

**“The ABC’s of the Christian Life: (31) Following Jesus Christ Rightly:
#19a. Three Great Foes: Third, the devil (part 1)**

Introduction:

The spiritual enemies with which we are engaged as Christians are three in number, we fight against the *world*, the *flesh*, and the *devil*. These three enemies are allied with one another. The *world* is the fallen world system in which we live-- *its ideas, values, and practices that are in opposition to the will of God*. The *flesh* is the sin principle that resides in every Christian; it is the desire to commit sin, even as it is in conflict with the desire that God gave us in our new birth to live for God and please Him. The *devil* is the malevolent spirit who is opposed to God and His people, who leads a great evil force of fallen angels in his control of the fallen world and in his opposition to the kingdom of God and its citizens.

In Revelation 12 we have the devil set forth in all of his evil, who is in hideous and violent opposition toward God and His people. It is a picture of the course of history, in which the devil sought to thwart God’s purposes to bring forth Jesus Christ to rule over the Kingdom of God. But in spite of his hostility and opposition, the Lord was exalted and enthroned and the devil deposed and dispelled from heaven. Let us read this chapter:

Now a great sign appeared in heaven: a woman clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet, and on her head a garland of twelve stars. ²Then being with child, she cried out in labor and in pain to give birth.

³And another sign appeared in heaven: behold, a great, fiery red dragon having seven heads and ten horns, and seven diadems on his heads. ⁴His tail drew a third of the stars of heaven and threw them to the earth. And the dragon stood before the woman who was ready to give birth, to devour her Child as soon as it was born. ⁵She bore a male Child who was to rule all nations with a rod of iron. And her Child was caught up to God and His throne. ⁶Then the woman fled into the wilderness, where she has a place prepared by God, that they should feed her there one thousand two hundred and sixty days.

⁷And war broke out in heaven: Michael and his angels fought with the dragon; and the dragon and his angels fought, ⁸but they did not prevail, nor was a place found for them in heaven any longer. ⁹So the great dragon was cast out, that serpent of old, called the Devil and Satan, who deceives the whole world; he was cast to the earth, and his angels were cast out with him.

¹⁰Then I heard a loud voice saying in heaven, “Now salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of His Christ have come, for the accuser of our brethren, who accused them before our God day and night, has been cast down. ¹¹And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, and they did not love their lives to the death. ¹²Therefore rejoice, O heavens, and you who dwell in them! Woe to the inhabitants of the earth and the sea! For the devil has come down to you, having great wrath, because he knows that he has a short time.”

¹³Now when the dragon saw that he had been cast to the earth, he persecuted the woman who gave birth to the male Child. ¹⁴But the woman was given two wings of a great eagle, that she might fly into the wilderness to her place, where she is nourished for a time and times and half a time, from the presence of the serpent. ¹⁵So the serpent spewed water out of his mouth like a flood after the woman, that he might cause her to be carried away by the flood. ¹⁶But the earth helped the woman, and the earth opened its mouth and swallowed up the flood which the dragon had spewed out of his mouth. ¹⁷And the dragon was enraged with the woman, and he went to make war with the rest of her offspring, who keep the commandments of God and have the testimony of Jesus Christ.

Now the popular interpretation of this passage is that it speaks to a future event in an endtime tribulation period, in which God will preserve a remnant of ethnic Jews from the assault of satan in the final

years of the tribulation, prior to the second coming of Jesus Christ. We would disagree. Rather, it speaks of the people of God who were anticipating the birth of the Messiah who would reign over the kingdom of God. The devil sought to kill the child at birth (i.e. King Herod), but God protected the child. The child grew and was enthroned in heaven over the kingdom of God (upon His resurrection). The establishing of the long-promised kingdom of God resulted in the deposing of authority of Satan, him being cast out of heaven. He wreaks havoc in this world, persecuting Christians throughout this age, even unto the end of the age. And so, here we see on display the great evil and the intense hatred that the devil has for the Lord and for His people. But the Lord protects and preserves His people from the intentions and efforts of the devil. Jesus Christ is Lord and is accomplishing the salvation and preservation of His people.

Now as we begin to address this subject of the devil, we should recognize that there is a great deal of error and confusion regarding him and his influence in the world and toward Christians. Generally speaking, errant beliefs and assertions about the devil fall into two extremes. First, there are those who gave very little credence to the existence of the devil and the nature of his influence. Second, there are those who give too much regard to the devil and to his influence in people's lives.

