

Dear Candice,

Thank you for writing us at Christian Questions Radio. You wanted to know if Satan was just our sin or an actual angel “gone bad.” You mentioned that although he has many names such as “devil” and “Lucifer,” you said you also read that “Satan” just means adversary and anyone can be Satan.

The word “Satan” (Hebrew) means accuser or adversary, the arch-enemy of good. Satan is mentioned many times in both the Old and New Testaments.

We believe that Satan was once a very beautiful high-ranking angel (morning star, son of dawn) who was cast down from heaven because he wanted to be like God. (See Isaiah 14:12-15.) Jesus, during his pre-human existence in heaven, knew Satan very well. After Jesus was baptized at Jordan and had fasted forty days in the desert, God permitted Satan to test Jesus three times. (See Matthew 4:1-11.) Satan’s efforts to tempt our Lord were of no avail and at the end of the encounter, Jesus said, “Away from me, Satan! For it is written: ‘Worship the Lord, your God, and serve him only.’ Then the devil left him, and angels came and attended him.” (Matthew 4:10-11) Years later, when Jesus told his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem to suffer many things and be killed, Peter said, “Never, Lord!” (Matthew 16:22) “Jesus turned and said to Peter, ‘Get behind me, Satan! You are a stumbling block to me; you do not have in mind the things of God, but the things of men.’” (Matthew 16:23) Peter had become the unintentional servant of Satan by opposing the death of Jesus, which was at the very center of God’s plan of redemption for the human race. The great enemy of God had sought to use Peter as a channel of temptation.

Not only did Satan fall from heaven, but other spirit beings (demons) left with him. They, like Satan, know that they will be judged at the appointed time. Speaking to Jesus, they shouted, “What do you want with us, Son of God? Have you come here to destroy us before the appointed time?” (Matthew 8:29) Furthermore, the Apostle Paul, alluding to a future time said to the Church at Rome, “The God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet.” (Romans 16:20) James adds, “You believe that there is one God. Good! Even the demons believe that—and shudder.” (James 2:19)

Because Satan knows his time is short, he is filled with fury. (See Revelation 12:12.) In these last days he and his servants are using every means at their disposal, especially through the media of TV, movies and the Internet, to deceive those who would follow after the Lord. We know Satan is wily. But we also know that his powers are limited. This knowledge, our faith, and our full submission to God, give us the strength we need to resist him. Be on guard because “the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour. Resist him, standing firm in the faith.” (1 Peter 5:8-9) “Therefore, put on the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand.” (Ephesians 6:13) “Submit yourselves, then to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.” (James 4:7)

We are told the good news in Revelation 20:2 that Satan, the devil, will be bound for a thousand years so that he will not be able to deceive the nations. After the thousand years are over, he will be released from his prison to deceive for a short time (Revelation 20:7). Then he and those who still wish to follow him will be destroyed, never to return (Revelation 20:7-10).

We hope we have answered your question. Be sure to sign up for CQ Rewind at www.christianquestions.net. The service is free without obligation and will provide you with scriptural perspective on many questions and topics.

Sincerely,
Christian Questions Radio