

**SCRIPTURE:**

Genesis 3:1a

SERMON:

Some of you know I grew up playing football. We had a really good team my Junior year of high school. We ended up winning the state championship that year. It wasn't an easy journey though, we had a couple teams in the playoffs we honestly didn't believe we were going to beat. We were coming off a good win the week before to a team that we had previously beat named Choctaw. We played them in the regular season and destroyed them, so honestly, we didn't really prepare for them like we should have and relied too much on our ability. That being said, we had a rough game, it was scrappy. I had 139 yards rushing and I won us the game. I was a little off my game that game.

So we advance to the second round of the playoffs where we would play a team named Andrew Jackson which was a team based out of Jacksonville Florida. They were straight DAWGS! We were literally watching film on them and one of our team captains turned to us and said, "Yeah, this is our last game. It's been a good season, boys."

Fast forward to that Friday night, we were in the weight room taking our pregame nap. We get word that Andrew Jackson has arrived and they are taunting us next to the window where we were sleeping. We peek out the window and we see some DAWGS! They're huge, they all have dreadlocks, and gold teeth, and they are posted up taunting us. In disbelief, our team captain turns to us and says, "Yeah, this is for sure our last game. It's been a good season, boys."

We ended up winning though. We won 7 to 6 on a blocked extra point and no offensive touchdowns. We won because we stuck to what we saw on film and practiced. We knew what we had to do to stop them.

I share this story, because I believe there is a parallel in how our team treated these two teams and how we treat our enemy, Satan, the adversary. We either treat him like he's not a factor at all and rely on our abilities, or we treat him like he can declare some type of victory over us. We should treat him like neither. And I'm concerned that we have

bought into the Hollywood depiction of Satan as the little red guy with horns with a pitchfork.

If he is truly one who is a threat in our walk with God we must adhere to what Peter, James, and Paul teach us.

1 Peter 5:8 - *Be sober-minded; be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour.*

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

Ephesians 6:11 - *Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil.*

But how will we be watchful, stand firm, resist and flee a devil we do not take seriously or we think has already won?

Genesis 3:1a - *Now the serpent was more crafty than any other beast of the field that the Lord God had made.*

There has been a shift in the creation story. Here is an introduction of the antagonist. Part of the story that says “But then...”

We read into this that the serpent is Satan. In fact, if you were reading into this blindly with zero context of the Bible, you would have no idea that this was Satan. You’d think this random talking serpent just decided to go rogue.

So Satan is introduced as the serpent, the craftiest beast of the field that God has created. Scripture doesn’t tell us how much time has passed since the creation of Adam and Eve and to this encounter. It could have been the next day after God brought Adam and Eve together or perhaps within months. We don’t exactly know, but it appears, out of nowhere, right off the heels of God calling everything good and Adam and His bride are naked and unashamed in perfect innocence BUT THEN... the antagonist is introduced. How long was it before Satan tempted Adam and Eve? Why did Satan choose a serpent to embody? Is this allegorical or poetic language or did he actually embody a serpent? Did serpents have feet before the curse? Is this the original Godzilla?

Those things are fun to think about and many of us here would love to pick a day to nerd out about those things. However, if we're not careful, we can make the minor things the major things. We can do that elsewhere. But for the remainder of this sermon I want us to focus on more important questions:

1. Who was Satan originally?
2. Who is Satan now?
3. Why does Satan exist?
4. What is Satan's future?

1. WHO WAS SATAN ORIGINALLY?

Satan, the leader of the demons, was not created bad. They were a part of God's good creation. At some point between creation and our passage today, a rebellion against God happened with some of the angels he created, and they were punished and sentenced for it.

Revelation 12:9 - 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.

2 Peter 2:4 - For if God did not spare angels when they sinned, but cast them into hell and committed them to chains of gloomy darkness to be kept until the judgment;

Luke 10:18 - And he said to them, "I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven. In these next two passages the fall of the king of Babylon and the Prince of Tyre draw a direct parallel to the fall of Satan:

Ezekiel 28:13-19 talks about how he was a cherub (the highest created angel) blameless in his ways until unrighteousness found him and he was filled with violence and he sinned, his heart grew proud because he was filled with beauty, he "corrupted his wisdom for the sake of his splendor" and he was cast out to the ground and destroyed.

Isaiah 14:12-15 parallels the fall of the king of Babylon with Satan's fall from heaven. He was cut down to the ground because he said in his heart that he will ascend to heaven above the stars of God and set his throne on high and make himself like the Most High, but was ultimately brought down to Sheol.

