

responsibility for our own sins. We have already seen that evil thoughts and actions come from the heart (Matthew 15:18,19). Paul says: "All have sinned" (Romans 3:23). Do you think that God would blame us, if the fault lay with a supernatural devil? Surely not.

We are mortal because of Adam's disobedience to God's laws. But we each deserve our own death sentence. We have all earned "the wages of sin" for ourselves. Those wages are death (Romans 6:23).

Only when we are willing to admit that we are fully to blame for our own sins can God work with us. Only then shall we marvel that in spite of our weakness, God is willing to save us.

#### 4. HOW CAN YOU BE SAVED FROM SIN AND DEATH?

One thing is certain. You cannot save yourself. The Bible makes that very clear. However, you can be saved, thanks to God's mercy. He has given us a way of escape from sin and death. By the sacrifice of His Son, Jesus Christ, He has opened the way to everlasting life. He invites you to share in the victory of Jesus over sin.

Jesus lived a perfect life and then he "died for us" (1 Thessalonians 5:10). Through faith in Jesus as your Saviour, God is willing to forgive your sins. By baptism into the name of Jesus (Mark 16:16) and by obeying His commandments (John 15:8-13), you can be saved from sin and death. Resurrection from the dead to live for ever can be your hope. Jesus came to take both sin and

death away, for, "he will save his people from their sins" (Matthew 1:21), and "the last enemy that will be destroyed is death" (1 Corinthians 15:26).

God asks you to take responsibility, not only for your sins, but also for your life. You have no need to fear a non-existent supernatural devil. Rather you should listen to these words of wisdom: "Fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the whole duty of man" (Ecclesiastes 12:13).

If you live like that now, the ultimate blessing of everlasting life will be yours, when Jesus returns to Jerusalem to establish God's kingdom on earth: "For there the LORD commanded the blessing—life for evermore" (Psalm 133:3).

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## Christadelphian Bible Mission BASIC BIBLE TRUTHS

# The Devil

## WHO OR WHAT IS IT?

**When you have read this leaflet you will know the answers to these questions:**

1. Is there a supernatural devil?
2. Why does the Bible talk about the devil?
3. Is a supernatural devil tempting you to sin?
4. How can you be saved from sin and death?

### 1. IS THERE A SUPERNATURAL DEVIL?

God makes one thing very clear in the Bible: "I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is none like me" (Isaiah 46:9, New King James Version). No superhuman power resists God's will. The devil of popular opinion does not exist. If we want to know the source of evil, we have to look elsewhere.

The Bible leaves us in no doubt as to where the blame lies. Man is tempted from within himself. Hear what Jesus, the Son of God, said: "Those things which proceed out of the mouth *come from the*

*heart*, and they defile a man. For *out of the heart* proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornication, thefts, false witness, blasphemies" (Matthew 15:18,19).

Jesus confirms what God had told Noah long ago: "The imagination of *man's heart is evil* from his youth" (Genesis 8:21). Jeremiah 17:9 says: "*The heart is deceitful* above all things, and desperately wicked."

James agrees with all these sayings. He concludes: "Each one is tempted when he is drawn away *by his own desires* and enticed. Then, when desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, brings forth death" (James 1:14,15).

Notice that no mention is made in any of these passages of a supernatural devil. We need to look no further than *ourselves* to see from where evil comes.

## 2. WHY DOES THE BIBLE TALK ABOUT THE DEVIL?

It is true that the Bible talks about the devil as if it had a real personality. We must remember, however, that the Bible is rich in using "picture language". It gives personalities to other things also which are not people.

In the story of Cain and Abel, *blood* is given a personality. Speaking to Cain, God said: "What have you done? the voice of your brother's *blood cries out* to me from the ground" (Genesis 4:10). It happens again with *wisdom*, which is spoken of as *a woman*: "Happy is the man who finds wisdom ... *she* is more precious than rubies; and all the things you may desire cannot compare with

*her*" (Proverbs 3:13-15). In Matthew 6:24, Jesus himself speaks of *money* ("mammon") as being a *master*. This should not surprise us. We often talk like that ourselves. We say, "Fire is a good servant, but a bad master". We don't really believe that fire is a man.

In the same way, evil and sin are sometimes given a personality. This helps us realise just how big sin is, and how dangerous sins are to our salvation. This is proved by comparing two Bible passages. Listen to the "picture language" used in Hebrews 2:14: "... that through death he (Jesus) might destroy *him who had the power of death*, that is, the devil." What is this devil? What has the "power of death"? Romans 6:23 tells us: "For the wages of *sin is death*." Sin is powerful and brings death. Your life is a constant battle against sin. Sin is your real enemy, not a supernatural devil.

Particularly in the Old Testament, the word "Satan" is often used for forces which stand in the way of God: "Satan" means 'adversary', but it is mostly left untranslated. In the New Testament the Greek word *diabolos* occurs 38 times; 35 times it is translated "devil". Its original meaning was 'one who accuses'. In fact it is twice translated "false accusers" and once as "slanderers", because in those passages, the translators of the Bible knew that it would not have made sense to use the word "devil". In Titus 2:3, the advice given by Paul to *older women* was to be reverent in the way they lived, "not *slanderers*" (*diabolos*). And in 1 Timothy 3:11, *Christian wives* are told to be reverent,, "*not slanderers*" (*diabolos*).

It would have been foolish for the translators to use the word "devil" in either passage. Older women and Christian wives are obviously not "the devil". You must not picture a supernatural devil every time you read the word "devil". That would be a big mistake.

Jesus said in John 6:70: "Did I not choose you, the twelve, and *one of you is a devil*?" But Judas was *a man*, not "a devil". If the translators had said, "*One of you is a slanderer*", the meaning would have been very clear. Judas later betrayed Jesus with a kiss. He was a false friend indeed, but he was not a supernatural devil.

We need to look carefully at the Scriptures to understand who or what is the devil. Think about Revelation 2:10, where believers at Smyrna were told: "The devil is about to throw some of you into prison." Does it make sense to you that a supernatural devil literally put believers into prison? It cannot be so, because we know the Romans did that. It is an example of evil at work. Time and again we see the word "devil" used to symbolise evil.

Sin is at work because men, left to themselves, do not follow the ways of God. The terms "devil", "satan" and "demons" do not refer to immortal tempters in their original meanings. There is no such being as a supernatural tempter.

## 3. IS A SUPERNATURAL DEVIL TEMPTING YOU TO SIN?

From what we have considered so far, the answer must be "No!" We must take full