

A Common Sense Approach to the Biblical Presentation of Jesus, Death, & THE Devil

by

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“Come now, and let us reason together”. Isaiah 1:18

Common Sense, what is it? Well according to Merriam-Webster the proper definition is as follows:

Common Sense: *sound and prudent judgment based on a simple perception of the situation or facts.*

Wow. What an easy to comprehend definition. The very definition of common sense almost seems like “common sense”. To be able to make a sound and prudent judgment based on a simple perception of the situation or facts sure sounds right. It sounds like what we should always strive to do. And people do exactly that all the time, everyday. When we drive to work and see that the sky is overly cloudy and looks like it might rain, we know it wouldn’t be wise to leave our car windows down. If your battery powered flashlight starts getting dimmer, you understand that you might need to put new batteries in it. Part and parcel of common sense is paying attention to the obvious. It is using the knowledge and experience of life to see and comprehend accurately what is right in front of us. Again, common sense is plain ordinary good judgment that is not based on any specialized knowledge.

For me, common sense has always been something I’ve prided myself in having. A lot of it was instilled by my father who himself had a strong common sense approach to life. A lot of it though just came naturally. Ever since I was a child I had a need to understand and make sense of things. I remember driving my mother crazy at times by not being able to simply accept things without a proper explanation that made sense to me. Whenever she would tell me to do something or not to do whatever I might have been doing, I would always ask WHY? Of course this is something that children are wont to do, but for me it wasn’t just a delay tactic, but something that truly mattered to me. I wanted to know the reason. A “because I said so” answer from my mother was something I could never accept. That drove me crazy! And it wasn’t because I didn’t respect her as a parent. I just had to make sense of why I was being told this. When an answer was given to me that did make sense, I could accept it. I could move on. I still might not have liked doing it, but at least I understood it. The common sense aspect of my thinking was appeased.

Ever since those early years trying my mothers patience, I’ve always had a strong common sense approach to life. This has served me well over time in most every aspect of life and I believe it also serves me well in my Biblical studies. Like everything else in life, I try to use a common sense approach to Scripture. I feel that it has to make sense at the most basic level. If God is communicating to humanity throughout the generations of time through the written word (which I firmly believe He does through The Bible), then having it make sense to people is of primary importance. Of course right here the skeptic or the Atheist could chime in and say that the Bible defies common sense. They would say that tales of the supernatural and miracles are contrary to logic and rational thought, much less common sense. From the viewpoint of a non-believer that can appear to be true. But once the existence of God is recognized and faith in Him and His Holy Scriptures becomes your axiom, then miracles and other supernatural occurrences become not just possible, but entirely logical. However the point of my presentation is not a defense of theism or The Bible, but is that within the framework of God’ written word, what practically all of believers of Scripture feel is the truth given to us from God, common sense still must be applied to it in order to properly understand what God is communicating to us. What God articulates to us as rational cognitive thinking beings must make sense to us in order for us to understand Him. Common sense is a part of how we think and make logical judgments about life and the world around us. That is how God created us. Common sense was made into our mental makeup by God. Hence the popularly heard term “God-given Common sense” is very accurate. And if God gave it to us, we should definitely strive to use it as a proper guide through his written word. His instructions throughout the Bible - beginning to end, should be read using God’s gift of common sense.

With that in mind, let's now examine how common sense will keep us on track on three very important biblical subjects. These are three vast subjects that one could write an entire book about. Indeed volumes and volumes of books have been written about them. But I believe that if one maintains a God-given common sense approach to important details of the Bible's presentation of each of these subjects, all difficulties and complexities will fade away and the simple truth of what God really intends us to know about them will be clearly visible.

1. Jesus

Understanding who Jesus is and how the Bible presents him is not all that difficult when one stops and uses some good ol' common sense to recognize the meaning behind many of the words of Scripture.

God's son

As a child growing up in a strong, Bible-believing family I learned about Jesus from a very early age. Frequently my mother would read to me from my storybook bible and from it I came to learn about all the great characters of Scripture. From the start, I recognized that of all the characters in The Bible, Jesus was extremely important and special. After all, he was said to be the Son OF God. And this is the beginning of where God-given common sense comes into play. Like every other child who learns that Jesus is the Son of God, I had no problems figuring out that Jesus and God were two different beings. The very words Father and Son let me know that God was the Daddy and Jesus was His son. Human fathers and sons do share being related, but they are ALWAYS two different individuals. Using father and son as descriptor nouns is incredibly easy to understand because we have that example provided for us in our own lives. A father and a son (or a mother and daughter if you're female) are two different individuals. This is easy to see and is simple common sense!

Another detail that is easily grasped is that a Father is always older than his Son. When one hears that this person is the father and this person is his son, no one would think for a second that they both have existed for the same amount of time. Fathers are always older than their sons because fathers bring them into existence. Sure a young child doesn't get all the nuances of this and parents hope the reproductive details of how human fathers "create" their sons & daughters is something that comes when the child reaches an appropriate age, but it is still something that registers in the brains of children as a part of common sense. Fathers are older than children because once again that is how the example works throughout all of humanity (not to mention all of the animal world).

This is MY son

There are two different events recorded in the New Testament where God himself vocally indicates that Jesus is His son. First at his baptism we have the accounts the three synoptic gospels.

Matt 3:16-17¹ *After being baptized, Jesus came up immediately from the water; and behold, the heavens were opened, and he saw the Spirit of God descending as a dove and lighting on Him, and behold, a voice out of the heavens said, "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well-pleased."*

Mark 1:10-11 *Immediately coming up out of the water, He saw the heavens opening, and the Spirit like a dove descending upon Him; and a voice came out of the heavens: "You are My beloved Son, in You I am well-pleased."*

Luke 3:21-22 *Now when all the people were baptized, Jesus was also baptized, and while He was praying, heaven was opened, and the Holy Spirit descended upon Him in bodily form like a dove, and a voice came out of heaven, "You are My beloved Son, in You I am well-pleased."*

The second account occurs at the transfiguration and is also recorded in the three synoptic gospels.

Matt 17:5 *While he was still speaking, a bright cloud overshadowed them, and behold, a voice out of the cloud said, "This is My beloved Son, with whom I am well-pleased; listen to Him!"*

¹ *All verses from NASB unless otherwise noted.

Mark 9:7 Then a cloud formed, overshadowing them, and a voice came out of the cloud, "**This is My beloved Son, listen to Him!**"

Luke 9:35 Then a voice came out of the cloud, saying, "**This is My Son, My Chosen One; listen to Him!**"

In these six accounts of the two different events, we have a voice calling Jesus his son. Common sense should tell us here that this voice belongs to God and that Jesus is NOT that God doing the speaking. The voice of God calls Jesus His Son. The overall aspect of these two events much less the words given "My beloved Son" should easily provide common sense clues that Jesus and God are two separate entities. If not we have a deception on our hands of the highest order. If Jesus was God - especially in a Oneness/"Jesus Only" sense then we are being tricked by a great act of ventriloquism. God would be performing an outright ruse to fool everyone into thinking that God and His Son were separate Father and Son entities. It would be a charade performed for the audience's benefit (both to the people present to those events and to the many more who have read the record of those events since then in the written form of Scripture.

The anointed of God

The term Messiah is the English translation for the Hebrew word "Mashiach – which means "God's anointed, or "the anointed one (of God)". The term was used to describe anyone who was "anointed" with holy anointing oil (e.g. Israel's Kings, prophets, & priests) to signify being chosen for a task ordained/authorized by God. And in a deeper eschatological sense, Messiah also stood for the coming of THE final "Moshiach" from the Davidic line who would usher in the Messianic age (the "Olam Ha-Ba" or "the world to come") and whose "kingship" would reign forever.

