

What on Earth is Satan Doing?

S.L.H.

Soli Deo Gloria!

“. . . for we are not ignorant of [Satan's] devices."
(2 Corinthians 2:11)

Introduction. Each year as part of the Christmas season, believers traditionally read the gospel accounts from Matthew and Luke which record the events associated with the birth of Christ: the supernatural conception of Jesus by the Holy Spirit in the womb of the virgin Mary (Matthew 1:18-25; Luke 1:26-38), the decree of Caesar Augustus that providentially caused Joseph and the very pregnant Mary to travel to Bethlehem (Luke 2:1-5), the unlikely birth of Jesus in a stable (Luke 2:6-7), and the appearance of a host of angels to a group of shepherds leading them to visit the newborn babe and find him lying in a manger (Luke 2:8-20). Although most Christians are somewhat aware that the visit of the wise men (i.e., Magi) did not occur on the night of Christ's birth, nor did their visit take place at the stable, the Biblical record of it is usually included in these Christmas readings (Matthew 2:1-12). In most cases the Christmas readings are concluded at this point, for the record immediately turns very dark if continued: Joseph is warned by an angel to flee into Egypt with Mary and the young Jesus to escape King Herod's slaughter of all the babies up to two years old in Bethlehem (Matthew 1:13-18).

A wicked King Herod was the human instrument in the slaughter of the babies in Bethlehem, but Revelation 12:3 reveals that this event was diabolical in origin, being planned and perpetrated by the "dragon", who is Satan himself (cf. Revelation 12:9). Apparently Satan believed that if he could murder Jesus, he could thwart the plan of God and perhaps somehow escape his own prophesied destruction by the Messiah (Genesis 3:15). Although this was Satan's first direct attempt to destroy the Messiah, it was not his first attempt to prevent His coming—nor would it be his last attempt to prevent His coming again.

Satan's Strategy. Immediately following God's primeval prophecy of the destruction of the Serpent (i.e., Satan; cf. Revelation 12:6) by the seed of the woman (i.e., Messiah; Genesis 3:15), Satan began working to thwart the fulfillment of this prophecy. Initially, he worked to prevent the coming of Messiah; when Messiah came, he worked to destroy Him; and after Messiah's death, resurrection and ascension, he worked (and continues to work) to prevent His return. Initially, Satan's work was necessarily very broad in scope, since he had little information on which to act. However, as God progressively revealed more and more information regarding the nature of Messiah's origin and coming, Satan's attack became more narrowly focused. In the following sections, a few highlights from some of Satan's activities undertaken in his attempt to thwart the plan of God and his own prophesied destruction are briefly surveyed in: 1) the Old Testament, 2) the New Testament, 3) the Church Age following the close of the canon of

Scripture, and 4) the future Tribulation. As will be seen, the broad-based activities of Satan very quickly devolve into a narrow, focused persecution of Israel. The annihilation of the nation of Israel and extermination of all Jews is Satan's only hope to avert his own destruction.

In the O.T. At first, Satan had to act on very little information. He only knew that his prophesied protagonist (hereafter referred to as the Messiah) would be a male descendent of Eve (Genesis 3:15). When Eve gave birth to Cain, she actually (albeit incorrectly) believed he was the Messiah (Genesis 4:1). Satan worked to sow discord between Cain and his brother Abel, resulting in Cain committing the first murder; apparently Satan believed the sin of murder would disqualify Cain as the Messiah—but Cain was not the Messiah.

A thousand years later, in the days of Noah, a new tactic of Satan surfaces. Satan had been working, apparently for centuries, to corrupt the human gene pool by the interbreeding of human women with his demonic horde (Genesis 6:1-2), which produced a race of "giants" (i.e., Nephilim; Genesis 6:4). As human-demon hybrids, the offspring of such giants would be unqualified to be a kinsman-redeemer for the human race (cf. Hebrews 2:14-16). So widespread was the scope of this Satanic attack, it required the destruction of the entire human race in the global flood of Noah in order to frustrate (Genesis 6:17); only Noah and his family were preserved through the flood in order to repopulate the earth, for Noah was "perfect in his generations" (i.e., his family's genetic code was free of Nephilim corruption; Genesis 6:9).

Satan employed this same tactic again (note Genesis 6:4, "and also after that"), but on a much more limited scope. When the children of Israel first arrived at the Promised Land (i.e., Canaan), they found dwelling there the "sons of Anak", a new race of "giants" (Numbers 13:33). Now knowing that God had chosen Abraham to be the progenitor of the Messiah (Genesis 12:3), and that four generations after Abraham God would give Abraham's seed the land of Canaan as their inheritance (Genesis 15:16,18-21), Satan again began his work of corrupting the human gene pool from which Messiah must come. The elimination of all vestiges of Anakim genetic corruption from the Promised Land was at least one reason God commanded Joshua and the Israelites to "utterly destroy" all the indigenous people they found dwelling in Canaan (Deuteronomy 7:1-3).

