

Transcript 116

Shea Houdmann

Welcome to the Got Questions podcast. We're going to be continuing our series and discussing angelology and demonology today. So if you've not listened to the prior ones we did on what does the Bible say about angels? Was the Bible say about demons? We also did one on Guardian angels. I'd invite you to check those ones out as well, but today we're going to be discussing the question of who is Satan?

Shea Houdmann

And joining me today is Jeff the editor of bibleref.com and Kevin, the managing editor of Got Questions Ministries. So gentlemen, let's start out with this a little, who is Satan? Question seems pretty simple, but at the same time, there are a lot of misconceptions out there. Now we'll start by diving into two passages that we get receive a lot of questions about in the side in Isaiah 14 and Ezekiel 28. Most of the questions will even be have a little antagonistic bent to them and that people, oh these are not about Satan as Isaiah 14 is actually discussing the the king of Babylon. Ezekiel 28 is discussing the King of Tyre. When you read these passages, I think they give us a picture of an angelic being that was evidently the power behind these two kings.

Shea Houdmann

Let me just start by reading these two passages. In Isaiah 14:12 to 15, I'll be reading from the ESV, says how are you falling from heaven oh Daystar, son of Don how are you cut to the ground you who laid the nations low? You said in your heart I will send to heaven above the stars of God, I will set my throne on high. I will sit on the mount of assembly in the far reaches of the north. I will ascend above the heights of the clouds. I will make myself like the most high.

Shea Houdmann

So he just kind of describes a being who wanted to ascend not just to the heavens, but to be actually above God. To be liked the most high. In Ezekiel 28 says you were the signet of perfection, full of wisdom and perfect in beauty. You were in Eden, the Garden of God. Every precious stone was your cover. Not going to bother trying to read the names of all these precious stones, but picture creature adorned with beautiful stones. You were an anointed guardian cherub. I placed you on the mountain of God and the mist of the stones you walked. You were blameless in your ways from the day you were created till unrighteousness was found in you.

Shea Houdmann

So these two passages again describe what I believe is Satan. Who was the power behind these two kings, the King of Tyre, King of Babylon. God is describing both the arrogance of the kings, the human kings, but also the power behind them, and describing Satan was the anointed Cherub, the Guardian cherub. Possibly, most Bible scholars knew Satan before his fall as the highest of all angels, but Satan was not content in that position. He desired more.

Shea Houdmann

Ultimately, according to Isaiah 14, he desired to be God rather than to be the highest of all angels, pointing people towards the worship of God. That's kind of the brief intro, and from there the Bible goes into who Satan is now and so forth. Let's start off and Jeff let me cover some of the popular misconceptions that people have about Satan both from pop culture and even from a poor reading of scripture.

Jeff Laird

Pop culture is interesting in that sense, we've talked in our other podcasts about how things we believe in, in a general sense, in a outside the Bible outside of church sense about things like demons and angels and such is very influenced by pop culture. That's one of the reasons that people think of demons as these monsters or creatures that roam around to do physical damage. They think of Hell, as sort of like a city or a country. That's the polar opposite of heaven. And with Satan it's interesting because we do have some same things that are misconceptions. That are negative. We see things where Satan looks like the a dragon, or this gigantic red creature with horns. There's a famous movie with Tom Cruise and Tim Curry in the 80s that has that sort of depiction of Satan. Huge, muscular, red, big horns, cloven hooves, things like that. Scripture actually describes Satan as being able to look like an Angel of Light and even in that passage the purpose is not to describe a literal physical appearance. Satan's an Angel, originally so he has the same properties that we talked about with angels and demons. He doesn't have any particular native physical form.

Jeff Laird

So that kind of misconception kind of gets to us. The idea that Satan is the polar opposite of God, or that there's this evenly matched wager or bet or contest between Satan or God. The idea that Satan is somehow the king or the mayor of hell. As if hell is a place that he rules or that he is the one in control of and actuality hell is just as much punishment and torment for Satan and the demons as anyone else. The Bible says that's actually what it was created for in the first place.