But let's go back and look at what is being said here with the word itself. If we are to honestly examine the actual, basic definition of the word, common sense should tell us that if the Messiah is someone whom God "anoints", then it is someone OTHER THAN God. God is anointing/authorizing somebody else to perform a task. This is a very simple concept that seems to be lost or ignored by those promoting the Trinity belief that Jesus is the Messiah who is also God. If the word "Messiah" is to have any true meaning at all either Jesus is God and is NOT the Messiah. Or Jesus is the Messiah who is someone other than God. There is no other option. It is totally absurd to say God "anoints" himself.

The Messiah is suppose to be...

Then there's the Biblical expectations regarding the Messiah. The Hebrew people have historically viewed (as Judaism still does to this day) the Messiah as someone that would be a real human being directly descended from the lineage of King David. And they have this view point because that is just what Scripture clearly describes - a real human man was promised, not God acting as a man.

The "Original" Testament starts such a path almost from the start with God giving a prophecy that one day a literal descendant of Eve would defeat the Serpent (Satan) in Genesis 3:15.

Gen 3:15 - "And I will put enmity Between you and the woman, And between your seed and her seed; He shall bruise you on the head, And you shall bruise him on the heel."

Later in Deuteronomy 18:15 & 18, God promises to bring up a future prophet like Moses from among the people of Israel's own "**brethren**".

Deut 18:15-19 "*The LORD your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among you, from your countrymen, you shall listen to him. This is according to all that you asked of the LORD your God in Horeb on the day of the assembly, saying, 'Let me not hear again the voice of the LORD my God, let me not see this great fire anymore, or I will die.'*" *The LORD said to me, 'They have spoken well. 'I will raise up a prophet from among their countrymen like you, and I will put My words in his mouth, and he shall speak to them all that I command him. 'It shall come about that whoever will not listen to My words which he shall speak in My name, I Myself will require it of him.*

Isaiah 11 promises the Messiah will come out of the human line of Jesse and that God's Spirit "will rest on him".

Isaiah 11:1-2 "Then a shoot will spring from the stem of Jesse, And a branch from his roots will bear fruit. The Spirit of the LORD will rest on Him, The spirit of wisdom and understanding, The spirit of counsel and strength, The spirit of knowledge and the fear of the LORD."

Isaiah 42:1 describes the Messiah as God's "servant" His "chosen one" whom God places (anoints) his Spirit upon.

Isaiah 42:1 "Behold, My Servant, whom I uphold; My chosen one *in whom* My soul delights. I have put My Spirit upon Him; He will bring forth justice to the nations."

Isaiah 52:14 again states that God's servant will be a man.

Isaiah 52:14 "He was despised and forsaken of men, **A man** of sorrows and acquainted with grief; And like one from whom men hide their face He was despised, and we did not esteem Him."

In the book of Jeremiah the Messiah is declared to be "raised up" as David's "righteous branch" (23:5)

Jer. 23:5 "Behold, the days are coming," declares the LORD, "When I will raise up for David a righteous Branch; And He will reign as king and act wisely And do justice and righteousness in the land."

And that this "leader shall be **one of them** and their ruler shall **come forth from their midst**" (30:21).

Jer. 30:21 "Their leader shall be one of them, And their ruler shall come forth from their midst; And I will bring him near and he shall approach Me; For who would dare to risk his life to approach Me?" declares the LORD."

Of course it couldn't be said any clearer than in 1st Chronicles 17:11-14, where God promises that the Messiah will be one of David's "descendants" and "**shall be of your sons**".

1 Chron 17:11-14 "When your days are fulfilled that you must go *to be* with your fathers, that I will set up **one of your descendants after you**, who **will be of your sons**; and I will establish his kingdom. "He shall build for Me a house, and I will establish his throne forever. "**I will be his father and he shall be My son**; and I will not take My lovingkindness away from him, as I took it from him who was before you. "But I will settle him in My house and in My kingdom forever, and his throne shall be established forever."

Then we have the Messianic promises that David himself wrote in the book of Psalms. Starting in Psalm 2 saying that God's anointed will be "begotten" at a point in time (2:7) and will be established from David's "seed forever" (89:4).

Psalm 2:7 "I will surely tell of the decree of the LORD: He said to Me, '**You are My Son, Today I have begotten You.**'"

Psalm 89:4 "I will establish **your seed forever** And build up your throne to all generations." Selah."

Psalm 89:27 has God making the Messiah "My first-born". This doesn't make sense if Jesus were God, how would God make himself his own first-born?

Psalm 89:27 "I also shall make him **My firstborn**, The highest of the kings of the earth."

And finally we come to Psalm 110. Here all doubts are erased and the precise declaration is provided that God's anointed Messiah would be a human man and absolutely not God himself. Psalm 110:1 is THE verse in the Original Testament that shows the clear distinction between God and the Messiah.

Psalm 110:1 "The LORD says to my Lord: "Sit at My right hand Until I make Your enemies a footstool for Your feet."

It shows that there are TWO Lords. One is the LORD God Almighty and the other is addressed with the honored but fully human title of Lord. No wonder it is the most quoted verse in the New Testament from the Hebrew Bible! To explain further, I'll quote Anthony Buzzard as he says this better than I ever could.

"It tells us that the relationship between God and Jesus is that of Deity and non-Deity. The Messiah is called *adoni* (my lord) and in every one of its **195 occurrences** *adoni* (my lord) **means a superior who is not God**. *Adonai* on the other hand **refers exclusively to the One God in all** of its **449**

occurrences. Adonai is the title of Deity and adoni never designates Deity.

If the Messiah were called *Adonai* this would introduce “two Gods” into the Bible and would be polytheism. Psalm 110:1 should guard us all against supposing that there are *two* who are God. In fact the Messiah is the supreme human being and agent of the One God. Psalm 110:1 is the Bible’s master text for defining the Son of God in relation to the One God, his Father.”²

Jesus was seen!

Throughout the “Original” Testament God goes out of his way to say over and over that He is the one and only God of the universe and that He alone is responsible for all of creation. But God also reveals something else there and then confirms it later in the New Testament. God says that he CAN NOT be seen by man. In Exodus 33:20 God flat out tells Moses that “**no man can see me and live**”. Then in the Gospel of John we have collaborating texts like “**No man hath seen God at any time**” (John 1:18) and “**You have neither heard His voice at any time, nor seen His form**” (John 5:37). And in 1st Timothy we have the added facts that God is “**invisible**” (1 Tim 1:17) and that He “**dwells in unapproachable light, whom no man has seen or can see**” (1 Tim 6:16).

Yet according to all the biblical records, Jesus was seen and heard by thousands of human beings and was perceived totally as a fellow human. How could Jesus be God in human form if God has made it abundantly clear that he can NOT be seen? Sure the typical Trinitarian response tends to be something along the lines of that since Jesus put on “human nature” that allowed him to be seen and heard just like a normal human being. So perhaps the more important, critical common sense question here would be WHY? Why would God state that he couldn’t be seen, yet then turn around and come down into human form TO BE SEEN? It seems illogical not to mention totally contradictory.

The fact of this is amplified even further when one looks at the record of the events at Sinai. In Deuteronomy 4: we find God making the concise effort to tell the Israelites that they “**saw no form**” (verse 12), and that they needed to “**watch yourselves carefully, since you did not see any form on the day the LORD spoke to you at Horeb from the midst of the fire, so that you do not act corruptly and make a grave image for yourselves in the form of any figure, the likeness of male or female**” (verse 15 &16). Here God specifically went to the trouble to prohibit the Israelites from attempting to worship him in human form (or any form for that matter). Yet according to the Trinity belief (as well as Oneness), God turned right around and did this EXACT thing by appearing in human form as Jesus. This seems absurdly contradictory and well beyond the realm of common sense.

