

Genesis 3:1-7 (Opening)

¹ Now the serpent was more crafty than any other beast of the field that the LORD God had made.

He said to the woman, "Did God actually say, 'You shall not eat of any tree in the garden?'" ² And the woman said to the serpent, "We may eat of the fruit of the trees in the garden, ³ but God said, 'You shall not eat of the fruit of the tree that is in the midst of the garden, neither shall you touch it, lest you die.' " ⁴ But the serpent said to the woman, "You will not surely die. ⁵ For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil." ⁶ So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate, and she also gave some to her husband who was with her, and he ate. ⁷ Then the eyes of both were opened, and they knew that they were naked. And they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves loincloths.

Things go wrong. That's a given. And, more often than not, we want to blame something other than ourselves when things go wrong.

For centuries, people all over the world would blame creatures or beings that no one could see for the things that went wrong.

Imps in Germany; leprechauns in Ireland; fairies, goblins, jinn, and even gremlins as recent as World War II; every culture and time frame in history has a favorite "bad guy" to pin the blame on for things that go wrong.

We even have traditions that some of us still follow that stem from these creatures; like knocking on wood to ensure that something good happens or something bad doesn't happen, alerting the fairies associated with the wood of your wishes.

Over time, most of these folk I listed have become more or less benevolent in our folk lore. Leprechauns have that pot of gold at the end of the rainbow, and of course that breakfast cereal. Fairies help you fly in Never-Land; genies grant wishes; and even gremlins are OK, as long as you don't feed them after midnight.

But these folk haven't always been considered nice, or even indifferent to human interaction. Even the fuzzy and friendly looking Mogwai from the movie Gremlins were considered to be evil spirits in Chinese culture.

Over the past few weeks we've been looking at the spirit realms. Last week we talked about angels, and this week we're going to look at the other team.

Generically speaking, I've been able to find three types of these bad guys in the Bible.

So, to start off with, any idea why I've avoided using the term demon so far? Well, like with the term angel, we have preconceived ideas as to what a demon is. Also, the word demon is a transliteration of the Greek

word daimon, so it's not a very descriptive term. In fact, in Greek, daimon was sometimes used interchangeably with theos, the word for God.

So, just like last week, we'll use Hebrew to label these types of bad guys, or demons. The first type mentioned in the Bible is in Leviticus 17:7.

Leviticus 17:7

⁷ So they shall no more sacrifice their sacrifices to goat demons, after whom they whore. This shall be a statute forever for them throughout their generations.

Se'irim

The Hebrew word translated as goat demons here in this translation is Se'irim. Se'ir can be translated as goat, or hairy. In some earlier English translations, it's translated as satyr. A satyr, if you aren't familiar with Greek mythology, was the half man half goat creature. Pan, the god of nature was a satyr.

There's another scripture that talks about the Se'irim, and that's 2 Chronicles 11:14, 15. After Solomon died, his son Rehoboam didn't follow in his ways, and this caused the splitting of the kingdom into Israel and Judah. Jeroboam was against Rehoboam, but also wanted the people to like him, so he let them do what they wanted.

2 Chronicles 11:14, 15

¹⁴ For the Levites left their common lands and their holdings and came to Judah and Jerusalem, because Jeroboam and his sons cast them out from serving as priests of the LORD, ¹⁵ and he appointed his own priests for the high places and for the goat idols and for the calves that he had made.

We also see here in verse 15 talking about “the calves that he had made”. There were like the golden calf that the Israelites made while they were waiting for Moses to come down off the mountain with the law from God. There were several cow-like “gods” in the middle east during this time, including Molech, worshiped by the Ammonites and the Canaanites. The primary method of worship of Molech was human sacrifice, as we see in Leviticus 18:21

Leviticus 18:21

21 You shall not give any of your children to offer them to Molech, and so profane the name of your God: I am the LORD.

But I’m getting just a little bit ahead of myself here. Let’s look at the next type of demon mentioned in the Bible.

Shedim

That type would be the Shedim. They are mentioned only in two places as well; first in Deuteronomy 32:16, 17.

