**Appendix 8. Names of the Devil**

The Bible never gives a proper name for the Devil, although it seems clear that at one time he had one. It is fitting that God does not glorify the Devil by telling us what his original name was. It likely contained inherent honor and blessing that he now no longer has or deserves. Originally the Devil was the “morning star” of God; His most brilliant creation. He was the “model of perfection” (Ezek. 28:12). But he became prideful and rebelled against God, managing to convince one-third of the angels to follow him (Rev. 12:4). The cause of the Devil’s sin was a free will choice. The occasion of his sin was pride. The result of his sin was the corruption of his character and the perversion of his power. His end will be in the Lake of Fire.

The Devil is God’s archenemy. He was created as an angel and heads up and rules an army of fallen angels (demons) as well as demonically controlled or influenced people. He is the chief architect of the world’s evil and is responsible for the pattern of evil that exists in cultures and the world in general. Two important sections of Scripture that refer to the Devil are Isaiah 14:12-17 and Ezekiel 28:11-19. Further evidence that the Devil was the top of all of God’s creation before he fell is that Jesus Christ has now been exalted above God’s creation, taking the Devil’s place, and instead of being the morning star, he is the Bright and Morning Star (Rev. 22:16).

Terms used of the Devil in Scripture: As was mentioned above, there is no proper name given for the Devil in Scripture. Instead, there is a list of appellations and comparisons that, when taken together, build a picture of who he is and what he is like.

**1. Accuser.** The Greek word is *kategoreō* (#2723 κατηγορέω), and it means to accuse, and often to officially accuse before a judge. “For the accuser of our brothers, who accuses them before our God day and night, has been hurled down” (Rev. 12:10). The Devil relentlessly accuses people.

**2. Adversary.** The Greek word for Adversary is *Satanas* (#4567 Σατανᾶς ). The term means “Adversary,” and it was borrowed from the Aramaic, *Satana* (סָטָנָא) which originally referred to one who laid in ambush [as an adversary], and then became used as a proper name meaning “Adversary” (see *Vocabulary of the Greek NT*, by Moulton & Milligan). The word “satan” means “adversary” in all the biblical languages: Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek, although sometimes it is used just as “an adversary,” and sometimes, especially with the article, it is used as an appellative, a name, for the Devil.

Being an adversary to God and the things of God is a major part of the Devil’s character and strategy. “Satan” can refer to the direct work of the Devil as in Job 1, or it can refer to indirect work as in Matthew 16:23 when Jesus called Peter “Satan.” Usually the word “Satan” places the emphasis on the indirect work of the Devil. As the great adversary of the true God, the Adversary is the indirect cause of people’s problems by way of situations or circumstances or other people, which he arranges and controls. He is the influence of these situations, circumstances, and people. It has been generally unhelpful that *satanas* has been transliterated as “Satan” rather than translated as “Adversary.” Anyone reading Hebrew or Greek knew what the word meant, but almost no Christian knows that “Satan” is not just a name; it is a word that became used as a name, and its meaning, Adversary, is important.

**3. Azazel.** “Azazel” is found in Leviticus 16:8, 10; and 16:26, and it is a name for the Slanderer (Devil), which gets mistranslated “scapegoat” in the KJV. The *Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia* says, “In 1 Enoch, Azazel appears at the head of the rebel angels.” The text note in the NET (First Edition) on Leviticus 16 reads: “The most common view among scholars today is that it is the proper name of a particular demon (perhaps even the Devil himself) associated with the wilderness desert regions. Levine has proposed that it may perhaps derive from a reduplication of the ז (zayin) in זe combined with אֵל (’el, “mighty”), meaning ‘mighty goat.’” This assessment seems correct. The appellation “mighty goat” would be very fitting for the Devil because goats were independent, rebellious and destructive. In Islam, Azazil (spelled slightly differently) is said to be the original name of Satan. Modern occultists recognize Azazel as a demon, but not the Devil himself. However, given the way that he is mentioned in Leviticus and the goat sent to him, it seems clear that Azazel is another name for the Devil himself.

