

Sin Enters the World

The theme of our Advent season this year is Joy to the World. We continue with this theme this week.

Last week we consider the creation. God made a world with everything we need to sustain and thrive. Everything was good. It was a beautiful world and the crowning jewel of creation was man (or humans). There was a special relationship between God and those humans who were created in image of God. The second chapter of Genesis retells us of the creation of both male and female. In this narrative, we see that God cares for His creation and take special steps to provide the fundamental needs.

Then the LORD God said, “It is not good for the man to be alone; I will make him a helper suitable for him.” And out of the ground the LORD God formed every animal of the field and every bird of the sky, and brought *them* to the man to see what he would call them; and whatever the man called a living creature, that was its name. The man gave names to all the livestock, and to the birds of the sky, and to every animal of the field, but for Adam there was not found a helper suitable for him. So, the LORD God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man, and he slept; then He took one of his ribs and closed up the flesh at that place. And the LORD God fashioned into a woman the rib which He had taken from the man, and brought her to the man. Then the man said, “At last this is bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh; She shall be called ‘woman,’ because she was taken out of man.” For this reason, a man shall leave his father and his mother, and be joined to his wife; and they shall become one flesh. (Genesis 2:18-24 NASB)

Moving from this tender scene of God bringing the first couple together, we find the opening words of the 3rd chapter of Genesis and there is a character mentioned without any preamble. There is no introduction as we are told that the serpent was more crafty than any of the beast (3:1). This crafty serpent raises doubt in the mind of Eve and then Adam. This doubt let both of them to make a choice to disobey God’s specific command. Sin has entered God’s beautiful world. And with these words, he tempts Adam and Eve into choosing to disobey God. **“Has God really said, ‘You shall not eat from any tree of the garden?’” The woman said to the serpent, “From the fruit of the trees of the garden we may eat; but from the fruit of the tree which is in the middle of the garden, God has said, ‘You shall not eat from it or touch it, or you will die.’” The serpent said to the woman, “You certainly will not die! For God knows that on the day you eat from it your eyes will be opened, and you will become like God, knowing good and evil.” (Genesis 3:1b-5 NASB)**

This crafty serpent uses lies and deceit to pull mankind into sin. For those of you who are already indoctrinated, there were no lies only a little spin and partial truths. This is the stock and trade of this crafty serpent.

So, who or what is this crafty serpent? We have come to know this character by several names. For the most part, we refer to him as Satan. He is also called the devil along with a few other names. God reveals who this character is as we move into the era of prophets. We will read these passages in a few minutes. First, I want us to understand why we call him Satan. The word Satan comes from the Hebrew word שָׂטָן (saw tawn) which means adversary or opponent. The one who stands against.

When we consider this definition in the light of Genesis 3, we see that Satan stood in opposition to what God said.

Several years ago, I had someone ask me one of those “gotcha” questions. The kind of questions people like to use to trap you into saying something that you may not mean. This seems to be a game for some to trap a preacher or Christian into denying their own belief. The nature of the question begins with a basic that God makes good things; to which we may all agree. Then they ask is Satan evil? (Of course) God made Satan. Gotcha!

God is not silent on the origin of Satan. Yes, God made Satan. God did not make him evil. Satan made choices that were against the will and nature of God. Let’s turn to Ezekiel the 28th chapter and read about this beautiful creature made by God and endowed with beauty.

“You had the seal (Lit were *the one sealing*) of perfection, full of wisdom and perfect in beauty. You were in Eden, the garden of God; every precious stone was your covering: the ruby, the topaz and the diamond; the beryl, the onyx and the jasper; the lapis lazuli, the turquoise and the emerald; and the gold, the workmanship of your settings and sockets, was in you.

On the day that you were created they were prepared. You were the anointed cherub who covers (or *guards*), and I placed you *there*. You were on the holy mountain of God; you walked in the midst of the stones of fire. You were blameless in your ways from the day you were created until unrighteousness was found in you.

By the abundance of your trade you were internally filled with violence, and you sinned; therefore I have cast you as profane from the mountain of God.

And I have destroyed you, you covering (or *guardian*) cherub, from the midst of the stones of fire. Your heart was haughty because of your beauty; you corrupted your wisdom by reason of your splendor. I threw you to the ground; I put you before kings, that they may see you. (Ezekiel 28:12-17 NASB)

We see here that God made him perfect and his perfection caused him to become proud and corrupt. His sin led God to remove him from heaven and to cast him away.

We may remember when the disciples had been sent out by Jesus to begin their “field-training” in mission work, they were amazed that even the demons obeyed their commands. Jesus commented: **I watched Satan fall from heaven like lightning. (Luke 10:18 NASB)** Jesus was on hand when Satan was expelled from heaven.

The prophet Isaiah also mentions the rebellious actions of Satan in Isaiah the 14th chapter. In this, we see that Satan (also called Lucifer) tries to exalt himself over God. This may be a reference to the building of the Tower of Babel. This portion of scripture we will read from both the NASB and the KJV.

How you have fallen from heaven, you star (from the Hebrew word *shining one*) of the morning, son of the dawn! You have been cut down to the earth, You who defeated the nations! But you said in your heart, ‘I will ascend to heaven; I will raise my throne above the stars of God, and I will sit on the mount of assembly in the recesses of the north. I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will make myself like the Most High.’ Nevertheless, you will be brought down to Sheol, to the recesses of the pit. (Isaiah 14:12-15 NASB)

Now from the King James Version:

How art thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning! how art thou cut down to the ground, which didst weaken the nations!

For thou hast said in thine heart, I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God: I will sit also upon the mount of the congregation, in the sides of the north:

I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will be like the most High.

Yet thou shalt be brought down to hell, to the sides of the pit. (Isaiah 14:12-15 KJV)

In just a short span of time, we have gone from a beautiful world made by God into a world where deceit and disobedience have pushed a beautiful creation away from a loving God.

The beautiful creation has allowed pride to separate them from a loving, providing, and sustaining God. Satan has won round one. Sin has defiled the once beautiful world.

Today, we live in a world that seems to have bought into another lie. Satan is a mythological creature that does not actually exist. First, we painted him as a red suited horned creature of cartoon-like qualities and now we can easily dismiss him all together. He is just a catch-all phrase for when things go wrong.

We must never allow this to be in our thinking. There are two things we must realize: first, Satan is real. He is still in rebellion against God and wants more than anything to enlist us in his rebellion. Paul, in his letter to the Ephesians, tells us in the sixth chapter, to put on the whole armor of God. Part of the armor is the shield of faith. In verse 16, Paul speaks of the evil one and his flaming arrows. Listen to these words: **in addition to all, taking up the shield of faith with which you will be able to extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. (Ephesians 6:16 NASB)**

Peter reminds us that Satan is not a passive player but a stalking hunter.

Be of sober *spirit*, be on the alert. Your adversary, the devil, prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour. (1 Peter 5:8 NASB)

Remember that Satan and adversary are the same word.

While we remember that Satan is real, is still rebelling against God and wants us to join him in that rebellion, and he is active constantly working for his goal to replace God; we need to remember the second thing.

Second, God, through Jesus defeats Satan. This is theme of this season. The joy of God comes to the world to defeat Satan and to make His creation back whole once more.

We are looking toward the coming of Jesus. This carries dual meaning. Certainly, as we prepare to celebrate the birth of the Christ, we look toward His coming. Perhaps more importantly, we look toward His coming to reconcile the creation to the creator. This will bring ultimate joy to the world.