

#0236 - March 30, 2009

## Why We Believe What We Believe – Satan Part 1

[Lepine:] There is an origin of evil that we see reflected in the words of the prophets in the Old Testament.

[Narrator and music:] *You were the perfection of wisdom and beauty.  
You were an Eden, a garden of God.  
Your clothing was adorned with every precious stone  
All beautifully crafted for you and set in the finest gold.  
They were given to you on the day you were created.  
I ordained and anointed you as the mighty angelic guardian.  
You had access to the holy mountain of God.  
You were blameless in all you did from the day you were created  
until the day evil was found in you.  
For you said to yourself,  
    'I will ascend to heaven and set my throne above God's stars.  
    I will preside on the mountain of the gods  
    far away in the north.  
    I will climb to the highest heavens  
    and be like the Most High.'*  
So I banished you from the mountain of God.  
I expelled you, almighty guardian.  
Your heart was filled with pride because of all your beauty.  
You corrupted your wisdom for the sake of your splendor so I threw you to the earth as a  
flash of lightning.

[Lepine:] This is *inContext* with Michael Easley. I'm Bob Lepine. And Michael, we are going to look carefully today at what the Bible teaches us about that one who is not just our enemy but ultimately the enemy of God.

[Easley:] As we think about the Holy Spirit controversy, the controversy around Satan is perhaps even more complex. Whether we simplify him and make him silly or we make him into, if possible, more than he really is.

Satan is alive, Satan is active, Satan hates the believer in Christ, Satan hates Christ. And to understand his role and his work in this spiritual realm is important for the life of the believer.

[Lepine:] Well, let's look together at what the Bible teaches us about our enemy and the enemy of God. Here with part one of his message on Satan is Michael Easley.

[Easley:] I am somewhat of a news junkie and that's one thing I don't have as much time to do as I used to. But two things caught my attention this past week, that are just indicative of the world that we're ministering in.

One is Wren Chapel. If you don't know William and Mary you'd have no reason to know Wren Chapel and the Wren name is a staunch Anglican conservative movement. And the Anglican roots of that school were to train clergy, to train ministers of the Gospel.

This past October 26 they took the cross out of Wren Chapel in order to make Wren Chapel less of a faith specific space and to make it more welcoming to students, faculty, staff and visitors of all faiths. Now, when you go in there, it's so Anglican and, you know, Christian, I don't know how a cross is going to make any difference. The cross has been removed from the alter area.

Before the church was what it was today, in those days they truly believed the Gospel, what you and I hold and all that is gone. And, oh, by the way, let's take the cross out of there because that might be offensive.

The other one that caught my attention was the Church of England. You've probably seen this. It's perhaps the most tragic piece of news I've read in a year. The Church of England has broken with tradition dogma by calling for doctors to be allowed to let sick newborn children die. Christians have long argued that life should be preserved at all costs, but a bishop representing a national church has now sparked controversy arguing that there are occasions when it is compassionate to leave a severely disabled child to die. And on it goes talking about the archbishop who issued the statement and they give all these examples. It is not for doctors or indeed anyone else to determine whether a baby's life is worthwhile simply on the grounds of impairment of health condition. The church took the other side. Said, "No, we think the cost of this debilitating, disabled child should be weighed in the factor and you should let that child die."

And the reason I share those, they're not sort of just "news you can use" but that's the culture we're going in to. That's the culture you're going into. Some of these faculty are better church historians than me, but as we talk about why we believe what we believe, your doctrine, your theology, your understanding of why the Scripture is so important, it's not just important, it's crucial. And your understanding of that is going to give you the platform to serve Christ, to share the Gospel well, to know why you believe these things, and my continued passion is that the culture and the tectonic shift is so sloped that no one is hanging on to truth anymore. And when the clergy come out and say, "Kill the baby," it sort of sounds like Herod, doesn't it? And God help you if you're the one who wants your son or daughter to live and the medical community and socialists say, "Sorry. It costs too much."

So that's where we are. Well, with that joyful news, let's think about Satan. [Laughter] You may envision red tights, pitch fork; you may envision a tempting smile, a smirk goading you on to sin. You may have pictures of the rock band Kiss in your room, [Laughter] maybe Marilyn Manson. When I see, I don't watch much television anymore, but when I do watch something and you see these advertisements, these trailers for horror films, I wonder, you know, how vile and wicked and evil can you become? I mean, it just blows my mind some of the stuff that you see in thirty seconds on television advertising some new horror movie.

