

# Angels Throughout the Ages



## LESSON 2: Satan in the Book of Job

### Suggested Responses

1. Job. The book, as it appears in the Bible, dates to somewhere between the 6th and 4th centuries B.C., but the same form of the story probably goes back much further.
2. *Ha Satan* means “the Accuser.” He is a member of the heavenly court whose task is to hold human beings accountable before God for their sins and their failings. In this respect, the Satan is related to the human conscience. Nonetheless, he is clearly depicted in terms of a personal celestial entity other than humans.
3. That depends on how we mean it. In the First Letter of John, the apostle talks about an element in the conscience, somewhere deep within the human heart, that calls us out for our moral weaknesses, even when we do not actually sin. The apostle sees this as a demonic temptation to despair against the transformative power of grace. Somewhere within the inner person, the devil taunts us to see only our disordered desires and none of our fidelity, and he waits for us to turn away from God and sin. John reminds us, though, that sin occurs in an explicit act, not merely in a disordered desire that we resist. He insists that God is greater than the inner heart—than that accusing voice speaking through the conscience—and that God knows the real truth about us even better than we know ourselves. The apostle John explains that this inner voice cannot be allowed to condemn us if, in the end, whatever our disordered desires may be, we stay faithful to God in our conduct, follow his commands, and do what is pleasing in his sight.
4. In Job, the Satan expresses concern over God’s interest in human beings. Human beings, he insists, are all unfaithful to God in the end and would curse God if given any excuse to do so. Humans are ungrateful for God’s concern for them.
5. God insists that the Satan is wrong about humanity, whatever may be true in the preponderance of cases. Job is a righteous man, and he proves to God’s satisfaction

that it is possible, in principle, for human beings to be truly faithful and righteous. The Satan, however, is so insistent that human beings are all treacherous in their hearts that he asks God to give him reign to destroy Job, arguing that when God lifts his protection from Job and allows him to suffer as if a guilty man, he will become one, himself, in the end. He will turn on God and curse him when things do not go his way. God is so confident in Job's righteousness, however, that he allows the Satan to torment Job as a demonstration that Job really does have a righteous heart, against all of the Satan's expectations.

6. By the time we arrive at 1 John, we have a picture of the Satan as a real person, and not merely as a metaphor. By the time of the apostle John, the image of the Satan in the Book of Job had come to be seen as a genuine insight about a real person. For John, though, who inherits a much more highly-developed tradition with a much more fully formed understanding of angels and demons, the Satan is not a member of the heavenly court, but stands in fierce opposition to the designs of God. He is "*ho Diablo*," or "the devil"—a term that means essentially the same thing as "*ha Satan*," but now comes to hold fully demonic implications.