

The Attributes of the Devil

By Dave DeWitt

Wise leaders, like wise military generals, business entrepreneurs, and coaches do not go into a battle, business, or a ball game without carefully studying their enemies, competition, or opponents. They want to know how the opposition operates. They study their character, their methods, their plays, and schemes. To be effective against an enemy, you must know your enemy, so you can be prepared to effectively counter his attacks. And they also realize that there is, indeed, an enemy. What they are entering into is not an ice cream social on the church lawn. It's a real battle with a real enemy. If they don't understand that, they will lose, fail, or be defeated.

For this reason alone, a study of The Devil is very important. Christians need to be informed. It was important to Paul *that no advantage would be taken of us by Satan, for we are not ignorant of his schemes* (2 Corinthians 2:11).

I will refer to our chief enemy as "The Devil," an English derivation from the Greek διάβολος (*diablos*). [Throughout this paper, I will use the title "The Devil" as if it were a name.] I would like to look at The Devil as a person. What is he like? What kind of personality does he have? Is he a scary guy with horns, or somebody you'd like to have a cigar or beer with, go to lunch with, or maybe go with to a ball game, a party, wedding, church, synagogue, or mosque? The Devil is the god of this world (2 Corinthians 4:4). The beliefs, morals, and philosophies of this world are the promotions of The Devil. So what is he like? We know something about the attributes of man and the attributes of God. What about the attributes of The Devil?

The Devil Is an Angel

We need to understand that The Devil is, by creation, an angel (Revelation 12:7-9). That means:

- He is not a personification of evil, but an evil person. He has all three aspects of personality: intelligence (2 Corinthians 11:3), emotions (Revelation 12:17), and will (2 Timothy 2:26).
- He does not have a physical body (with a cape and horns), but he does have a spiritual body, which can take different forms, transverse between this world and the heavenlies, and possess others (Luke 22:3).
- He does not have a sexual distinction, as in male or female. [I will use the pronoun "he" only for convenience.]
- He does not marry or reproduce.
- He was not born, and he will not die.
- He is not eternal because there was a time when he was created, but he is an eternal being in that he has an eternal future (like humans).
- He is not all-powerful, but he has a lot of power.
- He is not all-knowing, but he has a lot of knowledge.
- He is not everywhere-present. He can only be in one place at a time. It's unlikely you and I have ever encountered The Devil. But he can move from place-to-place with seemingly lightening speed.

The Names of the Devil

There are 14 names or titles given to The Devil in the Bible:

1. The Devil (Matthew 4:1, 5, 9; Ephesians 4:27; Revelation 12:9; 20:2)
2. Satan (Job 1:6-9; Matthew 4:10)

3. The serpent (Revelation 12:9)
4. Lucifer, Son of the Morning (Isaiah 14:12)
5. The dragon (Revelation 12:7)
6. The prince or ruler (John 12:31)
7. The god of this world or age (2 Corinthians 4:4)
8. The prince of the power of the air (Ephesians 2:2a)
9. The spirit who works in the sons of disobedience (Ephesians 2:2b)
10. The accuser of the brethren (Revelation 12:10)
11. The tempter (Matthew 4:3; 1 Thessalonians 3:5)
12. Belial (2 Corinthians 6:15)
13. Beelzebul (Matthew 12:24; Mark 3:22)
14. Abaddon/Apollyon (Revelation 9:11)

From the names alone, we can discern that The Devil is powerful, a tempter, and the ruler (or god) of this age (this time of history between his fall and when God casts him into the lake of fire—Matthew 25:41; Revelation 20:10). He also *works in the sons of disobedience*. That means there are people who represent The Devil’s world system surrounding us every day. How can we recognize that? Who are they? What will they be asking of us? What does the work of The Devil actually look like?

There are three places in the Bible where we meet The Devil face-to-face in a narrative context: with Eve in the garden, before God concerning Job, and at the temptation of Christ. We shall look at these three and see if we can learn some applications that answer these questions.