Jeff Laird

For me one of the things that's interesting is that pop culture actually provides some things about Satan that are at least useful. They're not necessarily perfectly accurate, but they're not without their own value. One of the things that we see very often in movies, and in books, and in stories is the idea of Satan acting as a tempter who convinces somebody to do something that's not really a good idea. He gets them to compromise their better judgment or their morals. He tricks them into doing something of their own free will that turns out not to be a good idea.

Jeff Laird

Or this idea that a person that somebody trusts, they assume as good, they assume as helping them, who is giving them advice, that they like to hear actually turns out to be the devil. Or at least an agent of the devil. A very famous line from a particular film that people have heard is one that we discussed when we talked about the idea of demons. And that's the idea that Satan is very good at strategy. So pop culture, sort of encapsulated that idea by making a reference to saying that the devil's best accomplishment was convincing people that he didn't exist. And that line in that movie fits into the plot and the twists and everything that's in there. But that's actually sort of a a biblically harmonized idea that Satan is not this Godzilla monster. He's not this creature who's just running around out of control.

He's actually this very strategic, tactically minded, intelligent being, whose main goal is to fool people. He's not really out there just to scare people. And in a culture like ours where most people don't think he exists, his best strategy is just to keep people going with that like we see in those movies and those ideas.

Jeff Laird

Now Scripture describes Satan, as being somebody who is dangerous. He is somebody that we need to be careful of. So just because he appears like an Angel of light, just because he seems to be somebody who's not a threat, does not mean that he's somebody that we can take lightly. Just because he's not some sort of major monster, so pop culture gives us something, but the real meat we get is from scripture.

Kevin Stone

What makes Satan such a dangerous being really has to do with several aspects of his personhood. And when we say that Satan is a person, we're not saying that he has a physical body, but we are saying that he has elements of personhood. He has personality. So the Bible presents him not as an impersonal force. Just, you know, an evil force that's existing in the universe, but he's a personal being. That is, he has a mind, he has emotions, he has a will, and then of course he's very powerful. Scripture presents him as powerful as well, and so he's very dangerous. He has the power, but he's got this incredible intelligence. He has a will that is set against God's will. And he has a hatred for all that God does, including God's creation, he has a hatred for us, has a hatred for everything that God has done. And you meld those four things together at intelligence, malice, power, and a commitment to oppose God. And you've got an adversary that frankly we need help with. We need to help to fight him.

Kevin Stone

Some things in life are just too powerful for us. A lion for example, and it's interesting that Scripture uses the lion as a metaphor for some of Satan's actions in this world, in his nature. First Peter 5 verse 8 be alert and of sober mind. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion seeking for someone to devour. So you've got a hungry, roaring, lion on the loose, and that's not something that I want to tangle with. If I met a roaring, hungry lion on the loose, then I would probably be calling somebody for help. 'cause I would not want to take this animal on by myself. So who am I going to call? Well I want I want the one person who can defeat this spiritual lion. We have a picture of Samson in Scripture of defeating a physical lion, but I want the one who is more powerful than Samson. I want the Lord Jesus Christ, the one who has all power and who is has promised to help his children.

Kevin Stone

Another example of something that's just too powerful for us to take on by ourselves would be Leviathan and this particular creature is mentioned in Job chapter 41. In fact, God spends the whole chapter there describing this great creature. And ask some rhetorical questions of job. Can you tame Leviathan? Can you put a leash on him and make a pet of him? You're going to take him home and give him to your daughters? No, the answer is in fact. Then God says if you lay a hand on it, you will remember the struggle and never do it again. Any hope of subduing it is false. The mere sight of it is overpowering, and no one is fierce enough to rouse it.

Kevin Stone

A little bit later on God says this. Nothing on earth is leviathan's equal. A creature without fear. It looks down in all that are haughty. It is a king over all that are proud. Now in Job 41, God is not trying to link that to Satan at all, but later on in Scripture, in the Book of Revelation, Satan is called that great dragon, the ancient serpent that deceived the whole world. We also have a picture there in Revelation Chapter 12 of Michael and his angels fighting against this dragon, but even Michael the Archangel as he is disputing with Satan in the book of Jude, he dares not condemn him, but says the Lord, rebuke you.

