



## Is Satan the God of this World?

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Christians will use all types of excuses to keep themselves out of today's religious-moral-cultural battles. One of the most diabolical excuses is to claim that Satan is the rightful god of this world. This translates into believing that this world is demonic. Let's see what the Bible actually says about this.

Satan is a creature. Like all creatures, he has certain limitations. Even under the Old Covenant, Satan had to be granted permission by God before he could act ([Job 1:6-12](#); [2:1-7](#)). Satan's limitations have been multiplied since the crucifixion, resurrection, and ascension of Jesus.

The Bible shows us that if we “**resist the devil he will flee from**” us ([James 4:7](#)). The only power that Satan has over the Christian is the power we give him and the power granted to him by God ([2 Cor. 12:7-12](#)). Scripture tells us that Satan is **defeated**, **disarmed**, and **spoiled** ([Col. 2:15](#); [Rev. 12:7-8](#); [Mark 3:23-27](#)). He has “**fallen**” ([Luke 10:18](#)) and was “**thrown down**” ([Rev. 12:9](#)). He was “**crushed**” under the feet of the early Christians, and by implication, under the feet of all Christians throughout the ages ([Rom. 16:20](#)). He has lost “**authority**” over Christians ([Col. 1:13](#)). He has been “**judged**” ([John 16:11](#)). He cannot “**touch**” a Christian ([1 John 5:18](#)). His works have been destroyed ([1 John 3:8](#)). He has “**nothing**” ([John 14:30](#)). He must “**flee**” when “**resisted**” ([James 4:7](#)). He is “**bound**” ([Mark 3:27](#); [Luke 11:20](#)). Finally, the gates of hell “**shall not overpower**” the advancing church of the Lord Jesus Christ ([Matt. 16:18](#)).<sup>[1]</sup> Surely Satan is alive, but he is not well on planet earth.

So then, what does Paul mean when he describes Satan as “**the god of this world**,” actually, “of this age”? ([2 Cor. 4:4](#)). To hear some people tell it, this verse teaches that Satan has all power and authority in this dispensation and in the locale of planet earth. Where God is the God of

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<sup>1</sup> [1] The material on Satan was taken from Jay E. Adams, *The Christian Counselor's Manual* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1973), 126-27.

heaven and of the age to come, Satan is the god of this world and this present evil age. This dualistic view of the universe may be part of Greek philosophy, but it has no place in biblical theology.

While it's true that the devil is said to be the god of this age,<sup>[2]</sup> we know that God is "the King of the ages" (1 Tim. 1:17). Paul is simply stating that Satan is the chosen god of those who deny Jesus as God's rightful heir of all things (Matt. 22:1-14). These are the true antichrists (2 John 2:7; 1 John 2:18, 22). Jesus is in possession of "all authority," in both *heaven* and *earth* (Matt. 28:18-20). In addition, we know that Satan's power has not increased since Job's day. He is still a permission-seeking creature. This is especially true under the new and better covenant inaugurated by Jesus Christ. As the above verses make clear, Satan is a second-class creature who has been cast out and judged: "The ruler of this world shall be cast out" (John 12:31); "the ruler of this world has been judged" (16:11).

What, then, does the apostle mean when he describes Satan as "the god of this age"? First, we must never allow one passage to finalize our understanding of a particular doctrine. Scripture must be compared with Scripture. There are no contradictions. Therefore, we can't have the Bible saying of the one true God, "I am the LORD, and there is no other; besides Me there is no God" (Isa. 45:5) and then making Satan a rival god. Paul must have something else in mind. We can't say that Satan has been judged and cast out, something that does not happen to gods, and still maintain that he is the god of this world similar to the way Jehovah is God of this world. Paul is making a theological point. For example, Jesus tells the Pharisees that the devil is their father (John 8:44). We know that Satan is not their biological father. Rather, he is their *spiritual* father in that they rejected their true Father and His Son, Jesus Christ.

Physically these Jews, to be sure, are children of Abraham; but spiritually and morally—and *that* was the issue—they are the children of the devil.<sup>[3]</sup>

Jesus is describing the devil as one who gives birth to a worldview, a worldview that includes lying and murder. In this sense, Satan is their *spiritual* father. In the same way, Satan is a god to those who cling to the fading glory of Moses, "the ministry of death" (2 Cor. 3:7). This is the age over which he is a god, an age that "has no glory on account of the glory that surpasses it" (v. 10).

Second, the devil is chosen as a god by "those who are perishing," and he must blind them before they will follow him: "The god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelieving,

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<sup>2</sup> The Greek word in this passage is "age" (Gr. *aion*).

