

The Binding Of Satan

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Imagine enjoying a grand time at a gathering of friends and family, eating good food, engaging in lively and pleasant conversation, and soaking up a warm glow of mutual affection and goodwill. Just as the party reaches full-swing, an uninvited guest with an obnoxious personality walks into the room. Immediately, the party's "good vibes" retreat, leaving a palpable chill behind.

Depending on what the obnoxious person does on entering the room, he can cause uneasiness, anxiety, or even perturbation in just about everybody there. His dislikable attitude may break up the party or instigate an argument or even a fight. Where agreement, peace, and enjoyment had been the rule, now there is frustration, negative feelings, and division—all because one person's attitude has disrupted the peace.

What does a person do in such a situation? Attempting to make the most of a bad situation often ends in making everybody equally miserable. Some may try to endure it until it is time to go home. A few brave or perhaps foolhardy souls may confront the offensive guest, telling him that he is not welcome. Others do their best to ignore the intruder, but obnoxious people often do not allow that to happen, demanding everyone's attention. The only way to restore the former pleasant situation—short of the unwanted person having a miraculous change of personality—is for the host to demand that he leave for the sake of his other guests.

This is how our world began. God and mankind, represented by Adam and Eve, enjoyed an agreeable relationship in the Garden of Eden until Satan, an uninvited, obnoxious intruder—a deceiver, accuser, and destroyer—disturbed the peace and ruined paradise. He has caused unbelief, fear, distrust, hatred, and division ever since.

God—our Host, if you will—has prophesied in His Word that He will one day, for a time, throw the intruder out and restore peace to His fellowship with humanity. The church has speculated that this may occur on a future Day of Atonement which represents accord and unity between God and man, something that can never truly be real until Satan is removed from the picture. We look forward to the time when this part of God's plan is fulfilled.

Satan is a major cause of the present separation between God and man, and his binding after Christ's return will be a vital step toward the restitution of all things (Acts 3:21), restoring conditions to the earth that will facilitate harmony between God and man during the thousand-year reign of Jesus Christ on earth. This restored relationship will open the way for astounding blessings, achievements, and advancements in the Millennium.

A Covering Cherub Falls

The being we know as Satan the Devil began his life as a glorious cherub covering God's throne. Ezekiel 28:12-15 describes him:

You were the seal of perfection, full of wisdom and perfect in beauty. You were in Eden, the garden of God; every precious stone was your covering: The sardius, topaz, and

diamond, beryl, onyx, and jasper, sapphire, turquoise, and emerald with gold. The workmanship of your timbrels and pipes was prepared for you on the day you were created. You were the anointed cherub who covers; I established you; you were on the holy mountain of God; you walked back and forth in the midst of fiery stones. You were perfect in your ways from the day you were created, till iniquity was found in you.

Before he sinned, this archangel, Helel (“shining one”), had everything going for him. God had created him perfect, wise, and beautiful. He had astounding skills and talents, especially musical talents, which were probably used in praising God. He was given high position as “*the* anointed cherub who covers” (emphasis ours), meaning that his wings stretched over God’s throne. Always at the hub of God’s activity, Helel was the perfect specimen of creation—beautiful, wise, talented, skilled, and eminent. Then he spoiled it all through sin.

Isaiah 14:12-15 illustrates the process of his thinking that led to his fall:

How you are fallen from heaven, O [Helel], son of the morning! How you are cut down to the ground, you who weakened the nations! For you have said in your heart: “I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God; I will also sit on the mount of the congregation on the farthest sides of the north; I will ascend above the heights of the clouds, I will be like the Most High.” Yet you shall be brought down to Sheol, to the lowest depths of the Pit.

Evidently, God had at some point also given him the earth to govern, as this passage shows him ascending to heaven, implying that he must have come from the earth. Isaiah also writes that he had a throne that he desired to exalt over all the “stars”—angels—of God. Revelation 12:4 reveals that a third of the angels were thrown to the earth with him, probably those whom God had earlier given him to assist him with his job on the earth, but Isaiah 14:13 reports that he wanted to rule *all* the angels, not just a mere third of them.

