

What is the Devil/Satan?

The Term „Satan“ (שָׂטָן śātān) in the Old Testament:

The noun “Satan” appears **over 20 times** in the Old Testament:
Numbers 22:22, 32; 1 Samuel 29:4; 2 Samuel 19:23; 1 Kings 5:18;
1 Kings 11:14, 23, 25; Zechariah 3:1–2; Psalm 109:6;
Job 1:6–9, 12; 2:1–2; 1 Chronicles 21:1

Different Functions of the Term „Satan“:

The word “Satan” takes on different meanings depending on the biblical context:

1. **Individual human opponents**
People acting as “adversaries” or opponents — used neutrally, without meaning a supernatural devil.
2. **Political enemies or military opponents**
Potential rivals or adversaries in times of war are called “satan” (see 1 Kings 11:14, 23, 25).
3. **“The Satan” as a distinct figure**
A personalized being representing accusation or opposition.

“The Satan” as a Personified Being/Acting Figure

There are only three Old Testament passages in which Satan appears as an acting figure.

Two scenes take place **in heaven**:

- Job 1:6–12; Job 2:1–7
- Zechariah 3:1–7

One scenes take place **on earth**:

- 1 Chronicles 21:1

Old Testament Passages Concerning Evil

In several Old Testament texts, evil or disaster is in some way connected to God’s activity.

Examples:

Isaiah 45:6-7; Amos 3:6; Job 2:10 ;Job 12:16ff

God incites disaster in connection with divine anger:

1 Samuel 26:19; 2 Samuel 24:1

God sends an evil or harmful spirit:

1 Samuel 16:14; 19:9; Judges 9:23; Jeremiah 51:1

(A Spirit bringing calamity is sent; see also Isaiah 19:14; 29:10.)

The Terms “Devil” and “Satan” in the New Testament

In the New Testament, two main Greek terms appear:

- **διάβολος (diabolos)** — Devil
- **σατανᾶς (satanas)** — Satan

Occurrences:

- **“Satan”** appears 36 times in 33 verses.
- **“Devil”** appears 37 times in 35 verses.

Occurrences of „Satan“:

Matthew 4:10; 12:26; 16:23; Mark 1:13; 3:23; 3:26; 4:15; 8:33
 Luke 10:18; 11:18; 13:16; 22:3; 22:31; John 13:27; Acts 5:3; 26:18
 Romans 16:20; 1 Corinthians 5:5; 7:5;
 2 Corinthians 2:11; 11:14; 12:7; 1 Thessalonians 2:18;
 2 Thessalonians 2:9; 1 Timothy 1:20; 5:15;
 Revelation 2:9; 2:13; 2:24; 3:9; 12:9; 20:2; 20:7

Occurrences of “Devil”

Matthew 4:1; 4:5; 4:8; 4:11; 13:39; 25:4; Luke 4:2f.; 4:6; 4:13; 8:12;
 John 6:70; 8:44; 13:2; Acts 10:38; 13:10; Ephesians 4:27; 6:11;
 1 Timothy 3:6–7; 3:11; 2 Timothy 2:26; 3:3; Titus 2:3; Hebrews 2:14
 James 4:7; 1 Peter 5:8; 1 John 3:8; 3:10; Jude 9;
 Revelation 2:10; 12:9; 12:12; 20:2; 20:10

Noteworthy Observations

- The Gospel of Mark and the seven undisputed Pauline letters (as well as 2 Thessalonians) use exclusively the Greek term for **“Satan.”**
- The other letters use exclusively the Greek term for **“Devil.”**
- The following writings use **both** terms: Matthew, Luke, John, Acts, 1 Timothy, and Revelation.

Important

Only a few New Testament writings do **not** explicitly mention satanic figures:

Galatians, Philippians, Philemon, Colossians, 2 Peter

However:

There is **no clear difference in meaning** between “Devil” and “Satan” within the New Testament.

Additional Descriptions of Satanic Powers in the New Testament

Besides the explicit terms “Satan” and “Devil,” the New Testament uses a variety of descriptive titles:

The Enemy — Matthew 13:39; Luke 10:19

The Evil One — Matthew 6:13; 13:19; John 17:15; Ephesians 6:16; 1 John 2:13–14; 3:12; 5:18; cf. Matthew 13:38;
 2 Thessalonians 3:3

The Accuser — Revelation 12:10

The Dragon — Revelation 12:9; 20:2

The Destroyer — 1 Corinthians 10:10

The Destroying Angel — Hebrews 11:28

The Ancient Serpent — Revelation 12:9; 20:2

The Tempter — Matthew 4:3; 1 Thessalonians 3:5

The Ruler of This World — John 12:31; 14:30; 16:11

The God of This Age — 2 Corinthians 4:4

The Prince of the Power of the Air / the Spirit — Ephesians 2:2

The Angel of the Abyss (Abaddon) — Revelation 9:11