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Bible Correspondence Course

Supplemental Lesson Part II: Satan and the Devil in the New Testament

Introduction

In the previous study we looked at the meaning of the word **Satan** in the Old Testament. We learned that it is the English form of the Hebrew word **satan**, which means "adversary, " "enemy" or "accuser." Usually it refers to human beings, although on one occasion it' meaning is an "angel" of the LORD, and on another occasion it describes God Himself when He made Himself an adversary to the people of Israel.

The word "devil" only occurs in the New Testament. It is the English form of the Greek word **diabolos**, which means "slanderer" or "accuser." The word "Satan" occurs in both testaments. Both words are used to describe: firstly, sinful persons or organizations; secondly, sometimes used to refer to sin *itself*, the evil tendency of the human mind to conceive and commit acts of disobedience to God. Sin manifests itself in various ways: in individuals, in societies, in governments and sadly, in so-called religious organisations.

The meaning of **diabolos**

In order to show that this is an ordinary word which means "slanderer", we will examine three passages in which **diabolos** has been rendered into English by the translators of our New Testament, referring to individual human beings:

1. According to **1 Timothy 3:11**, "The women likewise must be serious, no _____, (Greek **diabolos**) but temperate, faithful in all things."
2. In **2 Timothy 3:3**, Paul warns that in the last days there will be men who will be "inhuman, implacable, _____, (**diabolos**), profligates, fierce, haters of good."
3. In **Titus 2:3**, Paul says: "Bid the older women likewise to be reverent in behaviour, not to be _____(**diabolos**) or slaves to drink; they are to teach what is good."

In the cases mentioned above, the translators of the Bible have correctly translated into English the word **diabolos**, which obviously refers to human beings. In the remaining verses where it occurs, they have not translated it but rather used the anglicised form of the word, which is "devil". Each time we find the word "devil" in the New Testament, we must remember that it is not someone's name, but simply a common word. We have to analyse the passage in which it occurs to be able to decide who or what is being referred to in each particular case. We will now examine what the word "devil" means in some typical New Testament passages.

Different devils in the New Testament

4. **Revelation 2:10** tells us the _____ was about to throw some of the believers abiding in Smyrna into prison. Now we know that the legal authorities of each country are those who incarcerate people considered law-breakers. The devil in this verse, then, has to be some government authority that persecuted the Christians. What authority would that be? The only possible answer is the Roman Empire which ruled at that time. The devil (meaning "accuser") referred to in Revelation 2:10 is the Roman government which persecuted members of the church.

5. Another similar example is in **1 Peter 5:8**: "Be sober, be watchful. Your _____ the _____ prowls around like a roaring _____, seeking someone to devour." In **Proverbs 20:2** and **28:15**, the wrath of a wicked King is compared to the roaring of a _____.

Peter is using the same kind of figurative language that is used in Proverbs in order to warn the brethren in Asia of the coming persecutions by the enemies of the church, usually Roman and/or Jewish authorities. Peter also refers to these persecutions in other passages in his letter (See: 1 Peter 1:6, 2:12, 3:14–16, 4:15–19, 5:9).

6. Referring to Judas Iscariot in **John 6:70**, Jesus said: "Did I not choose you, the twelve, and one of you is a _____?" Bearing in mind the fact that "devil" means slanderer or accuser, we can see that Judas is called "devil" because according to **verse 71**, he was the one who would deliver up Jesus to be crucified.

In the cases mentioned above the term "devil" refers to people or human organizations that betrayed or attacked Jesus or his followers. "Satan" is frequently used in the same way in the New Testament. We will show this by looking at a few passages.

Satan in the New Testament

Jesus calls Peter "Satan"

7. In **Matthew 16:21–23** we find an interesting incident. The Lord Jesus Christ is explaining to his disciples that according to the will of his Heavenly Father, he would deliver himself into the hands of the authorities and be crucified. Peter, always concerned for the well-being of his Master, tries to convince him not to do it. But on hearing Peter's words, Jesus tells him, "Get behind me, _____! You are a _____ to me; for you are not on the side of _____, but of _____." Here Jesus uses the word "Satan" with the meaning of "adversary," as in the Old Testament.

