

The Devil Appears on Earth

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The first four trumpets will reduce life on Earth to total chaos. The religious coalition that forms in response to God's judgments (Babylon) will make a desperate situation only worse by tormenting people with laws that have severe penalties for disobedience. After a period of about two and a half years, the fifth trumpet judgment occurs. (Revelation 9:1-12) The first four trumpets are curses that are directed at the physical elements of Earth and the remaining three trumpets are curses (or woes) that are directed toward defiant people. (Revelation 9:12) In my opinion, the curse of the fifth trumpet is far worse than the physical destruction caused by the first four trumpets. The fifth trumpet marks the appearing of the Antichrist. The Antichrist is not an ordinary man. The Antichrist is a fallen angel and he will physically appear before the inhabitants of Earth. That ancient serpent, the devil, who deceived Eve in the Garden of Eden, will appear in the clouds with all his angels. Clothed in brilliant light and masquerading as God, the devil will appear in all of the great cities of Earth, one at a time. Daniel 11:45 indicates he will establish a throne in Jerusalem. Many orthodox Jews anticipate the arrival of Messiah and many Palestinians anticipate a Deliverer, so what better place could the devil choose "to initiate a reign of peace on Earth for 1,000 years!" The devil will say many blasphemous things and make outrageous claims in order to deceive the people of Earth. When Satan appears, he will be more resplendent than anything human beings have ever seen and he will claim to be the "Savior of the World." Think about this. When he appears, the world will be in a desperate position and cries of suffering will be everywhere. The father of lies and misery, the enemy of all humanity, will feign sympathy for the terrible human suffering he sees. To make his deception believable, he will perform great signs, such as healing the sick and feeding the hungry. (1 Thessalonians 2:9) Many people will be duped into believing the devil is Almighty God.

Who is the Devil?

According to the Bible, the devil once had an exalted name. His name was Lucifer which means "light bearer." A review of Isaiah 14:12-17 and Ezekiel 28:12-18 reveals that Lucifer was once an anointed cherub in Heaven. Eventually, he became arrogant and self seeking. He became dissatisfied with God's kingdom, God's laws, and the way God was running the universe. Because of hatred for Christ, he recruited one-third of Heaven's angels to join him in rebellion against Christ. Thus, Lucifer is the original "anti-Christ." The Father did everything possible to divert Lucifer's course of action, but the devil would not relent. According to Isaiah 14:12, Lucifer and his angels were cast out of Heaven because of rebellion. Jesus told His disciples, "**I saw Satan fall like lightning from Heaven.**" (Luke 10:18)

Angry and embittered by his fallen state, Lucifer focused his wrath on Christ's special handiwork – planet Earth. The devil went to the Garden of Eden and he led Eve to disobey God. Then, Eve seduced Adam and he disobeyed God. The devil did not stop his work there. Cain, the firstborn of Adam and Eve, became a murderer. As time went by, human beings became so defiled by sin that God was grieved that He had even made man! (Genesis 6) Consequently, God washed the Earth clean of sin with a flood of water, sparing just eight people – Noah and

his family. The flood may have slowed the devil down for a few years, but Peter tells us the devil is going about like a roaring lion seeking whom he may devour! (1 Peter 5:8,9)

God Allowed Satan to Live

Many, many people have asked the question: Why did God allow the devil to live? Why didn't God exterminate Satan and his evil angels right away and spare the universe a great deal of grief? God's ways are perfect and the answer to this question is both simple and profound. Consider the following issues:

1. What message would God have given to the angels if He immediately annihilated every angel that disagreed with Him? If God had destroyed Lucifer as soon as Lucifer sinned, surviving angels would have concluded that God does not tolerate anyone who has ideas that are contrary to His. How could intelligent angels love and trust God if He immediately annihilated His opposition? Should angels love God because God is fair and reasonable, generous and forgiving, or should angels submit to Him because to do otherwise would mean sudden death? If God had killed Lucifer and his followers right away, the remaining angels would have been forced to conclude that God was an omnipotent bully ruling over the universe.
2. God has infinite wisdom and He foreknew that sin needed time to mature so that all the universe could see the deadly and horrible consequences of sin. By allowing the devil and his angels to live for a few thousand years, the universe would have two governments to study – one in Heaven (free of sin) and one on Earth (full of sin). The presence of two governments will ultimately prove that God's laws and principles of government are best – not because He claims they are best – but because God's ways have been demonstrated to be best.
3. God gives the power of choice to each created being. His subjects do not have to obey Him, love Him, or respond to His goodness or generosity. Lucifer and his angels exercised their power of choice by choosing to rebel against God. Adam and Eve were given the power of choice and they chose to disobey God. For 6,000 years, sin has contaminated Earth. Time has proven that the quality of life suffers in proportion to our rebellion against the laws of God. True, sin may offer pleasure and excitement for a short time, but it always extracts a price that is far greater than the brief high of a cheap thrill. Sin takes us farther than we want to go, and sin costs us more than we want to pay. No matter how well Satan disguises sin, "**the wages of sin is death.**" (Romans 6:23)
4. God foreknew the consequences of allowing Satan and his angels to live. Yet, at great expense to Himself, God provided a plan to save everyone who would live on Earth. He loved the people of the world so much that He gave us His only Son's life. Jesus was willing to come and die in man's place so the penalty for sin would be paid! God Himself has paid a much greater price for the existence of sin than any human being will ever know! Incidentally, a plan of salvation was not offered to Lucifer and his angels because they willfully committed the unpardonable sin. (Matthew 12:31,32)

When these four items are brought together, we discover why God did not immediately destroy

Lucifer and his followers. The conflict between Christ and Lucifer has been in progress on Earth for 6,000 years. Today, Christ and Satan are still striving to win the affections of people. This struggle will come to a dramatic end during the Great Tribulation.

Satan (Lucifer) is Released from the Bottomless Pit

Revelation predicts that the devil will enter the realm of our human senses and he will appear physically before our eyes. Revelation 9 tells us the devil is an angel king that will come up out of the abyss (or bottomless pit, KJV)! To appreciate this prediction and the meaning of John's language, we need to review a little ancient history.

People thought Earth was flat, much like a large plate or basin in Bible times. Since they had limited knowledge about the law of gravity, it seemed logical to the ancients that Earth was made like a basin – otherwise the great seas would "drain away." Because Earth was believed to be flat, the ancients concluded a bottomless pit could be created if a person dug a hole all the way through the "basin." Without a bottom, a person could fall through the "bottomless pit" and never be seen again. The ancients also believed the "fires of hell" burned underneath the basin of Earth and volcanos were enormous chimneys that proved the presence of underground fires. When we understand John's view of the physical world at the time he lived, it helps us understand why God used this type of imagery in the book of Revelation.

The transliteration of the Greek word *abussos* into English is "abyss." Whether it is called "bottomless pit" (KJV) or "abyss" (NIV), the idea is the same. In ancient times, the "bottomless pit" represented a poorly defined source or origin of mythological monsters and demons. The ancients believed surreal creatures lived "under the basin" of Earth and when the creatures escaped, they came up through caves or holes which had no bottom or end to them. When God revealed last day events to John in A.D. 95, God used geographical ideas that were familiar to John. For example, John saw the devil and his angels ascend from a bottomless pit and John refers to this event in several places in the book of Revelation. By putting on John's sandals and considering the mind set of his day, we can understand God's use of imagery. Many people are surprised to learn that Revelation predicts the physical appearance of Satan on Earth before Jesus returns! However, Revelation not only tells us when, but it also tells us why!