The Devil in the Garden of Eden

Genesis 3:1-6

Now the serpent was more crafty than any beast of the field which the LORD God had made. And he said to the woman, “Indeed, has God said, ‘You shall not eat from any tree of the garden?’” The woman said to the serpent, “From the fruit of the trees of the garden we may eat; but from the fruit of the tree which is in the middle of the garden, God has said, ‘You shall not eat from it or touch it, or you will die.’” The serpent said to the woman, “You surely will not die! For God knows that in the day you eat from it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.” When the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was desirable to make one wise, she took from its fruit and ate; and she gave also to her husband with her, and he ate.

The Bible does not tell us that The Devil was the serpent until Revelation 12, although most people probably believed that from the nature of the discussion in Genesis 3. There, we seem to have The Devil possessing a snake. At that time, the serpent, apparently a large pleasant-looking animal that was able to support itself in a basically upright position, did not frighten Eve. Eve was probably unaware of the fact that animals couldn’t talk, and she was certainly not aware that she was talking to The Devil, or even that he existed. Here are a few things we can learn about The Devil:

- He was friendly, helpful, and concerned about Eve and her situation.
- The basis of his attack was a discussion, which made God’s commands into questions. “God has said” became “Has God said?”
- His deception included both truth and error. God did forbid eating from a tree, but not *from any tree of the garden*.
- When Eve clarified the fruit-eating command, The Devil went from partial truth to a denial of the consequences. He called God a liar with the statement, *You surely will not die*. But the only way for Eve to know the serpent was wrong was to take the Word of God literally. So

The Devil did not ignore the Word of God. Quite the contrary, he brought it up, twisted it, then denied it to be literally true.

- Then The Devil accused God of keeping Eve from reaching her full potential. He claimed God was holding her back from being all she could be. He claimed she could be like God. Basically, she could be her own god. His accusation was that God was evil, because He did not want Eve to *be like God, knowing good and evil*.
- The Devil wanted Eve to see herself as independent from God (the definition of pride), not dependent upon God (the definition of humility).
- The Devil brought Eve to the conclusion that the fruit was (a) *good for food*, (b) *a delight to the eyes*, and (c) *able to make one wise*. So what's wrong with that? Only one thing. It violated the Word of God.
- The impact of The Devil's influence included Eve influencing Adam to participate in The Devil's mentality.

Some Applications

- Someone representing The Devil's world system might be friendly, helpful and concerned. *Satan disguises himself as an angel of light* (2 Corinthians 11:14). The point is, being friendly, helpful, and concerned are only virtuous if their objective is virtuous. Biblical Christianity never presents these things as virtuous in and of themselves. The Devil does. [Cults usually attract followers by being friendly, helpful, and concerned.]
- Someone representing The Devil's world system will confuse the issue of independence. The Bible says that independence from the world is good, but independence from God is bad. The Devil will reverse that, so we will think independence from God (pride) is good, but being independent of his world system is bad. [That is, he wants us to be dependent on his world system, such as in socialism.]
- Someone representing The Devil's world system might bring up the Word of God as a "discussion" that questions God's commands. Legitimate questions seek information. Deceptive questions (like The Devil used here) are an attempt to confuse the issue, in order to state a position. [The Emergent Church movement is based on this kind of "discussion."]
- Someone representing The Devil's world system might twist God's commands away from obedience to God and into developing our own potential. [Most of the world's "success" systems and "How to succeed" books do this.]
- Someone representing The Devil's world system will encourage you to be your own god over your own life [the objective of today's liberal education].
- Someone representing The Devil's world system will promote pride as a virtue. [You hear this constantly, for example, in all kid sports.]

The Devil and God Discuss Job

Job 1:6-12

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." The LORD said to Satan, "Have you considered My servant Job? For there is no one like him on the earth, a blameless and upright man, fearing God and turning away from evil." Then Satan answered the LORD, "Does Job fear God for nothing? Have You not made a hedge about him and his house and all that he has, on every side? You have blessed the work of his hands, and his possessions have increased in the land. But put forth Your hand now and touch all that he has; he will surely curse You to Your face." Then the LORD said to Satan, "Behold, all that

he has is in your power, only do not put forth your hand on him.” So Satan departed from the presence of the LORD.

