

Devils, satans, serpents and dragons

Key verse

- “He who sins is of the devil, for the devil has sinned from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that He might destroy the works of the devil.”

1 John 3:8

The true source of sin

- “But each one is tempted when he is drawn away by his own desires and enticed. Then when desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, brings forth death.” James 1:14-15 See Matt.15:18-20

From the verses above we can see that the real cause of sin is **uncontrolled desire**. You will notice that these verses **do not shift the blame for sin to another source.**

Symbols in Revelation

- “His tail (the dragon) drew the third of the stars of heaven and threw them to the earth...” Rev.12:4

Jesus said that **God's will is done in Heaven** (Matt.6:10). Most of the popular beliefs about the devil being a literal rebellious angel from God's heaven are based on highly symbolic Scripture from Revelation. Most would agree that the “fiery red dragon” of Rev.ch12 **cannot possibly be a literal animal dragon tossing stars to the earth.** This same symbolic “dragon” is then listed as synonymous with **the devil, satan and the serpent** (Rev.12:9, ch20:2). This proves that **all four are being used as symbols depicting something in common.** We cannot say that the dragon is a symbol of the devil, because the dragon and devil are both listed together as symbols. **Symbols cannot be symbols of each other.** We will now see how these symbols represent four forms of sinful human behaviour which are **rebellious to God's way.**

Satan the ‘adversary’

- “But He turned and said to Peter, ‘Get behind Me, Satan! You are an offence to Me, for you are not mindful of the things of God, but the things of men.’” Matt.16:23

Some may be surprised to know that the word “satan” is neither an English word nor a proper name. “Satan” is a Hebrew word that has been **transferred directly** (transliterated) out of the Hebrew into our English Bibles, **rather than being properly translated.** The Hebrew word satan simply means “an adversary”, or somebody who is opposed to you. Peter's reasoning was opposed to what God required, so Jesus rightly called him, “satan”.

Where ‘satan’ is translated

In just a few cases the word satan is properly translated into the English word “adversary” (Num.22:22; 1Sam.29:4; 1Kings 11:14, 23; 2 Sam.19:22; Psa.71:13). Notably the Hebrew word satan is not always used in the evil sense. “Satan” is translated “adversary” in Num.22:22 and **refers to an obedient angel of God who was opposed to Balaam.** Several times in the Psalms the Hebrew word satan is translated “adversaries” to describe David's enemies in a **plural context** (Psa.38:20, ch109:4, v20, v29).

All Scripture quoted on this sheet is from the N.K.J.V.

The ‘false accusing’ devil

- “Jesus answered them, ‘Did I not choose you, the twelve, and one of you is a devil?’” John 6:70

- “Likewise, their wives must be reverent, not slanderers, temperate, faithful in all things.” 1 Tim.3:11

The word “devil” is **not a translation** of the original Greek word “diabolos”, but rather a **short Anglicized form of it.** By definition the Greek word “diabolos” means, “**to falsely accuse**”, “**slander**”, or “**speak maliciously**”, and in all occurrences should have been translated as such. Those whose speech is deceptive or hurtful towards others are in effect “falsely accusing” or “slandering” God's way, and hence in God's sight come to be described by their **actions.** The word “diabolos” is only properly translated three times in Scripture (“slanderers” in 1 Tim.3:11; 2 Tim.3:3 and Titus 2:3 NKJV).

Known by their actions

- “He laid hold of the dragon, that serpent of old, who is the devil and satan, and bound him for a thousand years.” Rev.20:2

- “**Serpents, brood of vipers! How can you escape the condemnation of hell?**” Matt.23:33 See also Rev.12:9

“Devil”, “satan”, “serpent” and “dragon” all represent **sinful habits of life** which are opposed or rebellious to God's Way. Those who practice these bad habits have **come to be identified by their actions ie the person is described as synonymous with their behaviour.** When you think about it, this is a **concise way** of getting a message across without having to repeatedly explain or define a situation. This is one of the reasons why all of us use figures of speech. Jesus called Peter, “**satan**”, Judas, “**a devil**” and the Scribes and Pharisees, “**serpents**”. God styles the king of Egypt, “**the great dragon**” (Ezek.29:3 A.V.). Rev.20:2 is very concisely summing up all those forms of sinful behaviour that have been offensive towards God, ever since the very first sin was committed.

Bound for 1000 years

All of these forms of human rebellion against God are said to be “bound for a thousand years” (Rev.20:2), meaning that finally in the coming kingdom, man's rebellion (sin) will be controlled, his bad habits of life turning to **good habits of life based on God's righteousness.**

Notes

Four forms of sinful rebellion against God's Way

Devil = False accuser, slanderer of God's way. Can refer to individuals or organisations whether political or religious who persecuted Christians. (Roman authorities, 1Pet.5:8; Rev.2:10). Strong's Concordance number 1228 NT

Satan = opposition (adversary) to God or others (Matt.16:23).

Strong's Concordance numbers 7854 O.T. and 4567 NT

Serpent = Cunning deception that can lead others away from God.

“Serpent” is a general term for those who are not God's people (Gen.3:15).

“Serpent” is also used to refer to those who push religious falsehood. (Pharisees, Matt.23:33)

Strong's Concordance numbers 5175, 8314 OT and 3789 NT

Dragon = Rebellion with particular emphasis on the political leadership (Pharaoh Ezek.29:3). Who would be the “dragon of the sea” in the latter days (Isa.27:1)? Who was the “dragon” featured in Rev.ch12?

Some later versions use the word “monster” instead of “dragon”.

Strong's Concordance numbers 8577 OT and 1404 NT