Two Adams

The Apostle Paul wrote in Romans and 1st Corinthians detailed comparisons of Jesus and Adam. Paul even termed Jesus the “Last Adam”. This is because he recognized critically important parallels between these two individuals. Adam, the father of the human race brought death upon everyone because his disobedience took away the ability for humans to live eternally. The perfect obedience of the Last Adam, Jesus the Messiah, gave humanity a way to overcome death and live eternally as originally planned.

Romans 5:12-19 (NRSV)

(12) Therefore, just as sin came into the world through one man, and death came through sin, and so death spread to all, because all have sinned—

(13) Sin was indeed in the world before the law, but sin is not reckoned when there is no law.

(14) Yet death exercised dominion from Adam to Moses, even over those whose sins were not like the transgression of Adam, who is **a type of the one who was to come**.

(15) But the free gift is not like the trespass. For if the many died through the **one man’s trespass**, much more surely have the grace of God and the free gift **in the grace of the one man**, Jesus Christ, abounded for the many.

(16) And the free gift is not like the effect of **the one man’s sin**. For the judgment following **one trespass** brought condemnation, but the free gift following many trespasses brings justification.

(17) If, because of the **one man’s trespass**, death exercised dominion through that **one**, much more surely will those who receive the abundance of grace and the free gift of righteousness exercise dominion in life through

² Sir Anthony Buzzard - Focus on the Kingdom article “[Adonai and Adoni \(Psalm 110:1\)](#)”.

the **one man**, Jesus Christ.

(18) Therefore just as **one man's trespass** led to condemnation for all, so **one man's act of righteousness** leads to justification and life for all.

(19) For just as by **the one man's disobedience** the many were made sinners, so by **the one man's obedience** the many will be made righteous.

1 Corinthians 15:20-23

(20) But now Christ has been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who are asleep

(21) For since **by a man came** death, **by a man** also *came* the resurrection of the dead.

(22) For as **in Adam all die**, so also **in Christ all will be made alive**.

(23) But each in his own order: Christ the first fruits, after that those who are Christ's **at His coming**,

(45) So also it is written, "The **first MAN, Adam**, BECAME A LIVING SOUL." The **last Adam** *became* a life-giving spirit.

For Paul's two Adam analogy to work, Jesus must be on the same level as the original Adam. For a "Last Adam" to logically be in the "Adam" category then he has to be a man just like the first. God or the 2nd member of The Trinity coming down to earth in human form just isn't an "Adam" at all. He would be God - the creator of Adam. Sure, God could come down and get it right. But it was a man that got us into this mess in the first place. Shouldn't common sense tell us that if a man that was created perfect by God and used his free will to disobey God and bring sin into the picture, then another perfectly created man with free will should be the logical counterpart to obey God and provide an escape from sin?

Not equal, not the same!

The following common sense arguments regarding how The Bible clearly demonstrates that God and Jesus are not the same being are ones that tend to come up quite often among those promoting Jesus as God. Many times I have been told in discussions with those wishing to support a Trinitarian or even a Oneness/Modalist viewpoint that these are simply tired old arguments. Yes, the arguments are centuries old and people often tire of them. But that doesn't mean that they still aren't valid objections. And their validity remains all the more significant due to the fact each of these are easily answerable when one uses common sense as their guide.

- Scripture calls Jesus a man while telling us that God is NOT a man.

Acts 2:22 "*Jesus of Nazareth **was a man** commended to you by God with mighty deeds, wonders, and signs, which **God worked through him** in your midst, as you yourselves know.*"

Acts 17:31: "*Because He has established a day on which He will judge the world with justice **through a man he has appointed**, and He has provided confirmation for all by raising him from the dead.*"

vs.

Numbers 23:19 "**God is not a man**, that He should lie, Nor a *son of man*, that He should repent;.."

Hosea 11:9 "...**For I am God and not man**, the Holy One in your midst,..."

- Scripture tells us that Jesus prayed to and has a God. Yet God doesn't pray to anyone because He alone is God.

John 17:3 "This is eternal life, that they may know **You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent**."

John 20:17 "Jesus said to her, "Stop clinging to Me, for I have not yet ascended to the Father; but go to My brethren and say to them, 'I ascend to **My Father** and **your Father**, and **My God** and **your God**.'"

Rev. 3:12 "He who overcomes, I will make him a pillar in the temple of **My God**, and he will not go out from it anymore; and I will write on him the name of **My God**, and the name of the city of **My God**, the new Jerusalem, which comes down out of heaven from **My God**, and My new name."

vs.

Isaiah 44:6 ""Thus says the LORD, the King of Israel and his Redeemer, the LORD of hosts: 'I am the first and I am the last, And **there is no God besides Me.**'"

Isaiah 45:6 "That men may know from the rising to the setting of the sun That **there is no one besides Me.** I am the LORD, and **there is no other,**"

Isaiah 45:18 "For thus says the LORD, who created the heavens (He is the God who formed the earth and made it, He established it and did not create it a waste place, but formed it to be inhabited), "I am the LORD, and **there is none else.**"

- Scripture tells that Jesus was tempted. Yet God cannot be tempted.

Matt 4:1 "Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness **to be tempted by the devil.**"
(see also **Mark 1:13** & **Luke 4:2**)

Hebrews 4:15 "For we do not have a high priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but One **who has been tempted in all things as we are,** yet without sin."

vs.

James 1:13 "Let no one say when he is tempted, "I am being tempted by God"; **for God cannot be tempted by evil, and He Himself does not tempt anyone.**"

- Scripture tells us that Jesus died. Yet God is immortal - incapable of dying.

1 Cor. 15:3 "For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received, that **Christ died for our sins** according to the Scriptures"

vs.

1 Tim 1:17 "Now to the King **eternal, immortal,** invisible, the only God, be honor and glory forever and ever. Amen."

Unless you are forcing yourself to hold onto the post-Biblical creeds of man, the honest, logical, and common sense conclusion should be that Jesus is NOT literally God himself. Jesus is just who God promised His Messiah to be, a special human MAN who would be brought into being at a point in time from the Hebrew people and "anointed" with God's Spirit so that he could accomplish all the God wanted him to do. This is said perfectly several times in the book of Acts.

Acts 10:38: "*how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and power. He went about doing good and healing all those oppressed by the devil, for God was with him.*"

2. Death

Death is certainly a cold, hard reality for us as human beings. It effects us all in some way during our short lives and will claim us at some point in time. A lyric in the song "*Do You Realize*" by the Oklahoma Alternative band The Flaming Lips says "Do You Realize - that everyone you know someday will die? It is poignant and unfortunately true. Just is a line from a famous pop culture film that says "On a long enough timeline, the survival rate for everyone drops to zero." Again, horribly all-too-true.

For the living the death of those near and dear to us hits us like a massive wrecking ball that we never truly recover from. It affects our lives with a profoundness that is typically life-altering. The finality of it is unescapable. I know the loss of my father 30 years ago when I was 15 altered my life like nothing else save for the death of my mother 8 years later. Being an only child, her death shook me to my core and has had a

lasting impact on so many aspects of my life to this very day.

What can we learn about death from The Bible? Well if we take off the blinders of post-biblical traditions and utilize a common sense approach to it, we can glean a clear picture of God's truth about death and what it means for us.

