

“Angels”

PART 2: SATAN AND HIS ANGELS

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If you were here with us last week, then you know that (based on several questions from some of our members and recent visitors) we started a series of lessons looking at ANGELS in the Bible. Last week, we started by learning that much of what people think they know about the appearance of angels is probably wrong. When most people think of an angel, of course, they picture a beautiful woman with huge wings or they think of a chubby little baby. We learned, though, that angels in the Bible are always pictured as men. As to why, we have no idea, but whenever an angel is named in the Bible, the name is always masculine, and the masculine pronouns are always used. This past week, I stopped in at the St. Vinnies Thrift Store over on Odana Road, and as soon as I was done looking for my favorite pants, I wandered over into the other half of the store, and I noticed that all of the Christmas decorations were out. Well, as I was walking by, I could see from a little bit of a distance that one of their end-caps featured a display of Christmas angels, and I thought: Maybe I can find a Biblically-accurate angel! And yet, as I got closer, my hopes were dashed! Every single one was either a beautiful woman or a chubby little baby! So, as I said last week, I will say again this morning: If you are willing to help me by drawing a Biblically accurate picture of an angel, I would greatly appreciate it. I passed out some paper last week, some have you have turned in some great ideas, and I am doing it again this morning. What I am looking for is an image of an angel that is awesome but not evil-looking. In Bible times, of course, angels often appeared as normal human beings, but when they appeared in their natural state, they appeared in a form where the natural human reaction was to fall down in fear and worship (although the worship of angels was always condemned).

Beyond this, we also learned last week that the word “angel” literally means “messenger.” So, the primary responsibility of angels in the Bible was to deliver messages on God’s behalf. And then we moved along and did just a brief overview of some characteristics of angels in the Bible. Last week’s lesson is available online, and I have also made a number of copies available on the table in the entryway if you were not here and if you are interested in learning more.

As we progress in our series, I would like for us move along this morning by looking for the next few moments at Satan and his angels. It is important, of course, that we study Satan from time to time, because we are living in a world where people would prefer that we never talk about Satan. Several years ago, our family went to the state capitol building to see the Christmas tree (or holiday tree, or whatever they are calling it these days), and while we were there, we went up to the second level to get a better view of the tree. If you have ever

been there to see the tree, then you know that in the spirit of love, and tolerance, and open-mindedness, there is a sign that is always so lovingly provided by the Freedom From Religion Foundation, "At this season of the Winter Solstice may reason prevail. There are no gods, no devils, no angels, no heaven or hell. There is only our natural world. Religion is but myth and superstition that hardens hearts and enslaves minds." And so there are people all around us who would love for us not to believe in Satan.

And yet when we look at the word of God, we quickly find that Satan is very real. In fact, the first reference to Satan comes almost immediately, only three chapters from the beginning of the entire Bible. In the opening verses of Genesis 3, we find that Satan is both a deceiver and a liar, and as we read through the Bible, it only gets worse from there. He is referred to by every single New Testament writer. On top of that, Jesus directly referred to Satan at least 15 times himself. And all combined, Satan is referred to in the Scriptures a total of 174 times. Satan is alive and well, and yet he would love for us to believe that statement that is posted every year in our state capitol. He wants us to forget that he is very real.

This morning, then, as we continue in our series on angels, I would like for us to consider what the Bible has to say about Satan and his angels. And again, as I pointed out last week, there is a lot we do not know, and yet the Bible tells us what we need to know. So, as you can see from the handout, I would like to divide this morning's lesson into three parts, followed by the "So what?" question.

I. **And I would like to start by backing up a little bit and by pointing out that ANGELS HAVE THE ABILITY TO SIN.**

And this, I believe, is where we start to understand something about the origin of Satan. My understanding is that Satan is an archangel who disobeyed God. In response to his sin of rebellion, he was basically kicked out of God's presence because of that sin, and he now leads other angels who have also sinned in a similar way. Again, as I said, this is my understanding of situation. However, I would also point out that although we do have some passages here and there that seem to indicate this, the Bible is not about Satan. Remember: Last week we learned that angels are in the background. There is not a single Bible story that features angels as the main point. Instead, angels are in the background, almost like trees in a beautiful painting. In the same way, although there is a lot in the Bible about Satan, Satan is not the main point. But again, my understanding, at least, is that Satan is a fallen angel and is now leading other fallen angels.