The Fifth Trumpet

"The fifth angel sounded his trumpet, and I saw a star that had fallen from the sky to the Earth. The star was given the key to the shaft of the Abyss. When he opened the Abyss, smoke rose from it like the smoke from a gigantic furnace. The sun and sky were darkened by the smoke from the Abyss. And out of the smoke locusts came down upon the earth and were given power like that of scorpions of the earth. They were told not to harm the grass of the earth or any plant or tree, but only those people who did not have the seal of God on their foreheads. They were not given power to kill them, but only to torture them for five months. And the agony they suffered was like that of the sting of a scorpion when it strikes a man. During those days men will seek death, but will not find it; they will long to die, but death will elude them. . . . They [the locusts] had as king over

them the angel of the Abyss, whose name in Hebrew is Abaddon, and in Greek, Apollyon.
" (Revelation 9:1-6, 11, insertion mine)

God does not permit the devil to escape from his prison in the abyss (the spirit world) until the sounding of the fifth trumpet. At an appointed time, the bottomless pit will be "unlocked" and the devil and his angels will be allowed to come out of the spirit realm and be visible to the people of Earth. The devil appears impersonating God almighty. God illustrated the appearing of the devil and his angels to John as a great swarm of locusts coming up out of the Earth. From a distance, several hundred million angels would look like a dense swarm of locusts. The swarm that John saw in vision was so great that he says it darkened the Sun! As the swarm came closer to him, John saw that the locusts actually looked like riders on horses. Leading the swarm was the angel king from the abyss whose name in Hebrew is Abaddon and in Greek, Apollyon. Both names mean the same thing: "Destroyer." The imagery and language used in Revelation 9:1-11 is similar to language used five hundred years earlier in Joel 2:1-11 where the prophet describes the appearing of the Lord and His angels as a great swarm of locusts prepared for battle. God permits the devil and his angels to physically appear on Earth after a majority of the world has heard and rejected the truth about the worship God requires. Notice Paul's words: **"They [the majority of people] perish because they refused to love the truth and so be saved. For this reason God sends them a powerful delusion so that they will believe the lie and so that all will be condemned who have not believed the truth but have delighted in wickedness."** (2 Thessalonians 2:10-12) The first key point in this verse is defiance. Paul says "they refused" to obey God's truth and be saved. Why will they reject God's truth? **"The sinful mind is hostile to God. It does not submit to God's law, nor can it do so. Those controlled by the sinful nature cannot please God."** (Romans 8:7,8) Therefore, when a majority of people reject God's last offer of salvation, He sends them a powerful deception. God releases the devil from the abyss and He empowers the devil to rule over people who refuse to recognize His sovereign authority. This is an interesting point about the Great Tribulation: Each person *will worship* one of two masters.

Three important elements are revealed when God releases Satan and his angels from the bottomless pit. First, Satan will come with a cloud of angels (like a swarm of locusts). These demons will be clothed with brilliant light. Remember, the devil himself will be a magnificent being of dazzling light. (2 Corinthians 11:14) Although Satan will do his utmost to imitate the Second Coming, God limits the devil's deception. When Jesus appears at the Second Coming, Jesus will not touch Earth. The saints will be caught up *in the air* to meet Jesus and He will take them to Heaven where they will spend 1,000 years. (1 Thessalonians 4:15-18; John 14:1-3; Revelation 21:2) However, Satan will come down out of the sky and he will walk upon Earth in various places. This is why Jesus warned, **"At that time if anyone says to you, 'Look, here is the Christ!' or, 'There he is!' do not believe it. . . . So if anyone tells you, 'There he is, out in the desert,' do not go out; or, 'Here he is, in the inner rooms,' do not believe it. For as lightning that comes from the east is visible even in the west, so will be the coming of the Son of Man."** (Matthew 24:23, 26,27)