Job 2:1-7

Again there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the LORD, and Satan also came among them to present himself before the LORD. The LORD said to Satan, “Where have you come from?” Then Satan answered the LORD and said, “From roaming about on the earth and walking around on it.” The LORD said to Satan, “Have you considered My servant Job? For there is no one like him on the earth, a blameless and upright man fearing God and turning away from evil. And he still holds fast his integrity, although you incited Me against him to ruin him without cause.” Satan answered the LORD and said, “Skin for skin! Yes, all that a man has he will give for his life. However, put forth Your hand now, and touch his bone and his flesh; he will curse You to Your face.” So the LORD said to Satan, “Behold, he is in your power, only spare his life.”

Then Satan went out from the presence of the LORD and smote Job with sore boils from the sole of his foot to the crown of his head.

Here are a few more things we can learn about The Devil:

- The Devil comes before God on some sort of regular basis, and they discuss things.
- Because The Devil spends time *roaming about on the earth*, he seems to know godly believers. [It is interesting that God mentioned Job to The Devil, as if he knew Job well.]
- The Devil can inflict severe pain and damage upon the earth and all living things.
- The Devil focuses his attacks on people who are *blameless, upright, fearing God and turning away from evil*.
- The Devil accuses believers, before God, of being insincere in their faith, and wants God to allow him to prove that.
- The Devil believes that the only reason people serve God is the same reason people serve idols, to receive something from God for their own (independent-from-God) benefit.

Some Applications

- The Devil is part of God’s plan. The Devil’s existence creates a drama with severe consequences. Therefore, the objective should never be to get rid of him or his world order (Matthew 13:30). That’s up to God. Our assignment is to learn how to be in the world but not of the world. Jesus prayed, *I do not ask You to take them out of the world, but to keep them from the evil one* (John 17:15).
- Someone representing The Devil’s world system might be well-informed about what is going on in the world [like liberal professors and politicians].
- Someone representing The Devil’s world system might inflict physical damage to the earth or any living things [like suicide bombers].
- We could be suffering because of a conflict between God and The Devil. [Therefore, we cannot know the reason for any event that is not specifically predicted in the Bible.]
- The more you become *blameless, upright, fearing God and turning away from evil*, the more likely you are to suffer from The Devil’s attacks, because God may point to you as a contradiction to The Devil’s philosophy of pride (independence from God).
- Someone representing The Devil’s world system will put Christianity among all the world’s self-serving religions [such as portrayed in films and TV programs].

The Devil Tempted Christ

Temptation #1 — Matthew 4:1-4

Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. And after He had fasted forty days and forty nights, He then became hungry. And the tempter came and said to Him, “If You are the Son of God, command that these stones become bread.” But He answered and said, “It is written, ‘MAN SHALL NOT LIVE ON BREAD ALONE, BUT ON EVERY WORD THAT PROCEEDS OUT OF THE MOUTH OF GOD.’”

Temptation #2 — Matthew 4:5-7

Then the devil took Him into the holy city and had Him stand on the pinnacle of the temple, and said to Him, “If You are the Son of God, throw Yourself down; for it is written, ‘HE WILL COMMAND HIS ANGELS CONCERNING YOU’; and ‘ON their HANDS THEY WILL BEAR YOU UP, SO THAT YOU WILL NOT STRIKE YOUR FOOT AGAINST A STONE.’” Jesus said to him, “On the other hand, it is written, ‘YOU SHALL NOT PUT THE LORD YOUR GOD TO THE TEST.’”

Temptation #3 — Matthew 4:8-11

Again, the devil took Him to a very high mountain and showed Him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory; and he said to Him, “All these things I will give You, if You fall down and worship me.” Then Jesus said to him, “Go, Satan! For it is written, ‘YOU SHALL WORSHIP THE LORD YOUR GOD, AND SERVE HIM ONLY.’” Then the devil left Him; and behold, angels came and began to minister to Him.

