



Lesson 30

THE DEVIL AND SIN

Reading Hebrews 2:9 - 18

The Bible certainly speaks of a devil. Who or what is the devil? (Greek: diabolos).

Let us see if we can find out from the Bible.

In 1 John 3:8 we are told why God sent Jesus:

"For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil."

Jesus came to destroy the "works of the devil". In Hebrews 2:14 we are told that Jesus also came to destroy the devil, as well as his works:

Hebrews 2:14	Meaning
<p>"Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same; that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is the devil."</p>	<p>Believers (people) are made of flesh and blood (human nature) and Jesus himself also in the same way had flesh and blood (human nature) so that through his death he would destroy the power of death (which is sin) (or the devil).</p>

This verse says that Jesus was born as a human being; and this was so that he could destroy the devil, by dying on the cross.

If the devil were a powerful superhuman being, how could Jesus by his death destroy it? This cannot be the true meaning of 'the devil'. Notice Hebrews 2:14 says the power of death is the devil and we know that it is sin that leads to death.

The devil which Jesus destroyed was really the power of sin which was in him, as it is in all human beings. (Remember, he inherited our nature from his mother, Mary.)

This is what Hebrews 9:26 tells us:

"... he (Jesus) appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself."

JESUS OVERCAME THE DEVIL
 JESUS PUT AWAY - OR OVERCAME – SIN

Jesus lived a perfect life. He was "in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin" (Hebrews 4:15). We are tempted, and we sin. Jesus was tempted, but he never sinned - he never gave way to temptation. He was able to overcome sin in this way because he was the Son of God.

He fought against sin all his life, and finally on the cross he destroyed it completely, by destroying the very nature that could be tempted. Because of this, God raised him from the dead, and gave him a "glorious body", free from all temptation to sin, and immortal.

What then is the devil?

Sin and the devil are the same thing. All that the Bible says about the devil, it say" about sin.

The devil is the enemy of God	...so is sin
The devil is the tempter of man	...so is sin
The devil is deceitful	...so is sin
The devil causes death (Hebrews 2:14)	...so does sin
The devil was destroyed by Christ's death	...so was sin

From these comparisons we can see that the devil and sin are the same thing.

So where does sin come from?

The Bible has the answer to that question, too. It comes from our own hearts.

Jesus once said:

"From within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness: all these evil things come from within, and defile the man" (Mark 7:21-23).

These evil things are not only in the hearts of bad men. Even the best of men have evil thoughts in their hearts. The apostle Paul, good man that he was, found it hard to do good and easy to do wrong. He says in Romans 7:18 that in his flesh dwelt no good thing. James gives us the same message, It is in ourselves, and not from some outside power, that we have the temptation to sin. He says:

"Every man is tempted when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed. Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin: and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death" (James.1:14-15).

Even though this passage from James is talking about temptation, it does not mention a devil here. Every man is tempted by his own evil thoughts.

THE DEVIL IS THE SINFUL FORCE WITHIN HUMAN NATURE

The devil that tempted Jesus

We have already seen, in Lesson 17, that the tempter of Jesus could not have been an immortal devil. The world belongs to God. He controls it, and no super-human being could have offered Jesus "all the kingdoms of the world". Moreover, Jesus would hardly have followed such a being, knowing him to be evil, to Jerusalem or anywhere else!

As we saw, the 'devil' of the temptation was the evil thought that came into the mind of Jesus - a desire to go his own way, instead of God's way, and so avoid the pain and suffering of crucifixion.

Why 'the devil'?

Why is it that the Bible so often uses the word 'devil' instead of just saying 'sin'? And why does it speak of this devil as if it were describing someone with tremendous power? It is surely so that we can understand just how powerful and deceitful sin is. We have to understand this before we can appreciate fully how much we all need to be saved from sin. When we realise our need, we can begin to appreciate what the Lord did for us in overcoming sin.

One all-powerful Creator

God is supreme. Could He possibly be challenged by an evil being - a devil or a satan? We know He could not.