Kevin Stone

So if Michael the Archangel needs help in his fight against Satan, how much more do we need help? Michael called on the Lord to come to his aid. And so should we. We need to take this spiritual battle against our enemy, the devil. We need to take our battle to the Lord and say, Lord, I, I need your help. You are the only one who can defeat this dragon, this lion, Satan is more powerful than we are. He's smarter than we are. He's got, he's got a stronger will than we have and we need help in defeating him and thwarting his plan in our lives. That one who rescues us is the Lord Jesus Christ.

Shea Houdmann

And then I look at the passage in Jude as well. If if Michael, who I'm presumably is now, the most powerful of all angels, he's the only one referred to in the Bible as an Archangel. If even he called on the Lord to rebuke Satan. Whenever I hear of those involved in whether it's the deliverance ministry or to spiritual warfare in general, rebuking Satan and doing so in their own presumed power. But that's it's very dangerous when we're talking about potentially other than God, the most powerful being in the universe. So relying on our own strength to do that is foolish to say the least.

Shea Houdmann

Then when I look at a passage like John 10 where it describes the thief and Jesus says, the thief comes only to steal, and kill, and destroy and contrasting that with himself. I have come that they may have life and have it to the full. Look at Satan. His goals are to to steal to steal everything we have in Christ, to make us ineffective to kill to if possible, literally destroy our lives. It's a reminder that his temptations, while they may seem, I guess, a temptation that's tempting. In the end, Satan's goal is to destroy us. Nothing he does is for our best interest, and that's very, very important for us to remember. Spiritual warfare, whether it's with Satan or with his host of demons, we are to rely on God's strength. The one who can overcome.

Shea Houdmann

First, John talks about greater is He who is in you than he was in the world. So our strength and fighting Satan, fighting his demons comes from the Lord, not from within ourselves. Yes, in the name of Christ we we do have the authority to rebuke, but it has to be done in the name and the power of Christ, not of our own strengths. And that's very, very important for us to remember.

Shea Houdmann

And that's based on the questions we receive. That's an error I see a lot of people making and thinking that they themselves can rebuke Satan, can overcome him on their own strengths. No, we can, but only in the strength with help of the Lord and we have to remember that.

Jeff Laird

Yeah, that context is really important that in passages James 4:7 talks about resisting the devil, and he will flee from you. All those passages, they what they're really presenting, is that context that a person who has Christ within them, who has God on their side. Can rely on God's power and our role is not to, you know, try to do something like a superhero or cast some spell or take it on ourselves to think that we can get into a fistfight with Satan. What we really need to do is recognize that when it's just our power versus his power. That's not even a contest. There's no way in any sense that that's going to work, there's even passages of the Bible that talk about how silly it is for people to blasphemes some of these creatures in the sense of speaking about them with with a sneering attitude, or, or a disrespect. Like there's something that you can just slap around it's.

Jeff Laird

This is something that we should take seriously. We can resist. We can hold up against these elements of spiritual warfare, but we can't do that if we're assuming that we're doing that through our own ability in our own power. We have to do that with the assumption that insofar as I rely on God's power, Christ's power in me I can resist these things.

Kevin Stone

The Bible gives us some helpful tips in our spiritual battle. It gives us some commands as we go through this world and we face the tempter. We face the evil one, this one who is seeking someone to devour. Well First Peter 5 verse eight, which I've already read just a minute ago. But that gives us the instruction to be sober minded and watchful or vigilant. So we need to take this seriously. We are in a spiritual battle and we need to. We need to be watchful and vigilant for the tactics of Satan.

