

The Origins of Evil

The Prince of this Planet

Carlyle Haynes said this:

Medical tradition and superstition are the source of the conception which has come down to us of Satan as a monster of horrid form and hideous expression, with an accompaniment of hooves, horns, pitchfork, barbed tail, and breath of flames. This hobgoblin of the ignorant and superstitious has no reality in fact, no basis in the Scriptures, and is the source of derision on the part of intelligent and cultured people. This very grotesque and absurd impression regarding Satan is in itself an evidence of the craft and guile of the deceiver.ⁱ

Lucifer Rebels

Satan was originally an illustrious, majestic angel called Lucifer—“the morning star.” However, just as the morning star shines brightest only until the day breaks, so Lucifer shone brightly for a time, only to go out into utter darkness.

Lucifer was a powerful angel in heaven with an exalted position. He was the “anointed cherub that covereth” the throne of God. He was very beautiful and had a beautiful voice. He might well have led the choirs of heaven (Ezekiel 28:12-14). But because Lucifer was proud of his beauty, he came to indulge the desire for self-exaltation. He chose himself over God, initiating the rebellion that still rages on today.

Martin Luther said this:

The wickedness of the Devil is so great on this planet, that no man can grasp it. To be so wicked to find one's pleasure and delight only in the misfortune of other people; in their lingering hunger, thirst, misery, and want, in the perpetration of nothing but bloodshed and treason, especially in the lives of those who neither have done nor could do any harm, this is the hellish and insatiable rage and fury of the wretched Devil.ⁱⁱ

We Can Overcome

The devil is no theological abstraction or distortion of the mind. The devil is a personal being, able to assail unsuspecting individuals. He had a personal encounter with Christ in the wilderness. John also writes of the spirit of Satan entering into Judas' heart when he betrayed Jesus (John 13:27). “Your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour” (1 Peter 5:8).

The devil is a deceiver, even working miracles to achieve his aims (Revelation 16:14). He transforms himself into an angel of light (2 Corinthians 11:14). He is a power warring against God's people (Ephesians 6:12).

The only way to overcome him is through God's help. We must to use "sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God" (Ephesians 6:17).

Resist the devil, and he will flee from you (James 4:7).

They overcame him by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony (Revelation 12:11).

In the great war between Christ and Satan, we are not left to battle alone. God's plan was always to bear the consequences of sin Himself. He became sin for us, so that whoever believes in Him can be saved.

The Origin of Sin

In Ezekiel 28:15, we are told that God created the angel Lucifer to be perfect. Just as God did not create rotten apples but only good apples, God did not create the devil; He created Lucifer.

Lucifer is the originator of sin. He was perfect until he developed iniquity—a trait that God never put there.

Freedom of Choice

God could have made angels and people so that they could not sin, like he made the stars to remain in their orbital positions. But He made us free agents, not robots. He gave freedom to choose whether to obey or disobey. Lucifer chose to rebel.

Lucifer held an exalted position in heaven. He was the “anointed cherub that covereth” the throne of God. He was “full of wisdom and perfect in beauty” (Ezekiel 28:12-14).

But Lucifer was proud of his beauty. Ezekiel 28:17 says this of Lucifer: “Thine heart was lifted up because of thy beauty, thou has corrupted thy wisdom by reason of thy brightness.” His beauty went to his head and the seed of sin germinated.

Instead of glorifying God, Lucifer said in his heart, “I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God: I will sit upon the mount of the congregation...I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will be like the most High” (Isaiah 14:13-14).

When Lucifer rebelled against God, he was thrown from heaven and became Satan, “the adversary.”

If God had chosen to destroy Lucifer at that point, some would have served God from fear rather than from love. Lucifer’s influence and the spirit of rebellion would not have been fully eradicated. Instead, for the good of the entire universe through ceaseless ages, God allowed Lucifer to fully develop his charges against the divine government so that they might be seen in their true light. Sin must run its course for its enormity to be fully abhorred; but it will eventually be eradicated, along with its instigator.