As we think about this, though, I would point out several passages that should NOT be used to prove this. Often, people will go to Isaiah 14 to show the origin of Satan. After all, in Isaiah 14:12-14, we find some verses that are often taken out of context. I have included the reference on the handout for those who want to know more. But in that passage, we read about the "**star of the morning, son of the dawn**" that has been "**cut down to the earth.**" Whoever this being was said in his heart, "**I will ascend to heaven; I will raise my throne above the stars of God,**" but God will throw this being "**down to Sheol, to the recesses of the pit.**" And at first, if we only look at those verses, it sounds like Satan: Yes, Satan tried to exalt himself over God, but God threw him down. And yet, when we read the entire chapter, we find that Isaiah is actually talking about the king of Babylon! In fact, if you have your Bibles open to that passage, just go back up to Isaiah 14:3-4, and notice how God introduces the prophecy. Basically, when the captivity is over, Isaiah is to, "**take up this taunt against the king of Babylon,**" and then the prophecy begins. So, God actually just comes out and tells us who the prophecy is about, and it is not about Satan; instead, it is about the king of Babylon. I would also point out a danger of the King James Version here. In verse 12, the KJV says, "**How art thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning!**" So, we have this reference to "**Lucifer.**" What many people do not know, however, is that the word "**Lucifer**" simply goes back to a Latin word meaning, "bearer of light." We know that light bulbs

today are rated according to their “lumens.” “Lumens” and “Lucifer” have the same root word. It goes back to the same Latin word, a word referring to light. So, instead of translating it as **“star of the morning,”** the KJV took that term and Latinized it and came up with **“Lucifer.”** And from that point on, people have thought that Lucifer is a reference to Satan. However, that is not the case. **“Lucifer”** does not refer to Satan. Instead, **“Lucifer”** is a mistranslation and a misapplication of a verse that is actually referring to the king of Babylon. So, have we learned something this morning? Lucifer is not Satan!

We have a similar situation with Ezekiel 28. In the middle of that chapter, there are a number of verses that really seem to apply to the fall of Satan, but when we look at the beginning of the chapter (when we examine the context), God very clearly says that the prophecy applies to the **“leader of Tyre.”** Yes, there is some powerful language there, and it might be that these kings were in some way following the example set by Satan, but these passages do not actually apply to Satan as many people might suggest.

There is also a passage in the New Testament that is sometimes incorrectly used to try to prove the origin of Satan, and it comes in Luke 10:18 where the Lord said, **“I was watching Satan fall from heaven like lightning.”** And if all we had was that one statement on its own, we might think: That’s it! Satan fell from heaven like lightning! However, in context, the Lord had sent out the 70 disciples with the power to cast out demons, when they came back they gave the Lord a full report, and that is when the Lord made that statement. He was not talking about the literal fall of Satan, but he was referring to these disciples exercising God’s power over Satan and his angels. In a sense, Jesus had sent out his disciples almost like soldiers into enemy territory with the mission of waging war against Satan, and the disciples were causing damage to the rule of Satan in the world.

And then, in the book of Revelation, we have another reference in Revelation 12:7-9. But again, in context, we are not talking about the original fall of Satan, but we are talking about Satan suffering defeat upon the coming of Christ into the world back in the First Century. Again, context is very important. Revelation was written to some of the early Christians who were suffering persecution, and in Revelation 12, John was explaining why Satan was causing so much trouble for God’s people on the earth. Since Satan lost the battle in heaven, his attention is now focused on the earth.

So, we get back to what we do know, and that is: Angels have the ability to sin, and ultimately, that is what appears to be the origin of Satan. It seems that Satan was a leading angel who sinned. If you remember from last week: There are different ranks of angels. Michael, for example, is described as being an **“archangel”** (Jude 9). As I see it, Satan is basically the evil equivalent of Michael. Some people think that God and Satan are equal, that God and Satan are equally powerful eternal beings who are engaged in battle, but that is not the case either. Only God is eternal. Satan is not God. Therefore, Satan must have been created. God does not create evil. So, Satan must have been created good, but made the choice to become bad. At least, this is the way that I understand it. And there are several verses that do seem to apply.