Kevin Stone

James 4 verse seven, you guys have already mentioned this as well, but this is the passage that says resist the devil and he will flee from you. But the first part of that verse, the command that comes right before resist the devil, is submit yourselves to God. That's very important. As we submit to God's power, we submit to God's will, or following his word, we're obeying him. And in that context, we are resisting the devil and then we have the promise that he will, he will flee. A committed believer who is walking in fellowship with the Lord is going to have overcoming power over Satan's temptations.

Kevin Stone

And then of course, Ephesians Chapter 6, how we are given by God grace the armor of God, where with we can take our stand against the devil, and if I could just read verses 10 down to verse 18 here. This whole context that helps us to have the equipment that we need to in our spiritual battles. Verse 10 says finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. Put on the full armor of God so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes. For our struggle is not against flesh and blood. But against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this Dark World, and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms. Therefore, put on the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil

comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you've done everything to stand, stand firm, then with the belt of truth buckled around your waist, with the breastplate of righteousness in place and with your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace. In addition to all this, take up the shield of faith with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the spirit, which is the word of God, and pray in the spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests.

Kevin Stone

So this resistance that we have against the devil is firm and steadfast. It presented as items of defensive protection that we have. We were given one offensive weapon, as is often pointed out, we are given the sword of the spirit. That is our one offensive weapon. If we're trying to take the offense against the devil with anything other than the sword of the spirit, the word of God, then we're setting ourselves up for failure. Taking these passages together in response to Satan's attacks, we are to submit to God. God, and as we obey him, we take up our spiritual armor that God has given us the righteousness and the truth and the gospel and all the rest, and we rely on God's power through prayer.

Kevin Stone

And I love how in Ephesians 6 we have over and over a command to stand firm. I think I counted four of them. Take your stand and verse 11. Stand your ground verse 13. Stand in verse 13. Stand firm in verse 14. So we are not to run from the battle. We are to submit to God, put on the armor, pray in the spirit and stand, stand firm. We have that sword of the spirit. We have the promises of God, we have the help of our Savior, our Redeemer, the Lord Jesus Christ as well. And so the battle is the Lords.

Shea Houdmann

It's interesting that you bring up that passage, and Melissa is currently at a vacation Bible school doing a lesson on the sword of the Spirit. So we're we're talking about this a lot the past couple days. I remember several years ago when I did something similar at a church and big group of kids. My a friend of mine has a real sword, I think it's a replica of Excalibur. What doesn't really matter. But just like pulling out the sword from the sheath with making that metal on metal sound and like seeing the kids eyes. And my point was what do you want to use as your offensive weapon? If it's anything short of the word of God is going to be completely ineffective, and of course, the perfect scriptural illustration of this is when the devil tempted Jesus, recorded in Matthew Chapter 4, and each time, with each temptation, Jesus responded with Scripture, showing us him using the sword of the spirit, and this is a full armor of God as a powerful reminder to us as to what's our defense and what's our offense? We often get those things mixed up and again back to the point earlier. If we're using the word of God, where we're relying on the power of God rather than ourselves and so that's the hugely powerful reminder.

Shea Houdmann

And then Jeff, you brought up two points earlier, I just wanted to touch on briefly. First is the whole idea of like a dualism. I see a lot of people asking us questions, have this mistaken idea that God and Satan are somehow equals. That God is good and Satan is evil and they're constantly battling, trying to get the upper hand, is like that's not what Scripture says.

Shea Houdmann

There's the famous song by Hillsong called what a beautiful name and one of the lyrics in that it says you have no rival referring to God and you have no equal. Well, it's only half true because God does have a rival. Satan is definitely a rival in the sense that he's combating with God. God is not an equal. Satan is in no sense and equally does not have omniscience, does not have omnipotence, does not have omnipresence, does not have any of the attributes that make God who he is. Satan is a finite being, a very powerful being, but a finite being. So let's not get into this yin Yang type of concept where there's two equal forces battling it out. No. God is in control. Nothing Satan can do can prevent God from accomplishing his purposes, and that's a very powerful reminder.