Actually, the belief in the existence of the devil is held by a majority of Americans. There are different assertions made by different researchers as to the numbers of "believers" in the existence of the devil.

Gallup asked Americans if the devil is something they believe in, something they're not sure about, or something they don't believe in. Sixty-eight percent said in a May 2001 poll that they believe in the devil, 20% said they don't, and 12% said they aren't sure. Majorities of Americans of every political inclination, region, educational level, and age group said they believe in the devil.¹

More recently George Barna's research gave a different story:

Recent polls suggest a large number of Americans don't believe the devil exists. A 2009 Barna survey reported that nearly 60 percent of Christians in America view the devil as only a symbol of evil. Only one quarter of participants strongly affirmed the devil's personal existence, though this figure more than doubles among "born again" Christians.²

And from Barna's website we read the following:

Four out of ten Christians (40%) strongly agreed that Satan "is not a living being but is a symbol of evil." An additional two out of ten Christians (19%) said they "agree somewhat" with that perspective. A minority of Christians indicated that they believe Satan is real by disagreeing with the statement: one-quarter (26%) disagreed strongly and about one-tenth (9%) disagreed somewhat. The remaining 8% were not sure what they believe about the existence of Satan.³

For anyone who believes the Bible to be the Word of God, denial of the existence and the personality of the devil is not an option. The Word of God reveals the devil to be a personal, fallen, spirit being, who is altogether evil, who possesses and exerts great authority in this fallen world, who is opposed to God and His kingdom in the world. The fate of the devil and his cohorts is certain. We read in the Revelation when the day will come when He is removed from God's (new) creation, to be consigned forever in punishment in the Lake of Fire that burns forever. The Lord Jesus spoke directly of this when He pronounced the fate of the damned on the Day of Judgment. "Then He will say to those on his left, 'Depart from Me, you cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels'" (Matt. 25:41).

¹ <http://news.gallup.com/poll/7858/devil-demographic-details.aspx>

² <http://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2014/february-web-only/casting-out-devil.html>

³ <https://www.barna.com/research/most-american-christians-do-not-believe-that-satan-or-the-holy-spirit-exist/>

I. Who is the devil?

The Bible identifies the devil by many names. These include Satan, Beelzebub, Belial, Adversary, Dragon, and the Serpent. He is also referred to as “the Prince of the power of the air” (Eph. 2:2), “the god of this world” (2 Cor. 4:4), and “an angel of light” (2 Cor. 11:14). There are at least 174 references to these names and titles in the Bible.

These names suggest a personal being, not a mere force or symbol of evil. **Arthur Pink** wrote a rather short book on the subject, “Satan and His Gospel.”⁴ He wrote of the names of the devil and their meaning:

Thirty-five times he is denominated “The Devil,” which means “The Accuser” or “Slanderer”—accusing the saints before God and traducing the character of God before men. Fifty-two times he is called “Satan,” which means “Enemy” or “Adversary.” He is God’s enemy and man’s adversary. “Satan” refers to his *character*: the malignant Adversary of all good—in God or His creatures. “Devil” refers to his *mode* of carrying out his evil designs: by lying slanders, false accusations, evil traducings⁵. He is termed “The Prince of this world” (John 14:30), which defines his position in relation to our earth. He is named “Beelzebub” (Matt 12:27), which regards him as the head of the demons. He is spoken of as the “Wicked One” (Matt 13:19) which refers to him as the primemover of *all* wickedness. He is styled “Apollyon,” that is “Destroyer” (Rev 9:11), which links him with the Bottomless Pit. He is referred to as “The prince of the power of the air” (Eph 2:2), which points to his present home and sphere of operations—cf. Eph. 6:12. He is termed “Lucifer” which means “Morning Star” (Isa 14:12), a title which seems to have belonged to him before his apostasy. He is called “The god of this world” (II Cor 4:4) because he is the inspirer and director of all spurious religion. He is termed “Liar, and the father of it” (John 8:44) because he is the inveterate opposer of the truth. These and other titles of Satan are meaningless unless he is a personal being.

The characteristics of satan that are set forth in the Scriptures present him as a being of great *power* and *capability*. However, satan is not as God, for God is infinite; satan is finite (limited). Satan is *powerful*, but he is not all-powerful (omnipotent) as God is. Satan is *wise*, but he is not all-wise (omniscient) as God. But the Scriptures do speak of him “who deceives the whole world” (Rev. 12:12). He is an intelligent, powerful, malevolent spirit being.

