

Satan and His Minions

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In a 2001 study conducted by the Barna Research Group Ltd., only 27% of American adults believe in the reality of Satan. That means that nearly 3 out of 4 people believe Satan is more of a metaphor, or a representation of evil, than he is a real being who can spread evil on earth.

The Biography of Satan

Satan (or the Devil—literally meaning slanderer), is a spirit son of God who was born in the morning of the premortal existence (D&C 76:25-26). Endowed with moral agency, Satan chose the evil part from the beginning, thus placing himself in eternal opposition to the divine will of God our Father.

God created all things, including all beings as his spirit children. Satan, or Lucifer as he was once called, was a spirit son of our Heavenly Father in the premortal existence and enjoyed great stature as a valiant spirit. Satan became angry when Jesus Christ was chosen to be our savior, as Lucifer wanted the glory of this role for himself (Moses 4:1-4). Satan's anger led to a war in heaven (Rev. 12:7). The spirits who followed Satan fought against Jesus Christ and his followers. All those born to the earth are among those who chose Jesus Christ in the premortal existence.

Satan and his Minions Were Cast Out

Because of Satan's rebellion, he and his followers—one third of the spirits of heaven (Rev 12:4)—were cast out. Their punishment was separation from God and loss of any opportunity to take on a mortal body. As the "sons of perdition," these evil spirits were and are eternally damned; there is for them no possibility of forgiveness.

Revelation 12:4 says that these evil spirits were cast down to the earth, the same earth we live in today. Being without a mortal body, these spirits retain their knowledge of their premortal existence and suffer constantly from the knowledge of their loss, which they know is hopelessly eternal.

Satan's Evil Designs on the Children of Men

With Satan as their leader, these lost spirits seek to destroy the plan of our Heaven Father by persuading us continually to break the commandments of God and to do evil. Satan's plan is to deceive us, keep us from returning to our Heavenly Father, and to be miserable as he and his followers are. The scriptures state that Satan seeks "...the misery of all mankind... for he seeketh that all men might be miserable like unto himself" (2 Nephi 2:18, 27).

Satan accomplishes his goals through deception and cunning, leading away many into sin. He is the master deceiver. He is able to imitate the gifts of the spirit, including prophecy, tongues, healings, visions, and other miracles (Gospel Principles, 149 and Exodus 7:8-22). Satan's army of seduced mortals includes false prophets, false healers and miracle workers, fortune tellers, paranormal mediums, and others who engage in practices that lead us away from Christ and the plan of Heavenly Father. God will reveal to those who seek discernment the falsehood of these seduced mortals—people who are under the influence of Satan and are an abomination to the Lord (Isaiah 47:12-14; Deuteronomy 18:9-10).

Satan can use the most subtle means to deceive us. In doing so, he can cause us to give up our freedom of choice: He can tempt us into following him in ways that have terrible—and frequently inevitable—consequences. For instance, Satan leverages our passions and human emotions to lead us into breaking the law of chastity through pre-marital sex, adultery, and yielding to sexual

temptations of same-sex attraction. Satan can accomplish this in degrees by leading people into wearing immodest clothing, encouraging immoral or improper thoughts, viewing or listening to inappropriate movies and music, and performing suggestive acts. He uses lewd distortions of dancing, music, and other delightful activities to bring us into sin. Satan preys especially upon those who are "...lonely, confused, or depressed. He chooses this time of weakness to tempt us..." (Gospel Principles, 250).

Knowledge of Our Pre-existence Aids Satan

When one ponders that these spirits who follow Satan retain their knowledge of their pre-existence, including their knowledge of precisely who we were then and am now, we can begin to understand the seriousness of the struggle. We can know with a deeper understanding the power of temptation and the potential danger from weapons available to Satan to tempt us. This doctrine helps all of us finally understand why unclean spirits in the Bible knew that Jesus Christ was the son of God long before Jesus declared himself: "And unclean spirits, when they saw him, fell down before him, and cried, saying, Thou art the Son of God. And he straightly charged them that they should not make him known" (Mark 3:11-12).

The unclean spirits knew Jesus as the son of God because these spirits retained their knowledge of the premortal existence. Imagine the great power Satan can exercise over us because of his clear memory of us in the premortal existence. We have no such clear memory of him or his minions. No wonder we see so much evil in the world today! Until our memory is restored, we must rely on faith in God, the Atonement of Jesus Christ, and the inspiration of the Holy Ghost. With these and the many spiritual tools available through Christ's Church, we can overcome the memory advantage of Satan. This hope, this confidence sustains us in the fight.

Satan's Influence Will Eventually End

Satan will have the power to tempt us until the second coming of Jesus Christ. During the thousand year reign of Christ before the Final Judgment (known as the millennium), Satan will be bound and have no power to tempt those living on the earth at that time (Rev. 20:2). At the end of millennium, Satan will be set free once again

(Rev. 20:3) as part of a last epic struggle before the final judgment. In that final battle, Satan and his followers will be soundly defeated and cast into outer darkness for all eternity.

Our Heavenly Father has given us clear guidance on how we can avoid the temptation and bondage of Satan. We will never be tempted beyond our capacity to resist (1 Cor. 10:13), but only if we put forth the effort ourselves to pray regularly and petition God for help in resisting the temptations of Satan.

Knowledge of Satan helps us Avoid Temptation

The doctrine of Satan as an angelic being who fell from God's presence creates a valuable awareness of evil. Such awareness can help adults and children better understand how to identify evil and avoid being caught in its Satan's snares.

Christian doctrine provides valuable details on the specific act of disobedience that caused Satan and his followers to fall, along with insights on how Satan and his followers regularly tempt us today. Through modern day scripture one can come to understand Satan's error—how he rebelled against our Heavenly Father's plan of salvation; how in this rebellion, he desired to become the savior of the world in a way that would have robbed mankind of free will and brought us as slaves to universal salvation; and how for this he wished to claim sole glory for himself, with no acknowledgement of Heavenly Father. In short, Satan's great sin was pride, and thus he fell from being son of the morning to being the master of evil.

These details about the nature and mission of Satan give mankind new weapons against him. We know he was a powerful spirit, and we understand the cause of his spectacular fall in the premortal existence. The modern day scriptures that provide this understanding illuminate several ambiguous scriptures found in the Bible. With this knowledge in hand we can know better how to combat evil, because we know more about its source.

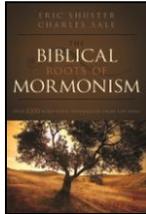
Our roles in the plan of salvation become clearer with this doctrine on Satan. We cease to be spiritual spectators and become soldiers for Christ here-and-now, having been informed of the side we had already taken, the choice we had already made in the premortal existence. We gain confidence in knowing our choice allowed us to ultimately come to the earth and gain a body, while Satan and his followers were cast to the earth without bodies—thus explaining the scriptural accounts of demons taking control of earthly bodies. This knowledge helps us understand the fight that we are in. It helps us stay committed to the fight when times are tough and memory of our choice begins to fade.

Conclusion

The Christian doctrine of Satan provides details and insights that help all of us in our personal struggles with evil. Satan lives, and he and his wicked followers, both spirits and mortals, are hard at work. We must match this work with our own in the name of Jesus Christ, relying on his divine power through the Holy Ghost, to protect ourselves against Satan and his minions.

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