

Darkness and Light
A History of Satan
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Slide 1

1. This is the first in a series of four presentations on the history of Christian beliefs about life and death and especially about life after death.
2. We will be looking at the history of beliefs about an eternal judgment, the nature of hell and expectations of heaven, beliefs that are closely related to each other.
3. Underlying all these beliefs is the belief that sin has eternal consequences.
4. As Paul writes: **“For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Jesus Christ our Lord.”** *Romans 6:23.*
5. And tied up with this idea, at least among some Christians, is the belief that the temptations of Satan are at the root of sin.
6. For example, *1 John 3:8* says: **“The one who does what is sinful is of the devil, because the devil has been sinning from the beginning. The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the devil's work.”**
7. As a result of the close connections between Satan and beliefs about life after death, I decided to begin this series with a discussion of the history of Satan and the devil as the source of sin and evil, focusing largely on what the Bible says.
8. Some of what I have to say on that topic may be familiar to you from other presentations I have made, but it is worth reviewing even if you have heard me talk about some of this before.

Slide 2

1. The idea that Satan is the source of sin or evil would have been incomprehensible to the Jews prior to their exile to Babylon in 587 B.C.
2. When pre-exilic Jews saw evil in the world, they attributed it exclusively to God.
3. As the prophet Amos wrote in about 700 B.C.: **“When disaster comes to a city, has not the LORD caused it?”** *Amos 3:6.*
4. As a result, evil spirits came directly from God.
5. For example, *1 Samuel 16:14* states: **“Now the Spirit of the LORD had departed from Saul, and an evil spirit from the LORD tormented him.”**

Slide 3

1. In *2 Kings*, the prophet Micaiah reported on a meeting of God's heavenly assembly in which God asked for suggestions to entice Israel's King Ahab to go into a battle with a neighboring country so that he would be killed. *2 Kings 22:20*.
2. One **"spirit"** in attendance volunteered to go to the prophets who were advising Ahab and, as a **"lying spirit,"** falsely tell those prophets that God would support Ahab in the battle. *2 Kings 22:21-22*.
3. God responded: **"Go and do it."** *2 Kings 22:22*.
4. Based on this false advice from a lying spirit expressly authorized by God, Ahab went into battle and, as God had wanted, was killed. *2 Kings 22:29-37*.

Slide 4

1. *2 Samuel* tells a story in which **"the anger of the LORD burned against Israel, and he incited David against them, saying, 'Go and take a census of Israel and Judah.'"** *2 Samuel 24:1*.
2. But conducting a census except under certain circumstances was against Jewish law. *Exodus 30:11-16*.
3. So when David actually conducted the census that God had ordered, God got angry and sent a plague that killed 70 thousand of David's people. *2 Samuel 24:15*.
4. David could not understand why God was killing the people of Israel and Judah for a violation of Jewish law that he alone had committed: **"When David saw the angel who was striking down the people, he said to the LORD, 'I have sinned; I, the shepherd, have done wrong. These are but sheep. What have they done? Let your hand fall on me and my family.'"** *2 Samuel 24:17*.
5. But David did not question God's right to punish him for doing what God himself had requested—after all, he was God.

Slide 5

1. Just as God was seen by the early Jewish writers as the source of all evil in the world, God was also the source of spiritual blindness and deception.
2. Moses reported: **"Sihon king of Heshbon refused to let us pass through. For the LORD your God had made his spirit stubborn and his heart obstinate in order to give him into your hands, as he has now done."** *Deuteronomy 2:30*.
3. The prophet Jeremiah said: **"You deceived me, LORD, and I was deceived; you overpowered me and prevailed. I am ridiculed all day long; everyone mocks me."** *Jeremiah 20:7*.

Slide 6

1. So powerful was the belief that God was the source of both good and evil that Jewish writers attributed to God the destruction of the Temple and their exile to Babylon.
2. The author of *Lamentations*, mourning the destruction of the Temple by the Babylonians, a reflection of almost unspeakable evil, wrote: **“Who can speak and have it happen if the Lord has not decreed it? Is it not from the mouth of the Most High that both calamities and good things come?”** *Lamentations* 3:37-38.
3. In 1924, a more recent author summarized the view of the Jews at the time of the exile: **“God could not be the author of all things without being the author of evil. *** It is easy to perceive . . . why the Jews had no Devil. They had nothing for him to do. The Lord did it all. He perpetrated the evil as well as achieved the good.”** Graves, *Biography of Satan* at 42, 44.

