

Do Not Revile Dignitaries: Jude 8-10 (Part I)

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When engaging someone for the first time on matters of religion, we may desire to provoke their mind by revealing to them that things that are commonly believed are often incorrect. This allows us to begin the process of revealing that faith comes not from what we are told, but from what the Bible says. One such “intellectual provocation” is the identity of Lucifer. Mentioned only once in the Bible (and that, only in the KJV and NKJV) in Isaiah 14:12, many people believe that this refers to another name of Satan, our adversary. However, when we look in Isaiah 14:4-12 (context), we find that in fact “Lucifer”, if it is even a name (it means “Morning Star”, and is used to describe Jesus in II Peter 1:19), refers to the King of Babylon. Likewise many create a backstory for Satan using Ezekiel 28 when Ezekiel 28:12 tells us that, like Isaiah 14:4, we are not speaking about Satan (again, never mentioned in the passage), but in this case, the king of Tyre. Our point is this: most people have no idea who Satan is, and likely revile “dignitaries” in their ignorance.

Jude wrote about such ignorant assumptions in Jude 8-10. The word revile (in some translations, “speak evil”), contextually refers to speaking falsely & insultingly about someone with the intent and purpose of denigrating them. The word dignitaries (rendered “angelic majesties” or “dignities”) are not exclusively angels (consider the context of Michael not reviling Satan) but those in Spiritual authority. This would include the Devil, demons and angels. We will first examine the danger of reviling the Devil.

It may seem hard to believe that we are not to speak evil of the Devil, but consider that it is part of our obligation to speak the truth on all things that is at the heart of this command. We are not to revile without understanding, which is the warning Jude is making. So we must then ask “*what do we know about Satan*” (the name “Satan” mean opponent in Hebrew, and is translated as “Devil” in Greek)?

We need to acknowledge that the answer to the question of what we know about Satan is: not much. For example, nothing states that Satan was ever an angel. Angels that have fallen are held in chains according II Peter 2:4, the only passage that references fallen angels in the entire Bible (nothing says that the “*Nephilim*” of Genesis 6:4 are angels, and the imagery in Revelation 12 is NOT literal). Simply stated, we DO NOT KNOW Satan’s origin. As well, He does not “rule” from Hell (since He will not be cast there until the end of time, Revelation 20:10). Instead, the Bible clearly states that the earth is domain (Job 1:7, 1 Peter 5:8, Ephesians 2:2, 1 John 5:19, 2 Corinthians 4:4). We know that the power Satan is given is the power of death (Hebrews 2:14, Ephesians 6:12), and that (to some degree) his power is divinely given (Job 1:12). However, his power is revoked over those who are in Christ (again Hebrews 2:14, etc.). We do not know how Satan knows to tempt us; nothing states he is omniscient.

We are also told that Satan has a purpose: accusation (consider that the word Devil in Greek is accuser). He is called the accuser in Revelation 12:10, we see his accusations in Job 1&2 against Job, and we see such against Peter in Luke 22:31. Perhaps we ought to consider one power Satan does NOT have: Satan is NOT the reason/cause of our sin. According to James 1:13-15, our sin is based in our desires, and our choices are the guilt of sin. Even the events in the Garden reveal that Satan, while tempting Eve, did not compel her to sin. Satan is our tempter, but he is NOT the cause of our fall. Therefore, we may be reviling Him to falsely accuse Him.

Let us learn from Jesus how we ought to reject the Tempter. In Matthew 4:10 Jesus rebuked Satan three times without reviling Him. We are told to do the same in James 4:7, and in Ephesians 6:11 we are told that if we put on the armor of God, we are able to resist accordingly.

Conclusions: It is a sin to “revile dignitaries”, and that includes the Devil. We need to be mindful of what we say about them, not making up stories about Satan (or angels and demons) that are not true. If we have not been told a great deal about Satan, there is a reason that we need not know. Putting on Christ guarantees our correct conduct in all things.