[For more information on Azazel, see Keil and Delitzsch, *Commentary on the OT*; *Rotherham’s Emphasized Bible*, the appendix on Azazel.]

**4. Beelzebul.** The Greek is *Beelzeboul* (#954 Βεελζεβούλ), which gets transliterated into English as Beelzebul. “Beelzeboul” literally means, “lord of the dung” or “Lord of the dunghill.” This comes from the Hebrew *zebul* (dung, a dunghill). Beelzebul is found in Matthew 10:25; 12:24, 27; Mark 3:22; Luke 11:15, 18 and 11:19.

Among the ignominious names given to idols by religious Jews both before, during, and after the time of Christ (in the Talmudic period), the general and common one was “dung.” They also used the name Baal-zebul (Lord of dung) to describe the chief demon (Lightfoot, *Commentary from Talmud*). The use of “dung” as a name for idols and demons appears many times in the Talmudic writings but not in the Hebrew text itself.

Because the Hebrew word *zebul* also means “height” or “dwelling,” a few commentators say that “Beelzebul” means something such as “lord of the heavenly dwelling.” However, this is not likely. We can envision the Jews trying to associate Jesus with the “lord of the dunghill,” especially given the common Jewish practice of degrading idols (and Jesus) whenever possible, and the frequent use of “dung” to refer to idols and the chief demon. It is easy to imagine the Pharisees saying that Jesus was possessed with the “lord of dunghills” and was casting out demons by it. It is less likely that they actually called “the prince of demons” the “lord of the heavenly dwelling.” That would have been uncharacteristic of the way they thought and spoke of idols and demons.

The Jews certainly had the right idea about how to name the chief demon, whom we know as the Slanderer (the Devil). He was certainly “lord of dung.” He is smelly and worthless, and the demons and people who follow him are smelly and worthless, and will eventually come to an end in the Lake of Fire.

The Latin and Aramaic texts read “Beelzebub” (Lord of the flies) instead of Beelzebul in the New Testament, apparently adapting the text from the OT god of Ekron (2 Kings 1:6). This apparently led to some Greek texts being changed from “Beelzeboul” to “Beelzebub,” (we can imagine a scribe who knew Latin well, simply copying “Beelzebub” from memory into the Greek text), and from there “Beelzebub” came into some English versions such as the King James. However, modern textual research has shown that “Beelzebul” is the original reading in the Greek text (e.g., CEB, CJB, CSB, ESV, Moffatt, NAB, NASB, NET, NJB, NIV2011, NRSV). “Beelzebub,” “Lord of the flies,” would place an emphasis on the Devil’s ability to bother and pester (cf. *Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible*).

**5. Belial.** From the New Testament we learn that “Belial” is a name for the Devil (2 Cor. 6:15). The Hebrew word “Belial” means “worthlessness,” and the phrase son or daughter of Belial is used many times in the Old Testament (cf. Deut. 13:13; Judg. 19:22; 20:13; 1 Sam. 1:16; 2:12; 10:27; 25:17; 30:22; etc.). Unfortunately, most modern versions of the Bible translate the meaning of “Belial,” which is “worthless” into the text, so what is clearly in the Hebrew text as “son of Belial” becomes something like, “a worthless person.” While it is true that people who have such an intimate relation with the Devil that they are called “sons of Belial” are indeed worthless, much of the meaning of the Hebrew text is lost when the phrase “son of Belial” is not translated that way. When we study the people who are referred to as “sons of Belial” in the Old Testament, they are similar in character to the people who are associated with the Slanderer as a “father” (see “Father” below). They seem to be wholly evil.

[For more on Belial and those who are “children of Belial” see commentary on 1 Sam. 2:12.]