Slide 7

1. In 539 B.C., while the Jews were in exile in Babylon, Persia, led by Cyrus the Great, conquered Babylonia.
2. Cyrus decreed that the Jews were free to go home and agreed to pay for the reconstruction of the Temple in Jerusalem and return the treasures of the Temple looted by the Babylonians. *Ezra* 4:5, 6.
3. In 537 B.C., thousands returned home while thousands more stayed in Babylon.
4. During and after their exile, the Jews became familiar with a Persian belief system that reached exactly the opposite conclusion from their own about the source of evil.
5. As one author states: **“It is, of course, common knowledge that the Jewish people came into close contact with Zoroastrianism during their exile in Babylon.”** Nigosian, *The Zoroastrian Faith* at 96.

Slide 8

1. Zoroastrianism was known, if not practiced, by Cyrus and members of his court.
2. It arose from the teachings of a person known as Zoroaster after the Greek rendering of his name.
3. Zoroaster was born in what is now eastern Iran into a world that worshiped multiple gods.
4. Some of those gods were seen as responsible for the world’s stability, while other gods were seen as responsible for instability and trouble.

5. Zoroaster became a priest serving one or more of the positive gods.

Slide 9

1. When Zoroaster was about 30 years old, he had a vision that led him to conclude that Mazda, the god of wisdom, was **“the sovereign, lawmaker, supreme judge, master of day and night, the center of nature, and the inventor of moral law.”** Messadie, *A History of the Devil* at 83.
2. **“Because Mazda was holy, eternal, just, omniscient, the primeval being, creator of all and the origin of all goodness, Zoroaster chose him as the sole God.”** *Id.* at 21.
3. Zoroaster taught that six other positive gods being worshipped at the time had been created by Mazda and were subject to his control.
4. Each of these subordinate spirits or angels, called the Holy Immortals, **“has a specific character and an assigned sphere to act on behalf, or as an agent, of Mazda.”** Nigosian, *The Zoroastrian Faith* at 75.

Slide 10

1. Although Zoroaster believed that Mazda had created a perfect world, without darkness, hardship, sickness or evil, he recognized that the earth of his day was filled with **“sin, violence, falsehood, dust, dirt, disease, death, and decay.”** Armstrong, *The Great Transformation* at 11.
2. Because Zoroaster did not believe that the hardship and evil he saw around him could be attributed to Mazda, he concluded **“that there must also be a wicked deity who had inspired the cruelty”** that existed in the world. *Id.* at 10.
3. He concluded that Angra Mainyu or Ahriman, the Hostile Spirit, is **“the destructive personification (and creator) of evil, the harbinger of death, disease and lies.”** Wray, *The Birth of Satan* at 85.
4. The Hostile Spirit also created the darkness that shrouds the earth at night.
5. Zoroaster taught that other existing gods called *daevas* or demons that created misery and disease had decided **“to fight alongside the Hostile Spirit”** and were subordinate to him. Armstrong, *The Great Transformation* at 11.
6. **“The world, instead of being a Paradise, became a battlefield of conflict between good and evil”** and light and darkness. Waterhouse, *Zoroastrianism* at 91.
7. Zoroaster also taught that a savior will eventually appear and, after a great battle won by the forces of Mazda, the Hostile Spirit will die in a river of molten metal; a perfect earth, with no more death and no more evil, will be restored.

Slide 11

1. While in Babylon, the Jews had become familiar not only with Lord Mazda but with other gods worshipped by the Babylonians.
2. As a result, Jewish writers reminded them that Yahweh, the God of Israel, was the only God in the universe and had protected them even when they were in Babylon.
3. The most important of those writers was an unnamed prophet, dubbed Second Isaiah, who wrote chapters 40 to 55 of the *Book of Isaiah*.
4. Second Isaiah, thought to have been among those exiled to Babylon, set out to demonstrate that **“Yahweh was not just the god of Israel (both as land and people), but of all lands and nations.”** Smith, *The Origins of Biblical Monotheism* at 179.
5. Second Isaiah first ridiculed Babylonian idols made of wood and metal, which **“know nothing”** and **“understand nothing,”** concluding: **“This is what the LORD says--Israel’s King and Redeemer, the LORD Almighty: ‘I am the first and I am the last; apart from me there is no God.’”** *Isaiah* 44:6, 17-18.