The first passage is found in 2 Peter 2:4. Peter is warning about the danger of false teachers who would come in and try to destroy each congregation, and he is making the point that all of those who oppose God are ultimately headed for destruction, and this is what he says (2 Peter 2:4), **“For if God did not spare angels when they sinned, but cast them into hell and committed them to pits of darkness, reserved for judgment,”** and then he goes on to make the point that God will also not spare those who divide the church with false teaching. But for the purpose of our study this morning, please notice that angels have the ability to sin, and when they sin, God causes them to be punished. In fact, this is the only time we have the Greek word TARTARUS, a word describing the bad part of Hades (translated as **“hell”** in the NASB). Hades is where all of us

go when we die. Those who are good go to the Paradise side of Hades, and those who are evil go to the Tartarus side of Hades. But the point for us is: Angels can sin! Like us, angels were created with the freedom to choose, and some have chosen evil.

We have another interesting reference in Matthew 25:41, where the Lord is speaking of the final judgment, and he pictures the King saying to those on His left, ***“Depart from Me, accursed ones, into the eternal fire which has been prepared for the devil and his angels.”*** Again, the main point here is not about Satan, but notice what we learn: The Devil has angels. So, in this context, Satan seems to be a leader of sorts, at least to the extent that some angels can be described as being ***“his.”*** So, since we know from the Bible that angels can sin, we are starting to get the idea not only that Satan sinned, but that he is leading other angels in that rebellion against God.

II. With this in mind, I would point out something else we know, and that is: SATAN AND HIS ANGELS ARE INTENT ON OUR DESTRUCTION.

And to emphasize this point, we only need to think about the two most common names that are given to Satan in the Bible: Satan and the Devil. Satan goes back to a Hebrew word meaning ***“adversary.”*** In other words, Satan is our adversary. Satan is against us. If something is good for us, Satan is against it. If something is bad for us, Satan is for it. We think of 1 Peter 5:8 where Peter tells us that, ***“Your adversary, the devil, prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour.”*** Satan wants to destroy us. He is our adversary. That is the meaning of the word “Satan.” Every time that Satan is mentioned in the Bible, in fact, he is referred to as being against God’s people in some way. He is intent on our destruction. His goal is our failure as Christians. Satan is against us personally, and he will do everything in his power to destroy us. He will seek us out and track us down at our weakest moment, like a lion going after the sick and the weak and those that are straggling behind. He is prowling around seeking someone to devour. He is our adversary.

Satan, of course, is also referred to as the Devil. Devil goes back to a word that literally means “slanderer.” The word has an interesting history. It comes from two words meaning, “to throw” and “against.” So, the Devil is someone who throws stuff against us. In the ancient world, it came to refer to throwing charges at someone in court. And so we have the picture of the Devil being our “accuser,” and that is why he is sometimes referred to as our ***“accuser”*** in the Bible (Revelation 12:10). The Devil loves to just constantly throw stuff at us to try to hurt us. In my own mind, I think of a game of dodge ball, and the Devil is that huge mutant of a kid who always gets to the ball first. He is the guy who would love nothing more than to throw that ball so hard that we just splatter all over the gym floor. The Devil is like that. He wants to hurt us, and so he is always throwing things at us. He is always accusing us. We remember how the Devil accused Job of serving God for nothing. The Devil was making an accusation. That is his name. So, 1.) He is our adversary, and 2.) He is our accuser. He is against us personally and against everything we stand for as God’s people. He is intent on our destruction.

III. So, since we are starting to get a deeper appreciation of who Satan is, I want us to move on at this point and think about the fact that Satan does have some level of power today – it has been limited to some degree, but we need to be aware of how Satan works in the world – SATAN IS RESTRAINED, BUT STILL VERY DANGEROUS.

We think of those passages where Satan is referred to as being ***“bound”*** (Revelation 20:1-6). Sometimes I think about a vicious dog chained to somebody’s front porch. As a preacher, I can tell you that I have been to a lot of front porches, I can tell you that I have been chewed on by a number of dogs, but I can also tell you that I have never been chewed on by a dog that is chained to a front porch. Do you know why? Because when I see

a huge dog chained to a front porch, I will stay away from that front porch! I love dogs, but I also love not being chewed on. When I went on a door-to-door campaign to Montreal several years ago, one of the first French words I learned was the word for “dog,” and if I saw a sign on a fence that had that word on it, I would just move along to the next house. I did not want to spend the rest of the week in the hospital getting my face sewn back on. So if we could use this as a picture of Satan: Satan has been restrained, but he is still dangerous. The key, then, is to know how Satan is restricted and how Satan operates.