<sup>3</sup> William Hendriksen, *Exposition of the Gospel According to John*, 2 vols. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1953-54), 2:60.

that they *might not see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God*" (2 Cor. 4:4). This passage teaches that unbelievers are *fooled* into believing that "*the old covenant*" where the "*veil remains unlifted*" is the way to life (v. 14). Satan is the god of the "*ministry of death.*" The "god of this age" keeps them in bondage, "*but whenever a man turns to the Lord, the veil is taken away*" (v. 16). Liberty from the ministry of death only comes where the Spirit of Lord is: "*Now the Lord is the Spirit; and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty*" (v. 17). But Satan has blinded the eyes of the unbelieving so they cannot see the lifted veil. They are still trusting in the shadows of the Old Covenant.

Third, like idols in general, the devil is "by nature" not a god (Gal. 4:8; cf. Deut. 32:17; Ps. 96:5; Isa. 44:9-20; 1 Cor. 8:4; 10:20). In Philippians 3:19, Paul tells us that those who are "*enemies of the cross of Christ*" worship "*their appetite*": "*For many walk, of whom I often told you, and now tell you even weeping, that they are enemies of the cross of Christ, whose end is destruction, whose god is their appetite, and whose glory is in their shame, who set their minds on earthly things.*" The appetite is not a god, but it can be chosen as a god.

Fourth, the only way Satan can pass himself off as a god is to first blind his victims. Keep in mind that Jesus described the devil as "*a liar, and the father of lies*" (John 8:44). Though Satan masquerades as a god, this does not make him a god.

Satan wishes, albeit vainly, to set himself up as God, and sinners, in rebelling against the true God, subject themselves to him who is the author of their rebellion. The unregenerate serve Satan as though he were their God. They do not thereby, however, escape from the dominion of the one true God. On the contrary, they bring themselves under His righteous judgment; for Satan is a creature and not a God to be served (cf. Rom. 1:18, 25). Just as there is one in the world and every pretended alternative to it is a false no-gospel, so there is only one God of the universe and every other "deity" whom men worship and serve is a false no-god.<sup>[4]</sup>

When all the evidence is in, we learn that Satan is the god of an age that was passing away. "*This age*" and "*this world*" are used "*in an ethical sense,*" denoting "*the immoral realm of disobedience rather than the all-inclusive, extensive scope of creation,*" representing "*the life of man apart from God and bound to sinful impulses, a world ethically separated from God.*"<sup>[5]</sup> Calling Satan the "*god of this age*" is more a reflection on the condition of "*this age*" than the real status of the devil. Chrysostom comments that "*Scripture frequently uses the term god, not in regard of the dignity that is so designated, but of the weakness of those in*

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<sup>4</sup> Philip E. Hughes, *Commentary on the Second Epistle of the Corinthians*, The New International Commentary on the New Testament Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1962, 127.

<sup>5</sup> Greg L. Bahnsen, "The Person, Work, and Present Status of Satan," *The Journal of Christian Reconstruction*, Symposium on Satanism, ed. Gary North, 1:2 (Winter, 1974), 22.

subjection to it; as when he calls mammon lord and belly god: but the belly is neither therefore God nor mammon Lord, save only of those who bow themselves to them.”<sup>[6]</sup>

When the church makes Satan the “god of this age,” it has fallen for one of the devil’s schemes—giving him a lot more credit and power than he deserves. He is quite satisfied in having anyone believe one of his lies.

As Martin Luther said,

*And though this world, with devils filled, Should threaten to undo us, we will not fear, for God hath willed His truth to triumph through us. The prince of darkness grim we tremble not for him; his rage we can endure, for lo! his doom is sure, one little word shall fell him.*

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<sup>6</sup> Quoted in Hughes, *Commentary on the Second Epistle of the Corinthians*, 128.

## Scripture references in order of usage

(Job 1:6-12 ESV) Now there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the LORD, and Satan also came among them. <sup>7</sup>The LORD said to Satan, "From where have you come?" Satan answered the LORD and said, "From going to and fro on the earth, and from walking up and down on it." <sup>8</sup>And 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, who fears God and turns away from evil?" <sup>9</sup>Then Satan answered the LORD and said, "Does Job fear God for no reason? <sup>10</sup>Have you not put a hedge around 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. <sup>11</sup>But stretch out your hand and touch all that he has, and he will curse you to your face." <sup>12</sup>And the LORD said to Satan, "Behold, all that he has is in your hand. Only against him do not stretch out your hand." So Satan went out 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. <sup>2</sup>And the Lord said to Satan, "From where have you come?" Satan answered the Lord and said, "From going to and fro on the earth, and from walking up and down on it." <sup>3</sup>And 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, who fears God and turns away from evil? He still holds fast his integrity, although you incited me against him to destroy him without reason." <sup>4</sup>Then Satan answered the Lord and said, "Skin for skin! All that a man has he will give for his life. <sup>5</sup>But stretch out your hand and touch his bone and his flesh, and he will curse you to your face." <sup>6</sup>And the Lord said to Satan, "Behold, he is in your hand; only spare his life. <sup>7</sup>So Satan went out from the presence of the Lord and struck Job with loathsome sores from the sole of his foot to the crown of his head.