Slide 12

1. After taking on the Babylonian idols, Second Isaiah seems to have directed his attention to Mazda, the Zoroastrian god of goodness and light.
2. Second Isaiah quotes God as saying directly **“to Cyrus:” “I am the LORD, and there is no other; apart from me there is no God. I will strengthen you, though you have not acknowledged me, so that from the rising of the sun to the place of its setting people may know there is none besides me. I am the LORD, and there is no other. I form the light and create darkness, I bring prosperity and create disaster; I, the LORD, do all these things.”** *Isaiah* 45:1, 5-7.
3. As the only God of the universe, Yahweh was in control of everything.
4. As one author states: **“Once there is one god, he or she must be the author of all evil as well as all good.”** Segal, *Life after Death* at 179.
5. Because Mazda could not **“do all these things”** that Yahweh, the God of Israel, could do, he was no more a real god than the Babylonian idols.
6. Because Yahweh was the only God, it was he (and not Mazda) who had provided Cyrus the strength to defeat the Babylonians even though Cyrus did not worship him.
7. To give further evidence that Yahweh is the source of both good and evil and light and darkness, Second Isaiah also quotes Yahweh as telling Cyrus: **“I will give you the treasures of darkness, riches stored in secret places, so that you may know that I am the LORD.”** *Isaiah* 45:3.

Slide 13

1. The Jewish conclusion that God is the source of both good and evil was repeated in the *Book of Job*, which some scholars believe may have been written or influenced by Second Isaiah because of the number of phrases found in both books but nowhere else.
2. Job had no doubt that God was the source of his almost unbearable sufferings, saying: **“The arrows of the Almighty are in me, my spirit drinks in their poison; God’s terrors are marshaled against me.”** *Job* 6:4.
3. But Job **“did not sin by charging God with wrongdoing.”** *Job* 1:22.
4. As he said to his wife: **“Shall we accept good from God, and not troubles?”** *Job* 2:10.

Slide 14

1. The *Book of Job* goes beyond simply quoting Job’s belief that his troubles came directly from God—it sets out to prove that.
2. The Biblical account of Job’s miseries opens in what Karen Armstrong describes as God’s **“divine assembly.”** Armstrong, *The Great Transformation* at 201.
3. In the first use in the Hebrew Scriptures of the word *“hassatan”* as a proper noun describing a specific being, the account reports that Satan had just come back from **“roaming through the earth.”** *Job* 1:6-7.
4. To determine if Job was really righteous, Satan suggested that God test Job by **“stretch[ing] out your hand and strik[ing] everything he has.”** *Job* 1:11.
5. God agreed and authorized Satan to do whatever he wanted to test Job’s faith so long as he did not harm Job himself. *Job* 1:12.
6. With this express grant of authority from God, Satan left the heavenly assembly and orchestrated events that killed Job’s family, his servants and his livestock, but, as God had demanded, did not harm Job. *Job* 1:12-19.

Slide 15

1. The *Book of Zechariah*, written at about the same time as *Job*, also describes Satan in God’s heavenly council, objecting to God’s appointment of a high priest in Jerusalem. *Zechariah* 3:1-2.
2. So, as late as 500 B.C. Satan is not only **“one of God’s obedient servants.”** Pagels, *The Origin of Satan* at 39.

3. He is **“explicitly a member of the heavenly council.”** Messadie, *A History of the Devil* at 232.

Slide 16

1. So how did we get from there, with God being the source of both good and evil and using Satan to accomplish his dirty work on earth, to the current Christian view of Satan as an independent source of evil, opposing God?

2. Many scholars believe the answer to that question begins with the continued suffering of the Jewish people, who were conquered by one after another foreign power, from which they gradually concluded that God could not be the source of their misery.

3. As one author writes: **“A God who was all-powerful, author of blessings and curses, good and evil, was not easy to get close to. Once this pure monotheism was exposed to real-life conditions outside the control of the prophets, it began to break down.”** Wray, *The Birth of Satan* at 166.

4. As a result, that same author writes: **“One can almost hear the cry of their epiphany: Surely God would not allow this to happen to us! Our misery must be the result of a malevolent force opposed to the goodness of God.”** *Id.* at 94.

5. Gradually, Satan, once seen as God’s loyal servant, became transformed into an independent source of evil closely resembling the Hostile Spirit of Zoroastrianism.

