

24 The fight against sin - What others believe

Many people believe that the Devil is a fallen angel who was cast out of heaven for disobeying God and is the source of all the evil in the world. Evangelical Christians have a very strong belief in a personal devil and see superstitions such as tarot cards, ouija boards, hallowe'en, and the like, as dangerous opportunities for him to work.



Satan the prince of the demons, the author of evil, persecuting good men, estranging mankind from God and enticing them to sin, afflicting them with diseases by means of demons who take possession of their bodies at his bidding.

Definition taken from the OnLine Bible

Here are some Bible passages that seem to talk about an angel being cast out of heaven. After you have looked at them all and thought about the questions that follow you may like, if there is time, to make some notes about individual passages.

Isaiah 14:12	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! (AV)
Luke 10:1,17-19	After this the Lord appointed seventy-two others and sent them two by two ahead of him to every town and place where he was about to go. ... The seventy-two returned with joy and said, "Lord, even the demons submit to us in your name." He replied, "I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven. I have given you authority to trample on snakes and scorpions and to overcome all the power of the enemy; nothing will harm you.
John 12:31	Now is the time for judgment on this world; now the prince of this world will be driven out.
Hebrews 2:14	Since the children have flesh and blood, he too shared in their humanity so that by his death he might destroy him who holds the power of death - that is, the devil.
Romans 16:20	The God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet. The grace of our Lord Jesus be with you.
Revelation 12:7-9	And there was war in heaven. Michael and his angels fought against the dragon, and the dragon and his angels fought back. But he was not strong enough, and they lost their place in heaven. The great dragon was hurled down - that ancient serpent called the devil, or Satan, who leads the whole world astray. He was hurled to the earth, and his angels with him.

If these passages are all taken literally, what would you conclude?

And what do you think is the explanation?

What Jehovah's Witnesses believe

The Jehovah's Witnesses, and others, believe that much (some would say all) of what goes wrong in the world is caused by the devil. The Jehovah's Witnesses believe that Satan first appears as the serpent in Genesis, and is a fallen angel who was cast out of heaven in 1914. These extracts are taken from one of their books.

Satan the Devil - Definition

The spirit creature who is the chief adversary of Jehovah God and of all who worship the true God. The name Satan was given to him because of his becoming a resister of Jehovah. Satan is also known as the Devil, because he is the foremost slanderer of God. Satan is described as the original serpent, evidently because of his using a serpent in Eden to deceive Eve, and for this reason "serpent" came to signify "deceiver". In the book of Revelation, the symbolism of a devouring dragon is also applied to Satan.

How can we know whether such a spirit person really exists?

The Bible is the chief source of evidence. There he is repeatedly referred to by name (Satan 52 times, Devil 33 times). Eyewitness testimony as to Satan's existence is also recorded there. Who was the eyewitness? Jesus Christ, who lived in heaven before coming to earth, repeatedly spoke of that wicked one by name - Luke 22:31; 10:18; Matthew 25:41.

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Does the Bible teach that Satan exists? Does it teach that Satan is a 'spirit creature'?

Is Satan perhaps only the evil within people?

Job 1:6-12 and 2:1-7 tell about conversations between Jehovah God and Satan. If Satan were the evil in a person, the evil in this case would have to be in Jehovah. But that is in complete disagreement with what the Bible tells us about Jehovah as being One "in whom there is no unrighteousness." (Psalm 92:15; Rev. 4:8). It is noteworthy that the Hebrew text uses the expression *has Sa tan*' (the Satan) in the accounts in Job, showing that reference is being made to the one who is outstandingly the resister of God. See also Zechariah 3:1, 2, footnote in NW Reference edition.

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Although the Bible does indeed teach that Satan is human nature, there are occasions when individuals (like Peter) are referred to as Satan, because their human nature had taken charge. Remember that in the Old Testament Satan is simply an adversary; so in the book of Job the passages are simply referring to someone who is opposed to Job. Clearly there is a person involved, but he is under God's control, and there is no suggestion of a 'spirit person'.



Read Job 1:6-12 and Job 2:1-7

Note that where the NIV refers to angels, the Hebrew (and the AV) simply speaks of 'sons of God', which is an expression used in Genesis 6:2-4 to refer to people living on the earth. In Psalm 82:6 the Jewish people are referred to as 'sons of the most High'.

This passage suggests that being tempted is the same as sinning. Is that true? Look at Hebrews 2:14-18 and 4:15.

Luke 4:1-13 reports that the Devil endeavored to tempt Jesus to do his bidding. The account relates statements made by the Devil and answers given by Jesus. Was Jesus there being tempted by evil within himself? Such a view does not harmonize with the Bible's description of Jesus as being sinless. (Hebrews 7:26; 1 Peter 2:22) Although at John 6:70 the Greek word diabolos is used to describe a bad quality that had developed in Judas Iscariot, in Luke 4:3 the expression ho diabolos (the Devil) is used, thus designating a particular person.

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Where did Satan come from?

It is not easy for us to understand how sin came into the world, but this explanation

All of Jehovah's works are perfect; he is not the author of unrighteousness; so he did not create anyone wicked. (Deuteronomy 32:4; Psalm 5:4). The one who became Satan was originally a perfect spirit son of God. When saying that the Devil "did not stand fast in the truth," Jesus indicated that at one time that one was "in the truth" (John 8:44). But, as is true of all of God's intelligent creatures, this spirit son was endowed with free will. He abused his freedom of choice, allowed feelings of self-importance to develop in his heart, began to crave worship that belonged only to God, and so enticed Adam and Eve to listen to him rather than obey God. Thus by his course of action he made himself Satan, which means "adversary" - James 1:14.15

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makes things more complicated rather than easier. We have to understand not only how Adam and Eve abused the free will that God had given them, but how a 'perfect spirit son of God' did the same.

Read John 8:44, which is referred to above. It is not easy to understand, and Jesus is using figurative language, but even if you take it literally, does it teach that Satan is a person who once was 'a perfect son of God' but who chose to become an adversary to God?

God Almighty

Who is in charge of the world? See Daniel 4:17.

Look at 1 John 5:19 and compare it with Romans 3:19 and Galatians 3:22. What does 'the evil one' mean? Why do you think the Bible describes our human nature as though it were a person who wants to destroy us.

Compare this with the verses at the beginning of Proverbs 8. What conclusion do you come to?

So our human nature is an enemy. Why is that?