

The Character Satan in John's Gospel

John 8.44

They answered him, 'Abraham is our father.' Jesus said to them, 'If you were Abraham's children, you would be doing what Abraham did, 40but now you are trying to kill me, a man who has told you the truth that I heard from God. This is not what Abraham did. 41You are indeed doing what your father does.' They said to him, 'We are not illegitimate children; we have one father, God himself.' 42Jesus said to them, 'If God were your Father, you would love me, for I came from God and now I am here. I did not come on my own, but he sent me. 43Why do you not understand what I say? It is because you cannot accept my word. 44You are from your father the **devil**, and you choose to do your father's desires. He was a murderer from the beginning and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks according to his own nature, for he is a liar and the father of lies. 45But because I tell the truth, you do not believe me.

John 12.31

'Now my soul is troubled. And what should I say—"Father, save me from this hour"? No, it is for this reason that I have come to this hour. 28Father, glorify your name.' Then a voice came from heaven, 'I have glorified it, and I will glorify it again.' 29The crowd standing there heard it and said that it was thunder. Others said, 'An angel has spoken to him.' 30Jesus answered, 'This voice has come for your sake, not for mine. 31Now is the judgment of this world; now the **ruler of this world** will be driven out. 32And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself.' 33He said this to indicate the kind of death he was to die.

John 13.2

Now before the festival of the Passover, Jesus knew that his hour had come to depart from this world and go to the Father. Having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them to the end. 2The **devil** had already put it into the heart of Judas son of Simon Iscariot to betray him.

John 13.27

27After [Judas] received the piece of bread, **Satan** entered into him. Jesus said to him, 'Do quickly what you are going to do.' 28Now no one at the table knew why he said this to him. 29Some thought that, because Judas had the common purse, Jesus was telling him, 'Buy what we need for the festival'; or, that he should give something to the poor. 30So, after receiving the piece of bread, he immediately went out. And it was night.

John 14.30

28You heard me say to you, "I am going away, and I am coming to you." If you loved me, you would rejoice that I am going to the Father, because the Father is greater than I. 29And now I have told you this before it occurs, so that when it does occur, you may believe. 30I will no longer talk much with you, for the **ruler of this world** is coming. He has no power over me; 31but I do as the Father has commanded me, so that the world may know that I love the Father. Rise, let us be on our way.

John 16.11

'I did not say these things to you from the beginning, because I was with you. 5But now I am going to him who sent me; yet none of you asks me, "Where are you going?" 6But because I have said these things to you, sorrow has filled your hearts. 7Nevertheless, I tell you the truth: it is to your advantage that I go away, for if I do not go away, the Advocate will not come to you; but if I go, I will send him to you. 8And when he comes, he will prove the world wrong about sin and righteousness and judgment: 9about sin, because they do not

believe in me; 10about righteousness, because I am going to the Father and you will see me no longer; 11about judgment, because the **ruler of this world** has been condemned.

John 17.15

15I am not asking you to take them out of the world, but I ask you to protect them from the **evil one**. 16They do not belong to the world, just as I do not belong to the world. 17Sanctify them in the truth; your word is truth. 18As you have sent me into the world, so I have sent them into the world. 19And for their sakes I sanctify myself, so that they also may be sanctified in truth.

A General Description of the Concept of Satan in the New Testament

διαβαλλω (*Diablo*) is formed from two Greek words *dia* (*through or because of*) and *ballw* (*to throw or cast*) which together mean *to separate from*. In some ancient sources the word means to be put in opposition to someone. This leads naturally to the more commonly known meaning of διαβαλλω, which is to accuse or lie. Thus, the devil is the force which causes separation, hostility, or agitation through his complaints and reproaches. The devil denounces and gives false or defaming information. Ultimately, the Devil's function is to separate people from God.

Satan in the New Testament is the prince of the world and in such a position takes to himself the esteem belonging to God. The dominion of Satan over this world is primarily a dominion over people. Unredeemed people are in his sphere of influence and they cannot free themselves from his yoke. The acts of wicked people are the works of Satan. The goal of Satan's activity is humanity's destruction in alienation from God.

The demons are subject to Satan. And all bad things are attributable ultimately to Satan. The Kingdom of God encroaches on Satan's realm and ultimately defeats Satan's dominion.

Satan appears at decisive points in Jesus' life, beginning with Jesus' temptation and at the end of Jesus' life. Satan is active in the treachery of Judas. The New Testament view of the end times sees Satan as defeated when he is bound and judged in Revelation's Lake of Fire. Since Satan's power ultimately derives from God, Christians are confident that Satan's defeat will be inevitable.

Discussion Questions

1. What do you make of the fact that, except for the proper name, Satan, the other references to the Devil are not capitalized? How do other translations available to the class treat the various names for the Devil?
2. The description of the Devil (Diablo), given on the previous page of this packet, is general for the entire New Testament. After the teacher reads this description, let the class discuss the aspects of it that are particularly true in John's gospel. Are there any aspects of the Devil that are true in John and not mentioned in the description?
3. Do you believe in the existence of a personal being who is Satan or the Devil? Did Jesus? Did the people of his time? Did the writer of John?
4. What would you point to in contemporary life that is or corresponds to Satan? Is there, for instance, a force that is opposed to God that is dedicated to confusing, enslaving, and separating people from God?
5. What is the danger of a robust belief in Satan? What is the danger in a robust disbelief in Satan?
6. Have you moved to a greater or lesser appreciation of evil's independence, intelligence, and malice?
7. What do you make of the similarity between the words "devil" and "evil?"