

Kenmore Baptist Church Message Outline 16/9/2012 AM/PM (LOGOS)  
DIABLO: An Examination of Evil<sup>1</sup>

## Medi-Evil

At this year's *Festival of Dangerous Ideas*, Bishop Julian Porteous will take the platform with atheists and anarchists to present his deadly proposition: *"The Devil is Real."*

The devil: you know, Satan (the adversary), Lucifer (the deceptive light bearer)—yes, *Diabolo* (our opponent from of old).

How does this strike you? ... Sensible? Stupid? Or Superstitious?

In an age of medical science and NASA sending probes to Mars, we prefer material explanations. Such perspectives appear positively *medi-evil*. As New Age Guru Deepak Chopra puts it, "Healthy people don't need the devil."

Let's widen the lens beyond Satan. Is it rational to believe there is such a thing as 'evil'?

In 1900, Professors like Paul Carus believed that as science rose, superstition would fall. Yet in the new millennium—after two world wars, political regimes, terrorism, GFC, mass shootings and more—we struggle to find any word more apt than 'evil'.

If your worldview isn't closed-minded to the supernatural, then maybe there are good reasons to believe an evil force is at work in the world today.

Regardless of your attitude, if you flick through the Bible, the Devil *is* in the details. In 1 John we're told, "the whole world is under the sway of the evil one" (5:19). Indeed, "The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the devil's work" (3:8).

That's why today Logos is looking at *Diablo: An Examination of Evil*. What is evil? Does Satan exist? And what does all this mean for a broken world like ours?

### Q1. THE LOGIC OF EVIL: Brace Blackshaw responds ...

**In the modern world, is belief in supernatural evil a superstition, or is it rational?**

- ✚ Science explains the natural world using natural causes. Science is, however, limited when examining immaterial things such as emotions, love, and our minds
- ✚ Spiritual forces are immaterial, and therefore science can't rule them out
- ✚ Twisted events like the Holocaust suggest that evil is real
- ✚ Evil is not a *thing*—it is the act of misusing the good things given to us by God
- ✚ If God had made a world without evil, he would have had to remove free will, and our ability to choose to love him
- ✚ Irreducible to matter, evil appears to have a supernatural element, which indirectly points to God as the standard of good



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<sup>1</sup> For full notes, fact sheets, and a small group discussion guide, visit <http://logos.kbc.org.au/blog/resources/logos-talks/diablo-an-examination-of-evil/>

## Q2. THE PSYCHOLOGY OF EVIL *Tammy White responds ...*

- ✚ Psychology has long sought to explain evil through many streams including Forensic, Clinical and Social Psychology
- ✚ Fresh from the atrocities of WWII, a famous social experiment was conducted by Stanley Milgram in 1961 to try and explain why such events occurred
- ✚ He designed a study where participants had to give increasingly strong electric shocks to a stranger in another room. He found that one third of all participants were willing to administer a fatal electric shock to a complete stranger
- ✚ While Milgram argued that this was due to obedience, he also found what history has taught us: that people are prepared to inflict evil on each other even when they know it is wrong
- ✚ Knowledge of evil does not stop us doing evil acts. This study, therefore, powerfully demonstrates that we all have the capacity for evil. The question then shifts from being a philosophical one of whether evil exists in this world, to a theological debate as to the cause of this evil

## Q3. THEOLOGY OF SATAN: *Dave White responds ...*

Beyond humans behaving badly, when you say 'evil' many of us think 'the Devil'. What does the Bible say about who Satan is, and his role in the evil around us?

- ✚ Based on Isaiah 14:13-15, Ezekiel 28:11-19 and Revelation 12:7-9, the traditional—though contested—theory is that Satan is a fallen angel, formerly named Lucifer, or the 'Light bearer' (2 Corinthians 11:14). Old Testament metaphorical language about an earthly king morphs into a cosmic description of rebellion, perhaps an analogy for Satan's fall
- ✚ Satan has *Intellect* and the capacity to *Reason* (2 Corinthians 2:11; 11:3), *Memory* (Matthew 4:1-11) and *Emotion* (Luke 22:31). But unlike God, Satan has some clear limitations; he is not all knowing, all powerful or present everywhere
- ✚ Satan is *not* God's arch nemesis. He *is* a created being in rebellion against God, whose intention is to interfere with God's purposes for having a relationship with humanity. He deceives Adam and Eve (Genesis 3), inflicts and incites Job to reject God, tempts Jesus in the wilderness (Luke 4), and draws us away also (Ephesians 6:11)
- ✚ We also see from Scripture that Satan tries to use our failings against us. Like a loan shark he uses our disobedience to God as a debt that we owe God which we cannot repay—it's leverage over us. This is a direct attack by Satan to undo Jesus' primary purpose of reconciling us with God by taking our punishment through dying for us
- ✚ "Why hasn't God destroyed Satan if he is so evil and his purpose is to undermine God's work?" Satan has God-given free will, and God does not instantly destroy something because it rebels against him. God has clearly appointed a time for judging the decisions of his creation. Satan, like us will be held accountable for his decisions and at that time will no longer be able to act against God (Revelation 20:7-10)

#### Q4. DEMONIC OPPRESSION: Dave White continues ...

Hollywood is fixated on exorcism. It even spills into Aussie documentaries like John Safran vs. God. As a doc tor and a Christian, what do you make of this?