Here are a few more things we can learn about The Devil:

- The Devil challenges the deity of Christ. Two of the three temptations began with, *If You are the Son of God.*
- The Devil may attack us at the times of greatest weakness, or as a way to fulfill our needs. And his solution will be something apart from obedience to God’s Word. *He then became hungry... “If You are the Son of God, command that these stones become bread.”*
- The Devil believes the Word of God is insufficient. The temptation of Christ included asking Jesus to live by something other than, or in addition to, *every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God.*
- The Devil believed he could command Jesus to do miracles.
- The Devil believes our ultimate desire is earthly power. He assumed Jesus wanted *all the kingdoms of the world and their glory.*
- The Devil desires to be worshipped above Jesus.

Some Applications

- Someone representing The Devil’s world system will probably challenge the deity of Christ, for example, by way of a cult, or by way of a liberal education.
- Someone representing The Devil’s world system might approve meeting physical needs in such a way that it denies the sufficiency of *every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God.* This might include our sex drive (or sexual orientation), our need for food, clothing, housing, and peace of mind. [This is common in secular counseling.]
- Someone representing The Devil’s world system might believe they can command Jesus to do miracles.

- Someone representing The Devil’s world system will assume that our goals are about having earthly physical, financial, or political power. [This might include things like, success in business, selling lots of books, and having our church filled every Sunday.]
- Someone representing The Devil’s world system will always end up putting something above the worship of Jesus Christ.

The Creation and Fall of The Devil – Isaiah 14 and Ezekiel 28

Ezekiel 28:11-15

Again the word of the LORD came to me saying, “Son of man, take up a lamentation over the king of Tyre and say to him, ‘Thus says the Lord GOD, You had 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 ruby, the topaz and the diamond; The beryl, the onyx and the jasper; The lapis lazuli, the turquoise and the emerald; And the gold, the workmanship of your settings and sockets, Was in you. On the day that you were created They were prepared. You were the anointed cherub who covers, And I placed you there. You were on the holy mountain of God; You walked in the midst of the stones of fire. You were blameless in your ways From the day you were created Until unrighteousness was found in you.’”

Isaiah 14:12-15

How you have fallen from heaven, O star of the morning, son of the dawn! You have been cut down to the earth, You who have weakened the nations! But you said in your heart, ‘I will ascend to heaven; I will raise my throne above the stars of God, And I will sit on the mount of assembly In the recesses of the north. I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will make myself like the Most High.’ Nevertheless you will be thrust down to Sheol, To the recesses of the pit.

Many believe that these passages refer only to the kings of Tyre and Babylon. If these passages do not refer to The Devil, then we have no information about his origin or his original sin. These passages certainly do talk about the kings of Tyre and Babylon. But the wording of the texts goes way beyond anything that describes a human being. There are four basic interpretations:

1. This describes a mystical being from Phoenician mythology.
2. This is a primal being (real or unreal), who lived in the Garden of Eden.
3. This is a metaphorical description of the sins of these kings.
4. This is Satan or the antichrist.

As to #1, there is no reason to impose the idea of some mystical person on the text. #2 is possible, but there is no mention of such a person elsewhere. #2 also has the same problem as #3. It is an unlikely such an extreme description of such a sinister being would be attached to a human, or that a human would start out as such a perfect being. Even if it is a metaphorical description of these kings, it tells us how sin originates.

But some verses (like Ezekiel 28:14-15) are very difficult to apply to any earthly king. So it seems that the best interpretation is that this is a description of evil earthly kings, who were possessed (or otherwise controlled) by The Devil, which extends to a description of the origin and fall of The Devil himself.

With this in mind, we learn three things about the **origin of The Devil**:

1. He was created with *perfection (blameless in your ways), wisdom and beauty*. [This is where the name Lucifer comes from. The Hebrew word הֵלֵל (*helel*) means *star of the morning or shining one*.]

2. He lived *in Eden, the garden of God*, which was prepared for him before he was created. This was probably a heavenly Eden (*on the holy mountain of God*), since its description does not sound like the one in Genesis.
3. He was *the anointed cherub who covers*, apparently, meaning he was the leading angel of the cherubim (not the seraphim) group.