Deuteronomy 32:16, 17

*16 They stirred him to jealousy with strange gods;
with abominations they provoked him to anger.*
*17 They sacrificed to demons that were no gods,
to gods they had never known,
to new gods that had come recently,
whom your fathers had never dreaded.*

Here we see that the shedim are similar to the se’irim in that they want to be worshiped like a god. They don’t care if you worship others, as long as you worship them, too.

The other place we see shedim mentioned is in Psalms, talking about how the Israelites failed to follow what God told them to do.

Psalms 106:34-38

34 *They did not destroy the peoples,
as the LORD commanded them,*
35 *but they mixed with the nations
and learned to do as they did.*
36 *They served their idols,
which became a snare to them.*
37 *They sacrificed their sons
and their daughters to the demons;*
38 *they poured out innocent blood,
the blood of their sons and daughters,
whom they sacrificed to the idols of Canaan,
and the land was polluted with blood.*

In the Septuagint, the Greek language version of the Jewish Bible, shedim is translated as daimon.

Evil Spirit

The last type of demon I want to discuss is the one that causes the most problems for us. That's the generic "evil spirit". These evil spirits seem to have no form, no way to be recognized except by their actions or the actions they cause others to perform.

In 1 Samuel 16:14-17, we see Saul tormented by an evil or harmful spirit.

1 Samuel 16:14-17

¹⁴ Now the Spirit of the LORD departed from Saul, and a harmful spirit from the LORD tormented him. ¹⁵ And Saul's servants said to him, "Behold now, a harmful spirit from God is tormenting you. ¹⁶ Let our lord now command your servants who are before you to seek out a man who is skillful in playing the lyre, and when the harmful spirit from God is upon you, he will play it, and you will be well."

And again in 1 Samuel 18:10, 11, we see the same harmful spirit, and the result of the torment of Saul.

1 Samuel 18:10, 11

¹⁰ *The next day a harmful spirit from God rushed upon Saul, and he raved within his house while David was playing the lyre, as he did day by day. Saul had his spear in his hand. ¹¹ And Saul hurled the spear, for he thought, "I will pin David to the wall." But David evaded him twice.*

There are other instances in the New Testament that refer to evil spirits, demons, or unclean spirits. Let's take a look at a few of those, too.

Mark 1:21-26

²¹ *And they went into Capernaum, and immediately on the Sabbath he entered the synagogue and was teaching. ²² And they were astonished at his teaching, for he taught them as one who had authority, and not as the scribes. ²³ And immediately there was in their synagogue a man with an unclean spirit. And he cried out, ²⁴ "What have you to do with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are—the Holy One of God." ²⁵ But Jesus rebuked him, saying, "Be silent, and come out of him!" ²⁶ And the unclean spirit, convulsing him and crying out with a loud voice, came out of him.*

That's a powerful example, but there's a better known one in Mark chapter 5.

Mark 5:1-20

⁵ *They came to the other side of the sea, to the country of the Gerasenes. ² And when Jesus had stepped out of the boat, immediately there met him out of the tombs a man with an unclean spirit. ³ He lived among the tombs. And no one could bind him anymore, not even with a chain, ⁴ for he had often been bound with shackles and chains, but he wrenched the chains apart, and he broke the shackles in pieces. No one had the strength to subdue him. ⁵ Night and day among the tombs and on the mountains he was always crying out and cutting himself with*

stones. 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.

¹⁴ The herdsmen fled and told it in the city and in the country. And people came to see what it was that had happened. ¹⁵ And they came to Jesus and saw the demon-possessed man, the one who had had the legion, sitting there, clothed and in his right mind, and they were afraid. ¹⁶ And those who had seen it described to them what had happened to the demon-possessed man and to the pigs. ¹⁷ And they began to beg Jesus to depart from their region. ¹⁸ As he was getting into the boat, the man who had been possessed with demons begged him that he might be with him. ¹⁹ And he did not permit him but said to him, "Go home to your friends and tell them how much the Lord has done for you, and how he has had mercy on you." ²⁰ And he went away and began to proclaim in the Decapolis how much Jesus had done for him, and everyone marveled.

