

What about Satan? * Q's from the pews
September 1, 2019 * Langford Community Church * Graham Gladstone

This morning we have a series of questions to look at, all under the larger question - 'what about Satan?'

Let me just read them for you:

What about Satan?

Is he just a bad character in a fairy tale or is he real?

Does he live in hell and work on earth? Job 1 says he was in heaven with the angels... Revelation says he gets put in prison for 1000 years then he gets tossed into the lake of fire.

How do we guard ourselves from him if he is real? Does he have helpers? Who on earth is safe from his wiles? Do we need to be afraid of him?

And this person has kindly added: 'Blessings on you for this one.'

Good questions. All good questions. And lots of important ideas to address. So to do that, I think that I'll put on my news reporter hat and answer them using the famous 5 W's and H. Do you remember those? Who, what, where, when, why and how?

Well, let's put those to use and ask:

Who is Satan?

What does he do?

Where does he operate?

When does he operate?

Why should we care?

And how do we guard ourselves from him?

I think that if we use that framework, we'll be able to answer all of our questions here quite neatly, so let's get into, starting with who.

Who is Satan?

Well, let's start at the very beginning – all the way back to Genesis 1:1 – in the beginning, God created the Heavens and the earth. He created all things and there is nothing that exists that He did not make. And all of it was good.

At some point in that process, God created a class of spiritual beings that we call angels. Job 38:4-7 talks about angels shouting for joy when God laid the foundations of the earth, so it looks like these angels were created at some point prior that, sometime before day three of Creation.

4 "Where were you when I laid the earth's foundation? Tell me, if you understand.

5 Who marked off its dimensions? Surely you know! Who stretched a measuring line across it?

6 On what were its footings set, or who laid its cornerstone--

7 while the morning stars sang together and all the angels shouted for joy?

(Job 38:4-7 NIV).

These angels were created to advance God's purposes in the world and to celebrate His goodness and for a period of time, that's exactly what they did.

At some point though, prior to Genesis *chapter 3*, one of those angels got it into his head that he was better than God, that he was more worthy of glory than God. [Ezekiel 28](#) tells us that he was a 'guardian cherub' so it looks like this angel had some position of authority in the angelic ranks. Ezekiel also tells us that he was the model of perfection, full of wisdom and perfect in beauty. He was blameless in all his ways from the day that he was created – note – this is not an eternal being but someone that God created – he was perfect in all his ways... *until* wickedness was found in him. He turned his back on God to pursue his own glory. And [here's why](#), according to Ezekiel: "17 Your heart became proud on account of your beauty, and you corrupted your wisdom because of your splendor."

12 "... You were the model of perfection, full of wisdom and perfect in beauty.

13 You were in Eden, the garden of God; every precious stone adorned you: ruby, topaz and emerald, chrysolite, onyx and jasper, sapphire, turquoise and beryl. Your settings and mountings were made of gold; on the day you were created they were prepared.

14 You were anointed as a guardian cherub, for so I ordained you. You were on the holy mount of God; you walked among the fiery stones.

15 You were blameless in your ways from the day you were created till wickedness was found in you.

16 Through your widespread trade you were filled with violence, and you sinned. So I drove you in disgrace from the mount of God, and I expelled you, O guardian cherub, from among the fiery stones.

17 Your heart became proud on account of your beauty, and you corrupted your wisdom because of your splendor. So I threw you to the earth; I made a spectacle of you before kings.

Isaiah tells the same story – over in [Isaiah 14](#) – he records [13](#) [He] You said in your heart, "I will ascend to heaven; I will raise my throne above the stars of God; I will sit enthroned on the mount of assembly, on the utmost heights of the sacred mountain. 14 I will ascend above the tops of the clouds; I will make myself like the Most High" (Isaiah 14).

This created being was trying to be God. But there is no God but God.

And so this angel was kicked out of heaven and cast down to the earth. [Isaiah memorably](#) laments (12 How you have fallen from heaven, O morning star, son of the dawn! You have been cast down to the earth... Isaiah 14:12).

This angel was Satan.

He once had a privileged position in the presence of God, but he chose his own glory instead of God's, and he was cast out for it.