There are three things we can learn about the **fall of The Devil**:

- The origin of sin is the statement *Until unrighteousness was found in you* (Ezekiel 28:15). God created the perfect angel, and the perfect angel created sin. It was a thought, not a deed.
- The initial punishment for the fall of the Devil was that he was *cut down to the earth*, and his final punishment is to *be thrust down to Sheol, to the recesses of the pit*. Jesus called it *the eternal fire which has been prepared for the devil and his angels* (Matthew 25:41). [Positionally, The Devil was defeated at the cross (John 12:31), but like a convicted murderer on death row, he is still alive and well.]
- The goal of The Devil is, *I will make myself like the Most High*.

Some Applications

Actually, the applications of this passage would not change much if it just described the perfect, wise, wealthy, beautiful earthly kings of Tyre and Babylon.

- Moral purity, mental wisdom, and physical beauty do not prevent sin.
- Wealth does not prevent sin.
- Being a leader, or the first of a group, does not prevent sin.
- Sin originates in the one who sins, it does not come from outside the sinner.
- Initially, the result of sin is that the sinner becomes part of this world's systems. Ultimately, it means being cast into the lake of fire.
- The final goal of sin is to make yourself into your own god (pride). First Corinthians 10:12 says, *Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed that he does not fall*.

The Devil Is *the Father of Lies*

John 8:44

*You are of your father the devil, and you want to do the desires of your father. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth because there is no truth in him. Whenever he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own nature, for he is a liar and **the father of lies**.*

2 Corinthians 11:3-4

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 ... if one comes and preaches another Jesus whom we have not preached, or you receive a different spirit which you have not received, or a different gospel which you have not accepted.

1 Timothy 4:1-2

But the Spirit explicitly says that in later times some will fall away from the faith, paying attention to deceitful spirits and doctrines of demons, by means of the hypocrisy of liars seared in their own conscience as with a branding iron.

The truth is the way things actually are.

A lie is a deception,
Which falsifies the way things actually are
So that the end result of a communication is misleading

What exactly can we expect from The Devil as *the father of lies*?

- *There is no truth in him.* The Devil never influences people to see things as they actually are.
- *He speaks from his own nature, for he is a liar and the father of lies.* It is an attribute, from his nature, to speak lies. So, The Devil believes that lying is good. It seems that the reason The Devil loves lies is simply because truth is an attribute of God.
- *The serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness.* The word πανουργία (*panourgia*) means *cleverness, craftiness, or trickery*. *Trickery* is to intentionally mislead someone. But a clever crafty trick uses partial truths with misleading and illogical thinking.
- The lies of The Devil can be identified because they complicate devotion to Christ with *another Jesus, a different spirit, or a different gospel*.
- As we near the *later times*, the lies of The Devil and his demons will result in professing believers who *will fall away from the faith*.
- The Devil, his demons, and those they influence are *liars seared in their own conscience*. In other words, they don't feel guilty about lying, or see that their lying is wrong.

Some Applications

- We should never compromise the way things actually are. It may not always be appropriate to inform someone about something, but only when silence is not deceptive.
- We should never conclude that lying is a good thing in any situation.
- Lying starts with the truth and then perverts it. Lies cannot exist without some truth to pervert. Lies are always, *another Jesus, a different spirit, or a different gospel*, which requires the existence of the real Jesus, a spirit of truth, and an actual Gospel.
- Lying usually accompanies all other sins. Therefore, lying is a good “red flag” indication of other sins.
- As we approach the later time before the Great Tribulation, which precedes the Second Coming of Christ, lying will become common and accepted among “Christians.”
- Liars, being *seared in their own conscience*, believe their own lies. So lying is a deception, even when the deception is not intended. [For example, the cultists believe their own lies.]

The Attributes of The Devil

1. He is an angel. Therefore, he has no sex-distinction, he does not marry or reproduce, but he can also transverse between this physical realm (or dimension) and the heavenlies.
2. He has a **body**, which may vary in form, but it locates him in only one place at a time.
3. He has a **soul**, in that he is a person with intellect, emotion, and will.
4. He has a **spirit**, with thoughts about morality, purpose, and destiny, which he can act on creatively.
 - His morality is pride, seeing himself as having value independent from God.
 - His purpose and determination are to be his own god.
 - His creativity is used to craftily be *the father of lies*.