- ✚ Beyond Hollywood's melodrama, the effect demons have is rarely/never so extreme
- ✚ Christians believe in supernatural beings: God, Satan, angels, and also fallen angels or demons. We are not merely physical beings; we have a spirit, and this gives us the capacity to interact with and be affected by other spiritual beings. What is prayer, after all, but an exertion of spiritual force? *Demonization* is evil spirits impacting us
- ✚ Jesus deals with evil spirits multiple times in the Bible and from these accounts we see there is a diversity in the presentation of demonic influence (Mark 5:1-20; 6:7, 12-13; 9:14-29; Luke 9:1-2; 11:14-26; 13:32)

#### **But what about mislabelling mental illness as demonic possession?**

- ✚ The Bible makes a distinction between mental/physical illness and spiritual problems (e.g. 1 Samuel 21:13). Jesus did not label every illness as being caused by a demon but made a distinction between physical and spiritual problems (e.g. John 9:1-7)
- ✚ It is advisable to first eliminate natural explanations and treatments, but there are psychiatric and medical professionals who publicly advocate that the use of spiritual tools can have a real and measurable effect on people e.g. Galanter, Larson et al. *American Journal of Psychiatry* (1991) reported the Bible and prayer to be more effective than psychotropic medication or insight-based psychotherapy in the treatment of grief reactions, sociopathy and alcoholism
- ✚ KBC spiritual support as part of holistic care: counselling, prayer and deliverance; healing rooms; MOREH (*Ministry of Reconciliation and Emotional Healing*): [church@kbc.org.au](mailto:church@kbc.org.au)

#### Q5. SYSTEMIC EVIL: Bec Vallee responds ...

- ✚ Evil permeates into systems and structures that form the fabric of our society
- ✚ Whether it is government, local business, or a seemingly perfect family—all these can reflect a world where evil has corrupted our social structures
- ✚ Systems themselves *aren't* inherently evil. But, when polluted by our selfishness and pride, these social structures can become Satan's destructive tool. That's because *Satan is the prince of air working through those who practice disobedience* (Ephesians 2:2)
- ✚ No matter how greedy or selfish an institution becomes, it will never be outside the love of God. Where sin—our rebellion and selfishness—left us damaged and separated from God, Christ has left us restored. Beyond souls, he will also restore systems
- ✚ Colossians 2:15 reads: *And having disarmed the powers and authorities, Jesus made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them by the cross.* That is the foundation of Christian hope: Jesus disqualified Satan and his task masters
- ✚ *It's not okay for the Christian church to simply bandage the victims under the wheel, but we must jam a spoke in the wheel itself* (Dietrich Boenhoffer)



## Choose Your Side

What if evil is real? What if the devil exists? Does it make any difference today?

- ✚ Nikki's story: "In that one hour experience I became aware of three things: 1) a darkness like I had never known 2) That Jesus' name conquers, and 3) I was a part of it all whether I liked it or not." (cf. Mark 3:27; Ephesians 6:12)
- ✚ Deliverance is less a power encounter than a *truth encounter*: Jesus IS Lord
- ✚ We are *not* passive pawns. As rebels we must first surrender. In so doing, we can be free from whatever keeps us bound (John 8:34–36; Galatians 5:1)

If there is such a thing as evil, and if the devil really does exist, then this is no game. As C.S. Lewis said, "There is no neutral ground in the universe: every square inch, every split second, is claimed by God and counterclaimed by Satan."

Jesus said, "The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. But I, Jesus, have come that you may have life, and have life to the full" (John 10:10). This day, *choose life*.

### A Prayer of Response:

*God, this world is not the way it's supposed to be. I still see the good, but everything has been damaged by evil. And while I can blame someone else, or even Satan, for the way it is, I know that I'm part of the problem. My hands aren't clean. I've done wrong things and fall short of what you made me for. Please forgive me. Today, would you make me new and give me a fresh start? Jesus, thank you for paying for my sins, and freeing me from Satan's grip. Give me your Spirit so I can walk in freedom. And would you come soon to judge this world and set everything right. Thankyou that love won the cross, and evil will end when you return to rule. In Jesus' name, Amen.*

### Questions for Discussion

1. What impacted you most in this talk? Download the *manuscript and small group discussion guide* from <http://logos.kbc.org.au/blog/resources/logos-talks/diablo-an-examination-of-evil/> to jog your memory.
2. "The whole world is under the sway of the Evil One" (1 John 5:19). Is this how it seems to you? Why, or why not? And what *is* evil anyway?
3. What might you say to—or ask—a materialist who dismisses the super-natural realm?
4. Milgram demonstrates our common *capacity* for evil. What, then, is the *cause*?
5. Often Christians speak of God and Satan as yin and yang, light and dark, good and evil—co-eternal equals. Who is Satan, and where does this dualism get it wrong?
6. "Biblically, exorcism is less a power encounter, and more a truth encounter." Discuss.
7. How does Jesus' life and death deal with systemic evil in government, business, and family? Name one such evil, then discuss how we should live this side of the cross.
8. In response to seeing someone delivered, Nikki became aware of three things: "A darkness I had never known; that Jesus' name conquers; and I was a part of it whether I liked it or not." How have you responded to the existence of evil? Close in prayer.