Probably some of the best news comes in 1 Corinthians 10:13, where we learn that Satan cannot force us to sin. We just briefly looked at this passage this past Wednesday evening, the verse where Paul said, **“No temptation has overtaken you but such as is common to man; and God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will provide the way of escape also, so that you will be able to endure it.”** We learned in that passage that no matter how strong some temptation might be, God has promised that he will always provide a way out. We might lose a few friends along the way, we might lose our jobs, we might even lose our lives in the process, but we have a guarantee from God that we will never be forced to sin. God does not tempt us. Satan tempts us, but when we are tempted, God steps in and make sure that we always have a way of escape. Our job is to find it and take it. So, that is comforting. Satan cannot force us to sin. But, Satan is still at work, and he does not fight fair. So, I would point out a few ways that Satan has worked in the past.

1. First of all, we find that Satan will often deceive.

As Jesus said, Satan is **“a liar and the father of lies”** (John 8:44). As an example, we think back to the very first sin in the Garden of Eden. He changed just one little word in God’s command, but he twisted the intent and deceived Eve into eating the fruit that she had been told not to eat. We think of how Satan twisted the scriptures as he tempted Jesus in Matthew 4. The audacity – to misapply the word of God to Jesus himself! And yet that is what Satan did.

Sometimes people think of the Devil as this creepy little critter with a pitchfork, and horns, and a long pointy tail. Instead, I would suggest that Satan is much more likely to work through those that we think we know very well – maybe even through the preacher, or an elder, or a trusted member of the congregation. Satan is a deceiver

In the Parable of the Tares in Matthew 13, you might remember how Satan went in after the farmer had planted the wheat, and Satan planted the tares (or the weeds). His goal there was to deceive and to wreak havoc with the harvest. We think of Paul’s warning about false teachers in 2 Corinthians 11:13-15, **“For such men are false apostles, deceitful workers, disguising themselves as apostles of Christ. No wonder, for even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light. Therefore it is not surprising if his servants also disguise themselves as servants of righteousness, whose end will be according to their deeds.”** Earlier in this chapter, in 2 Corinthians 11:3, Paul tells us why he is so concerned, **“But I am afraid that, as the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness, your minds will be led astray from the simplicity and purity of devotion to Christ.”** Paul, then, tells us that we are not to be surprised that Satan deceives, but we are to be aware and on guard. So, Satan will deceive people.

2. Secondly, we also find in the Bible that Satan will do everything in his power to keep us away from the word of God.

We think of the parable of the Sower and the Soils. Remember the seed that fell by the side of the road? Jesus said (in Mark 4:15), ***“These are the ones who are beside the road where the word is sown; and when they hear, immediately Satan comes and takes away the word which has been sown in them.”*** Exactly how does that happen? How does Satan take the word of God away from us? I don’t know. Perhaps Satan is able to fill our lives with so many activities and distractions that we think we don’t have time to study God’s word. Remember: Satan is a deceiver. It would be like him to try to distract us with hundreds of good things to distract us from what is truly important. We think of Mary and Martha, and Martha who was distracted by preparing a meal for the Son of God. Fixing a meal is good, fixing a meal for the Son of God is great, but it took Martha away from what was truly important, and the Lord had to offer a gentle rebuke. Think about it this way: Imagine going home and relaxing this afternoon when you hear the doorbell ring. You open the door, and there is a flaming creature standing on your front porch, complete with horns, a pitchfork, terrible claws, and a pointy tail. Now imagine this creature starts screaming, “Do not study your Bible today!” What would you do? I know what I would do: I would slam the door and go inside and start reading my Bible. But is that how Satan operates today. No! Satan has found it much more effective to simply give us a high-speed Internet connection, along with Facebook and virtually unlimited games and distractions. Let us, then, not get distracted. Let us not allow Satan to keep us away from the word of God.