Some key points to take away from both these stories. First, the demons that were in control of both of these men in these two stories knew who Jesus was, and accepted His authority over them. Second, there was a physical possession of these men, in other words, they didn't have control over what they were doing, the demon or demons in them did. And third, when Jesus had cast the demons out of them, they were in control of themselves and were "normal".

The Accuser

There is one of these bad guys who is personified, but not specifically named, in the Bible. It may be that there have been more than one who have filled this role, but we know of one role, and that is the accuser.

This accuser seems to be the unifying idea behind all the demons. The idea is to frustrate God's plans, to make people disobey God, and to cause people to walk away from God.

In Job we see the accuser interacting directly with God.

Job 1:16-12

⁶ Now there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the LORD, and Satan also came among them. ⁷ The LORD said to Satan, "From where have you come?" Satan answered the LORD and said, "From going to and fro on the earth, and from walking up and down on it." ⁸ And the LORD said to Satan, "Have you considered my servant Job, that there is none like him on the earth, a blameless and upright man, who fears God and turns away from evil?" ⁹ Then Satan answered the LORD and said, "Does Job fear God for no reason? ¹⁰ Have you not put a hedge around him and his house and all that he has, on every side? You have blessed the work of his hands, and his possessions have increased in the land. ¹¹ But stretch out your hand and touch all that he has, and he will curse you to your face." ¹² And the LORD said to Satan, "Behold, all that he has is in your hand. Only against him do not stretch out your hand." So Satan went out from the presence of the LORD.

Here in this translation we see a name, Satan. But as I've said a few times before, satan isn't a name, it's a job. In Hebrew, it's actually ha satan, the accuser. Because of time and transliteration from the Hebrew it's become a name.

In 1 Chronicles 21 verse 1, we see the accuser again. This time accusing or inciting David.

1 Chronicles 21:1

¹ Then Satan stood against Israel and incited David to number Israel.

Here, the accuser gets David to do something God doesn't want him to do. God wants David to be secure in His power, not the power of the army of Israel, so God doesn't want David to take a census and find out how strong or weak his people are. But through pride, the accuser gets David to count the men of Israel, so he can say "we can stand up to anything".

The accuser uses tactics similar to the ones he used on David against another, more important person; Jesus.

Matthew 4:1-11

⁴ Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. ² And after fasting forty days and forty nights, he was hungry. ³ And the tempter came and said to him, "If you are the Son of God, command these stones to become loaves of bread." ⁴ But he answered, "It is written,

*" 'Man shall not live by bread alone,
but by every word that comes from the mouth of God.' "*

⁵ Then the devil took him to the holy city and set him on the pinnacle of the temple ⁶ and said to him, "If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down, for it is written,

" 'He will command his angels concerning you,'

and

*" 'On their hands they will bear you up,
lest you strike your foot against a stone.' "*

⁷ Jesus said to him, "Again it is written, 'You shall not put the Lord your God to the test.'" ⁸ Again, the devil took him to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory. ⁹ And he said to him, "All these I will give you, if you will fall down and worship me." ¹⁰ Then Jesus said to him, "Be gone, Satan! For it is written,

" 'You shall worship the Lord your God and him only shall you serve.' "

¹¹ Then the devil left him, and behold, angels came and were ministering to him.

In interesting note here, the Greek words in verse 1 translated as "the devil" is tou diabolos. Diabolos is a compound word literally meaning "I throw across" or to falsely accuse. This is the same term used in the Greek Septuagint in Job for the Hebrew ha satan.

Tactics

So, if we look at the temptation in the wilderness, we really see some of the accuser's tactics laid out in the open for us.

The first point of attack that he makes against Jesus is by going for something that seems to be lacking in our lives. Jesus had intentionally been fasting in the desert. He knew He was hungry, that's the idea of fasting, to deprive yourself of something that distracts you from God. But the accuser knows it can make you physically and emotionally weak, too. So, that's when he attacked.

