

43

SATAN

Background

Satan (= 'adversary'), or the Devil (= 'slanderer'), is given numerous different titles and names in the Bible, e.g. Matthew **10:25**; **12:24**; 2 Corinthians **4:4** ; **6:15**; John **12:31**; **14:30**; Ephesians **2:2**; Revelation **9:11**; **12:9**; **20:2** with Genesis **3**. Clearly, the Bible is speaking about a person and not just a principle of evil. Who and what is that person?

Identity and Origin

The Bible reveals to us his identity, but it does so through hints and gives him no more attention than is necessary. For instance, the Greek of John **8:44** says that he did not 'stand in the truth', which implies that he fell into sin; and Luke **10:18** speaks of his downfall from heaven. He seems to have been a high-ranking angelic being who rebelled against God's rule and was thrown out of heaven along with his angel-supporters (who became the demons). When God created man and gave him intimate fellowship, Satan seems to have resented this and – taking the form of a beautiful serpent – seduced Eve with Adam into sin. He is constantly trying to corrupt God's world spitefully.

Isaiah **14:12–15** (where Satan is seen as the power behind the King of Babylon); Ezekiel **28:12–19** (where he is seen as the power behind the King of Tyre); Luke **10:18**; Revelation **12:4**, 7–9; Genesis **3:1–15**

Character

Satan is revealed as:

- arrogant (his rebellion against God; 1 Timothy **3:6**)
- wicked (Ephesians **6:12**; 1 John **2:13**; **3:8**)
- wily (Genesis **3:1**; 2 Corinthians **11:3**; Ephesians **6:11**)
- deceitful (John **8:44**; 2 Corinthians **11:14**; Revelation **12:9**)
- fiercely destructive (like a wolf – John **10:12**, a lion – 1 Peter **5:8**, and a dragon – Revelation **12:9**; **20:2**).

Activity

Impenitent in his sin, Satan is opposed to God and God's kingdom. Though his power is vastly less than that of the Lord who created him in the first place, he and his demons can still cause plenty of trouble as God allows them to act until the divine purpose has been fulfilled. We note that Satan was instrumental in events which led to—

- the downfall of a large minority of angels (Revelation **12:4**, 7-9)
- the Fall of mankind (Genesis **3**)
- the curse on the cosmos (Genesis **3:17–19**; but see also Romans **8:19–22**).

Satan—

- rules over the demons (Matthew **12:24**)
- opposed Jesus, the Incarnate Lord (Matthew **4:1–11**; John **13:27**)
- opposes the gospel and Christ's Church
 - by holding unbelievers captive (1 Timothy **3:7**; 2 Timothy **2:26**; Hebrews **2:14–17**; 1 John **5:19**)
 - by blinding unbelievers (Matthew **13:19**; John **8:43–45**; 2 Corinthians **4:4**)
 - by counterfeiting the truth (thereby causing cults, heresies, schisms and factions) (Matthew **7:15**, **24:11**, **24**; Acts **20:29–30**; 2 Corinthians **11:13**, **14**; Galatians **1:6–9**; 2 Thessalonians **2:3–4**, **9–12**; Matthew **24:24**; 2 Peter **2:1**)
- hinders Christian workers (1 Thessalonians **2:18**)
- seduces Christians into sin (1 Thessalonians **3:5**)
- demoralises Christians with his accusations (Revelation **12:10**).

Power of the enemy over believers is *strictly limited*. What we are to do . . . ?

Satan did not reckon with God's grace. The Lord had a plan of salvation to redeem sinners who could enjoy victorious living by their—

- **relying** on Christ's atoning work on the cross of Calvary on their behalf (Revelation **12:11**)
- in the power of God, **resisting** Satan (Ephesians **4:27**; **6:10–18**; James **4:7**; 1 Peter **5:9**)
- **being** vigilant and prayerful (Matthew **26:41**).

Destiny

A defeated enemy, Satan is doomed and finally will be punished in hell.

Matthew **25:41**; Luke **10:19**; John **12:31**; **16:11**, **33**; Romans **16:20**; Colossians **2:15**; Hebrews **2:14**; 2 Peter **2:4**; 1 John **3:8**, **4:4**; Jude **6**; Revelation **20:2**, **7**, **10**