

The Biblical Satan (Part Two: The Greek Scriptures)

As mentioned in part one of this series, modern-day dictionaries define "satan" as a (singular) spiritual being—the foe of both God and man. But how factual is this? Permit me to begin this installment of our studies in the biblical satan by repeating some of part one's introduction.

According to lexicographers like James Strong (#7854), the Hebrew term *sawtawn* refers to an opponent or enemy; according to Wilson, it refers an adversary; according to Gesenius, it refers to an adversary as in war, an enemy; and according to Girdlestone, it refers to an adversary or plotter, one who devises means by which to oppose another.

Just as the Hebrew term *sawtawn* involves two primary traits in a "being" (viz. {1} accuser [one who attacks by word, per the root *sawtan* (#7853)] and {2} adversary [one who attacks by word &/or physically]), so, according to lexicographers like James Strong, the corresponding Greek term *satanas* (#4567) involves one or both of those traits, depending upon how it's used in a given text; and, as we noticed in part one, accusers and adversaries would include {A} the persecutors (those who, with hostile motives, prowl around like PIs or police detectives, in search of evidence to use against others), and {B} the prosecutors (who sometimes even act out as executors). We might say, then, that *satanas* is an enemy-adversary, prowler-plotter, and accuser-prosecutor (with the desire of even being the executor); so no wonder lawyers (especially prosecuting attorneys) are look down upon so much. ☺ BTW... Does this remind you of any in the life of Jesus? How about these two passages?

Luke 11:53-54: "...the scribes and the Pharisees began to ... cross-examine Jesus about many things ... seeking to catch Him in something ... that they might accuse Him." And...

John 7:19-30: Jesus asked in verse 19, "...Why do you seek to kill Me?" To which some in His audience replied in verse 20, "Who's seeking to kill You?" Moments later in verse 25 we read, "Then some ... said, 'Is this not He whom they seek to kill?'" Then more moments later in verse 30 we read, "Then they sought to take Him, but no one [ended up laying] a hand on Him because His hour hadn't yet come." Anyway...

In the previous study of the biblical satan in the Hebrew Scriptures, the conclusion was actually quite clear that the Old Testament (OT) knew of no single, spiritual, foe-of-both-God-and-man being. So the question for us in this installment is whether or not the same holds true for satan in the Greek Scriptures—the New Testament (NT).

In order for me to share what I believe to be the Scriptural reply to this question, I simply won't be able touch on every passage that mentions "satan" (well, not if I want to keep this series down to two parts). And one more thing...

I won't be getting into the topic of demons, especially since I deal with that at length in another study that's also on my website. So onward we march.

The first thing that comes to mind when considering an answer to the question of whether the NT satan is the same as concluded concerning the OT satan is that James Strong said the Greek *satan* is of Hebrew origin, meaning that it's merely a transliteration of the Hebrew *sawtawn* and thus refers to the same thing. So, just in case you haven't done so already, *please* read "part one" of this series first, especially since the same people (Israel) are involved and since the NT usage of such language is based in the OT usage; in fact, the NT, which is the fulfillment of the OT, just therefore cannot be accurately interpreted apart from the OT.

In my former foundational study of satan in the OT, I shared that not only are Job and Zechariah 3:1ff the only places where "satan" has a definite article, but also that, unlike the other OT cases, it's my conviction that they're prophetic in nature, referring primarily to the leaders of Israel who would reject Jesus as Messiah and persecute His disciples. (Recall that I showed how Jude 9 is linked to Zec. 3 and how that such coincides perfectly also with the connection between Zep. 3 & 1 Pet. 5:8.) I bring this up here because...

Since there are too many instances where *satanas* and *diabolos* are found in the NT to consider them all in one study, I want to establish that, generally speaking, across the board, the enemy/adversary of the NT = the corporate body of Hebrew Jesus-rejecters, especially their leaders (e.g. the herodians, the high priest, the chief priests, the sanhedrin, et al.). So...

Before ever even *considering* that an instance of "satan" or "devil" is a reference to an esoteric / paranormal / wicked being created by God, it's my conviction that one should instead first automatically consider that such an instance actually is a reference to either the corporate body of rejecters or to an individual leader such as the Jesus-rejecting high priest; then, if that doesn't / can't make sense, consider another type of enemy or adversary. For example...

Listen to Jesus as He addressed Peter in Mark 8:33b after Peter spoke against Jesus having to die: "Get behind Me, satana!"