Satan is able to *perform miracles*. Was it not satan who enabled the “magicians and sorcerers” of pharaoh to mimic many of the miracles that God wrought through Moses? We read in Exodus 7:11, “Then Pharaoh summoned the wise men and the sorcerers, and they, the magicians of Egypt, also did the same by their secret arts.” Paul wrote that the man of sin would be “according to the working of Satan, with all power, signs, and lying wonders” (2 Thess. 2:9). Satan is able to enable some to foretell future events. We read of Paul casting out a demon that enabled a young woman to prophesy. Luke wrote of he and Paul experienced in Philippi:

¹⁶As we were going to the place of prayer, we were met by a slave girl who had a spirit of divination and brought her owners much gain by fortune-telling. ¹⁷She followed Paul and us, crying out, “These men are servants of the Most High God, who proclaim to you the way of salvation.” ¹⁸And this she kept doing for many days.

Paul, having become greatly annoyed, turned and said to the spirit, “I command you in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her.” And it came out that very hour. ¹⁹But when her owners saw that their

⁴ Interestingly this book, **Satan and His Gospel**, is not included among almost all of Arthur Pink’s books that are available online at https://www.etslifeministries.org/awp_books.htm. The copy I have is printed by Reiner Publications, Swegel, PA, but it has no date of publication. However, I did find a PDF version at the Chapel Library cite. I recommend virtually anything and everything that Chapel Library distributes, which is at <http://www.chapellibrary.org/>. See <http://www.chapellibrary.org/files/9413/7643/3355/sahg.pdf> for this 16 page copy of Pink’s book.

⁵ Traducings means “misrepresentations.”

hope of gain was gone, they seized Paul and Silas and dragged them into the marketplace before the rulers. (Acts 16:16-19)

Moses gave instruction to the Israelites not to listen to one who could accurately foretell an event to happen. We read Deuteronomy 13:1ff his warning:

If there arises among you a prophet or a dreamer of dreams, and he gives you a sign or a wonder, ²and *the sign or the wonder comes to pass*, of which he spoke to you, saying, "Let us go after other gods"-- which you have not known—"and let us serve them," ³you shall not listen to the words of that prophet or that dreamer of dreams, for the LORD your God is testing you to know whether you love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul. ⁴You shall walk after the LORD your God and fear Him, and keep His commandments and obey His voice, and you shall serve Him and hold fast to Him. ⁵But that prophet or that dreamer of dreams shall be put to death, because he has spoken in order to turn you away from the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt and redeemed you from the house of bondage, to entice you from the way in which the LORD your God commanded you to walk. So you shall put away the evil from your midst. (Deut. 13:1-5)

Satan is able to enable a person to dream of an event that will subsequently happen.

Satan has the power to cause *sickness* and *other physical infirmities*. There was a woman who had a physical malady for 18 years, who was healed when she touched the hem of Jesus' garment. Jesus said of her that Satan had "bound" her with this physical condition. We read of this in **Luke 13:10ff**.

Now he was teaching in one of the synagogues on the Sabbath. ¹¹And behold, there was a woman who had had a disabling spirit for eighteen years. She was bent over and could not fully straighten herself. ¹²When Jesus saw her, he called her over and said to her, "Woman, you are freed from your disability." ¹³And he laid his hands on her, and immediately she was made straight, and she glorified God.

¹⁴But the ruler of the synagogue, indignant because Jesus had healed on the Sabbath, said to the people, "There are six days in which work ought to be done. Come on those days and be healed, and not on the Sabbath day."

¹⁵Then the Lord answered him, "You hypocrites! Does not each of you on the Sabbath untie his ox or his donkey from the manger and lead it away to water it? ¹⁶And ought not this woman, a daughter of Abraham *whom Satan bound for eighteen years, be loosed from this bond* on the Sabbath day?" ¹⁷As he said these things, all his adversaries were put to shame, and all the people rejoiced at all the glorious things that were done by him. (Luke 13:10-17)

Satan had afflicted Paul with some form of physical malady, or so it seems. God allowed this in his life to prevent him from becoming puffed up with pride. We read of this in **2 Corinthians 12:4-9**.