Peter was not a powerful evil being, but a loyal, loving disciple of his Lord. However on this occasion he was opposing the will of God in trying to stop Jesus from being crucified. Though he was a good friend of Jesus, he was making it all that much more difficult for Jesus to fulfil his Father's will. For this reason, Jesus calls him "Satan." Generally, though, in the New Testament "Satan" and "devil" both refer to a person, or an organization that is frankly evil or an enemy of God. The identity of the enemy varies according to the passage in which it appears.

Ungodly society called "Satan"

On some occasions Paul uses the word "Satan" to refer to the non-Christian world, in other words, society composed of all those who do not believe in God or obey His commandments (See 1 John 2:16).

- 8.1 Speaking of a Christian who had committed a serious sin, the apostle orders that he be expelled from the congregation, saying, "You are to deliver this man to Satan for the _____ of the flesh, that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus" (**1 Corinthians 5:5**). What Paul hoped for was that the expelled man finding himself out in the pagan world again, and far from the hope of the gospel, would come to his senses, repent and rejoin the church

before the return of the Lord Jesus Christ. In **verse 11**, Paul clearly says, "... put away from among yourselves that _____ person. "

- 8.2 A similar case occurs in **1 Timothy 1:19–20**, where Paul mentions that by rejecting the faith and a good conscience, "certain persons have made shipwreck of their faith, among them Hymenaeus and Alexander, whom I have delivered to _____ that they may learn not to blaspheme." Paul had disciplined these two members of the church, sending them back out into the non-Christian world (Satan) so that they would meditate on the seriousness of their sin.
- 8.3 The third case we find in **1 Timothy 5:15**. Paul criticizes the behaviour of some of the widows in the church, saying, "For some have already strayed after _____." The apostle is simply saying that they have abandoned the church and returned to the pagan world, as in **2 Timothy 4:10**: "For Demas, in love with this present _____, has deserted me and gone to Thessalonica ... "

Enemies of the gospel called "Satan"

Paul sometimes applied the term "Satan" to those who opposed his ministry and the gospel he preached. These were generally Jewish or pagan religious authorities.

9. For example, in **2 Corinthians 11:13,14**, denouncing false Christians of Jewish origin (Judaizers) who had joined the church to try to destroy it from the inside, the apostle says, "For such men are _____ apostles, _____ workmen, _____ themselves as apostles of Christ. And no wonder, for even _____ disguises himself as an angel of light."

In this case, the "Satan" or enemy is the Jewish authorities who had sent false apostles to infiltrate the church. Possibly it was the head of the Jewish synagogue in Corinth, or even the high priest in Jerusalem, who previously had authorized Paul himself to persecute the church (See Acts 9:1,2). The Corinthians undoubtedly knew who Paul was referring to, but for us who live 2,000 years later, it is difficult to be sure. When Paul says that this "Satan" was disguised as an angel of light he was referring to the fact that the Jewish authorities claimed to be the true agents of the divine revelation. (The word translated "angel" simply means "messenger" and is frequently translated that way in both Testaments of the Bible, referring to men. See Luke 6:26-27, where John the Baptist is referred to as a "messenger," the same Greek word translated angel.)

Pagan religious authority called "Satan"

10. On another occasion "Satan" represents a pagan religious authority, referred to in **Revelation 2:13**. Writing to the church in the city of Pergamum, the Lord Jesus Christ says: "I know where you dwell, where _____ throne is; you hold fast my name and you did not deny my faith even in the days of Antipas my witness, my faithful one, who was killed among you, where _____ dwells."