As God gave him more, Helel’s greed grew until he began to conceive thoughts of taking everything for himself, not just the angels, but God’s very throne. As several modern translations read, “I will make myself like the Most High.” In essence, he wanted to *be* God. He deceived himself into thinking he was smart and powerful enough to boot the “Old Man” out and take over ruling all things!

So we see the sins that most describe Satan: vanity, greed, selfishness, self-exaltation, and pride, of course. Who knows how long these sins festered in him before they broke out into action? However long the time, these sins embittered him until he began to plan a coup against the very throne of heaven and to recruit other angels to his cause.

The story picks up Revelation 12:3-4:

And another sign appeared in heaven: behold, a great, fiery red dragon having seven heads and ten horns, and seven diadems on his heads. His tail drew a third of the stars of heaven and threw them to the earth.

Surely, these angels did not just fall obediently into line, especially as he was proposing full-blown rebellion against God, but Helel eventually managed to convince one-third of them to follow him. From this we can see that Satan has formidable powers of persuasion, an uncanny ability to deceive others into doing things to further his aims. He likely promised them freedom and power.

We find more information in verses 7-9. Although written in a prophetic sense, they probably also describe what happened when Helel attacked God's throne in pre-history:

And war broke out in heaven: Michael and his angels fought with the dragon; and the dragon and his angels fought, but they did not prevail, nor was a place found for them in heaven any longer. So the great dragon was cast out, that serpent of old, called the Devil and Satan, who deceives the whole world; he was cast to the earth, and his angels were cast out with him.

God and His angels, led by Michael, cast the former Helel—no longer a “shining one,” but now called Satan the Devil, the Deceiver, the Adversary, the Opposition—along with his angels, back to the earth, evidently causing great destruction all over the galaxy. And here they have remained.

Jude 6 records, “And the angels who did not keep their proper domain [the earth], but left their own abode, He has reserved in everlasting chains under darkness for the judgment of the great day.” God has bound them to the earth while they await their ultimate judgment. Though no place was found in heaven for them anymore, the book of Job says that Satan can present himself before God's throne on occasion. Earth, however, is their habitation. While only as free as God allows them to be, they can still deceive and prey on mankind.

A Being Under Judgment

The Bible and human history fill in what has happened since. It is evident that from creation, mankind has been living side by side with millions of demonic opponents led by the chief adversary, Satan the Devil. Apparently, this was part of God's plan for His children. He wants us to choose His way, to overcome and grow despite being surrounded by evil.

Satan had little trouble deceiving Eve and goading Adam to sin—just as he has swayed every other human being except Jesus to sin. However, he will not go unpunished for his part in deceiving the whole world. God makes this clear in Genesis 3:14-15, where he curses the serpent:

So the LORD God said to the serpent: “Because you have done this, you are cursed more than all cattle, and more than every beast of the field; on your belly you shall go, and you shall eat dust all the days of your life. And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her Seed; He shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise His heel.”

God says plainly that Satan would be put down; the woman's Seed—Messiah—would “bruise his head.” The Hebrew word for “bruise,” *qâmal*, means “to slay, kill.” When a person's head is “bruised” in this way—given a killing blow—he dies, while the same blow on the heel causes pain and damage, but not death. God's curse on the serpent signals what the ultimate end of Satan will be.

Even so, we still must resist the Devil's daily, evil influences. He and his demons are still around. Despite putting a hedge around us, God does not forbid Satan to try to deceive us after baptism. He tried his best to turn Jesus from His course (Matthew 4, Luke 4), but our Savior showed us how to fight and repel him. Satan is still trying to deceive and tempt human beings, especially God's children, since they have been chosen to be part of the Family destined to take over his throne with Jesus Christ.

God will always be faithful to His character and to His promises, so Satan does not waste his time attacking Him. There are easier fish to fry—us. Some doubt still exists in Satan’s mind whether we will endure to the end, so we must be strong and resist him in the faith (I Peter 5:9), remembering Paul’s encouraging words in Romans 16:19-20: “I want you to be wise in what is good, and simple [pure] concerning evil. And the God of peace will crush Satan under your feet shortly. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you. Amen.”