Slide 17

1. The earliest written evidence of that transformation is found in the *Book of Tobit*, part of the Old Testament of Roman Catholics and Eastern Orthodox Christians, but considered part of the Apocrypha by Protestants since Martin Luther.

2. *Tobit*, written by an unknown Jewish author in the third century B.C., tells the story of a Jewish man named Tobit and his family living in Galilee in the eighth century B.C., when the Northern Kingdom of Israel was conquered by the Assyrians.

3. *Tobit* describes **“Asmodeus, the worst of the demons,”** who opposes God and his angels, a concept not found in any earlier Jewish writing. *Tobit* 3:8, 17.

4. Most scholars believe Asmodeus was modeled on Aeshma-daeva, a wicked demon of Zoroastrianism who opposed Mazda and his Holy Immortals that the Jews had learned about during the exile.

5. As one author writes: **“The demon Asmodeus is certainly to be connected to Aeshma.”** Helyer, *Exploring Jewish Literature* at 83 n. 21.

6. Another more colorfully says: **“The Devil’s birth certificate was filled out by an Iranian prophet.”** Messadie, *A History of the Devil* at 85.

Slide 18

1. With the idea of evil demons acting independently of God having been introduced into Jewish literature, other Jewish writers set about trying to explain how such demons came into being and how they were controlled.
2. The most important of these writings, called *1 Enoch*, was written by a number of unknown Jewish authors between the third the century B.C. and the first century A.D.
3. A section of *1 Enoch* known as *Watchers* was written at the same time as *Tobit*.
4. *Watchers* elaborates on a bizarre passage in the Hebrew Scriptures that has long befuddled both Jews and Christians: **“When human beings began to increase in number on the earth and daughters were born to them, the sons of God saw that the daughters of humans were beautiful, and they married any of them they chose. The Nephilim were on the earth in those days—and also afterward—when the sons of God went to the daughters of humans and had children by them. They were the heroes of old, men of renown.”** *Genesis* 6:1–2, 4–5.

Slide 19

1. According to *Watchers*, the **“sons of God”** of *Genesis* 6 were 200 angels called “Watchers,” led by an angel named Samyaza, who rebelled against God, went to earth and took human wives who, **“conceiving brought forth giants.”** *1 Enoch* 7:1–11.
2. With these half-human, half-angel giants roaming the earth, **“[i]mpiety increased; fornication multiplied; and they transgressed and corrupted all their ways.”** *1 Enoch* 8:2.
3. Because of these giants, **“has the whole earth been filled with blood and with iniquity.”** *1 Enoch* 9:8–9.
4. According to *1 Enoch*, these giants, **“born of spirit and of flesh, shall be called upon earth evil spirits, and on earth shall be their habitation.”** *1 Enoch* 15:8.
5. These **“spirits of the giants shall be like clouds, which shall oppress, corrupt, fall, contest, and bruise upon earth.”** *1 Enoch* 15:9.
6. These evil spirits **“became ministers of Satan, and seduced those who dwell upon the earth.”** *1 Enoch* 53:6.

Slide 20

1. With their new understanding of Satan as an independent source of evil, Jewish writers began to literally rewrite the Bible to reflect this new understanding.

2. *1 Chronicles*, written as late as 200 B.C. to correct perceived errors in earlier writings, retells the story found in *1 Samuel* of the ill-fated census conducted by David that we discussed earlier. *1 Chronicles* 21.
3. As we saw, as reported in *2 Samuel*, **“the anger of the LORD burned against Israel, and he incited David [to] take a census of Israel and Judah. So he said to Joab and the army commanders with him, ‘Go throughout the tribes of Israel from Dan to Beersheba and enroll the fighting men.’”** *2 Samuel* 24:1.
4. However, in the *1 Chronicles* version, **“Satan rose up against Israel and incited David to take a census of Israel. So David said to Joab and the commanders of the troops, ‘Go and count the Israelites from Beersheba to Dan.’”** *1 Chronicles* 21:1.
5. As one author writes: **“Here he is, directly in our sights, Satan, *hassatan*, the Adversary, being given responsibility for an action that the Bible had previously attributed to the LORD.”** Wray, *The Birth of Satan* at 44.
6. Satan had become the **“personal adversary in the ultimate battle between good and evil,”** acting independently of God. *Id.* at 1.

