

ADDRESS CHANGE effective about June 17: 905 Forest Canyon Cove, Round Rock TX 78664; email remains. hookc@teleport.com. Mira's cell phone: 503-703-1678

FR 218

Another Look At Satan, No. 2

Greg Rasaka

Satan In the New Testament

What does the NT say about Satan? Does the NT shed new light on the subject? The first place we encounter Satan in the NT is Matt. 4, (Mark 1:13) where Jesus was led into the wilderness by the Spirit. He then fasted for forty days and was approached by the tempter. Reflecting back on Eve and the serpent in the garden, is this truly a separate deceiver, or is it the voice of temptation working on the humanity of Jesus? Here again, are we to take this literally or figuratively? Of course the big difference is the fact that the deity of Jesus did not succumb to the temptation.

Jesus told his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things, be killed and raised up on the third day. Peter rebuked Jesus saying, "**May it never be.**" Jesus' reply was, "**Get behind me Satan! You are a stumbling block to me; for you are not setting your mind on God's interests, but man's**" (Matt. 12:22,23). Peter was not Satan, but was playing the part of the adversary. He was attempting a different course of action than God had intended.

In Mark 4:15, when Jesus explains the parable of the sower, he says, immediately after the word has been sown in them, Satan, the adversary takes it away. Who was the adversary that stripped the word from those who accepted it? The Jews.

When the seventy had returned from their mission, Jesus said, "**I was watching Satan fall like lightning from heaven**" (Luke 10:18). Many take this passage to mean that Satan fell from his place in heaven. In the first place Satan had no place in heaven. Secondly, the statement isn't saying that Satan was falling from heaven, but rather, the adversary was falling in the manner that lightning falls from heaven. It was a figure of speech. In other words, the Gospel was gaining much ground over Judaism while the seventy were out preaching.

"**The God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet**" (Rom. 16:20). Is this to be taken to mean "Satan," or the adversary, the Jews? In verses 17-19, Paul is telling the brethren to watch out for those who cause dissention and teach falsely. These men are slaves of their own appetites, smooth talkers to deceive the unsuspecting. He wanted them to be wise in what is good and evil. Then he tells them God would soon crush their adversary. Does this fit the Jews? Of course it does, and they were crushed shortly after.

In 1 Cor. 7:5, we find Satan again as the tempter. But again, is this an outside influence, or is it the evil, lustful side of man? "**Stop depriving one another, except by agreement for a time, so that you may devote yourselves to prayer, and come together again so that Satan will not tempt you because of your lack of self control.**" Remember what James said, "**But each one is tempted when he is carried away and enticed by his own lust**" (1:14). Was James mistaken? No, I do not believe he was. He

was being quite clear with his words. I think we need to stop and think each time we see the word Satan in our Bibles and ask ourselves, if the context is speaking of our own voice of temptation as James points out, or is it speaking of a literal adversary, or accuser, such as the Jews. Or the third choice; is it speaking of some supernatural boogeyman. If we have Satan as our boogeyman whom we can blame evil on, where do we draw the line? In other words, do we blame it all on Satan? If we do, that makes us blameless, except for the fact that we carried out his prompting. This would mean we do not devise evil; we merely carry out what the instigator prompts us to do. (We read earlier that man is a deviser of evil). Or do we blame only the really heinous acts we commit on Satan? As I asked earlier, where do we draw the line?

What was it that hindered Paul from going to see the Thessalonians (1Thes. 2:18)? Was it Satan the evil being, or the adversary, Paul's opposition?

In 1 Timothy 1:20 we read, "Among them are Hymenaeus and Alexander, whom I have handed over to Satan [literally, the adversary], So that they may be taught not to blaspheme." Paul says these were among those who were "shipwrecked" in regard to their faith. If Paul had turned them over to Satan, how would that have taught them not to blaspheme? However if Paul had handed them over to the adversary, in other words the Jews, you can bet they would have been taught a lesson on blasphemy. A good stoning would make them take notice.

