

Sermon – 23rd April 2006.

“Satan” – Ephesians 6:10-18; Revelation 12:1-17

PPTa - Do you believe in aliens?

PPTb - In a recent survey it was found that:

60% of adults believe life exists on other planets

PPTa - Do you believe in Satan?

PPTb - In another recent survey,

59% of adults said they considered Satan as simply a **symbol** of evil, not an actual person.

Only 34% of adults believe Satan to be a living being.

PPT - Three questions I want look at today:

- **Does Satan exist?**
- **What do we know about him?** *and*
- **How should we respond to him?**

First of all, the Devil does exist. The Bible refers to him as Satan 54 times and to him as the Devil 36 times, among other names. Jesus is tempted by Satan, Satan enters Judas to prompt him to betray Jesus, Satan attacked Job, in 1 Chronicles 21 Satan incited David against Israel, and of course Satan, the serpent, deceived Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden.

His name means “Slanderer” or “adversary”. Satan, or the devil, does exist, and he is against God in every way.

So what do we know about him? Let’s start by having a look at Revelation 12.

The book of Revelation is a vision or dream given to John about creation – from beginning to end. In Revelation 12, there are a lot of characters, and it’s important to understand who these characters represent so we can understand what it all means.

PPTa - First of all, we meet the **woman**, with a crown of 12 stars on her head. She represents Israel – God’s people. The 12 crowns are the 12 tribes of Israel we read about in the Old Testament. This woman represents God’s nation, and she is in labour.

PPTb - The woman is about to painfully give birth to our second character, a son, who, in verse 5, will rule all the nations. This child is the saviour, the messiah, the king. In other words, **Jesus**. Jesus comes out of God’s people, Israel.

PPTc - Third, we meet the enormous red **dragon**. This of course is Satan. He looks incredibly powerful. He has 10 horns to signify his power, and wears 7 crowns to show he *claims* to be a ruler. And Satan wants to devour the child as soon as he is born. Why? Because Satan’s aim is to destroy God’s work. To be his adversary. But, in verse 5, the child is snatched up to God. Satan cannot get the child. Jesus lived, and died and then rose again, and was taken up into heaven. Where in heaven? Verse 5 – to God’s throne. **Jesus** is the true ruler. And Satan could not destroy him.

So what happens next? From verse 7. Satan, the dragon, goes into the heaven and fights to get at Jesus! Michael, God’s archangel, and all **his** angels, fight against Satan and all **his** angels, and they are defeated. And the great dragon, that ancient serpent, the devil, or Satan, who leads the whole world astray, was defeated.

These verses give us a lot of important information.

PPT - **Satan was created, Satan is defeated, and Satan is against us!**

First of all, **Satan is a created being**, fighting against other created beings and being defeated by them! He doesn’t even fight against God – he only fights against angels, and loses! Satan, like everything in this world, was created by God. There is no battle *between* God and Satan, because God **created** Satan, and has complete power over him. Satan does nothing without God giving him permission.

Then Satan was defeated. God defeated Satan at the cross. Death was the only thing Satan could hold over people. It was his only power on earth. The result of sin being in the world was death. But when Jesus died he took the punishment for sin and then he overcame death. So Jesus defeated Satan by taking away the one thing that gave him any power of us.

PPTa - READ verse 10-12a.

Satan has been defeated by the blood of the lamb, the death of Jesus on the cross, and by Jesus overcoming death.

PPTb - But then we read the rest of verse 12: *“But woe to the earth and the sea, because the devil has gone down to you! He is filled with fury, because he knows that his time is short.”*

Satan has been defeated. He has no power over death because of what Jesus did on the cross. And now he’s furious! He’s been defeated and his time is short! What does he do now that his time is so short?

Verse 13: *“When the dragon saw that he had been hurled to the earth, he pursued the woman who had given birth to the male child.”*

III – We used to have a little Pomeranian dog when we were living in a unit in Marrickville. And we would leave him inside when we went to work or college. And our little puppy knew he had only a short time before we got back. And he would make the most of it. On a bad day, when he was particularly naughty, he would rip all the toilet paper apart, chew through electrical leads, jump all over the couch, and wee on the floor. His time was short, and he knew when we got home, we were going to kill him!

When Satan can’t stop God, he goes after the woman. In other words, God’s people. US! Since God has already won and the devil’s time is short, the devil goes after God’s people to cause as much damage as possible before his time is up! And what happens to us?

In verses 14 – 17, we’re told that God continues to protect his people. Satan continues to make war against the offspring of God’s people – verse 17 - *“those who obey God’s commandments and hold to the testimony of Jesus”*, and God continues to protect his people against Satan’s attacks.