Slide 21

1. Similar modifications of other stories from the Hebrew Scriptures are reflected in the *Book of Jubilees*, which was written in the second century B.C. and **“presents itself as a revelation given to Moses and rehearses all the history of Genesis down to the time of Moses.”** Segal, *Life after Death* at 353.
2. *Jubilees* is included in the Old Testament of Ethiopian Orthodox Christians, but for Jews and most other Christians is considered Pseudepigrapha.
3. *Jubilees* retells the story found in *Exodus* in which God was **“about to kill”** either Moses or his son because the intended victim was not circumcised. *Exodus* 4:24.
4. In the *Jubilees* version of this story, it is the evil Mastema, whose name is related to the word “Satan,” **“rather than God, who goes after Moses, intending to kill him.”** Wray, *The Birth of Satan* at 103.
5. Like the *1 Chronicles* modification of the story about David’s census, *Jubilees* **“credits the more unsavory deeds of God to a malicious, evil being.”** *Id.*
6. Satan, or its namesake Mastema, had become **“the cosmic scapegoat, saving God from blame for evil.”** *Id.* at 176.

Slide 22

1. Similarly, *Jubilees* modified the famous story in *Genesis* in which God commands Abraham to sacrifice his son Isaac. *Genesis* 22:2.

2. In the *Jubilees* version, **“it is Mastema—not the Lord—who commands Abraham to kill his son, Isaac.”** Pagels, *The Origin of Satan* at 54.
3. In the *Jubilees* version, Abraham then pleads with God to protect him from the evil spirits: **“Deliver me from the hands of the evil spirits, and do not let them lead me astray from my God.”** *Id.*
4. Unlike in the earlier Hebrew writings included in the Old Testament, Satan and not God now controlled the evil spirits. *1 Samuel* 16:14.

Slide 23

1. With the new conception of Satan as the source of evil, other Jewish writers took a new look at the *Genesis* story about the serpent that tempted Eve in the Garden of Eden.
2. **“Nowhere in the Hebrew Bible is there any identification made between the serpent and the Devil/Satan”** or otherwise any suggestion that the serpent was not just **“one of the wild animals.”** Wray, *The Birth of Satan* at 69.
3. In fact, at the times of the Hebrew Scriptures, the snake was revered and even worshipped in the Middle East. Kugel, *How to Read the Bible* at 56.
4. Moses himself lifted a snake on a pole as a symbol of healing, the origin of today’s symbol of medicine. *Numbers* 21:9.

Slide 24

1. *The Wisdom of Solomon*, a book of the Apocrypha and therefore part of the Old Testament of Roman Catholics and Greek Orthodox Christians, was written by a Jewish writer sometime in the first century B.C.
2. Referring to the story of Eve and the serpent, it states: **“For God created us for incorruption, and made us in the image of his own eternity, but through the devil’s envy death entered the world.”** *Wisdom* 2:23–24.
3. This is the first time Jewish literature made the devil responsible for sin and death. Metzger, *An Introduction to the Apocrypha* at 74.

Slide 25

1. The conclusion that the serpent is the devil was made express in the *Life of Adam and Eve*, written as late as the first century A.D.: **“The devil answered through the mouth of the serpent.”** *Life of Adam and Eve* 17:4.
2. According to the *Life of Adam and Eve*, Satan deceived Eve by transforming **“himself into the brightness of angels.”** *Life of Adam and Eve* 9:1.

3. This may be the basis for Paul's contemporaneous claim that **"Satan himself masquerades as an angel of light."** *2 Corinthians* 11:14.

Slide 26

1. Most scholars believe that a strict Jewish group called the Essenes lived at Qumran at the time of Jesus and wrote what became known as the Dead Sea Scrolls.
2. Much of the writing in the Dead Sea Scrolls focuses on conflicts between God and Satan or other names for an independent source of evil.
3. As one author states: **"The Qumran literature makes it clear that the Essenes understood Satan to be an evil leader who commanded a legion of followers in heaven and on earth."** Wray, *The Birth of Satan* at 105.

Slide 27

1. As we saw earlier, *1 Enoch* explained the origin of evil in the world by describing 200 angels called "Watchers" who rebelled against God and left heaven, mating with human women and producing evil spirits.
2. The *Damascus Document* found among the Dead Sea Scrolls repeats this story: **"Because they walked in the stubbornness of their hearts, the Watchers of heaven fell; yea, they were caught thereby because they kept not the commandments of God."** *CD* 2:15.
3. New Testament writers also repeated the *Watchers* story about the rebellious angels. *Jude* 6; *2 Peter* 2:4.

