

APD8- ASK PASTOR DON - Sunday, May 17th, 2020 - 6:30 p.m.

Satan and his followers were thrown out of heaven and banished to earth before the Father created Adam and Eve. So why would the Lord place His children in the same place where His enemy was banished? Which leads to other questions - Why wouldn't He have separated us, His children, from His enemy? Wouldn't the Father want to protect His children?"

While I'm not certain I can show you a one text specific answer to these questions there are a number of Biblical themes that make this a fascinating issue. Just consider some of the things we know for sure from what the Bible plainly states about issues at least *related* to these questions.

1) ***First, we know that our Lord is the master and creator of all that exists.***

Colossians 1:15-17 - "He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. [16] For by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things were created through him and for him. [17] And he is before all things, and in him all things hold together."

Strong words these. Our Lord created all that exists. He breathed out every spiritual power and ruler with His creative word. He is the sovereign creator over all. Paul says everything else in creation owes its existence to Him. And that means they exist and do whatever they do only by Christ's sustaining power.

Of course, that's the problem for our opening question. If the Godhead was *unable* to do anything about Satan and his minions we'd be in spiritual trouble, for sure, but at least we'd have no lack of understanding about the spiritual mess this whole created order is in. God would simply be unable to do anything about it.

But Paul - and many, many other Biblical statements - indicates there is no *inability* with God. So we'll have to continue our search for answers.

2) ***Second, we know Satan is clearly identified as the ruler of this world.***

1 John 5:19 - "We know that we are from God, and the whole world lies in the power of the evil one."

The interesting feature of this verse is the way it insists on holding together the truth from our first point - ***our Lord is master and creator of all that exists*** - with another truth - ***that "whole world lies in the power of the evil one."***

So we know our question is at least on track. God *could* have done something with Satan's power over God's created order, but didn't. We will have to find reasons for this divine choice. But there's more:

John 14:29-31 - "And now I have told you before it takes place, so that when it does take place you may believe. [30] I will no longer talk much with you, for the ruler of this world is coming. He has no claim on me, [31] but I do as the Father has commanded me, so that the world may know that I love the Father. Rise, let us go from here."

The important point here is Jesus Himself identifies Satan as the ***"ruler of this world."*** Satan

has power in this world. He acts as though he's on his own home turf. He exercises considerable might and sway. He seems to be able to do his bidding at will. And Jesus makes no attempt to **deny** this.

- 3) ***We know that all through His earthly ministry Jesus manifested His authority over the demonic realm***

Mark 5:1,6-13 - "They came to the other side of the sea, to the country of the Gerasenes....[6].... And when he saw Jesus from afar, he ran and fell down before him. [7] And crying out with a loud voice, he said, "What have you to do with me, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? I adjure you by God, do not torment me." [8] For he was saying to him, "Come out of the man, you unclean spirit!" [9] And Jesus asked him, "What is your name?" He replied, "My name is Legion, for we are many." [10] And he begged him earnestly not to send them out of the country. [11] Now a great herd of pigs was feeding there on the hillside, [12] and they begged him, saying, "Send us to the pigs; let us enter them." [13] So he gave them permission. And the unclean spirits came out and entered the pigs; and the herd, numbering about two thousand, rushed down the steep bank into the sea and drowned in the sea."

I chose this passage out of the many options where Jesus exercises His mastery over the demonic realm only because in this passage we find Jesus casting out **many** demons (**"legion"**) with no more effort exerted than on those occasions where He was dealing with only one. It required no more effort to rule over thousands than over one. Such was the power and authority of our Lord.

- 4) ***We know that even now God is able to empower and keep His children in the face of Satan's deceptive, destructive work.***

Ephesians 6:10-13 - "Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might. [11] Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil. [12] For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places. [13] Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand firm."

Just to be clear. In our first point we were asserting **God's creative ability and might over all His creation**. This third point asserts something different. In this beloved Ephesians text Paul asserts God's provision to enable **us** to stand against the power and temptations of Satan in our own lives.

These verses answer to our questioners last query - **"Wouldn't God want to protect His children?"** The answer from Paul is God **desires** and **does** protect His children. The bigger question is less obvious - **"How would we ever realize God could protect us if He removed the work of the enemy? What would He protect us from?"**

- 5) ***We know that one day Satan will be cast in judgment into the lake of fire.***

Revelation 20:10-15 - "...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. [11] Then I saw a great white throne and him who was

seated on it. From his presence earth and sky fled away, and no place was found for them. [12] And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. Then another book was opened, which is the book of life. And the dead were judged by what was written in the books, according to what they had done. [13] And the sea gave up the dead who were in it, Death and Hades gave up the dead who were in them, and they were judged, each one of them, according to what they had done. [14] Then Death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire. [15] And if anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire."

So Satan's end is as sure as the eternal judgment of those rejecting Christ on judgment day. Our Lord will cast down Satan as surely as He cast down those demonic powers during His early ministry. Indeed, one of the things fueling Satan's work in this present age is he is fully aware ***his time is short:***

Revelation 12:12 - "Therefore, rejoice, O heavens and you who dwell in them! But woe to you, O earth and sea, for the devil has come down to you in great wrath, because he knows that his time is short!"

But none of these texts directly answers our opening question. If Jesus had such creative authority over Satan and his minions - even though Satan is temporarily called the "***ruler of this world,***" why did God place him here on earth? And even if He did place him here, why not send him into the lake of fire right now? We know he's going to be cast there eventually. So why let him steal and kill and destroy all these centuries? Why not just get rid of Satan right now and make this created order a lovely, Godly place?

I have two additional points that help me come to terms with this difficult question:

- 5) ***Without the presence of a tempter and temptation there would be no opportunity to prove loyalty to Christ.***

Imagine my wife and I were somehow deserted on an uncharted island. We have been the only two on the island since we were stranded there on our honeymoon and we will both live there until we die. ***Am I really to be praised because I was faithful to her all our marriage? Did my marital faithfulness really demonstrate devotion to her alone?***

Just to be clear - I ***might have*** been devoted inwardly to my wife all those years. It's ***possible*** that I was. The real point, however, is we'll never know. My devotion to her was never ***tested*** by any other options. And that's what faithfulness is all about. It's about ***loyalty in the face of other options.*** That's the reason all marriage vows - at least those with any meaning whatsoever - declare those ***priority words*** - those ***loyalty words*** - "***...And forsaking all others...***"

- 6) ***God's desire is not only to prove Himself more powerful than Satan, but more desirable than Satan.***

If there's anything we clearly learn from the ministry of Jesus it is His absolute mastery over the Devil and his minions. So we know there was no ***inability*** to vanquish Satan at any time. The ultimate reason for not doing so is that wouldn't demonstrate what needed demonstrating.

The desire of God is the undoing of the lie of the serpent in the garden. It takes no great

imagination to see our Creator God as **more powerful** than any of the creatures He created. But the immediate destruction of Satan would do nothing to set the record straight that caused the fall of mankind. We would never have been given the opportunity **by choice to demonstrate the superior delight there is in honoring God over all else.**

John 10:10 - "The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I came that they may have life and have it abundantly."

Take note of what Jesus is doing here. He delineates the two options of devotion for the whole world. His call is for us to make an accurate **comparison and decision**. The plan is not to immediately eliminate the thief but to **expose his lies so God is chosen out of love - not because there was no way not to choose Him. Loving God robotically with no chance of choosing otherwise brings less honor and glory to God than renouncing the lie to which Eve and Adam fell prey in the first place. Creation is set on its right footing again.**