Second, God does not allow Satan to physically appear on Earth until a majority of the world has rejected the gospel. I believe that this will occur in about a two and a half year period. During this period of time, the 144,000 will proclaim the truth about worshipping God so that

everyone on Earth can make an informed decision. The result will be simple. People will either submit to God's law or rebel against it. When God sees that a majority of Earth's population intends to rebel against His gospel, He allows the devil to appear. God has a very wise purpose for doing this. The physical appearing of the devil will force the people of Earth into one of two groups: people who worship God out of choice and people who worship the devil out of force. In a final effort to bring rebellious human beings to their senses, God will empower the 144,000 to proclaim a special message throughout the Earth. This message is so inflammatory that most – if not all – of the 144,000 will become martyrs for preaching it! The message is this: ". . .**If anyone worships [obeys] the beast [the devil from the abyss] and his image [his one world church] and receives his mark [tattoo] on the forehead or on the hand, he, too, will drink of the wine of God's fury, which has been poured full strength into the cup of his wrath. He will be tormented with burning sulfur in the presence of the holy angels and of the Lamb.**" (Revelation 14:9,10, insertion mine) Since a majority of the world will think the devil is God, speaking against "God" like this will be considered utterly derogatory and blasphemous and the 144,000 will be horribly persecuted for their testimony!

The third reason God allows the devil to physically appear is that God wants people of the world to get a "close up" view of the demon they are following. The issue of worship will be completely resolved after the devil arrives. The devil will demand worship, and through his lieutenants, he will clearly explain what men and women must do. God continues to do no less through His servants, the 144,000. The saints will submit to God's law. The wicked will submit to the law of the devil. This is the vortex surrounding the decision that all humans will face. Every person will exercise his or her power of choice and God will seal every decision.

Satan Tortures People for Five Months

According to Revelation 9:3-6, after Satan and his evil angels appear, they will have five months to torment the wicked. This may seem strange at first, but God does not let the devil hurt His saints "with the sting of a scorpion's tail." The devil will inflict this torture on the nonreligious wicked in order to subdue them. The devil will not hurt those who believe he is God, either. Instead, he will hurt people who have not made a decision to join with his forces or with God's saints. Just what the torment is and how it is inflicted is not clear from Scripture. However, we do know the torment will hurt like a scorpion's sting (which is awful). The people who suffer this affliction will long to die, but the devil's sting is not fatal. God allows the devil to torment "undecided" people with scorpion-like pain because God's offer of salvation is still open. Everyone that the devil harms can be delivered from agony *if* he or she will turn from rebellion and worship the Lord. (See Numbers 21:6-9 for a parallel story.) Remember, God will do everything possible during the Great Tribulation to save as many sinners as possible!

Satan Appears as an Angel of Light

When Satan appears, his radiant countenance will dazzle the people of Earth. Millions will eagerly believe his claims that he is God because of his appearance alone. Paul says, ". . . **for Satan himself masquerades as an angel of light.**" (2 Corinthians 11:14) Revelation says the wicked will be awestruck when they actually see the devil! ". . . **The inhabitants of the Earth**

whose names have not been written in the book of life from the creation of the world will be *astonished* when they see the beast" (Revelation 17:8, italics mine.)

Satan's first work after appearing "in the flesh" as a brilliant God-man will be to convince the world that he is divine – that he is actually who he claims to be. Paul warns, "**Don't let anyone deceive you in any way, for that day (the second coming) will not come until the rebellion occurs and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the man doomed to destruction. He opposes and exalts himself over everything that is called God or is worshiped, and even sets himself up in God's temple, proclaiming himself to be God. . . . The coming of the lawless one will be in accordance with the work of Satan displayed in all kinds of counterfeit miracles, signs and wonders, and in every sort of evil that deceives those who are perishing. They perish because they refused to love the truth and so be saved.**" (2 Thessalonians 2:3,4,9,10)