2. WHO IS SATAN NOW?

As we read the Scriptures, we see that the evil influences of Satan and his demons continue. Satan isn't passive. He has a mission and vision. He is the adversary, the opposition to God and His salvific plans to redeem his bride. He's the devil, the slanderer that desires to accuse all guilty before the holy God. How does he operate in this world?

He is the wicked ruler of this fallen world.

Though limited by the sovereignty and power of God, Satan operates within this fallen world as the ruler. He's not the sovereign ruler in the way that God is sovereign, but a ruler over the domain of nonbelievers that Pastor Erik mentioned in Colossians 1 that Christ rescues us from. The will of this world is of the will of the god of this world.

Ephesians 2:1-3 - And you were dead in the trespasses and sins 2 in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience— 3 among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind.

John 8:44 - 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.

He distorts the truth of God, deceives the minds of man, and seeks to devour the faith of God's people.

Satan, the god of this world, is ruthless and has zero sympathy for anyone at any time. He has no truth in him and because God is the very embodiment of truth, he seeks to distort it. He is wise and crafty and will go beyond measures to interfere with you and your loved ones knowing what is good. He wants to make your faith waver and ultimately try to destroy it.

1 John 5:9 - We know that we are from God, and the whole world lies in the power of the evil one.

Matthew 4:1-11 - 1 Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. 2 And after fasting forty days and forty nights, he was hungry. 3 And the tempter came and said to him, "If you are the Son of God, command these stones to become loaves of bread." 4 But he answered, "It is written, "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God.'" 5 Then

the devil took him to the holy city and set him on the pinnacle of the temple 6 and said to him, “If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down, for it is written, “He will command his angels concerning you,’ and “On their hands they will bear you up, lest you strike your foot against a stone.” 7 Jesus said to him, “Again it is written, ‘You shall not put the Lord your God to the test.” 8 Again, the devil took him to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory. 9 And he said to him, “All these I will give you, if you will fall down and worship me.” 10 Then Jesus said to him, “Be gone, Satan! For it is written, “You shall worship the Lord your God and him only shall you serve.” 11 Then the devil left him, and behold, angels came and were ministering to him.

2 Corinthians 4:4 - 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.

Mark 4:15 - And these are the ones along the path, where the word is sown: when they hear, Satan immediately comes and takes away the word that is sown in them.

2 Timothy 2:26 - and they may come to their senses and escape from the snare of the devil, after being captured by him to do his will.

Luke 22:31-32 - 31 “Simon, Simon, behold, Satan demanded to have you, that he might sift you like wheat, 32 but I have prayed for you that your faith may not fail. And when you have turned again, strengthen your brothers.”

He’s a ferocious monster on an unbreakable leash.

Satan is a greater theologian than we give him credit for. He’s a fool but he is not dumb. He is not omnipotent but he is not powerless. We’ll see in a couple weeks that Satan has already received his sentencing. He knows what is in store for him. He knows there is an appointed time for his destruction. He is indeed the god of this age, but he is not an autonomous sovereign. He is a ferocious lion on a leash and the address on his collar reads “Eternal Destruction”. Meanwhile, he continues acting within his character, bringing as much chaos as he possibly can, but he cannot act outside of the sovereign will of God.

Job 1:8-12 - 8 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?” 9 Then Satan answered the Lord and said, “Does Job fear God for no reason? 10 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. 11 But stretch out your hand and touch all that he has, and he will curse you to your face.” 12 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.

Matthew 8:29 - *And behold, they cried out, “What have you to do with us, O Son of God? Have you come here to torment us before the time?”*

Mark 1:27 - *And they were all amazed, so that they questioned among themselves, saying, “What is this? A new teaching with authority! He commands even the unclean spirits, and they obey him.”*

3. WHY DOES SATAN EXIST?

Questions begin to rise to the surface when we think about the creation of Satan and the existence of Satan, doesn't it? When I was 15 or 16 years old I had these questions about Satan and I wrestled with them for years after that. We just read a lot of passages that reveal the evil truths of Satan and when we begin to consider the truths of God, it can bring some confusion. There are 3 attributes of God that I want to keep in front of us to help filter these questions through, in order to give the most accurate biblical answer: Sovereignty, Omniscience, and Omnipotence.

QUESTION: With God being sovereign over creating Satan, eternally knowing Satan will fall and wreak havoc in the world, and delaying his power to crush Satan immediately, wouldn't it have been better to not create Satan at all?