Patterns from Adam & Eve

The story of mankind's beginnings presented in Genesis tell us why death exists. Adam and Eve's sin brought death upon the human race and each and every descendant of them on down to all of us alive today share in that same fate. But many people who read this story and understand where and why death came to exist, fail to recognize the biblical truths that lay out the stark simplicity of death as well as the human makeup. Genesis 2:7 in describing the creation of man says that God "*formed man of dust from the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life and man became a living soul*". Nothing from the account indicates that man was made with anything already immortal. Nothing says that God gave man a soul that was immortal. It just says that Adam became a living soul - a living being. Further still, once Adam and Eve sinned and God told them the penalty they would then suffer was that they would "*return to the ground, because from it you were taken; For you are dust, And to dust you shall return*" (Gen 3:19), God then took an additional step. A scant few verses later in Genesis 3:22 & 24 we see that God made sure to not only kick Adam and Eve out of the Garden of Eden, but He also stationed an angel with a flaming sword that turned in all directions to prevent humanity from being able to eat fruit of the tree of life and live forever. With the facts presented here, shouldn't common sense tell us that man was made mortal and it was the tree of life that was the key to being able to live forever? The facts presented show that once man was driven away from the tree of life - with an angel placed to ensure no one ever ate from it again, mankind became fully subject to death. Going to the trouble of preventing anyone from accessing the tree of life makes absolutely no sense if man already lived on forever past death as an immortal soul.

Also noticeably absent from the story of mankind's beginnings is any mention of what happens after physical death. Where are the instructions about going to Heaven or Hell? That's pretty important information that God neglected to tell Adam and Eve. If Hell is truly the ultimate penalty for sin, then why is only death mentioned? God told Adam back in Genesis 2:17 that if he disobeyed God's instructions (committing sin), then the penalty he would suffer was "*you shall surely die*". Shouldn't God have told them that disobedience would lead to punishment that they would physically experience for all eternity? Why didn't God say something like "not only are you not going to live forever here on earth in your physical body, but since I made you with an immortal soul (which is nowhere mentioned in Scripture), you will have to be tortured in hell for all eternity (or for the more modern, PC, immortal soulist - "suffer eternal separation from God in some dark corner of the universe)?" Why did God not lay this out for humanity from the beginning? If mankind was made immortal, then just being told you're going to "return to dust" is not really the full truth. God would have to be seen as more than just a little negligent in this all-too-important missing detail of humanity's makeup. I think common sense should help us to recognize that if death is explained as simply dying and returning to the base organic elements that are a part of us (termed "dust"), and this was the only penalty given by God, then such a death is all that occurs.

Who possesses immortality?

One might ask, is anyone naturally in possession of immortality? Yes! Scripture in fact clearly indicates who already has immortality. In 1 Timothy 6:16 we learn that God "*alone possesses immortality and dwells in unapproachable light, whom no man has seen or can see*." So here's where we employ the use of common sense and ascertain that if God ALONE possesses immortality, then nobody else has it. Alone is a simple word and means just that. In such a usage it has the definition of: *to the exclusion of all others or all else*. Therefore with nothing but basic common sense we can deduce that if God is the only one who possesses immortality, then we humans do not. And that makes perfect sense if we die. Being immortal by definition means "not subject to death". If we are subject to death - which we obviously are since we do die, then we are NOT immortal.

Death is an end

Humanity has had enough experience with death to know that when a person dies, everything that they are in this world comes to an end. Death is the complete and utter cessation of every quality of being alive. This is not just common sense, it is fact. We see it plainly evident from everything we encounter in the human experience and everything we have observed in the living world around us. Yet this is not what people have come to accept about the Bible. The Greek conception of the immortal soul has created a twisted view of Scripture that promotes an innate ability of man to live on past death in some way. That his existence does not come to a halt at the grave. But does this in anyway fit the facts of what God describes in his written word? No. Scripture never says that the dead go on living in some other unseen plain of existence. Biblically speaking, we are consciously non-existent and would remain that way if God failed to use His power to bring us back at some point in time. Consider these Scriptural passages of insight from the book of Job:

Job 14:1-2 "Man, who is born of woman is short-lived and full of turmoil, Like a flower he comes forth and withers, He flees like a shadow and **does not remain**".

Job 14: 10-12 "But man dies and lies prostrate. Man expires, and where is he? As water evaporates from the sea, And a river becomes parched and dried up, So man lies down and **does not rise**, Until the heavens be no more, **He will not awake nor be aroused out of his sleep.**"

Later, King David (one of God's most loved servants) in his Psalms describes death plainly in absolute, non-existent terms with verses such as:

Psalm 6:5 "For in death there is **no remembrance** of thee: in the grave **who shall give thee thanks?**"

Psalm 30:9 "What profit is there in my blood, when I go down to the pit? **Shall the dust praise thee?** shall it declare thy truth?"

Psalm 88:10-11 "Wilt thou **shew wonders to the dead?** shall the dead **arise and praise thee?** Selah. Shall thy loving kindness be **declared in the grave?** or thy faithfulness in destruction? Shall thy wonders be known in the dark? and thy righteousness in the **land of forgetfulness?**"

Psalm 115:17 "The dead **praise not** the LORD, neither any that go down into **silence**"

Psalm 146:4 (KJV) "His breath goeth forth, he returneth to his earth; in that very day **his thoughts perish**"

And one of the greatest thinkers of the Bible - King Solomon, wrote probably the most clear and straightforward truth regarding the condition of the dead in these three writings in Ecclesiastes:

Ecc. 3:19-20 "For the fate of the sons of men and the fate of the beasts is the same. As one dies so dies the other; indeed they **all have the same breath** and there is no advantage for man over beast, for all is vanity. **All go to the same place. All came from the dust and all return to the dust.**"

Ecc. 9:4-6 "But for him who is joined to all the living there is hope, for a living dog is better than a dead lion. For the living know that they will die; **But the dead know nothing**, And they have no more reward, For the memory of them is forgotten. **Also their love, their hatred, and their envy have now perished**; Nevermore will they have a share in anything done under the sun."

Ecc. 9:10 "Whatever your hand finds to do, do *it* with your might; **for there is no work or device or knowledge or wisdom in the grave** where you are going."

The plain truth of these verses can not be easily side-stepped or wished away by those looking to hold-on to the traditional view that man is an immortal creature that instantly moves on to another plain of existence once he "passes away". There is NO "passing on" or going anywhere but to become "worm food" in the grave. The "DEAD KNOW NOTHING". We do not exist any more. The organic "earth" elements that God designed mankind out of, is exactly what we turn back into. When that "breath of life" - that God gave Adam and has been passed down generation to generation each time sperm fertilizes egg - leaves us at death, we are nothing but a rotting corpse that turns to goo and eventually in time becomes "dust". The EXACT thing

that God promised back in Gen. 3:19!

You shall surely NOT die

In all of God's Holy Scripture, there's not a single verse that tell us that human beings have an immortal soul. In fact the very word "immortal" is used only once in 1 Timothy 1:17 and there it refers once again only to God himself.

However there is a verse in the Bible that promotes the idea that we don't really die. That verse would be none other than Genesis 3:4.

Genesis 3:4 "The serpent said to the woman, "**You surely will not die!**"

Of course even the casual reader of Scripture knows that this was THE grand lie that brought death and ruin to us all. Yet those that believe that humanity has an immortal part that continues living on past death fail to recognize the horrible irony of this. Those who believe that man is already immortal and goes off to live in another state of existence at death, at the core of what that means, are aligning themselves with the grand, original lie of the serpent over the simple truth that God presented that we do surely die and return to the dust! Common sense should expose this fact. Common sense should allow us to see that the immortality of the soul is Satan's great deception. The deception that Eve bought into and mankind has bought into ever since that day!