Firstly, the Greek word for "get" here means "to place oneself under someone's authority, mission, or objective" (cf. *HELPS Word Studies*), and the reason is explained by Jesus in His next statement to Peter. Secondly, the Greek word for "behind" means "to follow." And, thirdly, "satana" of course refers to someone who says something that opposes the authority, mission, or objective of another. Now listen to what Jesus went on to say:

"You're looking at this from a human [not a demon] point of view instead of from God's point of view." So Jesus was indirectly saying to all His disciples (cf. v. 33a) that what they had just heard Peter say—whether stated impetuously or not—was exactly the wrong response to Jesus because that type of thinking was in opposition to God's plan for man's conciliation through Jesus. So since God's Son had just expressed God's thoughts in this matter of His crucifixion, then Peter and the rest of them needed to discipline their minds by bringing their thoughts under His authority and follow His lead as He carried out His God-given mission; otherwise, they'd be considered adversaries instead of disciples.

In a case like Mark 8 (cf. Luke 22:3 & Acts 5:3), it's appears quite impossible to apply the New Testament's typical interpretation for *satanas* since the contextual enemy there was Peter's own way of thinking without taking into consideration God's way of thinking. So...

Let's spend time substantiating why I'm convinced that the *satanas*/enemy/adversary of the NT is/was, in general (i.e. essentially every time), those who rejected Jesus (whether the corporate / collective body of the Jews or a certain [usually high-ranking] member [or members] of that body). So...

Let's consider several passages (backwards from Revelation) with the word *satanas* in them:

In Revelation 17:1, 15-16, & 19:2 we find passages concerning the harlot, and at least in my circle of Bible students we all agree the harlot was a picture of Jerusalem led by King Herod and the High Priest and all their minions, especially since 19:2 concerns her destruction as vengeance for her martyrdom of numerous saints/prophets of God. In 17:3 it speaks of her as being in the driver's seat of one of the beasts of Revelation, this particular one being the one with 7 heads & 10 horns, which corresponds to the dragon of chapter 12. And what was that dragon called in 12:9 (as well as in 20:2)? That's right—the *satanas*.

In Revelation 3:9 Jesus spoke to the church of Philadelphia of the assembly of the satana, who say they are Jews and are not. Hmmm.

In Revelation 2:9 He spoke to the church of Smyrna of those who say they are Jews and are not, but are rather merely an assembly of the satana.

In Revelation 2:13 Jesus spoke of the church of Pergamos as being in the city of the seat of the satana, and Acts 19:10 (related to Paul's third missionary journey when the church there was likely established) speaks of Jews living there as well.

In 1 Thessalonians 2:18 Paul spoke of how that the satanas had prevented him from making it to Thessalonica. How? Well, Paul didn't specify here, but the scholars who've spent time studying the timelines of Paul's journeys indicate that he was probably referring to the incident in Acts 17:13 when ... yes ... the Jews again had created major problems for him.

In 2 Corinthians 11:14-15 Paul wrote that "the satanas transforms himself into a messenger of light, so it's no great thing that his servants also transform themselves into ministers of righteousness, whose end will be according to their works." And not only did Paul indicate throughout this chapter that he had Jewish Jesus rejecters in mind (e.g. v. 22), but if you're an adherent to fulfilled prophecy you also realize that the "end" to which Paul alluded here was in reference to Jerusalem's destruction along with the leaders of the Jews who wanted every Christian dead (as least every *Hebrew* Christian).

Now let's do the same thing but considering several passages with the word *diabolos* in them:

In Revelation 20:2 & 12:9 we find the devil (or diabolos) is just another term for the satanas: 20:2 called the dragon "the diabolos and the satanas," i.e. the accusing-enemy. (By the way, if you compare Mark 4:15 & Luke 8:12, you can see these two terms used interchangeably.)

In Revelation 2:10, right after He referred to the Jews in Smyrna as being the congregation of the satanas, He went on to warn His people there that the diabolos (their accuser-enemy) was about to throw some of them into prison.

In 1 Timothy 3:6 Paul wrote of the "doom of the diabolos." ¿Recall what I said moments ago about how that, if you're a fulfilled-prophecy adherent, you recognize that the *biblical* "end" (such as in relation to the satanas and his servants of 2 Cor. 11:15) is a reference to the demise of the Old Covenant temple with its city, priesthood, sacrifices, etc.? Well, that same thing was what was under consideration here when Paul wrote of the doom of the diabolos (again, just another term for the satanas). (Cf. Rom. 16:20!)