ANSWER: Satan was created, and Satan is still in existence for the maximum glory of God. The ordaining of Satan and his fall and even his evil disruption in this world serves as the best way for God to receive maximum glory as all of his majesty and splendor and radiance is seen and experienced fully in the punishing of evil and the redeeming of His bride.

Church, you will go absolutely insane, if you do not chalk this up to the glory of God. There is no other sufficient answer when you filter them through the sovereignty, omniscience, and omnipotence of God. God is not merely the protagonist in this story, but the author of it.

And we know this practically right? Woven deeply in us is a natural desire for redemption. That's why as kids when we were playing alone, we'd create scenarios like, “Down by 2

with 5 seconds left. He calls for the pick and roll, there's a defender, he steps back... Shoots the shot before the buzzer, 3!!!! He wins the game!!!!"

Recently, in playing with my son Arlo, he's been doing this thing where he can't even play without drawing up some type of conflict whether he's falling slowly off the bed or he's laying on the floor, or he'll flip his cars upside down and say "Oh no... help! Help!"

Or when we were kids and we tell stories with things starting off well, and out of nowhere, we'll introduce a problem or the antagonist. Or watching any good movie and finally seeing the antagonist introduced.

Side note: we're almost more intrigued by them because they're written better, perhaps because we naturally relate to them as sinners. But that's neither here nor there. But when we finally see Thanos or Bane or Biff Tannen being introduced, there is something in us that prefers them to be a part of the story with some type of build up, anticipatory defeat toward the end.

Isaiah 46:8-10 - 8 "Remember this and stand firm, recall it to mind, you transgressors, 9 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 not yet done, saying, 'My counsel shall stand, and I will accomplish all my purpose,'

There is no opposing power outside of God that puts restraint over His sovereign will.

OBJECTIONS

We have problems with this intellectually and emotionally because we think it sounds like a contradiction to the character of God? Is his goodness and holiness at stake if he has decreed Satan and his works to exist?

Objection #1: If God ordained Satan and his works of evil, that would make God unjust

Answer: We know that there is no sin in God. **Psalm 77:13 Your way, O God, is holy.**

What god is great like our God?" So God ordaining the creation and fall of Satan does not imply that sin has come from God. Evil is not a tangible thing that God has created as if evil is one of God's attributes. God is not the author of sin, but He is the author of this story of redemption that includes sin. God did, however, in His sovereign decree, plan and ordain Satan and evil to come into the world (WITHOUT bringing the evil) that His eternal plan for redemption to be accomplished. We never fret about God's eternal plan

to save mankind, but there is often pushback about God's decree of the very thing that would make that salvation necessary in the first place.

Objection #2: God didn't ordain Satan to rebel and bring about evil, but He did allow it.

Answer: The objective to this statement is to take God off the hook from Satan and everything Satan brings from being God's idea. Firstly, referring back to the Isaiah 46 passage, God never sits back and merely responds to things unfolding, but he DECLARES all things. God sets all things in motion. Secondly, filtering back through those 3 attributes of God's sovereignty, omniscience, and omnipotence. If we try to take away Him being sovereign over that, you still have to deal with the reality that God KNEW from the beginning that Satan would do it, and he had the POWER to prevent it, BUT HE DIDN'T. So that brings us back to the reality that God was never ignorant of this happening and he didn't stop it from happening and he either has a reason for that or He doesn't. We're either asking the question WHY did God ordain it OR WHY didn't God prevent it? God passively allowing it to happen doesn't answer the question, "Why is it happening?"

Objection #3: Why would God decree the fall of Satan and his evil works to wreak havoc on his own people.

Answer: This implies that there is a disconnect between suffering in your life and God's personal love for you. Remember that Job 1 passage. In verse 8 God is literally speaking with Satan and says, "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?"

Church, Job is ambushed right after this encounter between God and Satan with back-to-back tragic news that would have made us pass out. Job received news that all of his livestock and servants and kids were killed... and it started with SATAN, HAVE YOU CONSIDERED MY SERVANT JOB? Is God unloving and unjust in that? Job didn't think so.

Job 1:21 - And he said, "Naked I came from my mother's womb, and naked shall I return. The Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord." Passages like this help us deal with these issues biblically, because nothing about this passage implies God's hand being tied or Him hating Job.