**6. Devil.** The Greek is *diabolos* (#1228 διάβολος), which means “slanderer.” The English word “Devil” came into English from the late Latin, which itself came from the Greek word *diabolos*, which means “slanderer.” So the word “Devil,” is not a translation but is close to being a transliteration from the Latin. Interestingly, the Septuagint reads *diabolos* while the Hebrew text reads *satan* (Satan). To see more about the appellation “Devil” see this appendix under “Slanderer.”

**7. Dragon.** The Greek word *drakōn* (#1404 δράκων) means “dragon.” One of the New Testament names for the Devil is “the Dragon.” Since the Devil is not literally a dragon, this is the figure of speech hypocatastasis comparing the Devil with a dragon. The name “Dragon” emphasizes his fierce, ferocious qualities. Like a dragon, the Slanderer (Devil) is powerful, ferocious, pitiless, merciless, dangerous, and deadly. It is part of the Devil’s general and ongoing plot to either hide himself or change himself into something harmless or beneficial, and much recent literature, movies, etc., portray dragons as friendly and helpful beasts who are more misunderstood than actually dangerous. We must make no mistake, when God calls the Slanderer the “Dragon,” we are dealing with an evil, powerful, and dangerous adversary. The Slanderer is referred to as the Dragon in Revelation 12:3-17; etc.

[For more on hypocatastasis, see commentary on Rev. 20:2.]

**8. Father.** This New Testament designation of the Devil emphasizes his relationship to those he has “fathered.” It is not clear exactly what the Devil does to people so that he becomes their “father.” However, it seems that in the places where “father” is used in reference to the Devil it is more than just the standard Semitic idiom where it means mentor. There is good reason to believe that a person who has the Devil as his actual “father” has committed the unforgivable sin (cf. Matt. 12:32; Mark 3:29). Jesus said to some of the religious people who opposed him that “You are of your father, the Devil” (John 8:44). A study of these religious people (and also of the sorcerer who opposed Paul who was referred to as a “son of the Devil”; Acts 13:10) shows that they did indeed have the characteristics of their father: they were godless, evil, murderers, and so totally spiritually blind that no amount of truth or evidence could convince them they were wrong. For example, when told by the guards who watched the tomb of Jesus what happened at the tomb, rather than repent and admit they were wrong about Jesus, they bribed the guards to say Jesus’ body had been stolen (Matt. 28:11-13). The wise Christian is aware that there are still people who are that blind and evil on earth today, and they cannot be reasoned with or convinced. Like the sorcerer in Acts 13:10, they have to be removed from power so they cannot accomplish their destructive evil desires. [For more on what the sons of the Devil are like, see commentary on 1 Sam. 2:12.]

**9. god of this age.** This phrase emphasizes the Slanderer’s rulership over this age and the worship associated with it. It is used only one time (2 Cor. 4:4), and frankly, the general Christian teaching that “God is in control,” and “The Devil can only do what God allows him to do,” has obscured the powerful meaning of this phrase.

The Bible does not use the word “god,” lightly or haphazardly. By using the word “god” for the Devil, our God is giving us a glimpse into the tremendous power and control he exercises over the world—a control that is obvious when we stop and think about it. Famines, floods, hurricanes, tsunamis, tornadoes, epidemics, hatred and wars, envy and murder—these are all engineered by the “god of this age.” And that is just one part of his power. From behind the scenes he manipulates people to do his will, and is so powerful that it is safe to say that almost no one has a truly carefree life. Evil, hatred, jealousy, envy, and the use and abuse of people are everywhere, all promoted by the “god of this age.”

Another thing the phrase “god of this age” brings into focus is his insatiable desire for worship. The word “age” (sometimes mistranslated as “world”) is *aion*. While it is true that *aion* refers to an age, a period of time, the meaning is actually much deeper. It refers to the spiritual and moral climate of a time, the characteristics that mark the age. In restaurant terms, it means “atmosphere.” The Devil is the god in control of the “atmosphere” of our world, its spiritual and moral climate, and its physical activities.

