

Satan's Role in the New Covenant

Romans 16:20

By David B. Curtis

If we are going to understand Satan's role in the New Covenant, we must be willing to clear our minds of all the myths and legends that we have heard about Satan and look closely at what the Scriptures teach.

There is a myth that Satan is God's equal opponent- as if God is constantly battling Satan for sovereignty. Talking about the subject of salvation, I once heard a preacher say, "God votes for you, Satan votes against you, and you cast the deciding vote." I think that is how many people see it, like God and Satan are battling over the souls of men- as if they are equal and opposite foes. What does the Bible teach?

It teaches that **God is Sovereign.**

Romans 16:20 (NKJV) And the God of peace will crush Satan under your feet shortly. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you. Amen.

Paul tells the Romans that God is about to crush Satan. If we look at the first appearance of Satan in the Bible, we see him coming under God's judgment:

Genesis 3:14-15 (NKJV) 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. 15 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."

To help us understand this, let's look at a couple of other translations:

Genesis 3:15 (NIV) And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; he will crush your head, and you will strike his heel."

Genesis 3:15 (GWT) I will make you and the woman hostile toward each other. I will make your descendants and her descendant hostile toward each other. He will crush your head, and you will bruise his heel."

Who is the "he" in this text? We all know that this text is talking about Jesus. Satan will bruise Christ's heel but, Christ will crush Satan's head.

In the gospels we see Christ's complete control over Satan and his demons. Jesus Christ is God, and only God is omnipotent.

Revelation 19:6 (NKJV) And I heard, as it were, the voice of a great multitude, as the sound of many waters and as the sound of mighty thunderings, saying, "Alleluia! For the Lord God Omnipotent reigns!"

The Bible teaches that **God is sovereign**. By sovereign we mean that God possesses and exercises supreme authority and control in all creation, including man.

1 Chronicles 29:11-13 (NKJV) Yours, O LORD, is the greatness, The power and the glory, The victory and the majesty; For all that is in heaven and in earth is Yours; Yours is the kingdom, O LORD, And You are exalted as head over all. 12 Both riches and honor come from You, And You reign over all. In Your hand is power and might; In Your hand it is to make great And to give strength to all. 13 "Now therefore, our God, We thank You And praise Your glorious name.

Isaiah 46:9-11 (NKJV) Remember the former things of old, For I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is none like Me, 10 Declaring the end from the beginning, And from ancient times things that are not yet done, Saying, 'My counsel shall stand, And I will do all My pleasure,' 11 Calling a bird of prey from the east, The man who executes My counsel, from a far country. Indeed I have spoken it; I will also bring it to pass. I have purposed it; I will also do it.

Psalms 115:3 (NKJV) But our God is in heaven; He does whatever He pleases.

God calls ALL the shots, He rules over all.

Isaiah 40:25-26 (NKJV) "To whom then will you liken Me, Or to whom shall I be equal?" says the Holy One. 26 Lift up your eyes on high, And see who has created these things, Who brings out their host ("the starry host" NIV) by number; He calls them all by name, By the greatness of His might And the strength of His power; Not one is missing.

God has the POWER to speak the universe into existence; to fill the oceans and scatter the stars through space; to stack mountains to the summit; to ignite the sun that maintains all life; to create man in his own likeness. God did it ALL.

The Scriptures show us that God exercises sovereign rule over all the physical universe; over plant and animal creation; over the nations of the earth; and over all individuals and angels including Satan:

Job 1:8-12 (NKJV) Then the LORD said to Satan, "Have you considered My servant Job, that there is none like him on the earth, a blameless and upright man, one who fears God and shuns evil?" 9 So Satan answered the LORD and said, "Does Job fear God for nothing? 10 "Have You not made a hedge around him, around his household, and around all that he has on every side? You have blessed the work of his hands, and his possessions have increased in the land. 11 "But now, stretch out Your hand and touch all that he has, and he will surely curse You to Your face!" 12 And the LORD said to Satan, "Behold, all that he has is in your power; only do not lay a hand on his person." So Satan went out from the presence of the LORD.

Here we see that Satan is not an equal and opposite foe of God, Satan is subordinate to God. God tells Satan what to do and he does it. Satan is not omnipotent, his power is limited by what God allows him to do.