In this case, as in the other places where the word "Satan" appears in the Bible, we have to ask ourselves: Which enemy of God is being referred to here? Historians can help us find the answer, telling us that Pergamum was famous among Roman cities for its devotion to the Roman emperor, who was believed to be God Almighty. One of the most costly temples in the Roman Empire had

been built there and dedicated to the worship of the Emperor–God. The population of the city was fervently dedicated to this pagan cult and it represented a terrible obstacle to the Christian church; one of its members, Antipas, had recently died for his faith. The "Satan" who resided in Pergamum was the leader of the cult dedicated to the worship of the Roman emperor as God, and the "Satan's throne" was the pagan temple where this cult worshipped.

Satan and the devil as synonyms for sin

In many cases in the New Testament "Satan" and "devil" refer to the power of sin. The Bible assures us repeatedly that sin originates in the heart of man himself, or in more modern terms, in his mind. To confirm this fact you may read the following passages from the Old and New Testaments:

- ◆ Genesis 6:5; Genesis 8:21; Jeremiah 7:24; Jeremiah 17:9
- ◆ Matthew 15:19; Romans 5:12; Romans 7:15–24; Galatians 5:19–21
- ◆ James 1:13–15; 2 Peter 1:4; 2 Peter 3:3

Since the innate tendency of the human being to conceive and commit acts of disobedience is the greatest enemy of God and of man, it was natural that the Jews should chose two words that mean "enemy" to personify the sinful tendencies of the human being, representing sin as if it were a powerful being.

The apostle Paul deals extensively with the problem of sin in Romans chapters 5, 6 and 7, as he does nowhere else in his epistles. In **Romans 6:17**, Paul writes, "... God be thanked, that ye were the servants of sin, but [now] ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine that was delivered to you." Paul speaks as though sin itself were a master that demanded obedience. In **Romans 6:12**, Paul exhorts believers to, "Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof. " Because sin is such a powerful force in the lives of human beings, Paul depicts sin as a powerful King or Ruler. In a similar way, the book of Proverbs speaks of wisdom as if it were a woman calling out to anyone who would listen to her and become wise (See Proverbs 1:20–22). Wisdom is personified as a woman just as sin is personified as a being called Satan or the devil.

The "devil" represents sin in Hebrews 2:14

11.1 The author of Hebrews refers to the devil as "him who has the power of _____." This means that this "devil" causes death. But we have already been told in the clearest terms, in Romans 5:21, that " _____ reigned in death," and in **Romans 6:23**, "For the wages of sin is _____ "; that is, death is caused by sin. So we can see that in **Hebrews 2:14** the "devil" refers to sin, the great enemy of God and man.

11.2 The same verse says that Jesus appeared in order to _____ the devil by his _____. But we learn in **Hebrews 9:26** that Jesus "appeared once for all at the end of age to put away _____ by the _____ of himself", and in **Romans 8:3**, that Jesus "condemned _____ in the flesh".

11.3 The Lord Jesus rejected and condemned sin, permitting his body, the source of sinful impulses, to be publicly crucified and destroyed. In this way his death destroyed the "devil" in his own flesh.

This is why Paul says in **Romans 6:6** to those who have been baptized into Christ — "We know that our old self was _____ with him so that the _____ of _____ might be destroyed." This sin in the body, or in the flesh, is the "devil" that each one of us carries around inside himself. It is the "devil" of Hebrews 2:14.

Children of disobedience or children of the "devil"?

12. According to **Colossians 3:6**, those who commit sin are called "children of _____" (sin is disobedience to the law of God), while in **1 John 3:10**, the same type of people are called "children of the _____". In this case again, "devil" is a synonym of sin or disobedience. The concept of "children of the devil" simply means sinful persons. In John 8:44 it is applied to the Jews who were arguing with Jesus, and in Acts 13:10 it refers to the Jewish magician Bar-Jesus.

Tempted by the "devil" or tempted by our own lusts?

13. The gospels tell us that the Lord Jesus was tempted in the desert by the "devil" (Luke 4:1-13). Yet **James 1:14** says that each person is tempted by his _____, and **Hebrews 4:5** tells us that Jesus "was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin."