I must go on boasting. Though there is nothing to be gained by it, I will go on to visions and revelations of the Lord. ²I know a man in Christ who fourteen years ago was caught up to the third heaven-- whether in the body or out of the body I do not know, God knows. ³And I know that this man was caught up into paradise-- whether in the body or out of the body I do not know, God knows-- ⁴and he heard things that cannot be told, which man may not utter. ⁵On behalf of this man I will boast, but on my own behalf I will not boast, except of my weaknesses-- ⁶though if I should wish to boast, I would not be a fool, for I would be speaking the truth; but I refrain from it, so that no one may think more of me than he sees in me or hears from me. ⁷So to keep me from becoming conceited because of the surpassing greatness of the revelations, a thorn was given me in the flesh, *a messenger of Satan to harass me*, to keep me from becoming conceited. ⁸Three times I pleaded with the Lord about this, that it should leave me. ⁹But he said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." Therefore I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may rest upon

me. ¹⁰For the sake of Christ, then, I am content with weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, and calamities. For when I am weak, then I am strong. (2 Cor. 12:1-10)

II. Satan's authority over the fallen world

Satan is called "the god of this age" (2 Cor. 4:4). He is "the prince of the power of the air" (Eph. 2:2). Satan is the ruler of all unregenerate people. They are born as subjects of his kingdom. They do his bidding. When God converts a sinner to Jesus Christ, God snatches that soul out of the kingdom of the devil and translates him into the kingdom of God's Son. This is what Paul stated of God the Father in **Colossians 1:13f**,

"He has delivered us *from the power* (dominion) *of darkness and conveyed us into the kingdom of the Son* of His love, ¹⁴in whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins."

Satan works through unbelievers to accomplish his will in this world. We read in Ephesians 2 that the devil controls all unconverted people. We read in **Ephesians 2:1ff** these words:

And you He made alive, who were dead in trespasses and sins, ² in which you once walked according to the course of this world, *according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience*, ³among whom also we all once conducted ourselves in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, just as the others. (Eph. 2:1-3)

Satan is the ruler over a vast army of evil spirits, who are fallen angels, who rebelled against God and chose to serve the devil. Although Satan is a spirit being, he is not omnipresent. He can be only in one place at a time. But he extends the rule of his kingdom through multitudes of evil spirits, or demons, who do his bidding.

Satan is the father of lies. The Lord Jesus said of him: "When he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own resources, for he is a liar and the father of it" (John 8:44). All error respecting religious beliefs ultimately owes their origin and spread to the devil. All false religion, all false doctrine, owes its origin, its appeal to people's minds, and its continuance, to the devil. Paul wrote to the Christians at the church at Corinth: "I imply that what pagans sacrifice they offer to demons and not to God. I do not want you to be participants with demons" (1 Cor. 10:20). And Paul wrote to Timothy, "Now the Spirit expressly says that in latter times some will depart from the faith, giving heed to deceiving spirits and doctrines of demons" (1 Tim. 4:1).

Satan is the ruler of darkness. This conveys the idea that he is the author of error and falsehood and keeps his own captive and helpless. He blinds unconverted people to the gospel so that they cannot understand the truth of the gospel and so that they will not be able to respond to it. But the Lord in His sovereign grace defeats Satan's efforts to blind His people to the truth by which He intends to save them from sin. Paul wrote of his own confidence in the gospel because Satan was powerless to prevent it from saving the Lord's people when the Lord purposed to save them by it. We read of this in 2 Corinthians 4:

²But we have renounced the hidden things of shame, not walking in craftiness nor handling the word of God deceitfully, but by manifestation of the truth commending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God. ³But even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing, *⁴whose minds the god of this age has blinded, who do not believe, lest the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine on them.* ⁵For we do not preach ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord, and ourselves your bondservants for Jesus' sake. *⁶For it is the God who commanded light to shine out of darkness, who has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.* (2 Cor. 4:2-6)

And so, we have addressed **Satan's authority over the fallen world**. Let us now consider...