Usage of the Sleep Metaphor

I've been to several funerals the last few years where I have heard the preachers often say that the deceased is now "more alive than ever" up in heaven. Yet this runs counter to the most consistent description used in The Bible in reference to the dead. A description that isn't something that means energized and alert, but the exact opposite with the word "sleep". Of course this is a metaphor (something used, or regarded as being used, to represent something else) to describe the death. This metaphor is repeatedly used throughout many of the Old Testament books.

In Deuteronomy 31:16, Moses was told by God before his death "**thou shalt sleep with thy fathers..**" (KJV).

First and Second Kings and Second Chronicles repeatedly tell (over 30 times) of king after king that upon dying "**slept with their fathers**" (1 Kings 2:10, 11:43, 14:31, 15:8, 15:24, 16:6, 16:28, 22:40, 22:50 2 Kings 8:24, 10:35, 13:9, 13:13, 14:16, 14:22, 14:29, 15:7, 15:22, 15:38, 16:20, 20:21, 21:18, 24:6, 2 Chron 9:31, 12:16, 14:1, 16:13, 21:21, 26:2, 26:23, 27:9, 28:27, 32:33, 33:20).

Job wrote that if he had died at birth he would "*have lain down and been quiet; I would have slept then, I would have been at rest*" (Job 3:11-13). The he used it with startling clarity when he said "**man lies down and does not rise. Until the heavens be no more, He will not AWAKE nor be aroused out of his SLEEP**" (Job 14:12).

King David wrote in "*Consider and answer me, O LORD, my God; Enlighten my eyes, lest I **sleep the sleep of death,***" (Psalm 13:3).

Daniel wrote "And many of those who **sleep** in the dust of the ground will **awake**, these to everlasting life, but the others to disgrace and everlasting contempt" (Dan 12:2)

Later in the New Testament we also have numerous examples of sleep being used for death.

Jesus sad the daughter of the synagogue official was only sleeping:

- "*He said, "Leave; for the girl has not died, but is **asleep**."* (Matt 9:24),
- "*And entering in, He said to them, "Why make a commotion and weep? The child has not died, but is **asleep**."* (Mark 5:39)
- "*Now they were all weeping and lamenting for her; but He said, "Stop weeping, for she has not died, but is **asleep**."*

Jesus specifically uses the sleep metaphor when talking about the death of Lazarus. In the story we learn that Jesus was ready to head back to Judea and told his disciples "**Our Friend Lazarus has fallen asleep; but I go, that I may awaken him out of sleep**" (John 11:11). The disciples must have heard the message that Jesus received "**Lord, behold, he whom you love is sick.**" (John 11:3) because they naturally thought that sleep would do a sick man some good since they replied "**Lord if he has fallen asleep, he will recover.**" However like many people today, the disciples were not fully grasping that Jesus was using the Biblical "sleep metaphor" in describing death. So Jesus had to spell it out for them by plainly saying "**Lazarus is dead.**" (John 11:14).

At Jesus' crucifixion, Matthew writes "*The tombs were opened, and many bodies of the saints **who had fallen asleep** were raised;*" (Matt 27:52).

Luke records Paul's speech about Jesus' resurrection in Acts 13 where he said that King David "*after he had served the purpose of God in his own generation, **fell asleep**, and was laid among his fathers and underwent decay*" (Acts 13:36).

Paul used the sleep metaphor many times in his own writings. In the great resurrection chapters of 1 Corinthians 15 and 1 Thessalonians 4, Paul uses it repeatedly in referring to dead followers of Jesus:

1 Cor. 15:6 "After that He appeared to more than five hundred brethren at one time, most of whom remain until now, but some have fallen **asleep**".

1 Cor 15:18 "Then those also who have fallen **asleep** in Christ have perished."

1 Cor 15:20 "But now Christ has been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who are **asleep**."

1 Cor 15:52 "Behold, I tell you a mystery; we will not all **sleep**, but we will all be changed"

1 Thes 4:13-15 "But we do not want you to be uninformed, brethren, about those who are **asleep**, so that you will not grieve as do the rest who have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who have fallen **asleep** in Jesus. For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord, will not precede those who have fallen **asleep**."

Generally the reason for metaphor is to construct an analogy between two things, to have one help understand the other. A good metaphor is one that is easy to recognize and understand. Certainly sleep is easy for all people to understand. Every single person on earth knows what it means because they have experienced it first hand. Sleeping is universal. We lay down, drift off into unconsciousness and then regain consciousness and wake up sometime later. Yet when we're in deep, sound sleep we have no knowledge of the passing of time. Without a time keeping device or seeing some indication from the world around us, it is hard to know just how long has passed since we dozed off. Did we nod off for a few minutes or several hours?

So if death is compared to sleep in Scripture common sense should tell us that we're not active and we're not aware of anything happening while we are asleep. It would be ridiculous to say a person is "more awake than ever" while they are asleep. When we sleep we are unconscious and not thinking, planning, or praising God - all things the bible tells us that the dead do not do.

Psalm 6:4-5 "Return, O LORD, rescue my soul; Save me because of Your lovingkindness. **For there is no mention of You in death;** In Sheol who will give You thanks?"

Psalm 115:17 "The **dead do not praise the LORD**, Nor do any **who go down into silence**;"

Psalm 146:4 "His breath goeth forth, he returneth to his earth; **in that very day his thoughts perish.**"

Ecc 9:5-6, "For the living know they will die; but **the dead do not know anything**, nor have they any longer a reward, for their memory is forgotten. Indeed **their love, their hate and their zeal have already perished**, and they will no longer have a share in all that is done under the sun." 10 Whatever your hand finds to do, do *it* with *all* your might; **for there is no activity or planning or knowledge or wisdom in Sheol where you are going.**"

Defenders of the immortality of the soul who say that a person's body "sleeps" in the grave while their "soul" continues on living defy the plain, common sense truth of these Scriptures. Besides, for the metaphor to make any sense, it must have a similar meaning as it does in reality. And in reality when we're asleep, we're not balancing our checkbook or figuring out solutions to our problems of the day/week. No, when we're asleep we are "off" until we wake from our sleep. Death is the same. We are "off" until Jesus returns and awakens us at the Resurrection of The Dead!

An Enemy

The Apostle Paul in 1 Corinthians 15:26 says: "*The last enemy that will be abolished is death.*" Now everyone knows what an enemy is. It is someone or something that harms or opposes us. However the typical sentiment one hears at a mainstream Christian funeral is that death has taken the deceased to a "better place". And there's other variants like "God has called so and so home", or "The Lord needed another member of heaven". But does anyone stop and think about what this actually means? Such ideas mean that death isn't so bad. Death would be like an old friend that gives us a ride home.

But this doesn't fit with what we know about an enemy, much less about death itself.

THE Resurrection of the Dead

In all my years, I've never had anyone give me a satisfactory, common sense based answer to the following question - "If at death everyone is sent off to Heaven if we're good/saved or Hell if we're bad/unsaved, then why is Jesus coming back to resurrect the dead? No one has been able to provide a reason I could buy into. What is the resurrection of the dead for, if everyone has already received their reward or punishment? Further more, why is there going to be a judgment day? Isn't everyone already instantly judged at death? And they would have to be in order to get sent to the appropriate place! So it makes no sense to have ANOTHER judgement. Even our flawed court system here in the United States doesn't try people twice of the same offense (known as "Double Jeopardy"). Why would God bring people out of Heaven or Hell to do this? It makes no sense!