Not long ago in the U.N. general assembly, President Hugo Chavez stood up in that bully pulpit and called President George Bush the devil. Many people think Bill Gates is the devil. If you Google his name and put the word "devil" and "Bill Gates" you'll find all sorts of people that are sure he's the devil. I think the computer sometimes is the devil [Laughter], software sometimes is demonic. Some extremist Islamic thinkers will use a mantra that the United States and Israel are "the great and the little Satan".

Let's talk about some terms from the Bible, three of them in particular. Number one, the word Satan comes from the Hebrew word Satan. [Laughter] It's a transliteration. You take certain words in a language, you loan them, they're borrowed words and it's stn, so we have transliterated that into English. Technically it means "the adversary or the accuser". Job 1:6-7:

*Now there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the LORD, and Satan also came among them.*

*The LORD said to Satan, "From where do you come?" Then Satan answered the LORD and said, "From roaming about on the earth and walking around on it."*

And this is one of the oldest records of interchange between God and Satan. The dominion issue, the control issue, he is stating his domain. He is stating his proprietary right from roaming around the earth and walking about on it.

We see another concept of Satan in First Chronicles 21:1 when we read:

*Satan stood up against Israel and moved David to number Israel.*

So the forces of Satan behind the king, the pride, let's see how big the kingdom is. Let's see how well we're doing.

A second term often used is Lucifer. Lucifer does not occur in your Bible. The term is a Latin gloss of the phrase "the morning star" found in Isaiah 14:12:

*. . .you have fallen from heaven,  
O star of the morning,*

That English phrase Latinized, you might call Septuagint; Greek going to Latin language then and the Latin vulgate using the word Lucifer.

The third term is the devil, of course. And this comes two ways in the New Testament only. *Satanis* and *diabolos*, devil. Thirty-six and thirty-four times respectively, so the three most common terms.

Let's talk about his identity a little bit. We're moving in a culture that has sort of changed who he is. Does he really exist? Is he there? We've made him in our image, all sorts of different speculations. Even scholars, even men and women who used to believe the Scriptures were inerrant and trustworthy and reliable and the Word of God have changed the doctrine of Satan over the past decade or two. So they redefine him, they dismiss him, they classify him differently.

The two key texts, perhaps, in the Old Testament, Ezekiel twenty-eight and Isaiah fourteen that have always been sort of the wet stone for sharpening our theology on who this person is. The hubris of the five, "I will's," the description of the king of Tyre, and those were traditionally classically appealed to, to talk about the origin and the person of Satan. Those today have fallen off favor. You're hard pressed to find theologians of the day who will refer to either of those texts to prove or to demonstrate his identity as Satan.

Let me going to give you a dozen different terms, very quickly, that talk of Satan beyond those passages so you can sort of build your own arsenal. You can find any of these in a handbook of theology or a concordance. You don't have to depend upon me.

The serpent, of course, is the first one; we find him in Genesis 3:15. We'll also find him in Revelation chapter twelve and chapter twenty. The serpent is the great image of this evil one, this adversary, this accuser, the tempter.

Secondly, he's associated with angels. And there are a number of forms, either angels that are messengers or angels that are his minions, his demons.

Thirdly, he's disguised. He's referred to as the angel of light. What does that tell us? He can look really good. When you read some of these near death experiences, there were a few years ago when I studied the subject of death and dying at great length and I read a lot about near death experiences, people who claim to come back from the dead. They will all describe this angelic, this white, this welcoming, this warm type thing. The preponderance of those people will talk about that angel of light.

Fourthly, he is a tempter and a seducer. Let me give you just a few. He tempts Eve. What does he tempt the woman with? What is the basic of his temptation? "I offer you a counterfeit promise: to be like God."

The hubris of the "I wills" would correspond with this temptation. You'll be like God. Secondly, of course, he tempts Jesus. And if you study the temptation accounts, Satan is really after Christ saying, "Look, you don't have to suffer in order to be king. You can turn these stones to bread, you can throw yourself off this pinnacle, you can do whatever you want if you're really who you say you are."

And those temptations, while they may seem like theological abstracts to you and me, those were at the core of who the man Christ was and is. All those were counterfeit half truths. Jesus could have done any of those things, but Jesus exists only to do the will of His Father. For Jesus to be the King, He must suffer. He had to learn obedience to the point of suffering, to the point of death on a cross, in order to receive the glory that the Father had promised Him.