III. What was satan's origin?

Probably Revelation 12 speaks of the original rebellion of angels that joined forces with the devil. There we read these words,

³And another sign appeared in heaven: behold, a great, fiery red dragon having seven heads and ten horns, and seven diadems on his heads. ⁴His tail drew a third of the stars of heaven and threw them to the earth. And the dragon stood before the woman who was ready to give birth, to devour her Child as soon as it was born. (Rev. 12:3-4)

Ezekiel 28 records evidence to suggest satan's origin. Here God through his prophet was denouncing the king of Tyre, which was an ancient maritime kingdom on the Phoenician coast. The manner that Ezekiel describes the king of Tyre, however, seems to speak of more than the historic king. The king is described as one who was in the original Garden of Eden, but fell through pride. It is apparent that Ezekiel was describing the fall of satan, the evil power behind the king of Tyre, satan, who had rebelled against God in the beginning. Here is **Ezekiel 28:11-19**:

¹¹Moreover the word of the LORD came to me, saying, ¹²“Son of man, take up a lamentation for the king of Tyre, and say to him, ‘Thus says the Lord GOD:

“You were the seal of perfection,
Full of wisdom and perfect in beauty.
¹³You were in Eden, the garden of God;
Every precious stone was your covering:
The sardius, topaz, and diamond,
Beryl, onyx, and jasper,
Sapphire, turquoise, and emerald with gold.
The workmanship of your timbrels and pipes
Was prepared for you on the day you were created.

¹⁴“You were the anointed cherub who covers;
I established you;
You were on the holy mountain of God;
You walked back and forth in the midst of fiery stones.

¹⁵You were perfect in your ways from the day you were created,
Till iniquity was found in you.

¹⁶“By the abundance of your trading
You became filled with violence within,
And you sinned;
Therefore I cast you as a profane thing
Out of the mountain of God;
And I destroyed you, O covering cherub,
From the midst of the fiery stones.

¹⁷“Your heart was lifted up because of your beauty;
You corrupted your wisdom for the sake of your splendor;
I cast you to the ground,
I laid you before kings,
That they might gaze at you.

¹⁸“You defiled your sanctuaries

By the multitude of your iniquities,
By the iniquity of your trading;
Therefore I brought fire from your midst;
It devoured you,
And I turned you to ashes upon the earth
In the sight of all who saw you.
¹⁹All who knew you among the peoples are astonished at you;
You have become a horror,
And shall be no more forever.””””

God had created this holy angel and had given him authority over the world which God had created. When the fall of this foremost angel occurred, his authority over the world did not come to an end; rather, it continued. Since that time, the devil has sought to frustrate the purposes and plans of God in His creation.

When did satan instigate this rebellion against God, when did this glorious cherub become satan? Although the Bible does not speak directly of this event, it can be concluded quite clearly that satan had originally sinned against God after the creation week recorded in Genesis 1. God had created the heavens and the earth. And then, over the course of six days created all that exists in the physical, and we would say, the spiritual order. After God created all things and when He rested on that first Sabbath, it is said of the creation, “Then God saw everything that He had made, and indeed it was very good. So the evening and the morning were the sixth day” (Gen. 1:31). God could not, He would not, have pronounced “everything that He had made” as “very good”, if the devil and his minions were within His creation at this time. Satan fell into sin, I suspect, even as he sought to tempt Eve to transgress God’s law in the Garden.

IV. God’s authority over satan

There have been some in history and some today who believe that God and satan are two coeternal beings, God being all-good and satan being all-evil. This is heresy. God is infinite, but satan is finite—he is a created being. A similar and common idea is that God’s will desires one thing and that satan’s will desires what is opposite, and that sometimes God wins and the devil is defeated, but at other times the devil wins and God is defeated. This is blasphemous. In **Arthur Pink’s** classic book, *The Sovereignty of God*, he set the matter before his readers in quite a clear manner in his Introduction. He wrote:

Who is regulating affairs on this earth today—God, or the Devil? That God reigns supreme in Heaven is generally conceded; that He does so over this world, is almost universally denied—if not directly, then indirectly. More and more are men in their philosophizing and theorizing relegating God to the background. Take the material realm. Not only is it denied that God *created* everything by personal and direct action, but few believe that He has any immediate concern in *regulating* the works of His own hands. Everything is supposed to be ordered according to the (impersonal and abstract) “laws of Nature.” Thus is the Creator banished from His own creation. Therefore we need not be surprised that men, in their degrading conceptions, exclude Him from the realm of human affairs. Throughout Christendom, with an almost negligible exception, the theory is held that man is “a free agent,” and therefore, lord of his fortunes and the determiner of his destiny. That Satan is to be blamed for much of the evil which is in the world is freely affirmed by those who, though having so much to say about “the responsibility of man,” often *deny* their *own* responsibility, by attributing to the Devil what, in fact, proceeds from their *own* evil hearts (Mark 7:21-23)...