And here's the thing; he wasn't content to go alone. Based on Revelation 12, he took as many as a third of the angels with him in rebellion. He convinced them that their Creator wasn't worthy of their loyalty, and so they were cast out too. They become to the demons and devils and evil spirits that would serve as Satan's minions here on earth.

Now that he's cast out, **what does he do?** And note that while I'm describing what Satan does, sometimes it's his minions who actually DO the dirty work.

So... Satan decided, if he couldn't take God's place in the heavens, maybe he could take God's place on the earth and so he set himself to separating God's creation from their Creator. He took the form of a serpent and enticed the very first humans into the same rebellion against God that he had already committed. And through treachery and deceit, Satan caused our ancestors to fall. .

He convinced Adam and Eve that there would be no harm in ignoring God's will. "God's didn't REALLY forbid it did He? And do you REALLY think God has your best interests in mind here?" They bought it, hook, line and sinker and one bite of fruit later, they found themselves cast out just as Satan had been. He was cast out of Heaven and they were cast out of the Garden.

And from that point on, Satan has done all that he can to oppose God's Kingdom here on earth.

His primary line of attack is to straight up prevent people from knowing that God exists and that this God loves and cares for them.

Paul wrote in 2 Corinthians 4: 4 The god of this age has blinded the minds of unbelievers, so that they cannot see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God. (2Co 4:4 NIV).

And Jesus said something similar when describing different people as different soils – Satan comes along, he says, and snatches away the truth of the Gospel from people's hearts and so they never turn to find salvation from God (Matthew 13:19).

Satan does all he can to prevent us from loving God the way we should.

But God's not going to let that happen. He sent His Son for the express purpose of destroying Satan's work. (~~The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the devil's work (1 John 3:8).~~

And look at the commission He gives to the apostle Paul – Acts 26:17-18 - 17 ...I am sending you to them [the Gentiles] 18 to open their eyes and turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God, so that they may receive forgiveness of sins and a place among those who are sanctified by faith in me' (Act 26:17-18 NIV). God is advancing His kingdom on earth in direct opposition to Satan's.

But Satan's a persistent little bugger and so he falls back on two major tactics to try to draw us away.

He'll start with deceit. And this is something interesting about Satan; I was looking for a picture to use in my powerpoint, but they were all incredibly grotesque, and that's really not very accurate. I mean, one of the OT words for demon IS the word you'd use to describe a hairy goat, so that's where THAT picture comes from, the reality is that Satan really wants you to think that he's the good guy.

Paul puts it like this in 2 Corinthians 11:14... for Satan himself masquerades as an angel of light.

He'll come in looking like the good guy, twisting the truth 'ever so much,' causing you to question what you know to be true. Just like he did in the garden, he'll ask 'did God REALLY say that thing was forbidden? It's not so bad. And besides, how do you know God has your best interests in mind? He's just trying to keep you from something good.'

He'll whisper these lies in your ear, convincing you that it's not so bad...

But the moment you bite, he switches over to his second mode – accusation. He'll immediately jump in and say 'pfft... you weak willed and awful Christian, you fell again. I don't know why God bothers with you. I don't even know if God even loves you with that kind of track record.' And on and on, tempt and accuse, tempt and accuse, trying to drive a wedge between you and God. That's ultimately his goal – to get us give up on Jesus – and that's something that we don't want to do.

So, who, what, where – where does Satan operate? Well, this one's interesting and as I got stuff together for this morning, I realised that parts of my understanding of Satan were shaped more by pop culture than the Bible. I remember as a kid loving the Far Side cartoon and I remember really clearly this one where Satan's in hell with another demon and there's this guy whistling away as he toils about in Hell and he says 'we're just not getting through to that guy.' It's funny. And I admit that I just kind of took for granted how that worked, but that's actually not a biblical reality.

Culture just kind of assumes that Satan reigns in Hell and pops up to torment believers, but the reality is, that Satan doesn't want to go to Hell any more than we do. As the questions states, Satan's ultimate destiny is to be cast into the lake of fire, and that's not going home. That's a place of eternal punishment for him. Revelation 20:10 says 10 And the devil, who deceived them, was thrown into the lake of burning sulfur, where the beast and the false prophet had been thrown. They will be tormented day and night for ever and ever (Rev 20:10 NIV). That lake of fire is hell and Satan wants nothing to do with it. And Jesus himself tells us that that eternal fire has been prepared for the devil and for his angels and for all those who by ignoring God follow Satan. (Depart from me, you who are cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels. (Mat 25:41 NIV).)