He tempts Ananias in Acts when he sells the property. He saw what happened to Barnabas and the attention Barnabas got so Ananias sells his land and he selfishly holds some, but he wants the popularity of the crowd. And the apostles sniffed that out through the Holy Spirit's leading and, of course, Ananias had a short life after that.

He tempts believers. A passage I came across yesterday that I hadn't looked at in this light before, First Corinthians 7:5, when it speaks to a husband and a wife abstaining from sexual intimacy for a time, but not too long lest you be tempted immorally; interesting use of the temptation there.

So he's a serpent, he's an angel, he's disguised, he's a tempter or a seducer, fifthly he's the lawless one. Interesting phrase in Second Thessalonians two, I think about the one who lives to break the law, who tries to get around the law, who's always being clever and subverting the law, the lawless one.

He's also, sixth, able to hinder, the hinderer; in First Thessalonians chapter two Paul talks about Satan hindering their ministry. Some of you have been overseas, some of you will go overseas soon, some of you will serve Christ overseas and I don't know all I know about theology, but their does seem to be oppression and hindrances in so-called developing countries that are not sometimes as prominent in other places. It doesn't mean it's not there; it just sort of manifests itself in different ways. That's been my experience, perhaps yours as well.

Seventh, he's the evil one in John seventeen.

Eighth, he's the great red dragon in Revelation. And if you think of some of the comic book imagery, some of the popularizations of Satan, so-called medieval type depictions, dragon slayer movies. Dragons are depicted as evil, as representative of Satan. So you have these two juxtapositions. You have the terror of a dragon but the appeal of the angel of light so he's a very clever creature.

He's Beelzebub; King's English, the lord of the flies, which is a strange designation. He's over death and decay. That's his domain.

Tenth, he's the god of the world.

Eleventh, he's the prince of the power of the air, Ephesians 2:2.

He's the liar and he's the father of lies in John 8:44.

A little bit about his identity. Think with me about his kingdom. Satan does have a kingdom. He does have a dominion. Some of you have perhaps heard the name Anton Szandor LaVey. LaVey started the Church of Satan. It was founded on April 30, 1996, very ancient religion. Listen to what they say on their web:

"We are the first above ground organization openly dedicated to the acceptance of man's true nature."

Listen to how they define man's true nature:

"That of a carnal beast living in a cosmos which is permeated and motivated by the dark force which we call Satan."

You know, that paragraph is pretty accurate, pretty accurate. Think about Satan's choice. "A carnal beast living in a cosmos . . . permeated and motivated by the dark force which we call Satan."

Well, two pieces under this kingdom. Number one, he is the ruler of this world. Number of passages in John from Jesus' lips; John 12:31, John 14:30 where Jesus speaks of Satan having power and influence over this world. Satan has darkened the minds of many people, even groups, I think sometimes there is an oppression, there is a power and his dominion. He's walking around, he's roaming over his domain. He has great freedom. God has allowed him a long rope of wickedness to affect his ministry in God's plan. He is a ruler of this world.

Secondly, he has many under his influence. They're called children in First John chapter

3:8. Those who practice sin, John explains, those who habitually practice sin. I would put these in the category of non-believers and those who have not trusted Christ and who live in sin calloused and determined and argumentative and rights oriented. They are under his influence. They are part of his dominion.

Now, if you stood on the street corner and did that same man on the street interview and said, "Do you think Satan is affecting your life?"

What would they say? "Probably not," right?

But that's the power that he has in his kingdom.

Satan will face a final end. He falls from heaven, Luke 10:18. Remember the disciples go out and Jesus says, "I saw Satan falling from the sky."

Now, that is not an eschatological prophesy. What Jesus is saying there is, "When the Holy Spirit was working and I was working through you, I saw Satan start to lose his power."

What is Satan's greatest enemy? The Gospel! So when the work of Christ comes into the world, Satan's working overtime, we might say, for our understanding. And he's being defeated. So when the Christ came and the disciples went out, he saw him fall from heaven.

Secondly, he'll be in prison for a thousand years but he'll also be released. Revelation twenty, verse seven. So there is an end to him, a terminus to him in his ruling on this earth when he will finally be judged.

A graphic passage in Matthew 25:41: He's destined to eternal fire. This is, again, another area where theologians the last decade or two have just sort of erased the concept of eternal punishment, annihilation is a more and more popular theology taught among men and women who years ago held to a literal torment of hell, an eternal punishment, eternal separation.

