



ISSUE

22.26

June 28, 2020

Faithful Sayings

BULLETIN OF
THE OL-
SEN PARK
CHURCH OF
CHRIST

Services

Sunday: 9:00 AM

10:00 AM

11:00 AM

Wednesday: 7:00 PM

Elders:

Pat Ledbetter

Brady McAlister

Jeff Nunn

Deacons:

Ryan Ferguson

Ben Hight

Blake McAlister

Walker McAnear

Sam Nunn

Lance Purcell

Justin Smiley

Kevin Wise

Trevor Yontz

Evangelist:

Kyle Pope

“The Ruler of This World”

By Kyle Pope

When Satan tempted Jesus by offering Him rule over the earth if He would worship him, Luke 4:6 records Satan’s bold claim **“all this authority . . . has been delivered to me”** (NKJV). This is echoed in John 16:11 where Jesus confirms his claim identifying Satan as **“the ruler of this world.”** While these statements declare Satan’s *rule* over this world, little is revealed about the nature of this rule or the circumstances under which it came to him.

Some connect Satan’s rule with his fall. We actually know very little about the fall of Satan. The infamous *Lucifer* passage of Isaiah 14:12 has been improperly used to describe Satan’s fall, but the context makes it clear it is talking about the king of Babylon, not Satan (see. 14:3). Jesus declared, **“I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven,”** but He does so in the context of His disciples casting out demons (Luke 10:18). Was Jesus talking about a past fall or what happened in the work of His disciples (i.e. Satan’s power being taken away)? In Revelation 12:7-12 it describes Satan and his angels being cast out of heaven, but it does so in the context of

Christ's victory over sin by His blood. Whatever power Satan had at the temptation of Christ in Luke 4:6 would predate this. If the book of Revelation is understood in terms of cycles that describe the same tribulation-deliverance pattern in different ways, the binding of Satan in Revelation 20:1-3 describes the same fall as 12:7-12. In either case, neither of these gives us an account of Satan being granted authority over the earth.

What we know about Satan's fall comes more from inference than from direct statement.

For example, in the qualifications for elders given in 1 Timothy 3:6, Paul warns that if a novice was appointed he could be "**puffed up with pride**" leading him to "**fall into the same condemnation as the devil.**" At the very least this infers that in some way Satan's pride led to his downfall and condemnation. What is clear is that Satan has "**sinned from the beginning**" (1 John 3:8) which likely refers to the beginning of this creation. He deceived the woman in the garden and even still he "**deceives the whole world**" (Rev. 12:9). In the parable of the wheat and the tares it is Satan who sows tares in the world (Matt. 13:39). So, Satan in one sense is responsible for sin, even though each of us individually is responsible when we give in to sin (Jas, 1:14).

The real questions that we wrestle with regarding Satan's rule is what authority does Satan actually possess and in what sense was that authority "delivered over" to him by God? If we go so far as to say that any sinful influence (or authority) was established by God, it would make God the cause of sin (or temptation). That is clearly not what the Bible teaches (Jas. 1:13). On the other hand, delivering something over to Satan does not have to express assent, agreement, or approval.

A photograph of a sunset over a field with trees. The sun is low on the horizon, casting a warm orange glow across the sky. The trees are silhouetted against the bright light of the setting sun.

Olsen Park Church of Christ

For example, in 1 Timothy 1:20, Paul “delivered” Hymenaeus and Alexander to Satan (i.e. he gave them over to their desire to follow Satan in their blasphemous behavior). The same is said of the man who had his father’s wife, from whom the church in Corinth had to withdraw. Paul described this as the man being delivered **“to Satan”** (1 Cor. 5:5). For God to allow Satan to tempt, deceive, and control the world through sin, does not make God complicit in this temptation, it is simply allowing Satan to exercise this type of influence. This may be the sense in which Satan’s power was “delivered” to Him.

Yet, what power (or authority) does Satan actually possess? In the temptation, Satan offered Jesus rule over all kingdoms. Did he really have that power and if so to what extent? It is true that often hardships of the flesh are attributed to Satan. The woman with the flow of blood was said to be **“bound by Satan”** (Luke 13:16). Paul’s thorn in the flesh is called a **“messenger of Satan”** (2 Cor. 12:7). Yet, it is unclear how directly these things should be understood. It may be that Satan is allowed to exercise some negative influence over nature. On the other hand it may be that the fact that Satan’s influence over man in the garden, which led to a world of sickness, death, hardship, and decay, means that all natural hardship could be said to trace back to Satan as its cause. Most of the “power” that Satan seems to possess concerns man’s spiritual state. We know that when

one follows the desires of Satan, he becomes a child of Satan rather than a child of God (John 8:44). In 1 Timothy 5:15 Paul speaks of those turning to sin as having **“turned aside after Satan.”** This is a personal choice and not compulsion, but having followed Satan rather than God puts one in obedience to Satan rather than under the rule of God. It yields to Satan’s rule. Hebrews 2:14 says that Satan had the **“power of death,”** and Jesus conquered this in His death. Obedience to the gospel allows one deliverance from the **“power (or authority—*exousia*) of Satan”** (Acts 26:18). If this is understood we can see that Satan’s authority is much like the sense in which we in Christ are part of His kingdom—it is dependent upon the assent of the governed. When I submit myself to the reign of Christ, I am



under His rule. When I submit myself to the reign of Satan, I am under his rule.

One final point should be observed from Satan's very name. *Satan* means "adversary." In Revelation 12:10 Satan is called "**the accuser of our brethren**" who accuses them be-

fore God "**day and night.**" This comes in the context of the description of his fall. This may give us more information about what God has allowed Satan to do. To some extent Satan was granted the right to "accuse" human beings before God. In Job 1:6-7 Satan appears in this role of the "accuser" with some right to roam

"**to and fro**" over the earth. In addition to Satan's rule over man through sin and death, it may be that this role of "accuser" is a *power* which God has granted Satan. Yet, Christ's death robs him of that power because it offers the atonement for sin whereby the repentant Christian can no longer properly be accused of sin.



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We are so glad that you joined us today.
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