3. I would suggest a third way Satan has worked in the past, and that is: He is able to tempt us to sin.

Exactly how does this work? I am not sure. But we do have several examples. Do you remember the time when Peter suggested that maybe the Lord shouldn’t go through with the crucifixion? In Matthew 16:23, the Lord responded and said to Peter, ***“Get behind Me, Satan! You are a stumbling block to Me; for you are not setting your mind on God’s interests, but man’s.”*** So in that case, Peter was acting on Satan’s behalf. Now, I don’t think that Satan came in and miraculously took over Peter in any way, but in some way, yes, Peter was acting on Satan’s behalf – not in any kind of a miraculous way, but Satan was working through Peter nonetheless. Satan was also involved when Judas betrayed the Lord, Satan entered his heart – not in any miraculous way, but Judas opened the door when he was tempted by the love of money. Satan was also involved when Ananias and Sapphira conspired to lie about their contribution in Acts 5. Peter asked, “Why has Satan filled your heart?” Again, not in some miraculous way, but Satan was working in that situation. In some way, Satan got involved in the process and convinced these people to do things that God did not want them to do. Satan tempts us to sin. Satan makes sin look good.

In 2 Timothy 2:26 we read about people escaping the ***“snare of the devil,”*** those who have ***“been held captive by him to do his will.”*** To me, that sounds a lot like temptation. One thing is promised, but then the trap snaps shut, and our lives are then spent struggling. We think of the promise made by alcohol, but often, in the end, a night of drinking with friends is nothing more than the giant glob of peanut butter that we might smear all over the trigger of a rat trap. It looks good, it smells good, but the end result is death and shame – the ***“snare of the devil.”*** So, Satan, although he is restrained, is still able to work through temptation.

4. I would suggest at least one more possibility, and that is: At least in times past (and perhaps today), Satan is able to affect a person’s health.

We think of Job. We think of the apostle Paul and his thorn in the flesh that he described (in 2 Corinthians 12:7) as a ***“messenger of Satan.”*** I looked that up again this week. The word Paul uses there is the word for ***“angel.”*** Literally, his thorn in the flesh was an ***“angel of Satan.”*** In some way, Satan was allowed to torment the apostle Paul physically. Is Satan still able to do this today? Is Satan still able to take away our health? I don’t know. I do know that when I go to the hospital, I have had many people ask, “Why is God doing this to

me?" I have never had anyone ask, "Why is Satan doing this to me?" When we look at people suffering in the Bible, though, it was Satan who usually caused the pain, not God. The point is: Satan is cruel, and we need to be aware of how he works.

IV. As we come near the end of our thoughts on Satan and his angels, I would ask: SO WHAT? What does this really mean for us? What do we need to do with this information?

Maybe I could put it this way: If you had a man living in your neighborhood who was known to be a liar, if you knew that he spent a lot of time prowling around scoping out your children, if you knew that this man often wore disguises, if he had made it clear that he was your enemy, if you knew that his mission in life was to destroy you and everything important to you, what would YOU do? What would YOU do if you knew you were being actively stalked by a dangerous person? I know what I would do. I would do whatever was necessary to protect me and my family. I would be on the alert. I would put up barriers. I would lock my doors at night. I would guard my children. I would warn my children about that man. In fact, I would even get the appropriate training and experience, and I would arm myself to defend myself and my family. That's what I would do. And you know, it's interesting: Isn't that exactly what the apostle Paul told us to do in the passage that Silas read for us earlier? ***"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."*** Or, as Peter said in 1 Peter 5:8, ***"Be of sober spirit, be on the alert. Your adversary, the devil, prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour."*** Because Satan is out there, we are to ***"be on the alert."*** We are to put on the armor, we are to be sober, and we are to fight back.

Conclusion:

There is so much more we could study on this subject, but our time is limited, so I would simply close with the encouragement given by James in James 4:7. In light of everything that we have learned about Satan and his angels, James sums it up with these words, ***"Submit therefore to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you."*** This morning, we need to ask ourselves: Are we submitting ourselves to God and resisting the devil? Or, are we submitting ourselves to the devil and resisting God? As we have learned this morning, those who do not obey the gospel will suffer the same punishment that has been prepared for the devil and his angels (Matthew 25:41). The good news is that Jesus came to die for our sins. We respond to that by turning away from sin and by allowing ourselves to be buried with Christ in baptism so that our sins are washed away. If you have any questions, let us know. If you have something we need to pray about as a congregation, let us know. But if you are ready to obey the gospel right now, you can let us know right now as we sing this next song...

To comment on this lesson: foullakeschurch@gmail.com