The problem I have with the whole concept of annihilation is not that it doesn't sound merciful; it's just that the soul of man made in the image of God cannot die. You will live one of two places forever. The only difference is identity and location. If we're identified with Christ, we're with Him. If we're not identified with Christ, we live apart from Him. Life is sacred in that sense. You cannot kill life permanently and so it only make sense that those eternal decisions have eternal consequences and Satan will be relegated to that eternal punishment.

He's also, last, crushed by God. You can't miss the imagery in Genesis 3:15 with the woman and the heel and the serpent and the bruising and the crushing and then you come full circle to Revelation 16:20, the same image is used again that Satan will be crushed by God.

[Narrator and music:]

*Now the serpent was the shrewdest of all the creatures the Lord God made.*

*"Really?" he asked the woman, "Did God really say you must not eat any of the fruit in the garden?"*

*“Of course we may eat it,” the woman told him. “It’s only the fruit from the tree at the center of the garden that we are not allowed to eat. God says we must not eat it or even touch it or we will die.”*

[Laughter] *“You won’t die,” the serpent hissed. “God knows that your eyes will be opened when you eat it. You will become just like God knowing everything, both good and evil.”*

*The woman was convinced. The fruit looked so fresh and delicious and it would make her so wise. So she ate some of the fruit. She also gave some to her husband who was with her. Then he ate it too. At that moment their eyes were opened.*

[Lepine:] That is obviously a pivotal scene in the Scriptures in Genesis chapter three. And it is one that we need to understand clearly not only because of what it reveals to us about Satan, but what it reveals to us about our own propensity for being deceived and our own sin nature, which we all have as descendents of our first parents.

[Easley:] I’m reminded of the commercial where the guy has a little miniature angel on one side and a devil on the other. And, of course, they’re him, just little versions of him talking to him and beyond the pedantic; the humor of it, there is the reality that we are being tempted beyond our own sinful self. That we live in a spiritual context where there is a spiritual battle for us. And as believers in Christ, we don’t want to give inordinate attention to this matter, but the lethal nature of his work is eternal and so as Christians, we need to be equipped to know he’s real, he’s a person, he’s an adversary, but there is One who is far greater and that our confidence rests in Christ not our ability to deal with Satan on our own.

[Lepine:] Mm hmm. You know, understanding our adversary is something that there’s a lot of confusion and even some misunderstanding about in our culture today. And that’s why we’re encouraging folks to go to the *inContext* radio website, [incontextradio.org](http://incontextradio.org); and there you’ll find information about the study guide we’ve put together for this series along with the *Moody Handbook of Theology*. And together these two resources can help you clearly understand what the Bible teaches, not only about Satan, but about things like the Holy Spirit, the doctrine of salvation, the ministry of Jesus, what it teaches about the Bible, about inspiration. Again, you’ll find information about resources to help you in this area on our website, [incontextradio.org](http://incontextradio.org).

And Michael, I think before we wrap things up here today, we ought to give our listeners a little bit of an update. Many of our listeners are aware of the fact that several months ago you stepped down as President of the Moody Bible Institute and you’ve just recently taken a new assignment, right?

[Easley:] Right. We’ve moved to the Brentwood, Tennessee area, just south of Nashville at the end of December, Bob, and have joined the staff at Fellowship Bible Church and back in the church saddle loving life back in the church ministry. So, two of our kids moved with us and Cindy and I and we’re just thrilled to be back in a local church. And we’re so thankful to Moody Radio that they’ve been kind to let us continue to broadcast to the end of the month and to migrate some of these programs to other stations as well as to the internet.

[Lepine:] Well, and if folks want to keep up with all that is happening with *inContext*, they can go to our website, [incontextradio.org](http://incontextradio.org).

And I should also let folks know that next week at these same times on most of these stations a new program is debuting called *Today in the Word*. We're going to take some of the best messages that have been delivered at Moody Conferences and feature Bible teachers like John MacArthur and Chuck Swindoll, Andy Stanley, Warren Wiersbe. There'll be classic messages from people like Vince Abner and E.V. Hill, E.K. Bailey, A.W. Tozer. So it's really going to be an opportunity to hear some of the best preaching of the last four decades that's happened on the campus at the Moody Bible Institute. Again, the program is called *Today In The Word* and it debuts on many of these same stations on Monday.

Tomorrow we're going to continue to look at what the Scriptures have to say about our adversary, about Satan. That's tomorrow on inContext, with Michael Easley.