In Ephesians 6:10 (with its context of verses 11-21) Paul wrote of how they needed to be sure and put on the entire armor of God so that they'd be able to stand against the diabolos, for (reminiscent of Rev. 2:10) those who comprised that accuser were those in religious / political power over them, which is why Paul referred to himself in verse 22 concerning his own circumstance of being in chains, Romans chains wherein he was placed at the behest of the Jews (just read Acts chapters 21–28 where this is an unmistakable fact).

In John 8:44, of whom/what did Jesus claim His rejecting Jewish audience were offsprings? Right—the diabolos. For a Jew to say someone was the son of someone in this sort of context was an idiom for saying he either *was* that someone or at least a carbon copy of him. So, just as we saw He did in Revelation, Jesus was calling them the diabolos. In fact, Paul used this same language in Acts 13:10 against the Jewish sorcerer Bar-Jesus, aka Elymas, when he called him a diabolos (accuser), appending that with the word *ekthros* which is the "Greek" word for enemy (remember: *satanas* was a transliteration of the Hebrew *sawtawn*). Now, once more...

Let's do the same thing but considering several passages with this word *ekthros* in them:

In Philippians 3:18, after bringing up the Christ-rejecting Jews in verses 2-3, under whom they there (as well as everywhere else in Paul's world then) were having to suffer for Jesus, Paul called them the *ekthros* of Christ, appending that with a comment about their destructive end (v. 19) because they, like Peter in Mark 8, weren't looking at things from God's point of view but from their own worldly/selfish point of view ... like most politicians have always done.

In 1 Corinthians 15:25 Paul wrote of how Jesus reigned until all His *ekthros* had been placed under His feet (being made His footstool per Heb. 10:13).

In Romans 11:28 Paul came right out and called the Jews the *ekthroi* of those accepting Christianity, i.e. the people of Jesus the Christ (recall Jesus standing at the stoning of Stephen and how that, in Acts 9, He told Saul that he was persecuting Jesus when he persecuted Christians).

In Luke 19:27 Jesus said to "bring here those *ekthros* of mine who didn't want Me to reign over them and slay them before Me," which, by the way, corresponds to the destruction of the *ekthros* in Revelation 11:5.

In Matthew 13:39 Jesus called the *ekthros* the *diabolos* and referred to his end at the end of His age (v. 40). (I have an entire study devoted to the parable explanation of Matthew 13:36-43 on my website as well.) So, I ask: What other verse besides Matthew 13:39 could've better sustained/summed up my point in all of this?! ☺ So...

I hope all of this at the very least encourages you to first view every case of *satanas*, *diabolos*, and even *ekthros* from the point of view that the adversary of the entire NT times in general was the corporate/collective body of the Christ-rejecting Jewish people, especially their leaders; then, if there's no way at all such makes sense, consider that the context may offer another option as we talked about relative to Peter in Mark 8, which also fits Judas in John 6:70, and Ananias in Acts 5:1ff.

There's SOOO much more we could discuss, but we'd need at least one more entire study to get to all the other passages with the terms *satanas*, *diabolos*, and *ekthros* in them. But let me end with a few words on the most questioned incident found in Luke 4:1ff concerning the testing of Jesus which transpired among "the wild beasts" in "the desert." The question is: Who was this *diabolos/satanas* who interacted with our Lord? Well, based upon my conviction that the theme running through the entire NT is the question and the strife over who really is/was God's true children, applying my principle that the enemy is always Rejecting-Israel unless it's impossible for such to fit in the context, I believe the adversary of Jesus here was either a single leader or a multitude of leaders of the Jews who were testing Him in regard to what they heard &/or even saw occur at John's baptism of Jesus. There's a lot which could be said about this, but just consider three quick things:

The accounts of this event indicate that Jesus was in "the desert" during all this testing. Did you know the Bible refers to Jerusalem (especially during its messianic days) as being a desert, i.e. a spiritual desert, in Jeremiah 4:11 & Isaiah 64:10 (same Greek word at that)? Further...

Mark 1:13 says that Jesus was with not just "wild beasts" but "the wild beasts" during this time. And did you also know the Jewish haters of Christ and Christians were called such (cf. Mat. 23:33, 1 Cor. 15:32, & Jude 10; cf. 1 Pet. 5:8 w/ Zep. 3:3). Lastly...

Compare the "get behind Me, *satanas*" in Luke 4 with our explanation of that same statement to Peter in Mark 8. Seems to clearly imply a human or humans if you ask me. ☺