Another very prominent myth believed by many is that **Satan is everywhere** - he is omnipresent. How often have you heard someone say, "Satan never misses a church service"? A pastor said this in a message, "The Devil is real, real enough, but he is limited in power. He is the Tempter in the book of Job, the distraction, the quick fix and the short cut. He is even the half-price doughnut in the shop window to the overweight curate. The Devil persists in placing temptations in our way, and inviting us to turn from loving God. That is the power he has. In fact, that is all the power he has."

We often talk about him tempting us as if he can be everywhere at once. There is, however, only one being who can be everywhere at once; God.

Jeremiah 23:24 (NKJV) Can anyone hide himself in secret places, So I shall not see him?" says the LORD; "Do I not fill heaven and earth?" says the LORD.

Psalms 139:7-8 (NKJV) Where can I go from Your Spirit? Or where can I flee from Your presence? 8 If I ascend into heaven, You are there; If I make my bed in hell, behold, You are there.

God is omnipresent - all of God is in every place. All other beings known to man, including angels and demons, are restricted to a given place at a given time. When they are here, they are not there.

Satan is neither omnipotent nor omnipresent. We might be tempted to think of Satan on the same level as Jesus, but the Bible teaches that Jesus Christ is the Creator and Satan is a created being.

Another common myth is that Satan is the source of all our trials, problems, and difficulties. Back in the late 60's and early 70's, Flip Wilson had a saying: "The devil made me do it". And more recently Andrea Yates, the mother that killed her five children, said the same thing. She said that the devil made her do it. Is the devil the cause all our problems?

A commonly held view in modern christendom is that Satan is behind all the destructive and bad things that happen to us. But we already saw that God is sovereign and whatever happens in the universe happens because God wants it to:

Psalms 115:3 (NKJV) But our God is in heaven; He does whatever He pleases.

Since this is true, then God is responsible for the destructive and painful things that happen in our lives, not Satan. Do we charge God with wrong when we say this? To answer this question from the Bible, look with me at what Satan said to God in:

Job 1:11-12 (NKJV) "But now, stretch out Your hand and touch all that he has, and he will surely curse You to Your face!" 12 And the LORD said to Satan, "Behold, all that he has is in your power; only do not lay a hand on his person." So Satan went out from the presence of the LORD.

Satan asks God to stretch out his hand against Job. God responds by giving Job over to Satan's power. Notice what happens:

Job 1:19 (NKJV) "and suddenly a great wind came from across the wilderness and struck the four corners of the house, and it fell on the young people, and they are dead; and I alone have escaped to tell you!"

Who caused this wind that killed these young people? The text doesn't tell us who caused the wind to blow, but Job does:

Job 1:21 (NKJV) And he said: "Naked I came from my mother's womb, And naked shall I return there. The LORD gave, and the LORD has taken away; Blessed be the name of the LORD."

What had the "Lord" taken away? Well, for one thing, his children. Job says that God was responsible for the death of all his children. Was Job wrong in making this statement? Was it sin for Job to blame God for this? God's Word answers this question in the very next verse:

Job 1:22 (NKJV) In all this Job did not sin nor charge God with wrong.

The Bible clearly teaches that God, and not Satan, has power over life and death:

1 Samuel 2:6 (NKJV) "The LORD kills and makes alive; He brings down to the grave and brings up.

We want to blame everything that we feel is "bad" on Satan. But Scripture teaches that God controls everything, including sin:

Isaiah 45:7 (NKJV) I form the light and create darkness, I make peace and create (evil) calamity; I, the LORD, do all these things.'

The word translated here as: "calamity", is better translated: "evil". Now, when you say that God causes evil, most Christians go into paroxysms. Yet, the whole Bible is filled with this idea. Evil is something that most Christians would associate with Satan, not God.

One commentator remarks on the word "evil" in this text by saying, "The Hebrew '*ra*' is translated: 'sorrow, wretchedness, adversity, afflictions, calamities,' **but is never translated: 'sin.'** God created evil only in the sense that he made sorrow, wretchedness and so forth, to be the sure fruits of sin."

How could he have made such a statement? He must have examined every instance of "*ra*" in the Hebrew text and have determined that in no case is it translated sin. If he, in fact, did study ever use of "*ra*" in the Hebrew text, he would have had to have noticed that "*ra*" in Genesis 6:5 and in a number of other places is translated: "wickedness." In fact, "*ra*" is translated: "wickedness" some 50 times in the Old Testament.

Let's look at several places in Scripture where "*ra*" is translated as: "evil".

Genesis 2:9 (NKJV) And out of the ground the LORD God made every tree grow that is pleasant to the sight and good for food. The tree of life was also in the midst of the garden, and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

Genesis 2:17 (NKJV) "but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die."