But the idea of a great power opposed to God has been held by nations through the ages. The ancient Persians believed in two great powers, corresponding to God and the devil. The first was supposed to be the creator of light and goodness, and the second of darkness and evil. In answer to this wrong belief, God sent a message through the prophet Isaiah, saying:

"I am the Lord, and there is none else, there is no God beside me: I girded thee, though thou hast not known Me: that they may know from the rising of the sun, and from the west, that there is none beside Me. I am the Lord, and there is none else. I form the light, and create darkness: I make peace, and create evil: I the Lord do all those things" (Isaiah 45:5-7)

(The word 'evil' here must not be confused with 'sin'. It means trouble. such as God brings on sinners who disobey His will.)

There is one great power in the universe, ordering all things. This is the one great Creator, who upholds all things by the word of His power. The only opposition to God is from sin in the hearts and lives of men and women.

Sin - A Serious Problem

"The Lord looked down from heaven upon the children of men, to see if there were any that did understand, and seek God. They are all gone aside, they are altogether become filthy; there is none that doeth good, no, not one" (Psalm 14:2,3).

That is how the Psalmist puts it. Paul in Romans 2:23 is telling us the same truth when he says, "All have sinned, and come short of the glory of God." Those words are not very pleasant reading. None of us likes to be told, "You are wrong!" When we have done wrong, we try to make excuses, to blame someone else. We do not like to face the fact that our nature is evil. But until we do realise this, we cannot begin to understand how much God has done for us in sending Jesus Christ, nor can we respond to His love.

Most people never stop to think about how God intended them to live their lives. The few who do try to do right soon find they have a terrible problem. The heart of man, Jeremiah tells us, is "deceitful above all things and desperately wicked" (Jeremiah 17:9). Anyone sincerely trying to live a good life will be sad about this. Paul expresses perfectly how we feel in his Letter to the Romans:

"For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh) dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not. For the good that I would I do not; but the evil which I would not, that I do" (Romans 7:18,19).

We cannot help ourselves... So what are we to do?

Once we have recognised sin in ourselves, we must turn away from it. Repentance means just that - turning round and going the opposite way. That is something we cannot do without God's help and the teaching of His Word. Through the death of Jesus, we can come to God and find forgiveness and have a hope of life.

Repentance begins when we realise how sinful and evil all men are; and - this is vital - when we recognise this sin and evil in ourselves
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When we repent in this way, we become disciples of the Lord Jesus, following him and going his way. Jesus lived a perfect life, and to be his disciples means striving with all our being to turn away from sin, and trying to live as he did.

"What shall we say then - Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? God forbid. How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?" (Romans 6:1,2).

We cannot continue in our own way. Further on in Romans 6, the apostle Paul says:

"Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof. Neither yield (give) ye your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin: but yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God."

Will we always have to fight against sin?

One thing is certain: we shall not win the battle in this life. We shall never come to a time when we can say, "The fight against sin is over, and I have won". If it were not for the forgiveness of God in Christ, which is there for us every day of our lives, we would find the struggle impossible. But one day the struggle will be over!

When Jesus returns to the earth to set up God's Kingdom, those who have been faithful disciples will be changed - they will be made equal to the angels. They will be made immortal, as you have learned in Lessons 19, 25 and 27.

But that is not all. They will be changed morally; sin will no longer have any power over them. They just will not want to do wrong things or think wrong thoughts. The struggle will be over and sin will be banished for ever from the disciple's mind. We read about this in 1 Corinthians 15:51-57.

Summary

1. 'Devil' is the Bible word for the sinful force of human nature.
2. Jesus overcame sin in himself. It is therefore said that he "destroyed the devil".
3. Sin is evil and unacceptable to God, and all (except Jesus) sin.
4. We have to repent. This means being truly sorry for our sins, and admitting that we are wrong.
5. We must repent and trust that God will forgive us, even when we sin after becoming disciples.

Chapters to read

James 1:12-27; Romans 6; Romans 7:14-25

Verses to learn

James 1:14,15

"But every man is tempted when he is drawn away of his own lust and enticed. Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin: and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death."