What is meant by the term "synagogue of Satan" used in Rev. 2:9 & 3:9? The text tells us in both places that they are those that call themselves Jews and are not. I rather doubt that it was Gentiles working for Satan, pretending to be Jews. I would see it as fleshly Israel, those who were teaching against Christ, and the true Jews of these two passages were Jews who belonged to the spiritual Israel—the remnant. So there were two groups of Jews, the synagogue of Satan (the adversary) who were Jews outwardly, and the Jews who were Jews inwardly, the remnant that followed Christ.

It does seem to be true that the idea of Satan has evolved much with the passage of time. The OT idea of Satan is less defined, than in the NT. Demonology is all but absent in the OT, yet is found quite regularly in the NT, especially in the Gospels. Why did this type of thinking develop and where did it come from? Does it have its roots in Babylon? Much corruption began there. The Pharisees were responsible for corrupting the Law, making it out to be something it was not. Could it be that the same kind of growth in ideas changed the concept of Satan and demons, bringing them to be one of central thought and importance? Hasn't the same type of idealistic growth happened much more recently? Look at dispensational theology. It was unheard of until less than 200 years ago, and the idea, being based on false assumptions, has grown so large that most of Christianity can see nothing else.

Now if this is what had happened by Jesus' time, he was not going to waste time and re-educate the public concerning their concept of Satan. He merely used their common ideas to support his message of salvation. They believed in Satan and demons. Whether it was reality or folklore, Jesus used it to his advantage. Paul did the same kind of thing at Athens (Acts 17:16-34). He didn't come into town and announce that all of these gods are false and Yahweh is the only real God. Instead he used the altar marked "TO AN UNKNOWN GOD" attempting to reach these pagan Greeks. In this way he offended no one and was allowed to preach the Gospel. Telling people that they are wrong right off

the bat is a sure way of getting the door slammed in your face. Jesus did not need to change their concept of Satan when he could work with it for good.

Another thing to consider is, did the people of that day and age really believe in Satan? They obviously believed in demons, assigning things they did not understand to be brought about by demons. But do we have a single verse where the Jews brought up Satan? Not that I know of. This term Satan is used by Jesus and the apostles. Why didn't the Jews ever use the term? Could it be because they did not feel comfortable using a term that was applied to them by Jesus and the apostles? Was Jesus' and the apostles' use purely figurative? The Jews were not into using figurative language like Jesus and the apostles were.

The Jews do accuse Jesus of casting out demons by Beelzebul, ruler of the demons (Matt. 12:22-29). Beelzebul is not Satan. Beelzebul, or Baalz-zebub was the god of Ekron, meaning "lord of the flies." Jesus only makes the comparison of Satan casting out Satan to show them the futility in arguing that Beelzebul could cast out his own demons. He is not equating Satan with Beelzebul.

Yes there are "Satan" verses that are not so easy to look at from this point of view. But I think we owe it to ourselves to keep this whole idea in mind when reading our Bibles. It may clear up a lot of problems elsewhere.

Today most view Satan as the great evil being, who is responsible for everything that goes sour. That may never change and maybe that is OK. What's more, is it may never be proven wrong. However, the concept that Satan was an angel that fell from his place in heaven can be proven false, simply by the absence of facts to support it. It is the product of most false doctrine—taking verses out of context. []

Eschatology Review (in which this article was published) is a FREE publication edited by Greg. Contributions are gratefully accepted, though he cannot provide a tax-deductible receipt for your gift. **Please** make all checks payable to Greg Rasaka, and send to 32080 NE Corral Creek Rd., Newberg, OR 97130. Send comments or questions to same, or gjr@viclink.com by E-mail. If sending articles by E-mail, please cut and paste. Do not send attachments. Attachments will **not** be opened. Thank you. Permission to reprint for personal, non-profit use is hereby granted, provided the context is maintained and the source stated as Eschatology Review. Copyrighted.

(Cecil Hook; June 2004. My thanks to Greg. Look for more from him later. My apologies that Greg's skilled formatting does not carry through in my mailouts.)