[For more information on the control the Devil has over this world, see commentary on Luke 4:6.]

**10. Lucifer.** This comes from the Latin. See under “Shining One.”

**11. Opposer (or the “Opposing One”)**. The Greek word translated as “opposer” is *antikeimai* (#480 ἀντίκειμαι), and it refers to someone who is in opposition, or an opposer. The Devil always opposes God, so the reference to him as the “Opposer” is appropriate (1 Tim. 5:14). Sadly, although the Greek text of 1 Timothy 5:14 does not say “adversary,” using the word “satan,” many English versions read “adversary” instead of the more accurate, “opposer.”

**12. Ruler of the demons.** This is not so much a “name” for the Slanderer (Devil) as a descriptive phrase that emphasizes the Slanderer’s rule over demons. The phrase occurs in Mark 3:22. The Greek word translated “ruler” is *archōn* (#758 ἄρχων), which is from *archē*, “first,” and it means the one who is first, thus the “ruler, commander, chief,” etc. There are three designations of the Slanderer which refer to him specifically as “ruler.” There are three designations of the Devil that refer to him specifically as “ruler.” The ruler of the demons (Mark 3:22), the ruler of the world (John 12:31; 14:30, and 16:11), and the ruler of the kingdom of the air (Eph. 2:2). These three, combined with the “god of this age” (2 Cor. 4:4), show how complete the Devil’s control of what happens on earth really is when it comes to the age and world we live in. The Slanderer rules, and thus controls to a large extent, the demons under him, the world, and even what goes on in the air.

**13. Ruler of this world.** This phrase emphasizes his rulership of the world (John 12:31).

**14. Ruler of the kingdom of the air.** This phrase is found in Ephesians 2:2. That the Devil is the ruler of the “kingdom” of the air emphasizes his rulership of the evil spiritual powers that move about in the air. The word “air” is *aēr* and refers to the atmosphere immediately above the earth’s surface. We would want to call it the lower atmosphere, but the Greeks thought that it extended to the moon (Zodhiates). Above the *aēr* was the lighter, purer air the Greeks called *aithēr* (“ether”). Both the Jews and the Greeks believed that the air was inhabited by supernatural powers, which it is. As the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the Slanderer (Devil) exercises power both in the spiritual realm over demons, and in the physical realm over the air itself. We see his influence over the physical atmosphere in many ways, including hurricanes, tornados, and “freak weather patterns.” He also has the power and authority over the air to influence electromagnetic energy and thus disrupt communication, radio, radar, etc. It is quite possible that some, if not many, of the UFO sightings are actually demonic manifestations. In the same way that a demon can come into concretion as a ghost or apparition on earth, if one comes into concretion in the sky it would be seen as a UFO. These UFO sightings do the same basic thing in the air that ghost sightings do on earth: they distract and confuse people, and often cause them not to believe what is clearly written in the Word of God.

**15. Satan.** The word “Satan” is a transliteration from the Hebrew, and later the Greek. See under “Adversary.”

**16. Serpent.** One of the names of the Slanderer is “the serpent.” The Slanderer is not a literal serpent, so his being called that is the figure of speech hypocatastasis (a comparison by implication; for more on hypocatastasis, see commentary on Rev. 20:2). Calling the Slanderer a “serpent” compares him with a serpent, and imports the characteristics of a serpent onto the Slanderer. Thus we can see that, among other things, the Slanderer is hard to see and recognize (he is very good at hiding), crafty, and deadly.

Another thing about the serpent that is worth noting is that, in nature, when a snake goes after its prey, it almost always eats its head first. Similarly, “the Serpent” goes after the minds of people. He lies to them, threatens them, lures them, and even controls them by the fear of death (Heb. 2:15). For the Christian, putting on “the mind of Christ” (1 Cor. 2:16) and “the helmet of salvation” (Eph. 6:17), are essential to being able to live a godly life.