Because Jesus is tempted like we are, and because James tells us that each of us is tempted by our own desires, then Jesus likewise must have been tempted by the desires within himself. Unlike us Jesus overcame temptation and did not sin.

The conversation between Jesus and the "devil" is a dramatic way of presenting the battle that took place in the mind of Jesus, giving personality to the human impulse that suggested to the Lord different ways to avoid the difficult road to the cross that his Father had prepared for him.

"Satan" or the "devil", the source of illness, or sinful mortal nature?

In **Luke 13** the word "Satan" represents sin in a different way, not as the cause of disobedience, but as the cause of the vulnerability to sickness that is part of our mortal condition. In verses 10–13 Jesus heals a woman who was bent over and could not stand up straight. She apparently suffered from arthritis or some sort of spinal defect.

14. When the leader of the synagogue criticized Jesus for having cured her on the Sabbath day, Jesus answered in **verse 16**: "And ought not this woman, a daughter of Abraham whom _____ bound for eighteen years, be loosed from this bond on the Sabbath day?"

In this instance, Satan personifies sin as the origin of the physical suffering we are all prone to as mortal beings. As was said before, we are mortal because of our sinful nature, but this mortal condition doesn't just mean that one day we will suddenly die. It also means that while we live we are subject to a variety of illnesses that attack our body and slowly cause it to deteriorate. So in Luke 13:16 Satan represents the sinful condition of humanity in the sense that it is the source of the sickness that we all suffer to some extent or other.

15. The word "devil" is used in a similar way in **Acts 10:38** when Peter, describing the way Jesus healed the sick, tells "how he went about doing good and _____ all that were oppressed by the _____."

Appendix A

Satan/Devil in the New Testament Summarised (King James Version)

Jesus calls Peter "Satan"	Jesus calls Judas a "devil"
Matthew 16:23 — But he turned, and said unto Peter , Get thee behind me, Satan: thou art an offense unto me, for thou savourest not the things that be of God, but those that be of men.	John 6:70-71 — Jesus answered them, Have not I chosen you twelve, and one of you is a devil? He spake of Judas Iscariot [the son] of Simon: for he it was that should betray him, being one of the twelve.
Devil is like a roaring lion	Wicked King is like a roaring lion
1 Pet. 5:8 — ... your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour. (Also see: 1 Pet. 1:6; 2:12; 3:14-16; 4:15-19; 5:9)	Proverbs 28:15 — [As] a roaring lion, and a ranging bear; [so is] a wicked ruler over the poor people.
Devil deceives	Sin deceives
Rev. 12:9 ... that old serpent, called the Devil , and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world: ...	Rom. 7:11 — For sin , taking occasion by the commandment, deceived me , and by it slew me.
Devil brings death	Sin brings death
Heb. 2:14 — ... that through death he might destroy him, who hath the power of death, that is the devil ;	Rom. 5:21 — ... sin reigned in death ... Rom. 6:23 — For the wages of sin is death ...
Jesus tempted by the devil/satan	Jesus tempted as we are, by lust
Matt. 4:1 — ... Jesus was led up of the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil . Mark 1:13 — he was there in the wilderness forty days, tempted of Satan ... Luke 4:2 — Being forty days tempted of the devil.	Heb. 4:15 — ... [Jesus] was in all points tempted like as we are , yet without sin. James 1:14 — But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust , and enticed.
Children of the devil	Children of sin/disobedience
1 John 3:10 — In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil ...	Colossians 3:6 — For which things' sake the wrath of God cometh on the children of disobedience ...
Jesus destroyed the devil	Jesus destroyed sin
Heb. 2:14 — ... that through death he might destroy him who hath the power of death, that is the devil ; 1 John 3:8 — ... For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil .	Heb. 9:26 — ... he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself. Rom. 8:3 — ... condemned sin in the flesh. John 1:29 — ... Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world .