Slide 28

1. The *Community Rule*, perhaps written earlier than the *Damascus Document*, presents a totally different explanation for the spirits creating evil behavior.
2. In the beginning, God created two opposing spirits **"in equal measure until the final age."** *IQS* 4:16.
3. According to the *Community Rule*, **"[t]hose born of truth spring from a fountain of light, but those born of falsehood spring from a source of darkness. All the children of righteousness are ruled by the Prince of Light and walk in the ways of light; but all the children of falsehood are ruled by the Angel of Darkness and walk in the ways of darkness."** *IQS* 3:20.
4. The *Community Rule* calls those who follow God's rules **"sons of light"** and those who follow Satan's rules **"sons of darkness."** *IQS* 1:10.

5. **“The appealing Zoroastrian doctrine that light stood for goodness and darkness for evil”** had now become the focus of Jewish writings. Golb, *Who Wrote the Dead Sea Scrolls?* at 81.
6. The writings of the Dead Sea Scrolls represented the final chapter in the **“break with the Old Testament,”** in which **“Satan lost the status as member of the heavenly council he had enjoyed in the Book of Job.”** Massadie, *A History of the Devil* at 243.
7. **“[N]ever again—was the name Satan . . . to be found . . . without being identified as an evil irreconcilable with the deity.”** *Id.*

Slide 29

1. The *Community Rule* repeats the Zoroastrian view that the forces of darkness and evil will be destroyed with the coming of a savior: **“God has ordained an end for injustice, and at the time of the visitation He will destroy it forever. Then truth, which has wallowed in the ways of wickedness during the domination of injustice until the appointed time of judgement, shall arise in the world forever.”** *IQS* 4:19.
2. A scroll called the *War Rule* describes a great battle between the **“Sons of Light”** **“against the forces of the Sons of Darkness, the army of Belial,”** the chief angel of darkness. *IQM* 1:1.
3. The battle will lead to the eternal annihilation of the forces of Belial. *IQM* 1:5.

Slide 30

1. As you can see, by the time of Jesus, Second Isaiah’s theological battle had been lost—the God he had argued was responsible for both darkness and light was now a God responsible only for light, a view the New Testament writers all adopted.
2. For example, writing to followers of Jesus, Paul states: **“You are all sons of the light and sons of the day. We do not belong to the night or to the darkness.”** *1 Thessalonians* 5:5.
3. *The Gospel of John* says: **“In him [Jesus] was life, and that life was the light of all mankind. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.”** *John* 1:4, 5.

Slide 31

1. The association of the forces of evil with darkness is made express in Paul’s second letter to the Corinthians: **“Do not be yoked together with unbelievers. For what do righteousness and wickedness have in common? Or what fellowship can light have with darkness? What harmony is there between Christ and Belial? 2** *Corinthians* 6:14-15.

2. Belial does not appear in any other place in the Bible, but appears repeatedly in the Dead Sea Scrolls as the name of the chief angel of darkness, equivalent to Satan.
3. One author writes: **“We cannot prove that the passage from 2 Corinthians is a revised Essene text, but Paul uses language here that is known only from Qumran texts.”** Shanks, *Understanding the Dead Sea Scrolls* at 188.

Slide 32

1. Through the Dead Sea Scrolls and other writings, by the time of Jesus, **“[d]evils [had] infected Judaism.”** Massadie, *A History of the Devil* at 234.
2. Demons were now seen as responsible for a variety of physical and mental ailments.
3. According to the *Gospel of Matthew*, in this area of the Decapolis town of Gadara Jesus drove demons from two demon-possessed men. *Matthew* 8:28-32.
4. At their request, the demons were directed into a herd of pigs and the pigs ran down the hill into the Sea of Galilee and died. *Matthew* 8:31-32.

Slide 33

1. These **“disease-making demons were subordinated to an arch demon”** and not under the control of God as they were in the Old Testament. Turner, *The History of Hell* at 63.
2. So Paul blamed a **“messenger of Satan”** for a **“thorn in my flesh.”** *2 Corinthians* 12:7.
3. Paul also blamed Satan for **“false apostles, deceitful workmen, masquerading as apostles of Christ.”** *2 Corinthians* 11:13.

Slide 34

1. According the *Gospel of Matthew*, Satan tempted Jesus to abandon God in the desert at this site near Jericho, now memorialized by a monastery. *Matthew* 4:1-10.
2. The writings of the New Testament then put Jesus and his followers at the center of a **“cosmic war to divide the universe at large—and the Jewish community in particular—between God’s people and Satan’s.”** Pagels, *The Origin of Satan* at 61.