It is important for us to notice that the very first time the Slanderer appears in the Bible is Genesis 3:1, and he is called “the serpent.” Sadly, this has confused Christians, who have all manner of discussions about this “snake,” including if it could somehow walk and talk. There should have never been any doubt about the fact that it was not a “snake” in the Garden at all, but rather the Slanderer himself, who likely came as a shining celestial being, something that would have gotten Eve’s complete attention and been able to convince her that what God said was not correct. We should have known this because 2 Corinthians 11:3 says it was the “serpent” who deceived Eve in the Garden, and in that record, this “serpent” can be seen to be “the Adversary,” who is specifically identified in verse 14. Furthermore, Revelation 12:9 and 20:2 call the serpent, “that old serpent,” which is very appropriate since the serpent is the very first mention of the Adversary in the Bible.

The places the Slanderer is referred to as a serpent are Genesis 3:1, 2, 4, 13, 14; 2 Corinthians 11:3; and Revelation 12:9, 14, 15 and 20:2.

**17. Shining One.** One of the names the Devil is commonly known by is “Lucifer,” which comes from Isaiah 14:12. The Hebrew word is *heylel* (#01966 הֵילֵל), and it literally means “shining one.” In the Hebrew language, *heylel* was used as a name for the planet Venus, while in Latin, “Lucifer” (literally, “Light Bringer”) was a word commonly used for the planet Venus. Thus, for the Latin Vulgate to translate *heylel* as “Lucifer” made perfect sense, because both *heylel* and “Lucifer” were used of the planet Venus. The association between the “Shining One” and Venus also explains why so many versions say, “morning star.” Venus was well-known as the morning star. So *heylel* meant “Shining One, and was used as a name for the planet Venus, which was the “morning star.”

Some theologians think that in Isaiah 14:12, *heylel* is not a proper name, but rather just a description of the Devil. However, the context seems to demand that the word *heylel* is being used as a name. Actually, *heylel* seems to be the figure of speech hypocatastasis, using the planet Venus as a comparison to the Devil, thus showing his brilliance and beauty.

[For an explanation of hypocatastasis, see commentary on Rev. 20:2, “dragon.”]

If we want to use a proper name in Isaiah, we could use the literal, “Shining One,” and explain how and why it, as a name of Venus, would have been used there in Isaiah. Or we could use the name “Venus,” and then explain how and why the Devil was referred to as Venus, which was because he was the dominant light among the stars of God (angels are sometimes called “stars,” cf. Job 38:7). Either translation, “Shining One” or “Venus,” would be better in our English versions than “Lucifer,” which does not mean anything in English.

Further evidence that “Shining One” is a reference to the planet Venus, which was being used as a hypocatastasis for the Devil, is the fact that the Hebrew text reads, “Shining One, son of Dawn.” In Hebrew, the word translated “dawn” is *shachar* (#07837 שַׁחַר), and, as it appeared in cognate languages such as Ugaritic, it was used as a divine name. In Greek mythology, Venus was the “son of Eōs,” (“son of Dawn”). Eōs was the female Titan who was the personification of the dawn (the Titans were the first generation of gods, before the Olympian gods that we are more familiar with, who were ruled by Zeus). Of course, we know that the Devil was not the son of a Greek Titan, but the reference to “son of the Dawn” in Isaiah emphasizes the fact that the Devil, and the angels who supported his rebellion, should have known that he was not the Creator God, but was himself a created being who owed allegiance to his Creator.

Modern versions do not use “Lucifer” in Isaiah 14:12, but because “Lucifer” appeared in the Vulgate and KJV, and thus was the dominant translation of Isaiah 14:12 for around 1600 years, “Lucifer” has become one of the most well-known names for the Devil.