“Therefore will I bring forth a fire from the midst of thee, it shall devour thee, and I will bring thee to ashes...and never shalt thou be any more” (Ezekiel 28:18-19).

When God created this world and all its creatures, “God saw every thing that he had made, and behold, it was very good” (Genesis 1:31). God is not the author of sin, but He was willing to bear its consequences. He became a man so that He could die, taking the punishment for all of our sin (Romans 6:23).

The great battle raging in the universe is between the Creator of all things and Satan, the angel who rebelled against God because he deemed himself equal with Christ, refusing to be subjected to His authority and government.

Sin on Earth

After Satan was driven from heaven, he turned his attention to the newly created Earth. He confronted Eve and convinced her that knowledge of good and evil would enable her to be like God, and that sin does not have the consequence of death. Eve chose to break the law of God, and Earth has since been a planet in rebellion against the government of God.

John 8:44 says that Lucifer “was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him.” His pride led to envy and his envy led to hatred. His hatred for Christ is so all consuming, that he murdered Christ. His hatred for those whom Christ has redeemed is what fuels the fires of the pain and grief of this world.

Everyday we see and experience evil and pain caused by those who choose Satan over God. God would like us to learn from those experiences that choosing Satan as a master is a deadly choice. God hopes that by seeing the results of Satan’s government, we will make Christ, rather than Satan, our King.

Those who love and serve Christ are the enemies of Satan. Christ himself tells us that a life lived for Him will be neither easy nor free of pain. But only through Him can we find true peace: “These things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. In this world you shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world” (John 16:33).

The Great Controversy

A Context

Ever since Adam and Eve chose Satan's way over God's way, this planet has been a battleground for a spiritual war. We are involved in this war everyday. But God doesn't leave us to fight alone. One way He equips us is by giving us his Word of truth.

The book of Revelation is full of images and prophecies for God's people who are in the midst of war. Chapter 12 tells an epic story that shows us how Christ will conquer Satan forever. This story symbolizes the heavenly battle that is unfolding throughout history and even today.

Revelation 12:1-9 gives a brief outline of the final conflict between Christ and Satan. The first scenes describe the efforts of Satan to destroy Christ at his birth in order to thwart the plan of salvation. This is followed by the crucifixion, the efforts of Satan to destroy His New Testament Church, and finally his efforts to destroy the remnant of the Church.

A great and wondrous sign appeared in heaven: a woman clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet and a crown of twelve stars on her head. She was pregnant and cried out in pain as she was about to give birth. Then another sign appeared in heaven: an enormous red dragon with seven heads and ten horns and seven crowns on his heads. His tail swept a third of the stars out of the sky and flung them to the earth. The dragon stood in front of the woman who was about to give birth, so that he might devour her child the moment it was born. She gave birth to a son, a male child, who will rule all the nations with an iron scepter. And her child was snatched up to God and to his throne. Michael and his angels fought against the dragon; and the dragon fought and his angels, And prevailed not; neither was their place found any more in heaven. And the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent called the Devil, and Satan...he was cast out into the earth, and his angels were cast out with him (Revelation 12:1-9).

The Characters

The two great adversaries in the war of Revelation 12 are Michael and the Dragon. Also present is a woman who gives birth to a son. Each character represents a spiritual being.

Michael

The name *Michael* means "He that is what God is." Michael is Christ, the leader of the angels. Who would contend with Satan over the body of Moses (Jude 9) other than Christ Himself? And the voice of the archangel that calls forth the dead at the Second Coming of Christ can only be the voice of Christ Himself.

“For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: And the dead in Christ shall rise first” (1 Thessalonians 4:16).

In the Old Testament, Christ is called the “Angel of the Lord” or the “Angel of His Presence,” and Michael is called the great prince:

“And at that time shall Michael stand up, the great prince which standeth for the children of thy people” (Daniel 12:1).

“The Angel who redeemed me from all evil” (Genesis 48:16).

“And the angel of the LORD appeared unto him in a flame of fire” (Exodus 3:2).