Who is regulating affairs on this earth today—God, or the Devil? What impression is made upon the minds of those men of the world who, occasionally, attend a Gospel service? What are the conceptions formed by those who hear even those preachers who are counted as “orthodox?” Is it not that a *disappointed* God is the One whom Christians believe in? From what is heard from the average evangelist today, is not any serious hearer *obliged* to conclude that he professes to represent a God who is filled with benevolent intentions, yet unable to carry them out; that He is earnestly desirous of blessing

men, but that they will not let Him? Then, *must* not the average hearer draw the inference that the Devil has gained the upper hand, and that God is to be pitied rather than blamed?

But does not everything seem to show that the Devil *has* far more to do with the affairs of earth than God has? Ah, it all depends upon whether we are walking by faith, or walking by sight. Are your thoughts, my reader, concerning this world and God's relation to it, based upon what you *see*? Face this question seriously and honestly. And if you are a Christian you will, most probably, have cause to bow your head with shame and sorrow, and to acknowledge that it *is* so. Alas, in reality, we walk very little "by faith." But what does "walking by faith" signify? It means that our thoughts are formed, our actions regulated, our lives molded by the Holy Scriptures, for, "faith cometh by hearing, and hearing *by the Word of God*" (Rom. 10:17). It is from the Word of Truth, and that alone, that we can learn what is *God's* relation to this world...

Who is regulating affairs on this earth today-God, or the Devil? What saith the Scriptures? If we believe their plain and positive declarations, no room is left for uncertainty. They affirm, again and again, that God is on the throne of the universe; that the sceptre is in His hands; that He is directing *all things* "after the counsel of His own will." They affirm, not only that God created all things, but also that God is ruling and reigning over all the works of His hands. They affirm that God is the "Almighty," that His will is irreversible, that He is absolute Sovereign in every realm of all His vast dominions. And surely it *must* be so. Only two alternatives are possible: God must either rule, or be ruled; sway, or be swayed; accomplish His own will, or be thwarted by His creatures. Accepting the fact that He is the "Most High," the only Potentate and King of kings, vested with perfect wisdom and illimitable power, and the conclusion is irresistible that He must be God in fact as well as in name.

The Holy Scriptures clearly display the devil as being subject to God. Though satan is an evil creature, he was not so when God first created him. God had created him as holy, but then he fell into sin through his own pride and rebellion. But though the devil is opposed to God and has attempted to thwart the glory of God in history and particularly through mankind, made in the image of God, the devil remains under the authority of God. Satan must gain the permission of God to act within this world. The account of Job is proof of this. We read in **Job 1:6-12**.

⁶Now there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the LORD, and Satan also came among them. ⁷And the LORD said to Satan, "From where do you come?"

So Satan answered the LORD and said, "From going to and fro on the earth, and from walking back and forth on it."

⁸Then the LORD said to Satan, "Have you considered My servant Job, that there is none like him on the earth, a blameless and upright man, one who fears God and shuns evil?"

⁹So Satan answered the LORD and said, "Does Job fear God for nothing? ¹⁰Have You not made a hedge around him, around his household, and around all that he has on every side? You have blessed the work of his hands, and his possessions have increased in the land. ¹¹But now, stretch out Your hand and touch all that he has, and he will surely curse You to Your face!"

¹²And the LORD said to Satan, "Behold, all that he has is in your power; only do not lay a hand on his person."

So Satan went out from the presence of the LORD.

Satan could only act against Job to the degree that God allowed him. And though satan meant only evil for Job, God used satan's assault to glorify himself. This can be seen in round two of God's interaction with satan. We read in Job 2 similar words that we read in chapter 1.

Again there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the LORD, and Satan came also among them to present himself before the LORD. ²And the LORD said to Satan, "From where do you come?"

Satan answered the LORD and said, "From going to and fro on the earth, and from walking back and forth on it."

³Then the LORD said to Satan, “Have you considered My servant Job, that there is none like him on the earth, a blameless and upright man, one who fears God and shuns evil? And still he holds fast to his integrity, although you incited Me against him, to destroy him without cause.”

⁴So Satan answered the LORD and said, “Skin for skin! Yes, all that a man has he will give for his life. ⁵But stretch out Your hand now, and touch his bone and his flesh, and he will surely curse You to Your face!”

⁶And the LORD said to Satan, “Behold, he is in your hand, but spare his life.”