So, where does Satan operate? Not in Hell, but on earth. And actually, the Bible describes Satan as reigning on earth. Paul calls him 'the ruler of the kingdom of the air' (2 in which you used to live when you followed the ways of this world and of the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient. (Eph 2:2 NIV). and John says that 'the whole world is under the control of the evil one' ~~19 We know that we are children of God, and that~~ the whole world is under the control of the evil one. (1Jo 5:19 NIV).

Satan and his minions operate on earth, opposing God's will and His people wherever they can.

When do they do that? Well, all the time. Peter calls us to be constantly alert and self-controlled. 8 Be self-controlled and alert. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour. (1Pe 5:8 NIV). All times and all places, he is looking for people whose guard is down so he can pounce. No one escapes his wiles.

Why should I care? Well, we should care because at all times and in all places, Satan is always looking for someone to devour. And the Bible describes Satan as a real threat that we need to take seriously. Paul, for example, in his letter to Timothy writes: "The Spirit clearly says that in later times some will abandon the faith and follow deceiving spirits and things taught by demons" (1Ti 4:1 NIV). And then later in that letter, he writes - '15 Some have in fact already turned away to follow Satan' (1Ti 5:15 NIV).

We should care about this real, honest to goodness, not made up, not a fairy tale, not 'a stand in for evil general' Satan because he is a legitimate threat.

But should we fear him?

No.

Why?

Because, 4 You, dear children, are from God and have overcome them, because the one who is in you is greater than the one who is in the world. (1Jo 4:4 NIV).

God keeps safe those who are born of Him and the evil one cannot harm them. (18 We know that anyone born of God does not continue to sin; the one who was born of God keeps him safe, and the evil one cannot harm him. (1Jo 5:18 NIV).

...neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, 39 neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord (Rom 8:38-39 NIV).

When Jesus died on the Cross, He paid for every sin that Satan could ever accuse you of. He paid for every sin you've committed; He paid for every sin that you WILL commit. There was a time when Satan roamed the earth and could reasonably accuse people before God— and as Job 2 says, God allowed Him to wander back into Heaven to accuse God's people – but that time is over. In Luke 10, Jesus says that he saw Satan falling from the sky; (18 He replied, "I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven. (Luk 10:18 NIV) either then, or at Jesus' resurrection, I think Satan was cast out of Heaven conclusively and he can no longer accuse us before God. Instead, we have a mediator, Jesus who died for us, at the right hand of God, counselling mercy every time.

Which means that Satan is a defeated foe.

The world around us pictures God and Satan as mortal enemies – equals facing off at the head of the armies of good and evil. But the reality is that on the organizational flow chart – God is at the top – and Satan is under His authority. Satan can do NOTHING without God's permission. Satan is like a leashed dog, unable to do anything unless God allows it. And allow it He does, because sometimes, God harnesses Satan's efforts to refine His people (See 1 Corinthians 5:5; 2 Corinthians 12:7). But ultimately, Satan's fate is sealed. In John 16:11, Jesus told his disciples: ~~11 and in regard to judgment, because~~ the prince of this world now stands condemned. (Joh 16:11 NIV).

And Paul tells us how that worked when Jesus died on the Cross – Colossians 2:15: 15 And having disarmed the powers and authorities, he made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them by the cross. (Col 2:15 NIV).

All Satan can do now is thrash about, frustrated by his own impotence, and attempt to draw us away from the God who has already beaten him. In fact, Satan knows that his future looks grim – Revelation indeed says that he will be bound and thrown in prison, then released after a thousand years for one last (doomed) attempted to overthrow God but he will ultimately be beaten.