“For he said, Surely they are my people, children that will not lie: so he was their Saviour. In all their affliction he was afflicted, and the angel of his presence saved them: in his love and in his pity he redeemed them” (Isaiah 63:8-9).

The Woman

The woman symbolizes the Church. In 2 Corinthians 11:2, Paul called the Corinthian church the bride of Christ, “for I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ.”

What an apt description of the Church of Christ! She has not committed fornication with the world, and her doctrines are pure. The sun, moon, and stars represent the light of heaven that illuminates her.

The Catholic Church teaches that this woman, clothed with the sun, is Mary, because she gave birth to Jesus. However, according to Revelation, the woman is persecuted by the Dragon, flees into the wilderness, and is taken care of for 1260 days (see Daniel 7). Then, the Dragon makes war on the remnant of her offspring. The symbol refers to God’s faithful people (of which Mary was a member). It was out of God’s people that the Messiah was to come.

The Child

“She 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” (Revelation 12:5 NKJV).

This child is Jesus. It is He that will rule the nations, and He that ascended into heaven. Psalm 2:79 says this:

I will declare the decree: The LORD has said to Me, “You are My Son, Today I have begotten You. Ask of Me, and I will give You the nations for Your inheritance, And the

ends of the earth for Your possession. You shall break them with a rod of iron; You shall dash them to pieces like a potter's vessel (NKJV).

The Dragon

And another sign appeared in heaven: behold, a great, fiery red dragon having seven heads and ten horns, and seven diadems on his heads. His 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 (Revelation 12:3-4 NKJV).

The Dragon is Satan, who works through earthly instruments to achieve his aims. The stars of heaven that the Dragon threw to the earth are the angels that followed Satan into the great war against heaven. They are the demons that now operate on our earth.

The Dragon has 10 horns, just like the fourth beast of Daniel 7 that represents Rome. Satan worked through pagan Rome to destroy Jesus. It was a Roman official that condemned Jesus to die, Roman soldiers that crucified Him and guarded his grave, and a Roman seal that secured His grave.

The Dragon tried to devour Christ, the Child, by killing Him on the cross. But instead of defeating Christ, killing Him produced the greatest victory the universe had ever witnessed. Christ, the sinless One, defeated death and rose from the grave. No Roman seal could hold Him and Satan lost the battle.

Then I heard a loud voice in heaven say: "Now have come the salvation and the power and the kingdom of our God, and the authority of his Christ. For the accuser of our brothers, who accuses them before our God day and night, has been hurled down" (Revelation 12:10 NIV).

Satan's apparent victory at the cross became his greatest defeat. Realizing that his own fate had been sealed forever, Satan turned towards the Church, determined to destroy all those who believed in the risen Saviour:

"And when the dragon saw that he was cast unto the earth, he persecuted the woman which brought forth the man child" (Revelation 12:13).

He relentlessly persecuted God's Church using first pagan Rome and then papal Rome. But even then Satan could not win, because the Church "overcame him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony; they did not love their lives so much as to shrink from death" (Revelation 12:11 NIV).

The Story of Revelation Plays Out

And when the dragon saw that he was cast unto the earth, he persecuted the woman which brought forth the man child. And to the woman were given two wings of a great eagle, that she might fly into the wilderness, into her place, where she is nourished for a time, and times, and half a time, from the face of the serpent (Revelation 12:13-14).

History tells us how cruel Rome was in its persecution of God's people. An estimated 80,000 Christians were martyred in the Colosseum. More than two million others were also brutally killed during the first 300 years after Christ ascended to heaven.