Satan is having a two year old tantrum! (Which is quite scary!) He waits and waits to destroy Jesus and loses. He’s completely defeated and thrown down to earth. And like an angry child who didn’t get his way, he does as much damage as possible before the end comes. But his end IS coming, when he will be finished off completely.

PPT - So what do we know so far?

1. **Satan is a created being**, and as such is UNDER the power of God. He is God’s adversary, but he is **not** more powerful than God. In fact, he cannot do anything that God does not *allow* him to do.
2. **Satan has been defeated!** The victory of the cross is an eternal victory over the power of Satan. Those who trust in the death and resurrection of Jesus are no longer under the power of sin and death. They are no longer under the power of Satan.
3. **Satan is furious!** He is **determined** to do as much damage as possible to the church of God before his time ends.

So what do we do with that knowledge? If Satan is real, if he has already been eternally defeated, and if he is working against us, what should we do?

Well, let’s turn over to the letter to the Ephesians. Chapter 6. Verse 10:

PPT - *“Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. Put on the full armour God so that you can take your stand against the devil’s schemes.”*

We are involved in a battle. How do we fight this battle? We’re told two things:

PPTa - 1. BE STRONG IN THE LORD. We’re **not** told to be strong *ourselves*. We’re told to put on *God’s* strength, to put on *God’s* armour, so we can stand against the devil’s schemes. **We** do not have the strength

to stand against the devil, but **God** does. God has defeated Satan and has the strength we need to keep him out of our lives.

PPTb - 2. STAND FIRM. We're not told to fight the devil. Because the fight has already been won. God defeated Satan with the cross. So we don't put on armour to fight. We put on armour to **stand!** God's armour allows us to stand upright in the middle of a powerful battle. Listen to verse 12:

PPT - *"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."*

We need spiritual weapons for a spiritual war.

As humans we are unable to take our stand against spiritual forces without spiritual weapons. And God gives us those weapons to fight with:

Truth, righteousness, the gospel of peace, faith, salvation, the word of God, prayer. This is the armour of God. This is *His* armour which he gives us to wear. These are *His* weapons. And they are all we need to stand firm against the devil's attacks. I don't need to explain what the sword and helmet and belt are. You know what prayer is, what the word of God is, truth, faith, peace.

The devil is our opponent and he *schemes* against us. He uses trickery and deceit to take us down the wrong path. And it's easy to be tricked by Satan if we rely on our *own* strength and our *own* armour, instead of *God's* strength and *God's* armour.

Satan exists. He is the adversary of God. He works against God in everything. He has been defeated by the death and resurrection of Jesus, and his time is up, his end is near. Satan is powerless against us while we wear the armour of God. But our greatest danger is when we underestimate what Satan is able to do and we choose not to wear the armour of God.

"I don't need to read the word of God EVERY day. I don't need to pray EVERY day. I don't really NEED the support of a church EVERY week. I don't need to be righteous and truthful in EVERY decision I make." Satan doesn't take a holiday. There's not a moment he's not looking for an opportunity to come between you and God.

III – I had this burning hot tray of chips in the oven. One of many times. But this particular time stands out. My wife hadn't put the oven mitts back in the right spot. Actually she had – I just didn't look properly. I said to myself "I've only got to take out the tray and put it straight on the bench. I don't need an oven mitt for that. I'm a man. It's only for a second or two! Oven mitts are for wimps anyway!" Let me tell you, it doesn't matter how long or short you hold a burning oven tray in your hands for, it burns. It burns through layers of flesh in seconds.

To think that there are times in our lives when we *don't* need the *full* armour of God is like saying "I can do it on my own today!" Satan loves to hear that. The great deception. The deception that Adam and Eve fell for in the Garden. You don't really need God ALL the time!

Satan exists. He has lost the battle. And he is taking a last stab at God's people before his time comes to an end. But God has given us all we need to stand firm against him and all his schemes. Let's not obsess about Satan. Let's just accept he exists and that he wants to come between us and God. And let's put on the armour of God each day to defend ourselves against him: Truth, righteousness, the gospel of peace, faith, salvation, the word of God and prayer. We know what they are. So let's not avoid using them each day.

Sometimes they can be like spiritual "seatbelts", can't they? Some people refuse to wear them. They're designed to save your life when you have an accident. They're preventative. But some people just don't want to wear them.

Our struggles are against the spiritual world. We need spiritual armour. Put on *God's armour* and Satan is powerless until the last day.

PRAY. *Question time?*