⁷So Satan went out from the presence of the LORD, and struck Job with painful boils from the sole of his foot to the crown of his head. ⁸And he took for himself a potsherd with which to scrape himself while he sat in the midst of the ashes.

⁹Then his wife said to him, “Do you still hold fast to your integrity? Curse God and die!”

¹⁰But he said to her, “You speak as one of the foolish women speaks. Shall we indeed accept good from God, and shall we not accept adversity?” In all this Job did not sin with his lips.

We see again the limitation that God placed upon the devil. The devil could only do what God allowed him to do. God said in effect, “This far and no farther.” (Job 2:1-10)

V. Satan’s ability to influence and torment people

It is clear that the authority that God has given unto satan is far greater than any authority that he has given to a man or woman. The exception to this, of course, is the superior authority that God the Father has given unto His Son, Jesus Christ. And by extension, the Lord Jesus gave authority to His apostles over all the forces of the devil and his demons that they would encounter. Now thankfully, because the Christian is in Jesus Christ and Jesus Christ is in the Christian, every Christian is protected and preserved from destruction and ruin that the devil would bring upon them. The Scriptures declare,

By this you know the Spirit of God: Every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is of God, ³and every spirit that does not confess that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is not of God. And this is the spirit of the Antichrist, which you have heard was coming, and is now already in the world. ⁴You are of God, little children, and have overcome them, ***because He who is in you is greater than he who is in the world.*** (1 John 4:2-4)

We also read in 1 John 5:18f,

We know that whoever is born of God does not sin; but he who has been born of God keeps himself, and ***the wicked one does not touch him.*** ¹⁹We know that we are of God, and the whole world lies under the sway of the wicked one.

When the Scriptures say of the Christian that the ***wicked one does not touch him***”, it is referring to satan’s ability to direct that soul into a state of damnation. “The wicked one touches him not.” It is not a declaration that the devil does not afflict or trouble the Christian, for we know that the Scriptures indicate that he does so in many ways. John Gill wrote of this verse:

He (the wicked one) cannot come at him so as to wound him to the heart, or destroy that principle of life that is in him, or so as to overcome and devour him; he may tempt him, and sift him, and buffet him, and greatly afflict and grieve him, but he cannot touch his life, or hurt him with the second death; nay, sometimes the believer is so enabled to wield the shield of faith, or to hold up Christ the shield by faith, and turn it every way in such a manner, that Satan, who is here meant by the wicked one, because he is notoriously so, cannot come near him, nor in with him; cannot work upon him at all with his temptations, nor in the least hurt his peace, joy, and comfort: the saints know their perseverance from the promises of God and declarations of Christ. (John Gill)

In what ways does the devil afflict people? A number of details may be presented from the Scriptures:

- (1) The devil is able to place evil thoughts into our minds.

“Now before the Feast of the Passover, when Jesus knew that his hour had come to depart out of this world to the Father, having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them to the end. ²During supper, when the devil had already put it into the heart of Judas Iscariot, Simon's son, to betray him... (John 13:1f)

“Now Satan stood up against Israel, and moved David to number Israel.” (1 Chron. 21:1)

- (2) The devil is able to cause us to forget the Word of God that has been taught to us.

“Those by the wayside are the ones who hear; then the devil comes and takes away the word out of their hearts, lest they should believe and be saved.” (Luke 8:12)

- (3) The devil is able to move us to do what he desires for us to do.

“You are of your father the devil, and *the desires of your father you want to do*. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own resources, for he is a liar and the father of it.” (John 8:44)

“In humility correcting those who are in opposition, if God perhaps will grant them repentance, so that they may know the truth, ²⁶ and that they may come to their senses and escape the snare of the devil, *having been taken captive by him to do his will.*” (2 Tim. 2:25 NKJ)

- (4) The devil is able to oppress people.

“How God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power, who went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with Him.” (Acts 10:35)

- (5) The devil is able to cause one to experience disgrace or reproach. Sometimes this is called a snare of the devil. Of a potential church elder it is said, “Moreover he must have a good testimony among those who are outside, lest he fall into reproach and the snare of the devil.” (1 Tim. 3:7)

- (6) The devil is able to lead a person to practice sin.

“He who sins is of the devil, for the devil has sinned from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that He might destroy the works of the devil.” (1 John 3:8)

- (7) The devil is able to persecute Christians through the use of civil authorities

“Do not fear any of those things which you are about to suffer. Indeed, the devil is about to throw some of you into prison, that you may be tested, and you will have tribulation ten days.” (Rev. 2:10)

- (8) The devil is able to deceive people, even the whole world.

