

Satan

II. The Doctrine of Satan

A. Does Satan really exist?

The Bible attests to the existence of Satan. He can be found in at least seven Old Testament books and is referred to by every one of the New Testament writers. Also, Jesus Himself referred to Satan many times (Matthew 13:39; Luke 10:18; 11:18).

B. What is Satan like?

1. Satan is a real personality.

Contrary to the teachings of many liberal theologians, Satan does not simply represent a presence of evil on the earth, he is a very real person. The Bible teaches that he possesses intelligence (2 Corinthians 11:3), has emotions (Revelation 12:17) and has a will (2 Timothy 2:26). Furthermore, he is treated by God as a morally responsible person, not a thing (Matthew 25:41).

2. Satan is a creature, not the Creator (Ezekiel 28:13).

Therefore, he does not possess attributes which God alone has, like omniscience, omnipotence and omnipresence. In other words, he possesses creaturely limitations. He is of a higher order of creatures than human beings are, but he is still a creature.

3. He is a spirit being.

He belonged to the order of angels called cherubim (Ezekiel 28:14). Apparently he was the highest created angel, and because of this still has a great deal of power even in his fallen state (in John 16:11 he is called "the ruler of this world" and in 2 Corinthians 4:4 he is called "the god of this world").

4. He is an opponent of God and His people.

The very name Satan means adversary (see 1 Peter 5:8)-and the word devil means slanderer (see Revelation 12:10). His character is further revealed in other designations which the Bible gives to him: "the wicked one" (Matthew 13:19); "tempter" (1 Thessalonians 3:5); "murderer," "liar" (John 8:44); the one "who deceives the whole world" (Revelation 12:9). In order to carry out his opposition, Satan can appear as a wily serpent (Genesis 3:1), or an attractive angel of light (2 Corinthians 11:14).

C. What was Satan's sin?

Satan's sin was pride (1 Timothy 3:6). The specific details of how that pride erupted are given in Isaiah 14:12-14 and are summarized in his assertion, "I will be like the Most High" (v. 14)

D. What does Satan do?

Satan's avowed purpose is to oppose the plan of God in every area and by every means possible. To accomplish this he is promoting a world system of which he is the head and which is against God and His rule in this universe. However, instead of promoting a kingdom whose characteristics are exactly opposite to God's, he tries to counterfeit God's program in order to deceive people into participating in his program. To counterfeit something is to create something as similar to the original as possible and to do it by means of a shortcut.

1. In relation to the redemption of Christ, in the temptation in the wilderness Satan tried to offer Him the rewards of redemption without the suffering of the cross (Matthew 4:1-11). (See also Matthew 2:16; 16:23; John 8:44; 13:27 for other attempts to thwart Christ's purpose).
2. In relation to unbelievers-, Satan blinds their minds so that they will not accept the gospel (2 Corinthians 4:4). One way he does this is to make them think that there are many ways to heaven and one is as good as another. If the Word is planted, he comes to snatch it away (Luke 8:12).

3. In relation to the believer, Satan may tempt him to lie (Acts 5:3), will accuse and slander him (Revelation 12:10), hinders his work for God in any way possible (1 Thessalonians 2:18), employs demons to try to defeat him (Ephesians 6:11-12), tempts him to immorality (1 Corinthians 7:5) and sometimes incites persecutions against him (Revelation 2:10). In addition to these he is always trying to get the Christian to follow a counterfeit plan instead of doing the will of God.