Now I have often had people tell me that The Resurrection is to reunite the body with the soul. But that still doesn't properly address the question because it still fails to make sense. If our bodies are just temporary and corrupt containers for our immortal true self (in good Greek philosophical thinking), then why bother resurrecting it? When you get right down to it, if the real us has been rewarded or punished at death, we really don't need our body. A later resurrection is truly inconsequential.

Even worse is that in a real and practical way, the dead really have no need of Jesus' return. Again if judgment (and through it an eternal place of residence) is applied to everyone at death, then a Second Advent of Christ is just an afterthought. The central focus is removed from the grand day of Jesus' return to bring all the dead back to life, to each person's own death. The tragic loss here is put in a unique way by Bishop NT Wright:

"The traditional picture of people going to either heaven or hell as a one-stage, postmortem journey represents a serious distortion and diminution of the Christian hope. Bodily resurrection is not just one odd bit of that hope. It is the element that gives shape and meaning to the rest of the story of God's ultimate purposes. If we squeeze it to the margins, as many have done by implication, or indeed, if we leave it out altogether, as some have done quite explicitly, we don't just lose an extra feature, like buying a car that happens not to have electrically operated mirrors. We lose the central engine, which drives it and gives every other component its reason for working."³

The Resurrection of the Dead is THE central and hope-inspiring climatic event of the New Testament and by and large the Old Testament as well. If we go back and look the Bible has spoken of bodily resurrection all the way through. Abraham was said to have believed that God could resurrect Isaac hence his trust in following God's instructions to sacrifice him (Heb 11:19). Job wrote that

³ N.T. Wright - "Heaven is Not Our Home", Christianity Today March 2008

3. THE Devil

I grew up in the Advent Christian faith of my father and grandfather and as such, I was taught (though not that explicitly - more matter of fact) that Satan or The Devil was a fallen angel that rebelled against and continues to oppose God. In other words, he was a mighty supernatural bad guy. Him being real and in literal existence was something that I just accepted as the way things were. Plus the world at large depicted "The Devil" as the embodiment of evil (though often humorously in literature, television and the movies) and of course the Bible spoke of The Devil, Satan, The Serpent, etc., so it all seemed to match up.

However in my college years I began to question this view. In the beginning I'm not sure I was really ever exposed to proper counter teachings from any particular Christian group or denomination(s) (e.g. The Christadelphians) that started me down that path. Perhaps it was just my studies in college, a movie or two I saw, or even some discussions with other church friends on the subject. But never-the-less I began to think that man himself was plenty capable of being evil, without needing a supernatural "bad-guy" around to push humanity into greater evil behavior. Eventually I threw the "baby out with the bath water" when I understood that the commonly accepted verses used to show the Devil's origins in Isaiah 14 and Ezekiel 28 actually concerned the human King of Babylon and Prince of Tyre. These developing thoughts along with other arguments presented by Christadelphians (and those of like mind) brought me to earnestly believe that there was no real Devil. I totally bought into the idea that it was just mankind's sinful nature that brought evil upon himself, his fellow man, and the world at large as a result.

I must say to embrace the belief in a non-literal Devil was quite a release. It was very freeing for me to think that I didn't have to worry about any kind of "boogieman" or evil supernatural forces out there. Movies like "The Exorcist" and other Devil/Demon related horror movies suddenly seemed silly. The whole concept of the power of evil as a force lost its power and effect on me. I even felt as if I could thumb my nose at the "ol" Devil because I believed he just wasn't real. Of course as anyone knows, just because you don't believe in something, does not mean that it does not actually exist. After all, that's certainly how we theists might respond to an atheist.

During this time of not believing The Devil existed, I still had issues with certain passages of Scripture. I wasn't really comfortable with viewing Jesus as having those "in-person" conversations all by himself out there in the desert. And I just couldn't understand why God would use the power of language in such a bad way. Why would He indicate the The Devil was a "he" and talked and did other things that makes no sense if it was simply the evil inclination of man. Why would God refer to disease and mental illness as "demons" when there were better words available and actually used in Scripture. It almost seemed liked misinformation. Further more, I was at a loss to explain away the immense problems with the world throughout history that human behavior - no matter how sinful & evil, could explain. And the more I examined it all (admittedly not as much as as I should have during my 20's & 30's), the more it just did not seem like it fit with all the evidence. It began to gnaw at me. A line from the 1992 movie "The Usual Suspects" (which was originally came from an old literary quote) that goes "*The greatest trick The Devil ever pulled, was convincing the world he didn't exist.*" really stuck with me. If Satan was real, there would be a great strategic benefit in getting people to think he was only imaginary. After all, camouflage and subterfuge have been central tenets of warfare for eons. Was I being tricked? Had I fallen prey to the hoax of a great con? I eventually decided that I needed to study the Scriptures more to examine closely if The Devil really was there in the details. I needed to see if I might haven been wrong.

After further study and listening to the evidence provided by others, while finally realizing that I had somehow not used the one thing I prided myself in having - healthy common sense, I recognized that I had been duped. I had come to the conclusion that those nagging feelings I had all along were justified and that I was wrong to accept the non-literal Devil theory. Even though comforting on the surface, the real truth (as I now believe it to be, is actually more satisfying since it fits in with the whole of Scripture, history, and of course - common sense.

So what does one find about Satan/The Devil when studying Scripture? I believe we find a clear, common

sense presentation that he exists and is a real, supernatural being.

Job's supernatural abuse

The first direct mention and detailed account of Satan is provided in the book of Job. Here we find several interesting details that we should pay attention to. Beginning in chapter one we have the following account:

Job 6-12 "Now there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the LORD, and Satan also came among them. The LORD said to Satan, "From where do you come?" Then Satan answered the LORD and said, "From roaming about on the earth and walking around on it." The LORD said to Satan, "Have you considered My servant Job? For there is no one like him on the earth, a blameless and upright man, fearing God and turning away from evil." Then Satan answered the LORD, "Does Job fear God for nothing? "Have You not made a hedge about him and his house and all that he has, on every side? You have blessed the work of his hands, and his possessions have increased in the land. "But put forth Your hand now and touch all that he has; he will surely curse You to Your face." Then the LORD said to Satan, "Behold, all that he has is in your power, only do not put forth your hand on him." So Satan departed from the presence of the LORD.

Right away we see that Satan is a literal being that God has a conversation with. Though the text does not say that Satan is a current or former "sons of God" he does come along with them. If Satan were only a human, why is he directly associating with angels coming before God Himself? One should also clue in to the fact that this entity tells God that he has been "roaming about the earth and walking around on it". These actions are ones of a literal being.

Later in verses 13-19 we learn the devastating attack that Satan places of Job's family and possessions. Bandits come and steal Job's oxen and camels and kill his servants. Then Satan causes fire to fall from the sky to destroy his flocks of sheep and a tornado to kill Job's sons and daughters in the house where they had gathered. Then in the next chapter, Satan inflicts Job with painful sores literally from head to toe!

Sin as an inclination can't do things like this. Human beings can't call fire from the sky or bring a tornado to take out a house like a modern military smart bomb. No matter how evil, no man can cause another man to break out in boils! No. Anyone with basic common sense can see that this was the work of a supernatural adversary.

Jesus' temptation

The temptation of Jesus was THE single biggest factor that brought me back around to the belief that the devil was a real, literal being. Once I saw the preponderance of the evidence (as I hope to somewhat provide to you today), and I regained my God-given common sense, I recognized that I was wrong to believe he didn't exist. What was it about the temptation event that troubled me so and made me re-examine everything? The bottom line was that Jesus is talking and interacting with someone. And Scripture calls that someone Satan and that Satan said and did some things that one's internal sin nature or even an external human could not have done.