The preparation of the Anakim in the Promised Land was a long-term (contingency) project of Satan while Jacob's family was sojourning in Egypt for four generations, but he also engineered more direct attacks on the Hebrews using Pharaoh as his diabolical instrument. These included Pharaoh's early command to the Hebrew midwives to kill all sons born to the Hebrew women (Exodus 1:15-16) as well as his ultimate attempt to destroy the fleeing Hebrews with the armies of Egypt (Exodus 14:5-9). In order to preserve the seed of Abraham, God destroyed

Pharaoh and the armies of Egypt, to the very last man, in the Red Sea (Exodus 14:28).

As time went on, and as the nation of Israel became established in their own land, God revealed that the Messiah would come from the line of King David (1 Chronicles 17:11-14). At this point, Satan could further focus his attacks on David and his family. Although Scripture records a myriad of such attacks, some subtle and some not so subtle, the most direct was Queen Athaliah's attempt to completely exterminate the royal seed (2 Chronicles 22:10). In that instance, the only member of the royal seed to escape death was the infant Joash, being hidden for six years and installed as king at the age of seven after the death of Athaliah (2 Chronicles 22:11; 24:1).

Attention is called to a final instance from late in the Old Testament period. With the nation of Israel still in exile, dispersed throughout the Medo-Persian empire, Satan raises up an influential Amalekite named Haman in the court of the Persian King Ahasuerus (i.e., Xerxes; Esther 3:1). Because of his hatred for Mordecai the Jew, "Haman sought to destroy all the Jews that were throughout the whole kingdom of Ahasuerus" (Esther 3:6). God foiled this diabolical attempt at Jewish genocide by providentially installing Esther as Xerxes' queen, whose Jewish identity had been kept secret until after Haman's plan was revealed (Esther 2:10; 7:3-6).

In the N.T. Satan's many attempts recorded throughout the Old Testament to prevent the coming of Messiah all failed. The New Testament opens with the record of the prophesied birth of Messiah to the virgin Mary in Bethlehem (Matthew 1:16-25; Luke 2:1-20). The Messiah having been born, Satan moves King Herod to slaughter all the babies born in Bethlehem over a two year period in a desperate attempt to murder the Messiah (Matthew 2:13-18). When Jesus the Messiah begins His ministry, Satan immediately and directly confronts Him with multiple temptations to sin (Matthew 4:1-11; Luke 4:1-14), since a sinful Messiah would be disqualified as "the Lamb of God, who taketh away the sin of the world" (John 1:29; cf. 1 Peter 1:18-19). Finally, Satan personally indwells Judas (John 13:26-27) in order to betray Jesus and move the Jewish people to demand His crucifixion (Matthew 27:22-26). Like Jesus' own disciples on the road to Emmaus, Satan mistakenly believed that the crucifixion of Jesus meant the mission of Messiah had been thwarted (Luke 24:21).

During the Church Age. The close of the New Testament canon has not meant an end to Satan's work. Indeed, throughout the Church Age, Satan has continued his work to destroy Israel and completely exterminate the Jewish race. Consider just two examples, one that began early in the Church Age and one that has occurred late: 1) the origin and ascendancy of Islam, a religion dogmatically devoted to the destruction of Israel (cf. Psalm 83), and whose consummation on earth cannot be accomplished until every last Jew has been killed; 2) Hitler's holocaust, in which one out of every three Jews on earth was killed,

and which required World War II (the greatest of all wars) to stop. But why, if Jesus (the Messiah) has already come and successfully completed His work of redemption, is Satan still working incessantly to destroy Israel? Because Scripture makes clear that it is only after Jesus' return that He will destroy Satan (Revelation 20:1-10), and Jesus Himself revealed that He will not return until the nation of Israel repents of their rejection of Him and petitions His return (Matthew 23:37-39; cf. Hosea 5:15). Thus, even today, Satan believes that by exterminating the Jews he can prevent the return of Jesus (not the Rapture, but the second advent) and his own prophesied destruction.

In the Future Tribulation. Satan's final and futile attempt to exterminate the Jews (and prevent the return of Jesus) will take place during the Tribulation (i.e., Daniel's 70th Week; defined in Daniel 9:27 and detailed in Revelation 6-19). It is during this period of time that Satan will be allowed (by God) to raise up his own seed, the seed of the Serpent (Genesis 3:15), which the Apostle John calls the "antichrist" in his epistles (1 John 2:18,22; 4:3; 2 John 7) and the "beast" in Revelation (e.g., Revelation 11:7; 13:1). "And the dragon [Satan] was wroth with the woman [Israel], and went to make war with the remnant of her seed, who keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ [Jewish believers]".

Conclusion. What on Earth is Satan doing? The Apostle Paul testified that believers "are not ignorant of his devices" (2 Corinthians 2:11). It is clear from the inspired and inerrant historical record preserved in the Bible that Satan worked throughout the Old Testament to prevent the coming of Messiah. Once God revealed that Messiah would come from Israel, Satan's tactics centered on the destruction of the nation of Israel and the complete eradication of the Jewish race. Throughout the Church Age, even to this very day, Satan continues his work to destroy Israel and the Jews in the desperate hope of preventing the return of Messiah. The Word of God, however, is clear, and its promises are sure: all Israel will be saved (Romans 11:25-27), Jesus will return (Revelation 19:11-16), and Satan will be cast forever into the Lake of Fire (Revelation 20:10).