

## Angels and Demons.

(The Principedom of the Devil, his Activity and Power and its Purpose)

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Question 1—*Wherein consists the principedom of the devil?*

*Answer*—In the matter of headship, as in many others matters, the devil has succeeded in counterfeiting and reimagining the things of God, and of His Christ and His spiritual kingdom, with a skill that is both dazzling and treacherous, *cf.* 2 Cor. 11:14. That Satan claims to be a king and a god is evident in that scene in the wilderness wherein he tempts Jesus, *cf.* Luke 4:6. This claim seems to be borne out as the Holy Spirit in Scripture gives us titles to describe this fallen angel as having great dominion, *cf.* John 12:31; and making him to be as a god to this fallen world, *cf.* 2 Cor. 4:4. It is not a common thing in the Scriptures for the LORD, Who views the nations of the earth as but a drop in a bucket and takes the isles as a very little thing, Isa. 40:15; to speak of anyone but Himself as great, *cf.* Tit. 2:13. Yet, when the devil is finally overthrown, he is referred to as great, *cf.* Rev. 12:9. Nonetheless, his overthrow is assured for there is none greater than our God, *cf.* Deut. 10:17; Ps. 95:3.

However, Satan is indeed great, whether we consider his power, the extent of his territory or the nature of his kingdom, *cf.* Jude 9. The hosts that obey his commands are numbered as myriads, and their service is both willing and complete, *cf.* Rev. 12:7; thus, for those who are subject to his rule, they are said to be under his complete control, *cf.* 2 Tim. 2:26. This principedom, or headship, of the devil extends over three distinct empires:

*First*, the devil has an imperial power over certain spirit beings called angels, *cf.* Matt. 25:41. Amongst this category of angels, as we have seen, there are two distinct orders of angelic beings, the elect angels, 1 Tim. 5:21; and those angels which kept not their first estate, Jude 6. Angels are also spoken of as spirits, *cf.* Heb. 1:4, 14; so, these fallen angels are called unclean spirits, *cf.* Mark 1:23. The apostasy of Satan, when he fell from heaven, as witnessed by Christ, who personally affirmed this fact, *cf.* Luke 10:18; was not solitary, but, so far as regards a vast host of the angelic world, was corporate, *cf.* Rev. 12:7-9. Therefore, we are warranted to take the title “Satan” as generic, as well as personal and specific, *cf.* Luke 4:6-8. So, Jesus employs it in this fashion as we see in His use and His exposition of this name, *cf.* Matt. 12:26, 27. Additionally, we should consider that there is a vast number of fallen angels, *cf.* 2 Pet. 2:4; Jude 6; and that this arch-fiend, who bears the titles of “Accuser of the brethren” and “the Destroyer,” Rev. 12:10; 9:11; has an empire in these fallen spirits, or angels, *cf.* Matt. 25:41. This fallen host of spirits is called “devils,” in Greek “demons,” *cf.* Matt. 8:28. From this, the devil-in-chief takes his title indicating his headship over these, being the prince of the demons, *cf.* Matt. 12:24-26.

This company of fallen angels is often described in Scripture under designations which set forth the terrible array and gigantic character of the kingdom of Satan, under a monarchy of evil, *cf.* Eph. 6:12.

*Second*, the devil’s kingdom extends over men, *cf.* Eph. 2:2. The fact that the devil is a spirit, and that those who are associated with him are spirits, or beings of another and much more exalted order than us, necessarily makes it less easy for us to estimate the nature of that *invisible* empire of hell, *cf.* 2 Cor. 11:3.

The devil has a perfect dominion over the heart of fallen men, *cf.* Isa. 30:1; his very title of “the devil” (ὁ Διάβολος), “the slanderer,” *cf.* Rev. 20:2; implies his purpose to break bonds and set men at variance, *cf.* 1 Kings 5:4. This corresponds to the noun *śiṭnâ* which describes a written accusation, Ezra 4:6; it had earlier served as a name, *Sitnah*, “enmity,” for a well over which men quarreled, Gen 26:21. So, in this work of setting man against his Creator, and man against man, the devil is ever busily engaged armed with power, Luke 22:53; using his wiles, Eph. 6:11; implementing his devices, 2 Cor. 2:11; throwing his fiery darts, Eph. 6:16; all from the depths of his own depravity, Rev. 2:24. Thus, the devil indwelling *man* is represented as being like a strong man garrisoned and so holding his palace in peace, *cf.* Luke 11:21.

The Scriptures help us trace the providential and legal causes of this acquired lordship of Satan over mankind so as to be seen by considering effect arising from cause—so, the strength of his power, Heb. 2:14; and its cause, Rom. 6:23. Next, the agent of the entrance of sin and death, Rom. 5:12; and its cause, 2 Cor. 11:3. It is not hard to see that there is a delegated rule whereby the devil, as God's executioner, is made the administrator of the sentence of sin, *cf.* Prov. 16:4; hence, he rightly declares it was delivered unto him, Luke 4:6. Moreover, this headship is affirmed to be over all that is called "the world" by the testimony of the apostle, 1 John 5:19. It is for this reason that there is a predisposition of rebellious men to follow the prince of darkness in his imperial policy to resist the Most High, *cf.* Zech. 3:1; so that the servants of sin obey the behests of sin with a willing mind, *cf.* Acts 7:51. The natural man is both weak and willing, weak in regard to nature compared to the devil's exalted spiritual intelligence and willing because of the Satanic corruption of the mind since the fall, and thereby willing to walk on in darkness and to reject the light, *cf.* 2 Cor. 4:3, 4.