First Satan comes up to Jesus and then departs from him. This does not fit with something that came from within Jesus. Then we have the whole recorded conversation. If this is Jesus talking to himself, then the whole temptation is just going on inside his head and we have portrait of Jesus acting quite unbalanced. Not to mention that if this was just a delusion recorded in the Bible, and since it is portrayed as an actual event, how do we know what is part of the delusion and what is not? Where does it stop? Where the angels that came up to him after the temptation also part of the delusion too? Was the whole thing one big hallucination?

If the person who came up to Jesus was a literal, external other human being, then who is it? Why wasn't the person named? And how could this other human have transported himself and Jesus all the way from the wilderness to the temple in Jerusalem then to a very high mountain? How did he show Jesus ALL the kingdoms of the world in an instant? If he were some other real human being, how could he say *"I will give You all this domain and its glory; for it has been handed over to me, and I give it to whomever I wish."* Who had authority such as that?

More critically, if the whole temptation that is recorded as an external being interacting and talking with Jesus is not one at all, then the story is profoundly misleading. If the devil here is just our internal inclination to sin, why isn't the event described as such. Why are we lead down not just a confusing path, but one that misrepresents the true facts?

No the only logical conclusion here is that this event is just what is being described. The devil, the "god of this world", as a supernatural entity, is the only option that fits the evidence presented. It is the only option that makes sense!

Personal Pronouns & Definitive Article

One of the great arguments against the Trinity is that throughout Scripture (over some 6800 times), God is referenced with singular verbs and pronouns. Common sense and the rules of language should tell us that if God consisted of three persons in one God, there would be plural verbs and pronouns instead of singular ones. Personal pronouns also tell us that God is a real, personal entity. We know this from the usage of those personal pronouns. Consequently the same should apply when the Bible mentions Satan as a "he". To refer to sin nature as a he over and over again throughout Scripture runs counter to the logical, proper use of grammar. Non-personal entities should be referred to as an "it", not a "he"!

Matt 12:26 "If Satan casts out Satan, **he** is divided against **himself**; how then will **his** kingdom stand?"

Mark 3:26 "If Satan has risen up against **himself** and is divided, **he** cannot stand, but he is finished!"

Luke 4:5 "And **he** led Him up and showed Him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time"

Luke 4:6 "And **the devil** said to Him, "I will give You all this domain and its glory; for it has been handed over to **me**, and I give it to whomever I wish."

Luke 4:9 "And **he** led Him to Jerusalem and had Him stand on the pinnacle of the temple, and said to Him, "If You are the Son of God, throw Yourself down from here"

Luke 4:13 "When **the devil** had finished every temptation, **he** left Him until an opportune time."

John 8:44 " You are of your **father the devil**, and you want to do the desires of your **father He** was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth because there is no truth in **him** Whenever **he** speaks a lie, **he** speaks from **his** own nature, for **he** is a liar and the **father** of lies."

2 Timothy 2:26 "and they may come to their senses and escape from the snare of **the devil**, having been held captive by **him** to do **his** will."

Hebrews 2:14 "Therefore, since the children share in flesh and blood, He Himself likewise also partook of the same, that through death He might render powerless **him** who had the power of death, that is, **the devil**,"

Rev 12:9 "And the great dragon was thrown down, the serpent of old who is called the devil and Satan, who deceives the whole world; **he** was thrown down to the earth, and **his** angels were thrown down with **him**."

The rules of language along with an everyday common sense application of them allow us to see that usage of the definite article "**the**" produces meaning that is not there when left out. For example if I said that "Children are bad", you might think I didn't like kids. But if I said "The children are bad", you would probably figure that I was referring to a specific group of kids that may very well be exemplifying inappropriate behavior. Sir Anthony Buzzard points out how this is apparent in Scripture when referring to THE Devil.

"When Matthew introduces the terms Kingdom of God and Kingdom of Heaven, he assumes that his readers are familiar with these phrases. When he introduces *the* Devil (Matt. 4:11), having already called him *the* Tempter (v. 2), he uses a title well recognized by his readers. He nowhere speaks of a tempter or *an* accuser. If we realize the importance of the definite article here our subject can be clarified without further difficulty. The celebrated New Testament Greek authority, Dr. A.T.

Robertson, states: "*The definite article is never meaningless in the Greek...The article is associated with gesture and aids in pointing out like an index finger...Wherever the article occurs, the object is certainly definite*" (*Grammar of Greek New Testament*, p.756). Thus a savior may be one of many saviors. *The Savior* means the one and only Savior. An "ecclesia" is an assembly of people gathered for many different reasons (Acts 19:32, 39, 41). But no one would consider confusing this with *the Church*. Similarly, the Satan, the Devil, the Tempter is that well-known Satan not requiring definition, because the writer knows that his readers understand who is meant. Will anyone deny that a book carries a very different meaning from *the book*?"⁴

The Bible uses the definite article many times and clues us into the fact we're dealing with the same well known external entity. Below are 31 mentions of "the devil" in the New Testament and all refer to a known, definite, entity.

Matt 4:1 "Then Jesus was led by the Spirit into the desert to be tempted by **the devil**."

Matt 4:5 "Then **the devil** took him to the holy city and had him stand on the highest point of the temple"

Matthew 4:8 "Again, **the devil** took Him to a very high mountain and showed Him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory;

Matthew 4:11 "Then **the devil** left Him; and behold, angels came and began to minister to Him."

Matthew 13:39 "and the enemy who sowed them is **the devil**, and the harvest is the end of the age; and the reapers are angels.

Matthew 25:41 "Then He will also say to those on His left, ' Depart from Me, accursed ones, into the eternal fire which has been prepared for **the devil** and **his angels**;

Luke 4:2 "for forty days, being tempted by **the devil**. And He ate nothing during those days, and when they had ended, He became hungry."

Luke 4:3 "And **the devil** said to Him, "If You are the Son of God, tell this stone to become bread.""

Luke 4:6 "And **the devil** said to Him, "I will give You all this domain and its glory; for it has been handed over to **me**, and I give it to whomever I wish."

Luke 4:13 "When **the devil** had finished every temptation, **he** left Him until an opportune time."

Luke 8:12 ""Those beside the road are those who have heard; then **the devil** comes and takes away the word from their heart, so that they will not believe and be saved."

John 8:44 " You are of your **father the devil**, and you want to do the desires of your **father He** was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth because there is no truth in **him** Whenever **he** speaks a lie, **he** speaks from **his** own nature, for **he** is a liar and the **father** of lies."

John 13:2

During supper, **the devil** having already put into the heart of Judas Iscariot, the son of Simon, to betray Him,

Acts 10:38

"You know of Jesus of Nazareth, how God anointed Him with the Holy Spirit and with power, and how He went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by **the devil**, for God was with Him.

Acts 13:10

and said, "You who are full of all deceit and fraud, you son of **the devil**, you enemy of all righteousness, will you not cease to make crooked the straight ways of the Lord?"

⁴ Anthony Buzzard - "Satan, The Personal Devil", a Restoration Fellowship/focusonthekingdom.org article

Ephesians 4:27 “and do not give **the devil** an opportunity.”

Ephesians 6:11 “Put on the full armor of God, so that you will be able to stand firm against the schemes of **the devil**.”

1 Timothy 3:6 “and not a new convert, so that he will not become conceited and fall into the condemnation incurred by **the devil**.”

1 Timothy 3:7 “And he must have a good reputation with those outside the church, so that he will not fall into reproach and the snare of **the devil**.”