(James 4:7 ESV) Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.

(2 Cor 12:7-12) to keep me from becoming conceited because of the surpassing greatness of the revelations, a thorn was given me in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to harass me, to keep me from becoming conceited. <sup>8</sup>Three times I pleaded with the Lord about this, that it should leave me. <sup>9</sup>But he said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." Therefore I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may rest upon me. <sup>10</sup>For the sake of Christ, then, I am content with weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, and calamities. For when I am weak, then I am strong. <sup>11</sup>I have been a fool! You forced me to it, for I ought to have been commended by you. For I was not at all inferior to these super-apostles, even though I am nothing. <sup>12</sup>The signs of a true apostle were performed among you with utmost patience, with signs and wonders and mighty works.

(Col 2:15 ESV) He disarmed the rulers and authorities and put them to open shame, by triumphing over them in him.

(Rev 12:7-8 ESV) Now war arose in heaven, Michael and his angels fighting against the dragon. And the dragon and his angels fought back, <sup>8</sup> but he was defeated, and there was no longer any place for them in heaven.

(Mk 3:23-27 ESV) And he called them to him and said to them in parables, "How can Satan cast out Satan? <sup>24</sup> If a kingdom is divided against itself, that kingdom cannot stand. <sup>25</sup> And if a house is divided against

itself, that house will not be able to stand. 26 And if Satan has risen up against himself and is divided, he cannot stand, but is coming to an end. 27 But no one can enter a strong man's house and plunder his goods, unless he first binds the strong man. Then indeed he may plunder his house.

(Lk 10:18 ESV) And he said to them, "I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven.

(Rev 12:9 ESV) And the great dragon was thrown down, that ancient serpent, who is called the devil and Satan, the deceiver of the whole world—he was thrown down to the earth, and his angels were thrown down with him.

(Rom 16:20 ESV) The God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you.

(John 16:11 ESV) concerning judgment, because the ruler of this world is judged.

(1 John 5:18 ESV) We know that everyone who has been born of God does not keep on sinning, but he who was born of God protects him, and the evil one does not touch him.

(1 John 3:8 ESV) Whoever makes a practice of sinning is of the devil, for the devil has been sinning from the beginning. The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the works of the devil.

(John 14:30 ESV) I will no longer talk much with you, for the ruler of this world is coming. He has no claim on me,

(James 4:7 ESV) Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.

(Mark 3:27 ESV) But no one can enter a strong man's house and plunder his goods, unless he first binds the strong man. Then indeed he may plunder his house.

(Luke 11:20 ESV) But if it is by the finger of God that I cast out demons, then the kingdom of God has come upon you.

(Matt 16:18 ESV) And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.

(2 Cor 4:4 ESV) In their case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelievers, to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.

(1 Tim 1:17 ESV) To the King of the ages, immortal, invisible, the only God, be honor and glory forever and ever. Amen.

(Matt 22:1-14 ESV) And again Jesus spoke to them in parables, saying, <sup>2</sup> "The kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who gave a wedding feast for his son, <sup>3</sup> and sent his servants<sup>[a]</sup> to call those who were

invited to the wedding feast, but they would not come. <sup>4</sup> Again he sent other servants, saying, 'Tell those who are invited, "See, I have prepared my dinner, my oxen and my fat calves have been slaughtered, and everything is ready. Come to the wedding feast."' <sup>5</sup> But they paid no attention and went off, one to his farm, another to his business, <sup>6</sup> while the rest seized his servants, treated them shamefully, and killed them. <sup>7</sup> The king was angry, and he sent his troops and destroyed those murderers and burned their city. <sup>8</sup> Then he said to his servants, 'The wedding feast is ready, but those invited were not worthy. <sup>9</sup> Go therefore to the main roads and invite to the wedding feast as many as you find.' <sup>10</sup> And those servants went out into the roads and gathered all whom they found, both bad and good. So the wedding hall was filled with guests.

<sup>11</sup> "But when the king came in to look at the guests, he saw there a man who had no wedding garment. <sup>12</sup> And he said to him, 'Friend, how did you get in here without a wedding garment?' And he was speechless. <sup>13</sup> Then the king said to the attendants, 'Bind him hand and foot and cast him into the outer darkness. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.' <sup>14</sup> For many are called, but few are chosen."