(And I saw an angel coming down out of heaven, having the key to the Abyss and holding in his hand a great chain.
2 He seized the dragon, that ancient serpent, who is the devil, or Satan, and bound him for a thousand years.
3 He threw him into the Abyss, and locked and sealed it over him, to keep him from deceiving the nations anymore until the thousand years were ended. After that, he must be set free for a short time.
7 When the thousand years are over, Satan will be released from his prison
8 and will go out to deceive the nations in the four corners of the earth... But fire came down from heaven and devoured them.

10 And the devil, who deceived them, was thrown into the lake of burning sulfur, where the beast and the false prophet had been thrown. They will be tormented day and night for ever and ever.

He's headed for that lake of fire and there's nothing he can do about it. So just like when he got kicked out of heaven, he's thinking, 'well, I might as well take as many with me as I can.'

But listen, we need not fear him, for God Himself will protect us from the evil one. We pray that everyday, don't we, when we pray the Lord's Prayer and Jesus Himself prayed it too – John 17:15 – My prayer is not that you take them out of the world but that you protect them from the evil one. (John 17:15 NIV). And Paul actually says in 2 Thessalonians 3: 3 ~~But~~ the Lord is faithful, and he will strengthen and protect you from the evil one (2Th 3:2-3 NIV).

So how do we guard against him? Satan is a threat, and he will attempt to undermine us if he can. God will sustain us but we do need to actively stand against Satan. How do we stand against him without fear?

Well, a good place to start is acknowledging Satan's existence. I think that C. S. Lewis is right; it's a mistake to see a devil behind every bush, but it's also a mistake to just say 'well, I just can't believe they exist.'

Paul is quite clear –

12 For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms. (Eph 6:10-12 NIV).

But they are ultimately powerless compared to God and so Paul also tells us -

10 Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power.

11 Put on the full armor of God so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes.

And of course, this is where the armour of God comes from –

14 Stand firm then, with the belt of truth buckled around your waist, with the breastplate of righteousness in place,

15 and with your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace.

16 In addition to all this, take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one.

17 Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.

(Eph 6:14-17 NIV).

I loved dressing up Nolan in his baseball gear five years ago to illustrate the armour part, but I think that when we focus on the actual armour, we risk missing what it stands for. Look at what Paul is saying.

Satan is going to come at you with deceit, with lies. He's going to try to tell you that up is down and God's will will cramp your style. How do you address that? With truth. With the Word. Like Jesus in the desert, you say, 'no, Satan, that's a lie and the truth is that the God who loves me enough to die for me is always pursuing what's best for me.'

When Satan says ‘oh, this morally grey area isn’t so bad and besides, it’s no fun to be righteous; you don’t want to be a prude do you?’ you say – no, this righteousness, this righteous which Jesus gives me, is my protection against you.

When Satan fires arrows, trying to get you to stumble, or knocking you down because you’ve sinned, you hold up faith like a shield and say ‘I trust in the finished work of Christ and that alone is my hope and my shield. Not my works. Not my lack of works. Jesus’ works and those alone.’ Martin Luther used to say “I admit that I deserve death and hell; what of it? ... For I know One who suffered and made satisfaction on my behalf. His name is Jesus Christ the Son of God and where he is there I shall also be!” (<https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/blogs/ray-ortlund/happy-warfare/>). Faith in the risen Son protects us from anything Satan throws our way.

So there you have it – the who, what, where, when, why and how of Satan. I’ve said a lot and there’s lots more that could be said. But I think that gives you a pretty good sense of who Satan is and what he gets up to.

The only risk I think of a message like this is that it gets us so deep into talking about Satan, that we risk saying too little about Christ. So in the interest of balancing it out, let me close with this.

There is a verse in Galatians that reads:

20 I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me. (Gal 2:20 NIV).

Martin Luther loved that verse and it showed. Once when asked how he overcame the devil, “Martin Luther replied, ‘Well, when he comes knocking upon the door of my heart and asks, ‘who lives here?’ the dear Lord Jesus goes to the door and says, ‘Martin Luther used to live here but he has moved out. Now I live here.’ The Devil, seeing the nail-prints in His hands, and the pierced side, takes flight immediately” (recounted in Billy Graham, *Peace with God* & Erwin Lutzer, *God’s devil*).

He who is in us is greater than he who is in the world. Let’s pray.

20 The God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet. The grace of our Lord Jesus be with you. (Rom 16:20 NIV).