This kingdom of darkness shall not last forever on earth but only until the mystery of God is finished, *cf.* Rev. 10:7; after which, Satan shall be bound no longer allowed to deceive the nations, *cf.* Rev. 20:1-3. Already the true Light shines because the Sun of Righteousness has risen upon a darkened world, *cf.* Isa. 60:1; Mal. 4:2. Because this headship of Satan is the last form of administration he will be permitted, he and his angels seem jealous of every moment of respite from their impending doom, *cf.* Matt. 8:29. There is One stronger than Satan Who stands for the tempted and persecuted people of God, *cf.* Zech. 3:1, 2. He has been manifested to destroy the works of the devil by plucking from the hand of Satan those given Him, *cf.* 1 John 3:8.

*Third*, the kingdom of Satan is over the world of sin around and he presides over it temporarily, *cf.* John 14:30. The lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye and the pride of life form a trinity of evil, 1 John 2:15, 16; which has its animating and energizing source in the prince of this world, *cf.* Rev. 13:2-4. So, it was he who stirred up David to sin against God and number the hosts of his armies, *cf.* 2 Sam. 24:1; 1 Chron. 21:1. It was he who used as his choice instrument the traitor Judas to slay the Lord of glory, *cf.* John 13:2. It was Satan who, by Divine arrangement, laid violent hands upon the family, property, and person of God's beloved servant Job, Job 1:12; 2:4-6. It was undoubtedly he who was that lying spirit in the mouths of the prophets of Ahab to lead that wicked king to destruction through the opposition to the Divine word and revelation, 1 Kings 22:20-22.

The order of this visible world, then, is in some mysterious sense, subject to the interference of that spirit who is called "the god of this world," 2 Cor. 4:4. So great is this dominion which he has, that when the lawful Heir of the kingdoms of our world was upon the earth, the eyes of the children of men were shut that they should not know Him, *cf.* 1 Cor. 2:8.

Question 2—*What is the power and activity of the devil?*

*Answer*—As we consider the power and activity of the devil, we should remember that all that he represents stands under a curse, *cf.* Gen. 3:14. Moreover, though this curse is not yet fully inflicted, its terrors shall be inflicted, *cf.* Matt. 25:41; Rev. 20:10. There is a conflict which may be described as Satan purposing to usurp the kingship of Christ, in order to gain a legitimate right to rule rather than simply a providential permission, *cf.* Matt. 4:9. Conversely, Jesus came into this world to destroy the devil and his works, *cf.* 1 John 3:8.

*First*, the activity of the devil is engaged in the trying of grace, for heart work must always be tempted by the devil just as precious gold must be purged in the fire, *cf.* Mal. 3:3; thus, God's uniform question to the great adversary of the brethren regarding every elect vessel of mercy, Job 1:8. Yet, should we note the preliminary question to Satan, we see that he goes about observing diligently all things in his passing, Job 1:7. We see him at work throughout history in the lies of men, *cf.* John 8:44. In such activities as stirring up the wicked to curse the chosen seed, *cf.* Num. 22:4-6. And, though Balak was not successful, he was able to draw them into unholy practices by which they were brought under Divine judgment, *cf.* Ps. 106:35-

37. In the Gentile world, we see the zenith of Satan's power displayed itself at the time of the Incarnation, *cf.* Rom. 1:19-32. Additionally, having failed to draw the Lord Jesus aside from His purpose of enduring the cross, Satan sought to turn the public mind from attaching to Jesus and His works of mercy and grace, *cf.* 2 Cor. 3:14. When Jesus chose twelve disciples, Satan was sure to include one of his own, *cf.* John 6:70. When Christ cast out unclean spirits, Satan was nigh to suggest to the unbelieving that He did so by the devil, *cf.* Matt. 12:24. Satan even tried to approach the Lord through the natural sympathy and love of Peter, when Christ foretold His passion at Jerusalem, *cf.* Matt. 16:22, 23. Eventually, Satan set out to constitute a false and counterfeit church, which, by its wondrous claims, its splendid wealth, its worldly influence, should serve to strengthen his kingdom by competing in favorable worldly contrast with the poor, lowly, feeble and scattered church of God, *cf.* 2 Thess. 2:3-12. Of this, the apostle warned when he spoke of the result of this apostasy, *cf.* 1 Tim. 4:1, 2.

*Second*, this power, which consists only in a providential authority, is limited by the Divine delegation, *cf.* Job 2:6; so that the affliction or temptation is circumscribed, particularly for the saint, to the bounds set by the LORD, *cf.* 2 Cor. 12:7-9. Yet, his extraordinary license, which he obtains from God, is implied by the apostle, Jude 9. This, together with his extraordinary access to the LORD, gives him wide opportunity to ply his wickedness in the earth, *cf.* Job 1:6. Nonetheless, the evil of this fallen spirit, together with his angels, is strictly under the control of God, *cf.* 1 Kings 22:21, 22.

Question 3—*What is the purpose of this delegation of power to the devil?*

*Answer*—Doubtless, it is for the LORD's own and greater declarative glory, which He reveals by His will, *cf.* Dan. 4:35. It is He, and He only, Who possesses the sovereignty to depose and exalt, *cf.* Ps. 75:7.

Yet, there seems to be another and more particular reason, within this concern for declarative glory, which is that the Divine grace might be magnified, *cf.* Phil. 1:20. The LORD is not only absolutely free to determine the end, but the means whereby to exalt His holy character and Divine name, *cf.* Ps. 138:2.

It is certain that those who are delivered out of Satan's kingdom have a right to look forward to the final and open triumph of God's church over this proud devil, when they shall participate in the Divine judgment, *cf.* 1 Cor. 6:2, 3. Relatively, that judgment is sooner, since the coming of Christ, than later, *cf.* Rom. 16:20. In that Day, the wisdom, grace and power of the Divine will, shall be fully vindicated by the Judge of all the earth, *cf.* Eccl. 7:13.