Not to mention, all throughout the bible we see many examples with Joseph, David, and John the Baptist, but let's look at the ultimate example in Christ. Christ suffered greater than anyone from his childhood of fleeing slaughter from Herod, started his earthly ministry with temptation from Satan, to Him coming to His own and His own not receiving

Him, from fleeing the hands of the religious leaders who unjustly tried to kill Him, to being beaten and flogged to ultimately absorbing the full wrath of God on the cross that He did not deserve, yet while being the "...beloved Son, in You I am well-pleased." Luke 3:22.

So here's my question, "Which one of these actually brings you MORE comfort and security? A God who knew Satan and suffering would exist and chose to do nothing about it either for no reason at all or for the sake of protecting a natural order of things playing out outside of his intervention OR a God who not only knew these things would take place, but PLANNED them for His perfect reasons?"

God is not merely the protagonist in this story... but the author of this story and nothing has gone unscripted.

4. WHAT IS SATAN'S FUTURE

Coming off the heels of why Satan exists and the reasons for it (the glory of God) is what our actual hope is today. It is very true that Satan is the ruler of this world, he devours, he deceives, and distorts the truth of God, but he has never won a battle. God and Satan do not trade punches. Satan is not a competitor. He is not a rival. God has victory and we as His bride can take ownership in that victory because of Christ.

Luke 22:53 - When I was with you day after day in the temple, you did not lay hands on me. But this is your hour, and the power of darkness."

1 John 1:8 - 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 12:31 - Now is the judgment of this world; now will the ruler of this world be cast out.

Revelation 20:10 - and the devil who had deceived them was thrown into the lake of fire and sulfur where the beast and the false prophet were, and they will be tormented day and night forever and ever.

Romans 16:20 - The God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you.

1 John 4:4 - Little children, you are from God and have overcome them, for he who is in you is greater than he who is in the world.

So what do we do with this monster? We're not stronger than him. We can't outsmart him. He's very seasoned. He's been doing this for a very long time. What do we do? He failed at the cross now he is doing everything he can from seeing the fruits of it. Satan fell in the wilderness when he tries to alter the purpose of why Christ has come for redemption and he failed as he entered Judas to betray Christ as we know that was suicide mission because it would be at the cross where Christ would destroy the works of Satan. The crafty serpent was outwitted by the eternal plan of God at the cross.

Friends, no matter how we shake it, it all boils down to these two things. Either God had nothing to do with or chose not to intervene with Satan and the works of Satan for no good purpose, or God, in His sovereign decree has everything to do with Satan and what Satan is doing, for His perfect and good purposes.

1 John 2:14 - *I write to you, fathers, because you know him who is from the beginning. I write to you, young men, because you are strong, and the word of God abides in you, and you have overcome the evil one.*

Church Satan is to be watched, but not feared. He is to be resisted, but not respected. He will indeed wreak havoc but he cannot condemn us! In Christ we have victory over Satan. There is a sovereign ruler who reigns superior over the god of this age who has rescued us from the domain of darkness and given us life. Praise be to God!

REVIEW:

- Why does this verse start with "Now"?
- What does it mean that the serpent was more "crafty"? (1 Peter 5:8, 1 Corinthians 16:13)
- What does this tell us about how he operates today? (Genesis 4:7)

REFLECT:

- What comes to mind when you think of Satan? That he really isn't a factor or that he is as powerful as God?
- Who was Satan? (Revelation 12:9, Luke 10:18, Ezekiel 28:13-19, 1 John 3:8, John 10:10, Revelation 20:10)
- Who is he now? Ephesians 2:1-3, 2 Corinthians 4:4, Ephesians 6:11-12, 1 Peter 5:8, 1 John 5:9, Matthew 4:1-11)
- Why does he exist?

- What is his future? (John 12:31, Revelation 20:10)

RESPOND:

- Does this new understanding of Satan challenge your view of God?
- How does this change your view of Satan? (John 10:28-29, Psalm 46:1)

MEDITATE:

- 1 Peter 5:8 - *Be sober-minded; be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour.*

MEMORIZE:

- Romans 16:20 - *The God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you.*

PRAYER FOCUS:

- TJC Director of Creative & Communications: **Ally Johnson**
- NAMB Church Planter: **Keith Radke** - South Jordan, UT - *River Community Church*
- Unreached People Group (UPG): **Tabasaran** in Ukraine
 - Population: 800
 - Christian: 0.0%
 - Evangelical: 0.0%
 - Primary Religion: Islam
 - Primary Language: Tabasaran
 - Status: **Unreached**