The accuser knew Jesus needed to eat. The body can't survive too long without food. After about 45 days or so, most people die from starvation, assuming they had water to drink; but can be significant physical consequences from it. So Jesus' human body was about at its weakest possible point here from not eating. I would bet a loaf of bread would have looked really good at that point.

But Jesus knew that He was out there to be tempted, but to also come to terms with His human nature. He replied to the accuser by quoting Deuteronomy 8:3

Deuteronomy 8:3

³ And he humbled you and let you hunger and fed you with manna, which you did not know, nor did your fathers know, that he might make you know that man does not live by bread alone, but man lives by every word that comes from the mouth of the LORD.

So, seeing that method of attack didn't work, the accuser tried a different method; trust. He even quoted scripture to Jesus. The accuser quoted from Psalm 91, but conveniently left off the part that was harmful to his own cause.

Psalm 91:11-13

*¹¹ For he will command his angels concerning you
to guard you in all your ways.
¹² On their hands they will bear you up,
lest you strike your foot against a stone.
¹³ You will tread on the lion and the adder;
the young lion and the serpent you will trample underfoot.*

Convenient he'd leave off that part about trampling the serpent underfoot.

But, Jesus knew it wasn't His place to test God, to see if God would do what He said He would do. Jesus **knew** that God would do it, so there was no proof needed. When we're tempted in this way, we need to have the faith that God will do what He said, because God doesn't lie. Jesus uses Deuteronomy again to refute the accuser's attempt, and it's a good thing for us to keep in mind when we're tempted, too.

Deuteronomy 6:16, 17

¹⁶ “You shall not put the LORD your God to the test, as you tested him at Massah. ¹⁷ You shall diligently keep the commandments of the LORD your God, and his testimonies and his statutes, which he has commanded you.

Finally, the accuser plays his final card. He’s all in now, to use poker terms. He shows his true colors, what he truly desires; worship me, and I’ll make this easy for you.

But Jesus rebukes the accuser, and sends him away, and quotes from Deuteronomy 6 again, which also ties us back to some of our earlier scriptures this morning.

Deuteronomy 6:13, 14

¹³ It is the LORD your God you shall fear. Him you shall serve and by his name you shall swear. ¹⁴ You shall not go after other gods, the gods of the peoples who are around you

The accuser uses these same tactics against us, and next week we’ll talk specifically about what we can do to defend against his attacks and the attacks of his minions.

But the key for us to remember about these bad guys, these demons, these false gods, is that they want us to turn away from God; they want us to focus on things other than what God wants us to focus on.

We can see lots of these false gods around us; money, sex, food, and even ourselves. It’s easy to get pulled into focusing on any one of these or more than one in a way that’s not healthy and pulls us away from God. We need to strive to keep our focus on God and not get distracted by the accuser’s attempts to pull us away.

2 Corinthians 1:5-11 (Closing)

⁵ Now if anyone has caused pain, he has caused it not to me, but in some measure—not to put it too severely—to all of you. ⁶ For such a one, this punishment by the majority is enough, ⁷ so you should rather turn to forgive and comfort him, or he may be overwhelmed by excessive sorrow. ⁸ So I beg you to reaffirm your love for him. ⁹ For this is why I wrote, that I might test you and know whether you are obedient in everything. ¹⁰ Anyone whom you forgive, I also forgive. Indeed, what I have forgiven, if I have forgiven anything, has been for your sake in the presence of Christ, ¹¹ so that we would not be outwitted by Satan; for we are not ignorant of his designs.

Questions

- 1. What are some of the ways that the accuser tries to get us to worship things other than God? What are some of the “gods of the peoples who are around you” to quote Deuteronomy 6:14?*
- 2. The mythology of many ancient cultures are taught in schools now as literature. Do you think that some of these gods described in ancient mythologies are just the imagination of the writers or tellers of these stories, or do you think they may have been (are) some of these shedim, se'irim, and evil spirits?*
- 3. Things don't always go the way we want them to. When things happen that are outside of what we expect or want, does that mean there's something evil influencing the outcome of that situation? Does God sometimes cause things to happen in a way that is contrary to what we want or expect?*