

AN OBITUARY OF THE DEVIL

There is a Being at the head of the spiritual forces of good called God. There is another being at the head of the spiritual forces of evil called the Devil. While the Devil is not dead, his obituary has already been written. God Himself wrote it, and you will find it in the Bible. Although many do not believe it, the Devil actually exists.

I. The Devil Is A Person.

The Devil's origin, personality, and work are greatly misunderstood. Along with this amazing ignorance regarding the Devil and his work, there are many who laugh with scorn at such an idea, refusing to accept the simple, unquestionable teaching of the Scriptures. To them he is a comical farce. For example, several little boys were discussing the Devil. Finally, one of them ridiculed the idea, saying to his comrades, "There ain't no Devil. It's just like Santa Claus. It is your Daddy!" We laugh, but the tragedy of it is that sometimes it is true. God help us to live so that our children will have a higher conception of us than that.

It is exceedingly advantageous to the Devil when he succeeds in persuading anyone that he has no existence. It suits his purposes, it complies with his wishes, it helps his projects, and it is advantageous to his programs, for men to cease to believe that he really exists. The Devil's best friends are those who deny his personality. But denial is no disproof. The Bible discloses the fact of his personality, portrays his character, defines his origin and activity, and warns against his devices.

The Devil is no joke. To laugh at him or to take him lightly is to make a very dangerous mistake. He needs to be feared and fought against with all one's power.

Various names are applied to the Devil in the Word of God. Each name is highly significant, suggestive of his character and work. Let us turn to the Scriptures and consider a few of these names.

1. "The Dragon."
"And the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world: he was cast out into the earth, and his angels were cast out with him." Revelation 12:9.
2. "The One Who Devours."
"Be sober, be vigilant, because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour." I Peter 5:8.
3. "A Liar."
"For he is a liar, and the father of it." John 8:44.
4. "The Accuser."
"For the accuser of our brethren is cast down, which accused them before our God day and night." Revelation 12:10.
5. "The Adversary."
"Our adversary the Devil." I Peter 5:8.
6. "The Devil."
"Then was Jesus led up of the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted of the Devil." Matthew 4:1.
7. "The Murderer."
"He was a murderer from the beginning." John 8:44.

8. "Wicked One."
"When anyone heareth the word of the kingdom, and understandeth it not, then cometh the wicked one and catcheth away that which was sown in his heart." Matthew 13:19.
9. "Tempter."
"And when the tempter came to him, he said, If thou be the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread." Matthew 4:3.
10. "Prince Of The Power Of The Air."
"Wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience." Ephesians 2:2.
11. "Prince Of This World."
"Now is the judgment of this world: now shall the prince of this world be cast out." John 12:31. "Hereafter I will not talk much with you: for the prince of this world cometh, and hath nothing in me." John 14:30.
12. "The God Of This World."
"In whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them." II Corinthians 4:4.
13. "Satan."
"Then saith Jesus unto him, Get thee hence, Satan: for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve." Matthew 4:10.

He is represented by these and various other names which are descriptive of his incorrigible character, the chief of which are Satan and the Devil.

Satan is accredited with all the attributes of personality: intellect, emotion, and will. Satan is intelligent. He knows, remembers, deceives, and has executive and organizing ability. Satan has emotions. He desires, and has fallen under condemnation because of pride, and has great wrath. Satan has a will. In Isaiah 14:12-13, he is presented under the name Lucifer, "light-bearer," and as having a will to ascend in heaven, to exalt his throne above the stars of God, and to sit also on the mount of the congregation.

To ascribe personality to Satan is not to think of him as being confined within a body, as is human personality. Personality — that which knows, feels, and wills, transcends the limitations of the corporate form, although the human personality is temporarily confined to the body.

Perhaps a measure of the present-age scepticism concerning the personality of Satan arises from the grotesque picturization of him presented in mediaeval art. Satan is no hideous monster with cloven hoofs, spear-pointed tail, and horned head, or with a pitch-fork in his hand. Such picturization grossly misrepresents him and has no foundation whatsoever in God's infallible Word.

II. The Devil's Original State.

He was not always the Devil; he became the Devil. He was perfect in his character, for God said, "Thou sealest up the sum, full of wisdom, and perfect in beauty." Ezekiel 28:12. Nothing can be more perfect than the "sum" of perfection. He was also perfect in his position. He was given a position of great power and authority as "the anointed cherub that covereth." Ezekiel 28:14. He was stationed as a guard and protector of the throne of the Most High. In priestly dignity he led the heavenly hosts in their worship of Him who sat upon the throne. It was his privilege to enjoy a position of nearness to the throne of God. There he was secure and perfect in all his ways. Ezekiel 28:15.

