

# I Made Me Do It

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In the 1970s, comedian Flip Wilson popularized the saying “The devil made me do it” by including it in his comedy routine. One of the characters that Wilson created was called Geraldine Jones who appears on the cover of his Grammy Award winning album entitled “The devil made me buy this dress.” Although many people enjoyed Wilson’s humor, the idea that someone else is responsible for the mistakes we make is appealing to our human nature because it deflects from our responsibilities by blaming someone else, or claiming that some situation beyond our control caused the problem.

We see this dynamic “alive and well” in politics because the majority of mistakes or omissions made by politicians are blamed on someone else, or the public is fed lies about some event that occurred that was beyond the control of the politicians.

To counter this strong human tendency, one of God’s Holy Days stresses the importance of taking personal responsibility for the mistakes we make, including sins that harm ourselves and those around us. In order to achieve this, the Day of Atonement includes “fasting” from evening to evening on the 10<sup>th</sup> day of the seventh month, according to God’s calendar. “Fasting” means going without food or water as the following section of scripture confirms,

*So the people of Nineveh believed God, **proclaimed a fast**, and put on sackcloth (symbolic of shame for one’s conduct), from the greatest to the least of them. <sup>6</sup>Then the word came to the king of Nineveh; and he arose from his throne and laid aside his robe, covered himself with sackcloth and sat in ashes*

*(humbled himself). <sup>7</sup>And he caused it to be proclaimed and published throughout Nineveh by the decree of the king and his nobles, saying, **“Let neither man nor beast, herd nor flock, taste anything; do not let them eat, or drink water”** (Jonah 3:5-7; cf. 1Samuel 7:6; Isaiah 58:5; Matthew 4:2; Acts 27:9; NKJV used throughout unless otherwise noted; emphasis added).*

In juxtaposition to the whole congregation going without food or fluids on the Day of Atonement, there was the banishment of a goat that represented a spirit being who lived “symbolically” in the desert, or barren region devoid of God’s abundant and fruitful blessings that are showered down upon those who are obedient to His word (cf. Leviticus 26:3-13). Therefore, the sins committed by this spirit-being are “symbolically” returned to him because they have produced nothing of benefit to mankind, and he is responsible for his part as “*an influencer of the people*”, or “*the prince of the power of the air*” who is the world’s specialist in lawless behavior (cf. Eph. 2:2),

*But the goat on which the lot fell for Azazel shall be presented alive before the Lord to make atonement (covering for sinful conduct) over it, that it may be **sent away into the wilderness to Azazel** (Leviticus 16:10; Ed. note in parenthesis; emphasis added; ESV).*

So, the Devil can make all the excuses he wants for his sinful conduct, but it does not change a thing because he will give an account to his Creator as all human beings have to sooner or later. The first consequence for his sins is death,

*For the wages of sin is death... (Romans 6:23a).*

*When the righteous turns from his righteousness and commits iniquity, he shall die because of it (Ezekiel 33:18).*

*"For behold, the day is coming, burning like an oven, and all the proud, yes, all who do wickedly will be stubble. And the day which is coming shall burn them up," says the Lord of hosts, "That will leave them neither root nor branch" (Malachi 4:1).*

*And the God of peace will crush Satan under your feet shortly... (Romans 16:20a cf. Isaiah 14:12-17).*

However, as God is not willing that anyone perish forever (cf. 2Peter 3:9b), the spirit being that used to serve and obey his Creator, before he rebelled, will come up in a resurrection of the dead at the end of Christ's one-thousand-year reign on earth. Then he will have a final opportunity to genuinely repent of his sins, and produce fruits that confirm his change of attitude,

*Again, when I say to the wicked, 'You shall surely die,' if he turns (repents) from his sin and does what is lawful and right, <sup>15</sup>if the wicked restores the pledge, gives back what he has stolen, and walks in the statutes of life without committing iniquity, he shall surely live; he shall not die. <sup>16</sup>None of his sins which he has committed shall be remembered against him; he has done what is lawful and right; he shall surely live (Ezekiel 33:14-16; Ed. note in parenthesis).*