Satan's Great Deception

To convince people that he is God, Satan will use one miracle above all others – he will actually call fire down out of Heaven at will! This "proof of divinity" will secure his deception. Because the 144,000 will not have this specific miracle working power, the devil will eclipse their power and bring their ministry to an end. (Revelation 11:7) John says, "**And he performed great and miraculous signs, even causing fire to come down from heaven to Earth in full view of men. Because of the signs he was given power to do on behalf of the first beast, he deceived the inhabitants of the Earth"** (Revelation 13:13,14) Remember, the appearing of the devil is "a powerful delusion" sent from God. The devil is granted power to call fire down from Heaven because God is bringing the offer of salvation to an end. Prior to the devil's appearing, God put forth the clearest evidences of truth before the human race through the testimony of His 144,000 servants. God wants people to worship Him on the basis of "Spirit and truth," not miracles! (John 4:23) Therefore, God reduces the ministry and power of His servants while increasing the deceptive powers of the Antichrist.

John describes the appearing of the devil as a "lamb-like" beast. (Revelation 13:11) The intended contrast is obvious. Depending on the Bible translation, Revelation refers to Jesus as the "Lamb" 30 or more times. John describes Satan as a "lamb-like" beast because the devil masquerades as Jesus. John warns that Satan will make every effort to deceive the world into believing that he is worthy of worship. When Satan appears, every quadrant of Earth will have experienced massive destruction. Extreme suffering will be everywhere. Earth's skies will have been dark for a long time, and millions of people (perhaps billions) will have grown deathly ill from famine. The death toll will be numberless, and millions of people will die every day from plague and disease. People will be filled with despair, and religious leaders will constantly reprimand sinners, telling them to repent and worship God so that His wrath will subside. Religious persecution and intolerance will be everywhere because Babylon (the coalition of religious leaders) will be determined to appease God at any cost. (What other option do they have?) Foremost in all people's minds will be the question, "What more can we do to appease God so that He will end our suffering?"

In the midst of this hellish nightmare, the devil suddenly appears. Satan uses incredible displays of signs and wonders to deceive, if possible, the very elect. (Matthew 24:24-25) His purpose has always been to destroy this world because it is the handiwork of Christ. When Satan's day of opportunity comes, it will be the perfect moment for him to fulfill this ambition. The devil will capitalize on the rebellious hearts of the wicked. He will lead the majority of the world away from hearing and believing the truth preached by God's servants, the 144,000. Because of the miracles that he has power to do, the devil will deceive or destroy everyone but the saints. After he gains control of Earth's nations, he will command the people of the world to worship "the image" or die! Revelation 13:15 says, "**He, [Satan] . . . caused all who refused to worship the image to be killed.**"

The Image of the Beast is Babylon

What is the *image* of the beast? Who does the beast represent? The beast from the sea in Revelation 13:1-8 represents Babylon. The seven heads represent the seven religions of the world and the ten horns represent ten kings who will play a strategic role near the end of the world. The *image* of Babylon will be a consolidation of the world's diverse religions and nations into one global church/state. When the majority of Catholics, Jews, Protestants, Moslems, Hindus and all others believe that Satan is actually God, they will be willing to do whatever he demands. Can a human being give too much or do too much for God? The devil will demand that all religions must be dissolved into one religion. Think about this for a moment. If God were physically on Earth to establish His eternal kingdom, how many different churches could He allow? How many views of God are possible when God is physically among men to reveal what is truth? The establishment of an "image" is the establishment of a likeness of Babylon. In short, the devil will form a new composite religion and he will require everyone to leave his old religion behind. His new religion will be designed to dissolve the antagonistic differences between Moslems, Jews, Hindus, Catholics, Protestants, etc. This new church or religion will have a special benefit. All who join it will receive permission to buy and sell. The members of the devil's kingdom will have access to the necessities of life (food, water, medicine, etc.) which the devil's forces will control. In other words, citizens of the devil's kingdom will be able to buy and sell because they will receive a mark or tattoo showing that they belong to the "One True Church." The saints, on the other hand, will be cut off from all necessities of life. It's just as well, for they would rather die than submit to the demands of the devil. The wicked will volunteer to receive the mark of the beast, justifying that it is a small price to pay for survival. Meanwhile, the saints will be fed and cared for by angels sent from God.

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