Shea Houdmann

And then even Jeff you mentioned also the idea that Satan somehow the Master of Hell. See so many pictures where Satan is like sitting on the throne of Hell or Satan is torturing people. I even remembered some like Bugs Bunny cartoons from when I was a kid. That picture this as Satan is not the ruler of hell. Well Revelation chapter 20 verse 11 verse 10. Sorry. Says and the devil, who deceived them, was thrown into the lake of fire, where the beast and false prophet had been thrown. They will be tormented day and night forever and ever.

Shea Houdmann

Satan is not the torturer in hell Satan is not the one doing the punishment. No Satan will be punished just as everyone else who is in hell and perhaps due to Satan's lofty position and possibly knew God better than any other being in all of creation, and yet still rebelled. Satan's punishment is probably worse, so let's also remember Satan is not the Lord of Hell. Satan is not in some exalted position in in hell no Satan will be tormented for his rebellion against God, along with everyone else. And that's two important reminders for who Satan is and who he is not.

Jeff Laird

That, to me, is something that's that's always been curious. It's it's good to remember to avoid those non biblical attitudes, because they do lead us into the wrong directions. And we can, we can have that dualism attitude and think that just because we say in Jesus name that that's a magic spell and we get it, we can think that just because we say not today Satan. That means that that somehow means something. But we also don't want to be in that mode of saying the devil made me do it where we try to pretend like we're just so helpless against him that we can't do anything. Where where Scripture does leave things open that is interesting are questions like that.

Jeff Laird

For me, I I recognize that there are aspects of reality, of creation, of God's nature, and the nature of spiritual things that he just does not need to fully explain to me, either because I couldn't understand them or because they're just not that relevant.

Jeff Laird

I find myself intensely curious about that question that you raised. Which is, if Satan has at least intellectually more knowledge, better understanding of God than we could. What is what's the angle? Why is he doing what he's doing? Now my human mind can think of some reasons that even if he knew for a fact, he would fail, that he would still do that. pure spite or whatever else. But those things are are

curious and they're interesting, but I don't want to go down a rabbit trail with those and start making assumptions that lead me into unbiblical ideas.

Jeff Laird

What I accept is what scripture actually tells me and I'll trust that when the time comes I'll know what I need to know about that. And even then, that might be nothing. But I know that the power that I have to resist Satan's temptation comes through Christ, and that when I don't take advantage of that, that's not God's fault. And that's not even really Satan's fault. That's that's my fault, and that's how I have to approach it.

Shea Houdmann

Exactly. Great conversation. Whenever answering a question or writing an article, anything related to Satan and demons I always spend some time in prayer because I recognize the reality of the spiritual battle. Satan doesn't want the truth about who he is and what he can and can't do out there, so.

Shea Houdmann

Please hear our main encouragement and this is to have a biblical viewpoint of who Satan is. Study the scriptures on what Satan's agenda is and how to combat that. It doesn't do us any good to have, to buy into fabrications or falsehoods from popular culture or from other religions or cults who have a different view who Satan is. But let's draw our understanding of who he is from Scripture and focus on that. To combat him the right way using the full armor of God to remember ultimately that God is in control and is as powerful as Satan is, he is nothing in comparison to God.

Shea Houdmann

In closing I get people who ask questions that should I pray silently so that Satan can't hear my prayers? It's like it doesn't matter if Satan can hear your prayers. One he's not omnipresent or omniscient. There's no way he could hear everyone praying at the same time. But even if he could, Satan is incapable of stopping God from answering your prayers. Let that be a reminder that satan limits. That's not given more credit than he's due in terms of what he can and can not do.

Shea Houdmann

But again, please study the scriptures. Please examine everything we've shared today to make sure that what we've said matches what the Bible says. That satan is powerful, is a dangerous enemy, but he is nothing in comparison to God.

Shea Houdmann

So Jeff, Kevin, thank you for joining me today. It's been a fruitful conversation. Hope our commentary, I guess has been encouraging to you. This is the Got Questions podcast on who is satan. Got questions? The Bible has answers. We'll help you find them.