Slide 35

1. The view of a cosmic battle between Christians and Satan is most clearly set out in the letter to the Ephesians attributed to Paul.

2. **“For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.”** *Ephesians* 6:12.

Slide 36

1. As so, to the Gospel writers, it seemed obvious to blame Satan for inspiring Judas to betray Jesus. *Luke* 22:3; *John* 13:27.
2. As Elaine Pagels explains, without invoking Satan, it must have seemed impossible for the Gospel writers to explain to their Jewish readers why Jesus was betrayed by one of his own followers if he really was the Son of God and the Messiah. Pagels, *The Origin of Satan* at 12.

Slide 37

1. But this conclusion was by no means inevitable; after all, Jesus’ death on the cross was a part of **“God’s preordained plan”** and the betrayal by Judas was part of that plan. Pagels, *The Origin of Satan* at 93.
2. Jesus himself had said that he **“must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things at the hands of the elders, chief priests and teachers of the law, and that he must be killed and on the third day be raised to life.”** *Matthew* 16:21.
3. Perhaps, if Satan did incite Judas to betray Jesus, he was just carrying out God’s divine plan as **“one of God’s obedient servants”** as he did in the Old Testament. Pagels, *The Origin of Satan* at 39.
4. That, in fact, is the thesis of the *Gospel of Judas* found in Egypt. *The Gospel of Judas* at 43.
5. But the writers of the Gospels did not see it that way.
6. **“All of the New Testament gospels, with considerable variation, depict Jesus’ execution as the culmination of the struggle between good and evil—between God and Satan—that began at his baptism.”** Pagels, *The Origin of Satan* at 12.

Slide 38

1. New Testament writers believed that the epic struggle between God and Satan will be finally resolved at the end of the age, when **“Satan [will] fall like lightning from heaven.”** *Luke* 10:18.
2. As in the Dead Sea Scrolls, *Revelation* predicts **“a battle on the great day of God Almighty”** between the forces of God and the forces of Satan. *Revelation* 16:14.
3. Eventually, the forces of God will prevail and Satan will be thrown into the lake of burning sulfur, ending his reign of terror forever. *Revelation* 20:10.

Slide 39

1. Early critics of Christianity claimed that the Christian belief that forces other than God were responsible for evil and suffering was a rejection of the monotheism at the heart of the Hebrew Scriptures.
2. For example, in about 180 A.D., a learned pagan writer named Celsus wrote: **“If one accepts that all of nature, and everything in the universe, operates according to the will of God, and that nothing works contrary to his purposes, then one must also accept that the angels and *daimones* [demons], heroes—all things in the universe—are subject to the will of the one God who rules over all.”** Pagels, *The Origin of Satan* at 141.
3. That is, of course, why Second Isaiah had rejected the belief in an independent source of evil that eventually came to be accepted by Christians.

Slide 40

1. Origen was a third century Christian writer who challenged Celsus and set out to prove that Satan was the enemy of God from evidence in the Old Testament.
2. Finding nothing directly supporting that conclusion in the Hebrew Scriptures, he latched onto a statement in *Isaiah* describing a fallen **“morning star . . . who once laid low the nations.”** *Isaiah* 14:12.
3. The Latin word for “morning star” is “*lucifer*,” which is the source of the name Lucifer that is often associated with Satan today.
4. However, Isaiah’s metaphor of the fallen **“morning star”** was **“quite specifically directed at the king of Babylon.”** Turner, *The History of Hell* at 41.
5. It was part of what Isaiah himself calls his **“taunt against the king of Babylon,”** who had threatened the land of Israel at the time. *Isaiah* 14:4.

Slide 41

1. Relying on the *Book of Isaiah* to prove that Satan acts independently of God is inconsistent with later passages in the same book that say that God is the source of all evil. *Isaiah* 45:5-7.
2. Linking *lucifer*, the Latin name of a morning star, with Satan is also inconsistent with Jesus’ own description of himself as the **“morning star,”** based on the same Greek word that was translated as “*lucifer*” in the Latin translation of *Isaiah*. *2 Peter* 1:19; *Revelation* 22:16.
3. But the story of Lucifer, the fallen angel, persisted and was popularized in John Milton’s *Paradise Lost*, first published in 1667.

