

Major Bible Themes

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CHAPTER XXI

SATAN: HIS PERSONALITY AND POWER

This chapter introduces the highest being among all the creatures of God. However, an immeasurable gulf exists between the uncreated, self-existent, eternal Persons of the Godhead, and this the chief of God's creatures.

I. THE PERSONALITY OF SATAN

Since he does not appear in corporeal form, Satan's personality, like that of the Godhead and like all the angelic hosts, must be accepted upon the evidence set forth in the Scriptures. Considering this evidence we may note:

1. Satan was Created as a Person.

The fact of the creation of all things that are in heaven and in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers, and that these were created by Christ and for Christ, is stated in Colossians 1:16. The time of the creation of the angelic host is not stated beyond the fact that their creation probably preceded that of all material things, and was

itself preceded by that eternity of existence on the part of the Godhead, which existence is declared in John 1:1, 2.

Among all the heavenly hosts, Satan's creation alone is mentioned in particular. This fact suggests the supreme place which Satan holds in relation to all the invisible creatures of God.

In Ezekiel 28:11-19 there is recorded a lamentation addressed to "The king of Tyrus," and while this may have had some partial and immediate application to a king in Tyrus, it is evident that the supreme one among all the creatures of God is in view; for the one here addressed was said to be the "sum" of wisdom, and perfect in beauty. He had been in "Eden, the garden of God" (probably the primal Eden of God's original creation, rather than the Eden of Genesis 3), and by divine design was created and anointed as a covering cherub over the holy mountain of God, which, in Biblical imagery, represents the throne or center of God's governing power. No king of Tyrus could answer this description. In fact, this description could apply to none other than Satan as he existed before his sin and fall.

2. Satan Exercises all the Functions of a Person.

Of many Scriptures which set forth the personality of Satan, the following may be noted:

Isaiah 14:12-17. Contemplating Satan as having completed his course and having been judged finally at the end of time, the prophet addressed him in this passage under the heavenly title of "Lucifer, son of the morning," and sees him as fallen from his primal estate and glory. He who "didst weaken the nations" is also guilty of opposing his own will against the will of God in five particulars, and in this passage, as in Ezekiel 28:15, his sin is said to be a secret purpose hid within his own heart which God discovered and disclosed (note 1 Tim. 3:6).

Genesis 3:1-15. By the events recorded in this passage, Satan gains the title of "Serpent," for through the serpent he appeared to Adam and Eve. Every word here spoken and design revealed is an evidence of Satan's personality (note 2 Cor. 11:3, 13-15; Rev. 12:9; 20:2).

Job 1:6-12; 2:1-13. A revelation peculiar to these texts is that Satan has access to God (note Luke 22:31; Rev. 12:10) as well as to men (1 Pet. 5:8; Eph. 6:10-12), and that he exhibits every feature of a true personality.

Luke 4:1-13. Again the personality of Satan is revealed when in the wilderness he comes into conflict with the Son of God -- the Last Adam. He who purposed to become like the Most High (Isa. 14:14), and who recommended this purpose to the first man and woman (Gen. 3:5), is now seen offering all his earthly possessions to Christ if only He will worship him. This proffered authority and power which Christ refused will yet be received and administered by the Man of Sin (1 John 4:3; 2 Thess. 2:8-10).

Ephesians 6:10-12. The strategies and warfare of Satan against the children of God as declared in this passage are proof positive of the personality of Satan. There is no mention in the Scriptures of a warfare by Satan against the unregenerate: they are his own, and therefore under his authority (John 8:44; Eph. 2:2; 1 John 5:19, R.V.).

II. THE POWER OF SATAN

Though morally fallen and now judged in the cross (John 12:31; 16:11; Col. 2:15), Satan has not lost his position, and he has lost but little of his power. His power both as to personal strength and authority is disclosed in two forms:

1. His Personal Strength.

His personal strength cannot be estimated. According to his own declaration, which Christ did not deny, he has power over the kingdoms of this world, which kingdoms he said were delivered unto him, and which power he bestows on whom he will (Luke 4:6). It is said of him that he hath the power of death (Heb. 2:14), but that power has been surrendered to Christ (Rev. 1:18). Satan had the power over sickness in the case of Job (Job 2:7), and was able to sift Peter as wheat in a sieve (Luke 22:31; 1 Cor. 5:5). Likewise, Satan is said to have weakened the nations, to have made the earth to tremble, to have shaken kingdoms, to have made the earth a wilderness, destroying the cities thereof, and not to have opened the house of his prisoners (Isa. 14:12-17). Against the power of Satan even Michael the archangel durst not contend (Jude 1:9); but there is victory for the child of God through the power of the Spirit and the blood of Christ (Eph. 6:10-12; 1 John 4:4; Rev. 12:11). Satan's power and authority are exercised always and only within the permissive will of God.

2. Satan is Aided by Demons.

Satan's power is increased by the innumerable host of demons who do his will and serve him. Though he is not omnipresent, omnipotent, nor omniscient, through the wicked spirits he is in touch with the whole earth.

QUESTIONS

1. On what ground must the personality of Satan be received?
2. By whom and for whom were all things created?
3. What is suggested by the fact that among all the heavenly hosts Satan's creation is mentioned in particular?
4. a. Give the passages in which Satan's creation and early condition are described.
b. What things are said of his first estate?
5. What evidence of his personality and power are indicated in Isaiah 14:12-17?
6. What evidence is indicated in Genesis 3:1-15 and Job 1:6-12; 2:1-13; Luke 22:31; Ephesians 6:10-12; 1 Peter 5:8 and Revelation 12:10?
7. Mention the facts set forth in Luke 4:1-13.

8. Against whom does Satan wage his warfare?
9. a. In what sense is Satan fallen?
 - b. Is he cast out of Heaven (see Rev. 12:9)?
10. Is Satan's professed authority over the kingdoms of the earth the statement of fact?
11. Where is the power of death now invested?
12. What evidence have we of Satan's power as seen in Job, in Peter, and over the nations?
13. a. Did Michael contend with Satan in his own strength?
 - b. How, then, may the Christian be victorious?
14. How is Satan assisted in his undertakings by the innumerable demons?