(2 John 2:7 ESV) The elder to the elect lady and her children, whom I love in truth, and not only I, but also all who know the truth, <sup>2</sup> because of the truth that abides in us and will be with us forever:

(1 John 2:18 ESV) Children, it is the last hour, and as you have heard that antichrist is coming, so now many antichrists have come. Therefore we know that it is the last hour.

(1 John 2:22 ESV) Who is the liar but he who denies that Jesus is the Christ? This is the antichrist, he who denies the Father and the Son.

(Matthew 28:18-22 ESV) And Jesus came and said to them, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. <sup>19</sup> Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in<sup>[a]</sup> the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, <sup>20</sup> teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age."

(John 12:31 ESV) Now is the judgment of this world; now will the ruler of this world be cast out.

(John 16:11 ESV) concerning judgment, because the ruler of this world is judged.

(Isa 45:5 ESV) I am the Lord, and there is no other, besides me there is no God; I equip you, though you do not know me,

(John 8:44 ESV) You are of your father the devil, and your will is to do your father's desires. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks out of his own character, for he is a liar and the father of lies.

(2 Cor 3:7; 14, 16-17) Now if the ministry of death, carved in letters on stone, came with such glory that the Israelites could not gaze at Moses' face because of its glory, which was being brought to an end;... <sup>14</sup> But their minds were hardened. For to this day, when they read the old covenant, that same veil remains unlifted, because only through Christ is it taken away.... <sup>16</sup> But when one turns to the Lord, the veil is removed. <sup>17</sup> Now the Lord<sup>[a]</sup> is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom.

(Gal 4:8 ESV) Formerly, when you did not know God, you were enslaved to those that by nature are not gods.

(Deut 32:17 ESV) They sacrificed to demons that were no gods, to gods they had never known, to new gods that had come recently, whom your fathers had never dreaded.

(Psa 96:5 ESV) For all the gods of the peoples are worthless idols, but the Lord made the heavens.

(Isa 44:9-20 ESV) All who fashion idols are nothing, and the things they delight in do not profit. Their witnesses neither see nor know, that they may be put to shame. <sup>10</sup>Who fashions a god or casts an idol that is profitable for nothing? <sup>11</sup>Behold, all his companions shall be put to shame, and the craftsmen are only human. Let them all assemble, let them stand forth. They shall be terrified; they shall be put to shame together.

<sup>12</sup>The ironsmith takes a cutting tool and works it over the coals. He fashions it with hammers and works it with his strong arm. He becomes hungry, and his strength fails; he drinks no water and is faint. <sup>13</sup>The carpenter stretches a line; he marks it out with a pencil. He shapes it with planes and marks it with a compass. He shapes it into the figure of a man, with the beauty of a man, to dwell in a house. <sup>14</sup>He cuts down cedars, or he chooses a cypress tree or an oak and lets it grow strong among the trees of the forest. He plants a cedar and the rain nourishes it. <sup>15</sup>Then it becomes fuel for a man. He takes a part of it and warms himself; he kindles a fire and bakes bread. Also he makes a god and worships it; he makes it an idol and falls down before it. <sup>16</sup>Half of it he burns in the fire. Over the half he eats meat; he roasts it and is satisfied. Also he warms himself and says, "Aha, I am warm, I have seen the fire!" <sup>17</sup>And the rest of it he makes into a god, his idol, and falls down to it and worships it. He prays to it and says, "Deliver me, for you are my god!"

<sup>18</sup>They know not, nor do they discern, for he has shut their eyes, so that they cannot see, and their hearts, so that they cannot understand. <sup>19</sup>No one considers, nor is there knowledge or discernment to say, "Half of it I burned in the fire; I also baked bread on its coals; I roasted meat and have eaten. And shall I make the rest of it an abomination? Shall I fall down before a block of wood?" <sup>20</sup>He feeds on ashes; a deluded heart has led him astray, and he cannot deliver himself or say, "Is there not a lie in my right hand?"

(1 Cor 8:4 ESV) Therefore, as to the eating of food offered to idols, we know that "an idol has no real existence," and that "there is no God but one."

(1 Cor 10:20 ESV) No, I imply that what pagans sacrifice they offer to demons and not to God. I do not want you to be participants with demons.

(Phil 3:19 ESV) Their end is destruction, their god is their belly, and they glory in their shame, with minds set on earthly things.

(John 8:44 ESV) You are of your father the devil, and your will is to do your father's desires. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks out of his own character, for he is a liar and the father of...



(Rom 1:18 ESV) For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth.

(Rom 1:25 ESV) because they exchanged the truth about God for a lie and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever! Amen.