If Satan were to repent in the future, it would be like the Azazel goat returning from the barren wilderness and rejoining the congregation, or family of God. A similar scenario is described in one of Christ's parables, which is often referred to as *"the prodigal son,"*

*The younger son journeyed to a far country and there wasted his possessions with prodigal living and he began to be in want. <sup>15</sup>Then he went and joined himself to a citizen of that country, and he sent him into his fields to feed swine. <sup>16</sup>And he would gladly have filled his stomach with the pods that the swine ate, but no one gave him anything. <sup>17</sup>But when he came to himself, he said, 'How many of my father's hired servants have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger! <sup>18</sup>I will arise and go to my father, and say to him, "Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you, <sup>19</sup>and I am no longer worthy to be called your son. Make me like one of your hired servants."<sup>20</sup>And he arose and came to his father. But when he was still a great way off, his father saw him and had compassion, and ran and fell on his neck and kissed him (Luke 15:13-20).*

Going back now to the original point of blaming someone, or something, other than ourselves when we do things that are sinful, we cannot claim that the Devil made us do it. Instead, we have to take personal responsibility and admit that we are ultimately to blame when we break God's law,

*But each one is tempted when he/she is drawn away by his/her own desires and enticed. <sup>15</sup>Then, when desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full grown, brings forth death (wage for sinful conduct) (James 1:14-15; cf. Romans 6:23a; Ed. note in parenthesis).*

There is a classic Biblical example of someone who had sinful desires that he did not deal with. Instead, he caved into them, and ended up committing a heinous crime against his own Teacher and Master (cf. John 13:13),

*Then one of his (Christ's) disciples, Judas Iscariot, Simon's son, who would betray him,*

said,<sup>5</sup> "Why was this fragrant oil not sold for three hundred denarii and given to the poor?"<sup>6</sup> This he said, not that he cared for the poor, but because **he was a thief, and had the money box; and he used to take what was put in it** (John 12:4-6; Ed. note in parenthesis).

So, Judas was drawn away by his desire for more wealth, even though he was treated the same as the other disciples and would not have been lacking the basic necessities of life. Therefore, his priority turned from serving Christ, to being concerned only about himself. Over time this attitude became entrenched to the point where he was prepared to betray his Master and Teacher if it provided some financial benefit. The final stage of this process gave birth to sin, which then led to the death of Christ who was innocent of any wrongdoing. As the following scriptures confirm, the Devil was eventually able to use Judas because he did not resist Satan's influence as he should have per James 4:7-10,

*When Jesus had said these things, he was troubled in spirit, and testified and said, "Most assuredly, I say to you, one of you will betray me"* (John 13:21).

*Jesus answered, "It is he to whom I shall give a piece of bread when I have dipped it." And having dipped the bread, he gave it to Judas Iscariot, the son of Simon. <sup>27</sup>Now **after the piece of bread, Satan entered him.** Then Jesus said to him, "What you do, do quickly."* (John 13:26; emphasis added).

Throughout his life, Judas would have observed the Day of Atonement, but he may not have understood that "fasting" was meant to stress how important it is to bring our thoughts and actions under control to avoid sinful conduct. This lesson was probably not lost on the

Apostle Paul who "fasted" on the Day of Atonement years after Christ's resurrection per Acts 27:9,

*But I discipline my body and bring it into subjection, lest, when I have preached to others, I myself should become disqualified* (1Corinthians 9:27).

When we sin, we have only ourselves to blame. If we believe we can hold someone else accountable for our behavior, we are deceived and will have to repent in order to inherit everlasting life. The Devil will have to answer for his sins as we will have to answer for ours,

*For it is written: "As I live, says the Lord, every knee shall bow to Me, and every tongue shall confess to God."<sup>12</sup> So then **each of us shall give account of himself to God** (Romans 14:11-12; emphasis added).*

So, the Devil cannot force anyone to commit sin, but he can influence those who have already decided to reject, ignore, or purposely break God's laws.

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