4. Origen's effort to find a basis in the Hebrew Scriptures for the Christian view of Satan is accepted by many even today, claiming that Satan was kicked out of heaven because of his arrogance and disobedience.
5. But that claim and the identification of *lucifer* as Satan **“was never made in the Hebrew Bible.”** Wray, *The Birth of Satan* at 110.

Slide 42

1. Similarly, the traditional image of Satan presiding over hell is found nowhere in the Bible, but comes from Dante's *Inferno*, written in the 14th century.
2. In the only reference in the entire Bible connecting Satan with something that might be thought to represent hell, Satan is tormented forever after having been thrown into the **“lake of burning sulfur”** at the end of the millennium. *Revelation 20:10*.

Slide 43

1. After the Romans destroyed Jerusalem in 70 A.D., Christians began describing their beliefs in ways that did not further antagonize the Romans.
2. They blamed the Jews for the crucifixion of Jesus, again not recognizing that whoever was responsible for his death was carrying out the will of God. *Acts 4:27*.
3. And so, as New Testament writers began to blame the Jews for Jesus' death, they began to associate the Jews with Satan, whom they saw as responsible for Jesus' death.
4. The *Gospel of John* is explicit in making this link, quoting Jesus as saying with respect to the Jews: **“You belong to your father, the devil, and you want to carry out your father's desires. He was a murderer from the beginning, not holding to the truth, for there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks his native language, for he is a liar and the father of lies.”** *John 8:43-44*.
5. Although this language is not found in any other Gospel, it has been used ever since in literally demonizing the Jews.

Slide 44

1. But Jews are not the only people Christians over the years have accused of being under the control of Satan and therefore enemies of God.
2. As Elaine Pagels notes: **“For many readers of the gospels ever since the first century, the thematic opposition between God's spirit and Satan has vindicated Jesus' followers and demonized their enemies.”** Pagels, *The Origin of Satan* at 13.
3. **“[F]or some two thousand years [Christians] have also identified their opponents, whether Jews, pagans, or heretics, with forces of evil, and so with Satan.”** *Id.* at xxiii.

4. “[A]nyone who opposes Jesus’ mission . . . is acting as a tool of the Satan.” Wray, *The Birth of Satan* at 126.
5. “Satan represents the ultimate embodiment . . . of the Other, the enemy, the foreigner.” *Id.* at 177.
6. As a result, supposed witches and heretics were burned alive because they were allegedly being controlled by Satan and therefore deserved to die.

Slide 45

1. Even devoted followers of Jesus have been accused of being led by Satan.
2. “Martin Luther . . . denounced as ‘agents of Satan’ all Christians who remained loyal to the Roman Catholic Church . . . and all ‘protestant’ Christians who were not Lutherans.” Pagels, *The Origin of Satan* at 180.
3. A current evangelical Christian website states: “The *Jehovah Witnesses* are a Satanic organization, based upon the occult of Freemasonry. Charles Taze Russell was a 33rd Degree Freemason; as was Joseph Smith, founder of the Mormon cult.” <http://www.jesus-is-savior.com/False%20Religions/Jehovah%20Witnesses/jw.htm>.

Slide 46

1. In my opinion, one of the greatest forces for evil today is the claim that Satan is animating people who have beliefs and practices different from our own.
2. I agree with one recent author, who writes: “[I]t is precisely the belief in the devil that lies at the root of religious fanaticism around the world today.” Messadie, *A History of the Devil* – back cover.
3. If Satan is believed to be at the root of a person’s religious beliefs, it is easy to see that person as damned by God and not deserving respect or even life.
4. But, as the Dalai Lama, born Buddhist, writes: “[I]f one believes that the entire cosmos, including all sentient beings within it, is a creation of one all-powerful and compassionate God, the inescapable consequence is that the existence of faith traditions other than one’s own are also God’s creation.” Dalai Lama, *Toward a True Kinship of Faiths* at 159.
5. It seems to me that any other conclusion seeks to limit the power of God.

Slide 47

1. In two weeks, we will take a look at the history of beliefs about an eternal judgment, in which the righteous will be rewarded and sinners punished after death.

2. As we will see, like changing views about Satan, those beliefs have drawn upon different traditions and have undergone changes over time.
3. As we will also see, because of the contradictory sources of Christian beliefs, some Christians are taught to believe in two potentially different judgments, one at death and one at the time of Jesus' return to earth.

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