The Greek word rendered as “crush” (*syntribô*; *Strong’s #4937*) in verse 20 means “to break the power of, deprive of strength, debilitate.” It can also be translated as “crush” or “bruise,” as in Genesis 3:15. Someday soon, just after Christ’s return, God will break Satan’s power over humanity for a thousand years, as prophesied in Revelation 20:1-3:

Then I saw an angel coming down from heaven having the key to the bottomless pit and a great chain in his hand. He laid hold of the dragon, that serpent of old, who is the Devil and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years; and he cast him into the bottomless pit, and shut him up, and set a seal on him, so that he should deceive the nations no more till the thousand years were finished. But after these things he must be released for a little while.

Many commentators believe this angel is Christ Himself, as no single angel seems to be the match for Satan. When Daniel cried for God’s help, it took two angels, both Gabriel and Michael to overcome “the prince of the kingdom of Persia,” thought to have been Satan (Daniel 10:13). If the key to the bottomless pit is like the keys of Hades and Death—that is, in the possession of Christ alone—Revelation 1:18 may support this speculation.

Times of Refreshing

Satan’s imprisonment in the bottomless pit is not his final sentence, but he will be “bound and gagged” for a thousand years, no longer able to deceive anyone. It is almost inconceivable to imagine what the world will be like without Satan around. Except for a short time in Eden, mankind has never experienced a time when his anti-God attitudes were not constantly pervading our environment (see Ephesians 2:2).

Once Satan is sealed away, a great weight will be lifted from the minds of people. A great sigh of relief will go up. When that prison door clangs shut and Satan’s influence is cut off, people may finally experience true peace of mind. The brain-fog caused by his attitudes will be gone, and human beings will for once be able to think clearly. Sin will not disappear altogether, since people will still have to overcome their carnal natures, but without Satan’s encouragement, they will have a fighting chance to conquer it.

With Jesus, the Prince of Peace (Isaiah 9:6), triumphant over rebellious humanity, and Satan out of action, peace will descend over the whole earth. With peace, as James writes in James 3:18, the fruit of righteousness can flourish. Over time, under Christ’s righteous government administered by the children of God, the creation will begin to return to the way it was before Adam sinned (Romans 8: 18-21). With Satan a nonfactor, healing can begin.

Peter describes it in different terms in Acts 3:19-21:

Repent therefore and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, so that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord. And that He may send Jesus Christ, who was preached to you before, whom heaven must receive until the times of restoration of all things, which God has spoken by the mouth of all His holy prophets since the world began.

Two very important steps in God's plan will occur in quick succession: the return of Jesus Christ prompting the first resurrection and the binding of Satan. The Devil will be imprisoned for most of the thousand-year reign of Christ with His saints, and until he is released for a little while (Revelation 20:7), the earth and its inhabitants, human and otherwise, will enjoy "times of refreshing." During this time, God will work with humanity through His resurrected firstfruits and a proper relationship between man and God will be restored.

What an advantage those people will have then, able to live, overcome, and grow without Satan's constant pressure to ignore or defy God! Instead, godly teachers will be near to say, "This is the way, walk in it" (Isaiah 30:21). People will still have to make their own choices, but free from the Devil's hateful and rebellious attitudes, they will be much more inclined to decide to do what is good.

Yet, because of this advantage, they will not receive as great a reward as God's firstfruits. Because those in this age have had to fight Satan's influence all their converted lives, they will receive, as the author of Hebrews puts it, "a better resurrection" (Hebrews 11:35), one that includes, among other things, reigning with Christ throughout the Millennium (Revelation 20:6) and following the Lamb wherever He goes (Revelation 14:4). As overcomers of Satan with Christ, the firstfruits stand on the first tier of those who are raised into God's Kingdom.

When Christ returns, so many wonderful things will come to pass, not the least of which is the confinement of Satan for a millennium. What an excellent reason to pray, "Your kingdom come" (Matthew 6:10)!