

THE NAMES OF SATAN

In this lesson we want to start looking at the character of Satan through the various names that the Scriptures give him. Names are important in the Scripture. And there are particular meanings that help understand the character of the one who is being named. In this case there are over 40 names ascribed to Satan. We will look a handful of these and be able to walk away with what the Bible describes Satan as through his character, his position, and his activity.

I. NAMES REFLECTING CHARACTER

- SATAN: (Zechariah 3:1; Revelation 12:9) This is the most common title and is used 52 times in the Bible. The name Satan is taken from the Hebrew word *satan*, it means adversary or opposer; and it designates this person as a self proposed rival against God. Satan opposes everything that God and His kingdom has established. In his opposition he sets up a counterfeit kingdom to oppose God. And in his opposition to God, he also opposes God's people, we see this in Zechariah 3:1-2 and Luke 22:31-32).
- DEVIL: (Luke 4:2, 13; Revelation 12:9) This is another common title in the Scriptures as it is used some 35 times. The Greek word for Devil is *diabolos* and it means slanderer or one who trips up. It pictures Satan as one who is uttering maliciously false reports that tend to injure the reputation of another. The devil seeks to defame God and Christ and their purpose. And if he seeks to defame God, he also seeks to defame His children.
- THE SERPENT OF OLD: (Revelation 12:9) This name recalls the first reference to Satan in the Bible as he stalked Eve in Genesis 3 and tempted her to sin. "Old" indicates that he has been around a long time and is well known. Paul uses this description in 2 Corinthians 11:3 when he said, "But I am afraid that, as the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness, your minds will be led astray from the simplicity and purity of devotion to Christ." Notice that there was no need to for Paul to clarify his use of "serpent" as a reference to Satan. Later in this same passage in verses 13-15), Paul refers to false apostles who are the servants of Satan. The characteristic that stands out is crafty deception.
- GREAT DRAGON: (Revelation 12:3, 7, 9) As the "Great Dragon" he is portrayed as a terrifying, destructive beast whose wrath is against God and His people seeks their total devastation. And as the "great dragon" he has an army of angels that join him in his war of destruction against Christ and His people (Revelation 12:4, 9, 17).

- THE EVIL ONE: (John 17:15; 1 John 5:18) “Evil One” in the Greek is from *ho poneros* refers to one intrinsically wicked who is not content to be corrupt in himself but must seek to corrupt others. Christ and the apostle John connect this term with Satan’s character and influence, extending into the world.
- DESTROYER: (Revelation 9:11) In Revelation 9:11 it tells of grotesque locust-like demons who “have as king over them, the angel of the abyss; his name in Hebrew is Abaddon, and in the Greek he has the name Apollyon.” Both Abaddon and Apollyon mean destroyer. In this context, the demons torment and kill great numbers of humans. Satan is not only a destroyer of physical life, but of spiritual life.

II. NAMES REFLECTING SATAN’S POSITION

- THE PRINCE OF THIS WORLD: (John 12:31; 16:11) This position indicates Satan as the ruler of this world and includes men and angels who are separated from God and are His enemies because their sin nature (Matthew 12:24; Romans 8:7-8). As Satan establishes his worldly kingdom he does so as a counterpart to God and His kingdom. His desire to be like God (Isaiah 14:14) caused him to sin, and now he rules over all rebels who have, like him, fallen into sin.
- THE GOD OF THIS WORLD: (2 Corinthians 4:4) This satanic title has been translated “the god of this world,” but the Greek word is *aion* which means age and not *cosmos* which is the Greek word for world. The emphasis however is on a system of philosophy or a spirit of the age that expresses a man centered life and religion that rejects the true God and sets up a counterfeit life and substitute religion. Sinful men walk according to the course of this world; that is, they are governed and dominated by it (Ephesians 2:1-3). They partake of its leader’s characteristics, and so it is termed “this present evil age” (Galatians 1:4).

III. NAMES REFLECTING HIS ACTIVITY

- TEMPTER: (Matthew 4:3; 1 Thessalonians 3:5) In Matthew’s passage as he tells us about the temptation in the wilderness gives us 3 names to the one who is tempting Christ: “the devil” (4:1), “the

tempter" (4:3), and "Satan" (4:10). As the tempter, Satan tempts men to fall in moral issues, and disobey God and His Word. He entices men to do evil. This is a continuous and characterizing activity of Satan.

- ACCUSER: (Revelation 12:10 says "...Now the salvation, and the power, and the kingdom of our God and the authority of His Christ have come, for the accuser of our brethren has been thrown down, he who accuses them before our God day and night." Satan's job so to speak is to accuse believers to God. He accused Job before God and brought about a spiritual battle in which the grace of God and the uprightness of Job were demonstrated to the defeat of Satan (Job 1:9-11; 2:4-5). Satan accused Joshua and Israel, but the Angel of the Lord defended them (Zechariah 3:1-2). We get the sense that Satan's incessant activity involves access to God's presence to oppose His children. The Father never takes Satan's side, nor should the believer. The believer stands secure in the grace of God through Christ's sacrifice (1 John 2:1-2), so our consciences should not condemn us (Romans 8:33-39). Neither should we accuse and condemn the brethren.
- LIAR, DECEIVER: Christ calls Satan the father, the originator of lies. Currently Satan is the one "who deceives the whole world," (Revelation 12:9). This continues until he is bound during the millennial reign of Christ and resumes again upon his release for a short time (Revelation 20:3), 7-8). This deception involves a wide range of scheming, from hiding his own existence to actively promoting false philosophies, religions, and outright perversions of behavior and morals.

These names of Satan do not exhaust the list, but they do represent the scope of his titles and present the multifaceted aspects of his character, power, and activity. As Christians we need to understand our enemy so as to know what we are up against. Next week we are going to look at the Original Fall of Satan.