2 Timothy 2:26 “and they may come to their senses and escape from the snare of **the devil**, having been held captive by **him** to do **his** will.”

Hebrews 2:14 “Therefore, since the children share in flesh and blood, He Himself likewise also partook of the same, that through death He might render powerless **him** who had the power of death, that is, **the devil**,”

James 4:7 “Submit therefore to God Resist **the devil** and **he** will flee from you.”

1 Peter 5:8 “Be of sober spirit, be on the alert Your adversary, **the devil**, prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour.”

1 John 3:8 “the one who practices sin is of the devil; for **the devil** has sinned from the beginning The Son of God appeared for this purpose, to destroy the works of **the devil**.”

1 John 3:10 “By this the children of God and the children of **the devil** are obvious: anyone who does not practice righteousness is not of God, nor the one who does not love his brother.”

Jude 1:9 “But Michael the archangel, when he disputed with **the devil** and argued about the body of Moses, did not dare pronounce against him a railing judgment, but said, “ The Lord rebuke you!””

Revelation 2:10 “Do not fear what you are about to suffer. Behold, **the devil** is about to cast some of you into prison, so that you will be tested, and you will have tribulation for ten days Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life.”

Revelation 12:9 “And the great dragon was thrown down, **the serpent** of old who is called **the devil** and **Satan**, who deceives the whole world; he was thrown down to the earth, and his angels were thrown down with him.

Revelation 12:12 ““For this reason, rejoice, O heavens and you who dwell in them Woe to the earth and the sea, because **the devil** has come down to you, having great wrath, knowing that **he** has only a short time.””

Revelation 20:2 “And he laid hold of the dragon, **the serpent** of old, who is **the devil** and **Satan**, and bound him for a thousand years;

Revelation 20:10 “And **the devil** who deceived them was thrown into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are also; and **they** will be tormented day and night forever and ever.

Evil acting against us?

If Satan/The Devil is just the evil side of humanity, then why is it portrayed throughout Scripture as something that acts so maliciously - especially towards its supposed host? What I mean is that if sin is disobeying God, and this is a counter productive internal side of ourselves, then why does Scripture show that it is out to get us in such hateful and vicious ways? For example, the devil tempts, the devil lies, the devil destroys, the devil murders, the devil schemes, the devil deceives (the whole world), the devil casts, the devil snares,

the devil captivates, the devil snatches, the devil desires (Peter to sift him like wheat), the devil looks for an opportunity, the devil knows Scripture, the devil has the power of death, and the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for people to devour! These are actions that Scripture portrays as coming from outside of us, not from within.

How does sin nature or other human tempters know that their time is short and as such has great wrath towards us?

Revelation 12:12 "For this reason, rejoice, O heavens and you who dwell in them Woe to the earth and the sea, because **the devil** has come down to you, **having great wrath, knowing** that **he** has only a short time."

How did impersonal sin nature or any other human tempter argue with the archangel Michael over the body of Moses?

Jude 1:9 "But Michael the archangel, when he disputed with **the devil** and argued about the body of Moses, did not dare pronounce against him a railing judgment, but said, " The Lord rebuke you!"

And why does Scripture portray an impersonal thing as being "tormented day and night forever and ever"?

Revelation 20:10 "And **the devil** who deceived them was thrown into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are also; and **they** will be tormented day and night forever and ever.

Kingdom & Angels

Another aspect of the biblical picture of Satan that just doesn't make sense with non-personality evil or general human adversaries is that fact that Scripture tells us that Satan has a kingdom and that he has his own angels.

Jesus himself explains that Satan has his own kingdom when the Pharisees accused him of being the demons ruler - Beelzebub.

Matt 12:25-26 "And knowing their thoughts Jesus said to them, "Any kingdom divided against itself is laid waste; and any city or house divided against itself will not stand. "If Satan casts out Satan, he is divided against himself; how then will **his kingdom** stand?" (See parallels in Mark 3:26 and Luke 11:18).

Luke 11:18 "If Satan also is divided against himself, how will **his kingdom** stand? For you say that I cast out demons by Beelzebul. "

Jesus said that Satan has his own angels!

Matthew 25:41 "Then He will also say to those on His left, ' Depart from Me, accursed ones, into the eternal fire which has been prepared for **the devil** and **his angels**;

Later and under Jesus' direction, John mentioned the same fact in Revelation!

Rev 12:9 "And the great dragon was thrown down, the serpent of old who is called the devil and Satan, who deceives the whole world; he was thrown down to the earth, and **his angels** were thrown down with him"

Scripture doesn't mislead us

If truth sets us free, and the Devil is not a real, supernatural entity, then why then does the Bible present him in such vivid ways that lead us to think that is the case? Why would it paint a picture of an external force that viciously seeks our destruction if it is just our own sinful nature? For Scripture to posit such elaborate details for something that could clearly be explained in better, more productive ways fosters no real faith in all its other parts. How can we trust we are being told the way things really are if the devil is just us and demons are mental illnesses? I would argue that we can't. It creates a slippery slope to doubting the entirety of God's word and even God himself.

Thankfully we don't have to doubt the Bible. Satan is real just as Scripture indicates. Any other explanation

runs counter to the presentation of Scripture. Again our friend Anthony Buzzard point this out in such an eloquent way:

“The view of the Satan as a personification of human nature is a theory imposed upon Scripture. It represents a serious misreading of the Bible which cannot be sustained by sound exegesis. Those who hold such a belief must consider, as we all must, the remark of James that all teachers of the Bible carry a heavy responsibility for teaching the Truth, and may be found guilty of leading others astray. Worst of all, a vagueness or error in understanding the Satan, who has a dozen or more titles in Scripture^[3] (and must therefore be a personality of some importance), may lead to others losing confidence in one’s ability as a teacher of the Bible. They will then be deterred from accepting the real Truths which are offered to them. Until the important matter of Satan and the demons is properly explained, according to the Scripture, there is little hope of a group being counted worthy of the task of bringing to the world the whole counsel of God. We must beware of putting a barrier between us and others who are unable to see how we can fail to understand a matter as straightforward as the existence of the personal Satan.”⁵

The biblical record is straightforward and easy to understand if we just open our eyes to it. If we do so, we can see how he his supernatural actions are something no human is capable of. We can see from the plain, ordinary rules of grammar that he is a personal, specific entity. We saw him interact and tempt Jesus the second/last Adam just as the first was tempted. We see that he actively purses us and wishes to harm us. We see that although he has a kingdom and angels of his own, his time is short and one day when Christ returns and establishes the Kingdom of God on earth, this old Serpent, this old Satan will be bound for 1000 years and then ultimately consumed by fire to never effect our universe again. A day that can not come soon enough!

Summation - Common Sense is vital!

Since the Apostles died off, Greek philosophical thinking overrode proper biblical Hebrew thinking and paved the road to error regarding the deification of Jesus and the immortal soul belief. The Age of Enlightenment along with more the modern movements of materialism, rationalism, and skepticism have make people question the existence of Satan, the Bible, and God Himself. But for those of us who believe that God exists, that He is the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, the Almighty Yahweh who reveals Himself and His plan for mankind within the pages of His Holy Scriptures, we treasure the truth presented in the pages of His written word. From there, we can see through the first lie of “You shall surely not die”. We can see through the lie that Jesus is literally God instead of God’s Anointed son and supreme agent. And we can see through the more modern lie that tells us “the devil doesn’t exist”. But we can only see through these deceptions if we carefully study our Bibles, while utilizing one of God’s great gifts to mankind - yes, our ability to use common sense!

⁵ Anthony Buzzard - “Satan, The Personal Devil”, a Restoration Fellowship/focusonthekingdom.org article