Then what brought about his fall? Ezekiel 28:15, says, "Thou wast perfect in thy ways from the day that thou wast created, till iniquity was found in thee." What brought about the change? False pride arose, which tarnished his beauty, corrupted his wisdom, and destroyed his value to God. Hear what the Word says: "Thine heart was lifted up because of thy beauty, thou hast corrupted thy wisdom by reason of thy brightness: I will cast thee to the ground." Ezekiel 28:17. The very qualities that were given to fit him for his position and ministry were the very qualities that proved his undoing. He stood near the throne of God to direct the worship of God. But passion for God gave way to pride in his superiority over the rest of the heavenly hosts, and he sought to divert their worship from God to himself. When he said, as recorded in Isaiah 14:13-14, "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," he rebelled against God. This particular passage records the entrance of sin into God's great universe.

The rise of his will against the will of God gave birth to his ambitious purpose to dethrone Almighty God and enthrone himself in His stead. His heart was turned away from the love of God to the love of self. When he resolved to seat himself upon the very throne of God, he thus struck at the throne he was set to protect. His fall was final, and his destiny was inevitable. The judgment of the Lord is pronounced in Ezekiel 28:16, in the words, "Therefore I will cast thee as profane out of the mountain of God: and I will destroy thee." The Lord Jesus described Satan's fall in Luke 10:18 by saying, "I beheld Satan as lightning fall from heaven."

III. The Devil's Present Abode.

Perhaps it may surprise you to learn that the Devil is not now in hell. Ephesians 2:2 tells us that at present he is "the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that worketh in the children of disobedience." I Peter 5:8 informs us that our adversary, the Devil, is walking about as a roaring lion seeking whom he may devour. He is now actively at work through the people of this world.

IV. The Devil's Present Activities.

Having become the "prince of this world" (John 12:31) by ensnaring the human family into his power through sin, Satan recognizes Christ as preeminently the One against Whom he must guard his estate. It is preponderantly through human agencies that the Devil has been active in history in efforts to thwart the redemptive purposes of God as expressed in Christ. Satan has always hated Christ. He has never failed to take advantage of every opportunity to defeat the Saviour. II Corinthians 4:4 refers to him as "the god of this age," meaning this present world system or social order which he has organized upon the principles of self-will, self-interest, self-seeking, sinful pleasure, socialism, humanism, and all other devices to blind men to the rise and claims of God to their sole devotion and obedience.

Satan is man's adversary in that he works to blind man to his highest interests and to keep him from realizing them in God. Satan seeks to accomplish this end by a policy of deception. He works to deceive man as to his own true character and need, and by suggesting to man that he has worth before God on the ground of his own moral character. He also deceives man by substitutions. Satan also employs the policy of idealism. He does not seek to debase men, but to exalt them. Debased men are the evidences of his failure, not the fruitions of his dreams. His ideal is an improved social order, as a substitute for God's regenerated spiritual order. His message is that of reformation and self-development, instead of God's requirement of regeneration by the power of the Spirit of God.

Satan is ever seeking to uplift humanity, to improve the social order, to reform the world system, to establish a religious civilization, and to eliminate vice and poverty.

He does not care what we do toward the uplift of humanity if humanity is not lifted from the death of sin to newness of life through faith in the Son of God. He is ever seeking to have God's people occupied with the by-products of Christianity and the things that have to do with the advancement of humanity and the improvement of the social order. He is ever seeking to get the churches to substitute works and human attainment for Christ and Bible salvation. Satan's motto is ANYTHING BUT CHRIST. He admires culture, ethics, and social service, but he despises the Blood. He lauds religion, good works, good character building, and nice religious living, but he hates the preaching of the Crucified, Risen, Exalted, and Returning Christ. He readily concedes to preaching a human Jesus and the imitation of Him, but he hates the doctrines of the Deity of Christ and Redemption by His Blood, and of Regeneration and Salvation through Him. He literally hates the doctrine of the Lord's return to earth again.

V. The Devil's Final Doom.

Following the Great Tribulation, Satan will be chained in the bottomless pit for a thousand years. After this period, he will be loosed for a season, then he will be judged and cast into the lake of fire to be tormented forever. "And the Devil that deceived them was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are, and shall be tormented day and night for ever and ever." Revelation 20:10. In referring to the followers of Satan, who refused to accept Christ, Jesus said, "And these shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into life eternal." Matthew 25:46. Unsaved friend, your destiny and doom will be identical with that of Satan if you neglect to accept Jesus Christ as your personal Saviour.

"Rock of ages, cleft for me,
Let me hide myself in Thee;
Let the water and the blood,
From Thy wounded side which flowed,
Be of sin the double cure,
Save from wrath and make me pure.

Could my tears forever flow,
Could my zeal no languor know,
These for sin could not atone;
Thou must save, and Thou alone:
In my hand no price I bring,
Simply to Thy cross I cling.

While I draw this fleeting breath,
When my eyes shall close in death,
When I rise to worlds unknown,
And behold Thee on Thy throne,
Rock of Ages, cleft for me,
Let me hide myself in Thee."