“So the great dragon was cast out, that serpent of old, called the Devil and Satan, who deceives the whole world; he was cast to the earth, and his angels were cast out with him.” (Rev. 12:9)

- (9) The devil is able to entice people to sin. (Matt. 4; Luke 4)

(10) The devil is able to exalt people in the world system, making them rich and powerful. (Luke 4:6)

(11) The devil has power over physical death (Heb. 2:14; 1 Cor. 5:5)

(12) The devil distorts truth and promotes error.

(13) The devil is able to cause sickness in people

“So ought not this woman, being a daughter of Abraham, whom Satan has bound-- think of it-- for eighteen years, be loosed from this bond on the Sabbath?” (Luke 13:16)

(14) The devil is able to cause physical disasters (Job 1)

(15) The devil is able to cause the people to lose faith, if the Lord did not prevent him from doing so. The Lord said to Peter, “Simon, Simon! Indeed, Satan has asked for you, that he may sift *you* as wheat. (Lk. 22:31).

(16) The devil can lead people to covet, to lie, and to steal.

“But Peter said, ‘Ananias, why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit and keep back *part* of the price of the land for yourself?’” (Acts 5:3)

(17) The devil is able to deceive people by presenting himself as an “angel of light”

“For such are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into apostles of Christ. ¹⁴And no wonder! For Satan himself transforms himself into an angel of light.” (2 Cor. 11:13f)

(18) The devil is able to produce and promote false shepherds, false pastors of churches.

“Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also transform themselves into ministers of righteousness, whose end will be according to their works.” (2 Cor. 11:15)

Arthur Pink said, “The apostles of satan are not saloon-keepers and white-slave traffickers, but are for the most part ordained ministers.”

(19) The devil is able to hinder the noble plans of Christians.

“But we, brethren, having been taken away from you for a short time in presence, not in heart, endeavored more eagerly to see your face with great desire. ¹⁸Therefore we wanted to come to you-- even I, Paul, time and again-- ***but Satan hindered us.***” (1 Thess. 2:17f)

(20) The devil is able to hinder the noble plans of Christians

(21) The devil can enable men to perform miracles. Of the antichrist Paul wrote, “The coming of the lawless one is according to the working of Satan, ***with all power, signs, and lying wonders...***” (2 Thess. 2:9)

(22) The devil is able to incite people to commit murder.

“We should not be like Cain, who was of the evil one and murdered his brother. And why did he murder him? Because his own deeds were evil and his brother's righteous.” (1 John 3:12)

VI. The devil's doom

At the cross Jesus Christ vanquished the devil. Our Lord's obedience unto death resulted in Him as the God/Man to be raised from the dead and ascend into heaven at which time He was enthroned over all creation. We read in 1 Peter 3:22 of the Lord Jesus, "who has gone into heaven and is at the right hand of God, angels and authorities and powers having been made subject to Him." And those angels and authorities included the defeat and subordination of the devil to the rule of the Lord Jesus. The devil continues to plague and frustrate the people of God, but he cannot destroy them. Martin Luther said it well in the classic hymn:

A mighty fortress is our God, a bulwark never failing;
Our helper He, amid the flood of mortal ills prevailing:
For still our ancient foe doth seek to work us woe;
His craft and power are great, and, armed with cruel hate,
On earth is not his equal.

Did we in our own strength confide, our striving would be losing;
Were not the right Man on our side, the Man of God's own choosing:
Dost ask who that may be? Christ Jesus, it is He;
Lord Sabaoth, His Name, from age to age the same,
And He must win the battle.

And though this world, with devils filled, should threaten to undo us,
We will not fear, for God hath willed His truth to triumph through us:
The Prince of Darkness grim, we tremble not for him;
His rage we can endure, for lo, his doom is sure,
One little word shall fell him.

That word above all earthly powers, no thanks to them, abideth;
The Spirit and the gifts are ours through Him Who with us sideth:
Let goods and kindred go, this mortal life also;
The body they may kill: God's truth abideth still,
His kingdom is forever.

Next Lord's Day, we will continue this important subject, Lord willing.

Then I heard what seemed to be the voice of a great multitude,
like the roar of many waters and like the sound of mighty peals of thunder,
crying out, "Hallelujah! For the Lord our God the Almighty reigns." (Rev. 19:6)