Compromise and Complacency

When Rome adopted the Christian religion, matters only worsened. Subtle compromise bred complacency. When Constantine adopted Christianity, he did so with a mind to blend it with paganism. According to Harry R. Boer, "the multiplication of holy days, the veneration of saints, martyrs and relics, and the value attached to pilgrimages and holy places often pushed truly spiritual concerns into the background."ⁱⁱⁱ

F. J. Foakes Jackson says that, "in dealing with the church, [Constantine's] object was gradually to transfer to Christianity from heathenism all that had hitherto made it attractive in the eyes of the people."^{iv}

Constantine was the first to enact Sunday laws, enforcing the maintenance of the pagan day of worship in violation of the law of God. The German historian, H. G. Heggveit, describes the compromise in these words:

Constantine labored at his time untiringly to unite the worshippers of the old and the new faith in one religion. All his laws and contrivances are aimed at promoting this amalgamation of religions. He would by all means melt together a purified heathenism and a moderate Christianity...His injunction that the "Day of the Sun" should be a general rest day was characteristic of his standpoint...Of all his blending and melting together of Christianity and heathenism, none is more easy to see through than this making of his Sunday law. The Christians worshipped their Christ, the heathen their sun god; according to the opinion of the Emperor, the objects for worship in both religions were essentially the same.^v

And Harry Boer has this to say on the topic:

[Constantine] designated Sunday by its traditional pagan name - The Day of the Sun, not the Sabbath or the Day of the Lord. Pagans could therefore accept it. Christians gave the natural sun a new meaning by thinking of Christ the Son of Righteousness. Constantine and later emperors, as well as the church councils, enacted additional Sunday legislation. It was Constantine's decree of 321, however, that laid the basis of the universal recognition of Sunday as a day of rest.^{vi}

The Church in the Wilderness

In response to the compromise, those who wanted to remain faithful to God and His Word fled into the solitary places to worship God in truth. Revelation 12:6 says, “the woman fled into the desert to a place prepared for her by God, where she might be taken care of for 1260 days.”

This is the persecution predicted by the prophet Daniel in connection with the little horn, which signifies the Antichrist or papal Rome. The compromisers became the persecutors. Pagan Rome was replaced by papal Rome.

During the time of papal supremacy, the Word of God was kept alive by small groups of believers such as the Waldenses in Italy, who kept the Sabbath of the fourth commandment rather than the pagan Sunday. They chose to die rather than deny their faith in Christ and the Scriptures.

When the Reformation spread the Word of God, Rome stepped up its efforts to destroy those who would defy its doctrines. History abounds with atrocities against Protestants—the wars, the massacres, and the work of the inquisition that led to the torture and death of thousands.

Despite trials, the Church in the wilderness kept the flame of truth burning. When persecution could not destroy the work of the Reformation, the Counter Reformation, led by the Jesuits, was born. This bore more compromise, and the Church was once more at peace with Rome.

However, the Bible predicted that after the 1260 days (after 1798), a remnant would arise that would enrage the Dragon because they would follow Jesus in obedience to His commandments:

*Then the Dragon was enraged at the woman and went off to make war against the **rest** of her offspring those who obey God’s commandments and hold to the testimony of Jesus (Revelation 12:17 emphasis added).*

The persecution of this remnant will only increase. Decrees will be legislated to enforce papal doctrines and declare the law of God null and void. Forces will rise to destroy those who follow God’s commands. But those who remain faithful will be rewarded. Christ will return as King of kings and Lord of lords to take those who have patiently waited for Him to the mansions He has already prepared.

This article is adapted from the book *Truth Matters* by Dr. Walter Veith.

i Carlyle B. Haynes, *Satan, His Origin, Work and Destiny*, (Nashville: Southern Publishing Associates, 1920).

ii Ewald Plass, *What Luther Says Volume 1*, (Concordia College, 2006).

iii Harry H. Boer, *A Short History of the Early Church*, (Eerdman's, 1976).

iv F. J. Foakes-Jackson, *A History of the Christian Church from the Earliest Times to A.D. 461*, (Cosimo, 2005).

v Heggteit, heggteit+Constantine&source=bl&ots=UbwWUij9pz&sig=g3HWVaYf-f4QrioRpsmzSXhxbqU&hl=en&ei=9uERSuXSHJzyswOFiPDvDQ&sa=X&oi=book_result&ct=result&resnum=2#PPP1,M1

vi Harry H. Boer, *A Short History of the Early Church*, (Eerdman's, 1976).