The word "evil" in these verses is "*ra*". Is this a knowledge of sorrow and calamity? No, it is primarily a knowledge of disobedience in sin.

Genesis 3:5 (NKJV) "For God knows that in the day you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil."

Genesis 3:22 (NKJV) Then the LORD God said, "Behold, the man has become like one of Us, to know good and evil. And now, lest he put out his hand and take also of the tree of life, and eat, and live forever";

These verses refer as much to sin as they do to its punishment. What ever excuse can be given for excluding sin but retaining punishment in these verses is dispelled in Genesis 6:5 which is clearly a reference to sin.

Genesis 6:5 (NKJV) Then the LORD saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.

God didn't see adversity or calamity in their hearts, he saw sinful thoughts. "*Ra*" as used here clearly means: "sin". The same is true of:

Genesis 8:21 (NKJV) And the LORD smelled a soothing aroma. Then the LORD said in His heart, "I will never again curse the ground for man's sake, although the imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth; nor will I again destroy every living thing as I have done.

Toward the end of Genesis "*ra*" refers to an alleged thief, many sins from which the angel had redeemed Jacob, and three times the brothers sin against Joseph. You can study the whole Old Testament for yourself, and you will see that "*ra*" often means: "sin as distinct from its punishment".

2 Chronicles 29:6 (NKJV) "For our fathers have trespassed and done evil in the eyes of the LORD our God; they have forsaken Him, have turned their faces away from the dwelling place of the LORD, and turned their backs on Him.

2 Chronicles 33:6 (NKJV) Also he caused his sons to pass through the fire in the Valley of the Son of Hinnom; he practiced soothsaying, used witchcraft and sorcery, and consulted mediums and spiritists. He did much evil in the sight of the LORD, to provoke Him to anger.

"Ra" certainly means: "sin" in these verses. And the Bible teaches that God created it and foreordained it:

Amos 3:6 (NKJV) If a trumpet is blown in a city, will not the people be afraid? If there is calamity (ra') in a city, will not the LORD have done it?

God is in absolute control of everything that happens, both good and evil. God is sovereign. You understand that, don't you? I think you do, but do you understand that his **sovereignty extends to our suffering, trials, and problems?** It is not Satan that brings these things. It is biblically wrong to say that God merely **permits** suffering and problems. They are something that God is actively involved in. The Westminster Confession of Faith puts it this way:

God, from all eternity, did, by the most wise and holy counsel of his own will, freely, and unchangeably ordain whatsoever comes to pass (chapter 3, section 1).

The Bible puts it this way:

Ephesians 1:11 (NKJV) In Him also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestined according to the purpose of Him who works all things according to the counsel of His will,

God doesn't permit, he ordains! When we say that God permits something to happen, we often mean that God, in his heart of hearts, doesn't want a thing to happen but will allow it for some reason. This is not biblical. God works all things according to the counsel of His will. Or, as the NIV puts it, "*Him who works out everything in conformity with the purpose of his will.*" God does not merely permit our suffering and problems, he planned

them. All that comes to pass in our lives is according to the eternal plan of the all-wise, all - powerful, and all - loving great God and our father.

The sovereignty of God is absolute, irresistible, infinite. God does as He pleases, only as He pleases, always as He pleases; whatever takes place in time is but the outworking of that which He decreed in eternity. So when you have problems, trials, pain, and suffering in your life it's not because of Satan, it is God who sovereignly controls all things.

God used Satan in the Old Covenant to carry out his will as we saw in Job. But Satan never did anything apart from the will of God. If Satan could act independently of God, God would not be sovereign.

We saw in Genesis 3:15 that God told Satan that He would "*crush his head*". We know this to be a prophecy of Christ destroying Satan. **But when does it happen?** Most Christians look for this event to happen at a future day when the earth and everything physical is destroyed. Perhaps a review of the scriptures will help clarify the matter:

Romans 16:20 (NKJV) And the God of peace will crush Satan under your feet shortly. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you. Amen.

The KJV uses the word "bruise" instead of "crush." The Greek word used here is *suntribo*, it means: "to crush completely, i.e. to shatter".