**18. Slanderer.** The Greek is *diabolos* (#1228 διάβολος), which means “slanderer,” “the one who slanders others,” but in Christian tradition and translation the word diabolos is brought into English as “Devil” rather than being translated as “Slanderer.” Slander, and the lying that always accompanies it, is a primary characteristic of the Devil. He has no regard for a person’s reputation or the illicit means he uses to discredit and destroy people. Slander is a primary tactic of the Devil. It seems unfortunate that *diabolos* has traditionally been transliterated as “Devil” rather than translated as “Slanderer,” because it has caused Christianity to lose a significant amount of understanding about him. The meaning of *diabolos* is important because God uses the meaning of names to describe the character of the one who has the name. Actually, we would learn a lot more about most of the Bible characters if their names were translated rather than transliterated. However, we also know that many times the literal meaning of a name becomes less important than knowing the one who has the name, because the person or being is always bigger than the name. An example would be, “Abraham,” who was “father of a multitude,” which is the meaning of his name, but he was much bigger than that. For example, Abraham is also the father of those who believe. So too, the Devil does much more than slander, so given our culture and the many different contexts in which *diabolos* is used in the Bible, transliterating it “Devil” is not a bad choice.

When it is used without the definite article “the,” *diabolos* usually does not refer to the Devil, but to a person who is a slanderer (cf. 1 Tim. 3:11; Titus 2:3). The Devil is “the Slanderer,” and slander is one of his major characteristics. He is spoken of in many places in the NT (cf. Matt. 4:1; 13:39; John 8:44; Acts 13:10; Heb. 2:14; Rev. 12:9).

In English, the word “Devil” only has meaning because we have all called God’s archenemy “the Devil” for so long, but the name “Devil” has no actual meaning in English. God specifically gave His arch-enemy the name “Slanderer” to teach us about one of his most prominent characteristics, and every Christian needs to be aware that a primary characteristic of the Devil is slander, and Christians should avoid slander at all costs.

**19. Tempter.** The Greek is *peirazō* (#3985 πειράζω, pronounced pay-'rah-zō), which means to tempt, to put through an ordeal. It can also be used in a good sense, to test with the idea of the one tested being successful, but that is not its meaning when it is used of the Slanderer. The Tempter is an apt name for the Slanderer because he is constantly at work to set traps and temptations up so that people will fall. The Adversary comes to steal, kill, and destroy (John 10:10), and often he sets the stage with a temptation so that we end up destroying ourselves. “The Tempter” is used in Matthew 4:3.

**20. Wicked One (or Evil One)**. The Greek is *ponēros* (#4190 πονηρός), which the BDAG *Greek-English Lexicon* describes as, “pertaining to being morally or socially worthless; therefore, ‘wicked, evil, bad, base, worthless, vicious, and degenerate.’” *Ponēros* is an adjective, but it is a substantive (an adjective used as a noun; for more on substantives, see commentary on Matt. 5:37).

The Slanderer is the fount and foundation of wickedness. It was in him that wickedness was first found when he was lifted up with pride and decided to rebel against God. Ever since that time, he has been true to his name, “the Wicked One,” and has been aggressively and destructively doing and causing wickedness wherever he can. The places where he is called “the Wicked One” are Matthew 5:37; 6:13; 13:19, 38; John 17:15; Ephesians 6:16; 2 Thessalonians 3:3; 1 John 2:13, 14; 3:12; 5:18 and 5:19.

Part of the “wickedness” of the “Wicked One” is his constant attack on the meaning of words. He knows that God communicated to mankind in words, and if he can lessen their impact, or cause people to not understand them, that is a major victory. “Wicked” is one of the words that has almost lost its meaning today. The Adversary has worked in our “pop culture” to turn the meaning of “wicked” upside down, and today in many social circles it is usually used to refer to something that is very good. *Merriam-Webster’s Collegiate Dictionary* (11th edition) defines “wicked” as “morally very bad,” and Webster’s 1828 Dictionary says it is “deviating from the divine law; addicted to vice; sinful; immoral. This is a word of comprehensive signification, extending to everything that is contrary to moral law.” That sums up the Greek meaning of *ponēros*, and describes both “wicked,” and the activities of the Devil.