When is it that Satan is to be crushed completely? It's at the end of the Old Covenant, when the Lord returned in judgement on Israel. Paul said here to the Roman Christians that it would happen "**shortly**". The Greek word translated "shortly" is *tachos*. According to Arndt and Gingrich Lexicon, *tachos* is used in the LXX and certain non-canonical writings to mean: "speed, quickness, swiftness, haste." Paul uses this same word in:

Philippians 2:19 (NKJV) But I trust in the Lord Jesus to send Timothy to you shortly, that I also may be encouraged when I know your state.

Paul says that he hopes to send Timothy "**shortly.**" How soon is "shortly"? If you look at verse 23 he tells us:

Philippians 2:23 (NKJV) Therefore I hope to send him at once, as soon as I see how it goes with me.

I think that what Paul is saying here is, "As soon as I hear the outcome of my trial, I'm going to send him so you will know what is happening in my life." The Philippians were concerned about Paul, and he wanted to keep them informed. He was going to send Timothy to them just as soon as he knew the results of his trial.

The Bible says that Paul will send Timothy "shortly." Are you excited about Timothy's soon arrival? Why not? I don't know of any Christians that are looking for Timothy to arrive soon. Christians understand that Paul was speaking to the Philippians in the first century when he said this. They don't understand the "shortly" to be to them but to the Philippians of the first century. Why then, when it comes to the crushing of Satan, do they not take "shortly" in its first century context?

Christians expected Timothy to show up in Philippi in the first century, but they don't believe Paul that Satan was "crushed" in the first century. We must work to be more consistent in our hermeneutics.

Remember, **audience relevance!** Do you think that the believers at Rome could have conceived of 2,000 plus years as shortly? If it was to be some 2,000 plus years, how could he crush him under "**their**" feet? The people to whom this was written are dust now, they have no feet.

I believe that Satan is a defeated foe. I believe this because I believe in inspiration. Paul told the first century Roman Christians that Satan would soon be crushed completely. If Satan is still around than we have a problem with inspiration which is a huge problem, because if the Bible is not inspired by God, it is of no value to us.

Hebrews 2:14 (NKJV) Inasmuch then as the children have partaken of flesh and blood, He Himself likewise shared in the same, that through death He might destroy him who had the power of death, that is, the devil,

One of the aspects of Christ's earthly mission was to destroy the devil. The Greek word for destroy is *katargeo*, which means: "to be entirely idle (useless), lit. or fig.--abolish, cease, destroy, do away, make of no effect, bring to nought". **Was Christ a failure in this mission?** Most Christians act like he was, they're still all worried about the devil. I think we want him to still be around so we have someone to blame for our sin.

1 John 3:8 (NKJV) 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.

The Greek word for "destroy" is *luo*, which means: "to loosen, destroy, dissolve, put off". Christ is said to have destroyed the devil and his works. Do you believe the Bible?

Colossians 2:15 (NKJV) Having disarmed principalities and powers, He made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them in it.

According to my Bible, Satan is a defeated foe. Jesus Christ has conquered the devil.

The Lord Jesus accomplish what he came to do, and the Book of Revelation is the story of this accomplishment. The Lord's Day is the Day of the Lord's Wrath - not Sunday. It was the day that John the Baptist spoke about:

Luke 3:7 (NKJV) Then he said to the multitudes that came out to be baptized by him, "Brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come?"

Satan is no longer the "god of the age". Jesus now has the keys of death and Hades (Rev 1:18). In Chap 12 the devil stands before the woman to devour her son when he is born, but he is caught up to heaven to the throne of God. There is a war in heaven which Satan loses and he is thrown down to the earth. He knows that his time is short so persecutes

the woman and her seed. I believe this chapter sums up the great events of the generation of Jesus and his apostles. We see Satan's judgement in:

Revelation 20:10 (NKJV) The devil, who deceived them, was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone where the beast and the false prophet are. And they will be tormented day and night forever and ever.

What was Christ's purpose in becoming a man to die for our sins? Was it to restore man to the original garden paradise? Was His purpose to restore man in a perfect physical state free from disease and death? No! Christ's mission was a spiritual one that restores man to his relationship with God by making provision for sin and eternal death. So when we read in Rev 21 that the new heaven and new earth have come down and God dwells in the midst of it, we are reading about the completion of Christ's work for us. The real paradise of God has been restored. No sin is there; the blood of Christ covers it. No death is there; all things are made new. Those who are in Christ Jesus today have entered into this new relationship.

People are unable to accept that the Kingdom of God is a present reality. They look at the physical and think that Satan still exists. But in reality, Satan has been crushed. Satan has no power in the New Covenant, he is in the Lake of fire.

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