

God and His Ways

We want to study what happened when the first humans rebelled against God. This is the doctrine of sin. But first, let's examine evil.

One of the ever-present problems in Christian theology is the existence of evil. Evil first appears in the serpent in the Garden of Eden.

The quandary is this: if God is all powerful and all-knowing, why didn't He dispose of Satan from the beginning – or, better yet, never even created him? There is no answer to this question in Scripture. We know only that God creates beings with the responsibility to choose right. Some choose evil, but no sin goes unpunished or defeats God's purposes.

The Reality of Satan

The following passages contain superhuman references – veiled descriptions of Satan.

- Ezekiel 28:11-19 (Lamentation over the king of Tyre)
- Isaiah 14:12-17 (A taunting song against the king of Babylon)

Satan stood at the zenith of God's creatures, filled with wisdom and perfect in beauty. (Ezekiel 28:12)

As a cherub (Ezekiel 28:14), Satan had occupied a special place of prominence in guarding the throne of God (Exodus 25:20). Apparently Satan was the chief guardian of God's holiness and majesty.

By creation Satan was perfect; but pride was his downfall (1 Tim. 3:6; Isa.). Satan's position in God's government is terminated in Ezekiel 28:16, though he still had access to heaven (Job 1:6).

Satan's plan was to counterfeit the plan of God, detailed in the five "I will" phrases in Isaiah 14:13-14. He wished to occupy heaven, the abode of God himself. To exalt his throne above the stars of God may refer to his desire to rule all the angelic creatures, or it may mean he wished to rule in the heavens. In heathen literature, *north* indicated the abode of the gods; thus Satan was ambitious to govern the universe as the council (assembly) of Babylonian gods supposedly did. He wanted the glory that belonged to God alone, and his entire goal; was to be like the Most High.

In the middle of the Tribulation Satan will be cast from heaven and restricted to earth (Rev. 12:7-13).

At the beginning of the Millennium Satan will be cast into the shaft of the abyss (Rev. 20:1-3) to be loosed for a short time at the end of the Millennium (Rev. 20:7-9).

Satan's judgment, announced in Ezekiel 28:16-19, will not be consummated until he is cast forever into the lake of fire (Rev. 20:10).

<p><i>How have you fallen from heaven, O star of the morning, son of the dawn! You have been cut down to the earth, You who have weakened the nations! But you said in your heart, I will ascend to heaven; I will raise my throne above the stars of God, And I will sit on the mount of assembly In the recesses of the north. I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will make myself like the Most High. Nevertheless you will be thrust down to Sheol, To the recesses of the pit. Those who see you will gaze at you, They will ponder over you, saying, Is this the man who made the earth tremble, Who shook kingdoms, Who made the world like a wilderness And overthrew its cities, Who did not allow his prisoners to go home? Isaiah 14:12-17 NASB</i></p>	<p><i>You had the seal of perfection, Full of wisdom and perfect in beauty. You were in Eden, the garden of God; ... You were the anointed cherub who covers, And I placed you there. You were on the holy mountain of God; You walked in the midst of the stones of fire. You were blameless in your ways From the day you were created Until unrighteousness was found in you. Your heart was lifted up because of your beauty; You corrupted your wisdom by reason of your splendor. I cast you to the ground, ... By the multitude of your iniquities, In the unrighteousness of your trade You profaned your sanctuaries. ... And I have turned you to ashes on the earth In the eyes of all who see you. All who know you among the peoples Are appalled at you; You have become terrified And you will be no more. Ezekiel 28:12-19 NASB (selected)</i></p>
--	--

- Satan was created (Ezekiel 28:15) before God planted the Garden of Eden (Ezekiel 28:13). This means he does not possess attributes which belong to God alone, like omnipresence, omnipotence, & omniscience.
- In his present, fallen state, Satan retains a great deal of power. Apparently he was the highest created angel, because Michael the archangel did not dispute with Satan about the body of Moses (Jude 9).
- Antichrist will be the climax (and final one) of all people whom Satan has indwelt throughout history. The king of Tyre was simply a tool of Satan, likely one whom he indwelt in the past.
- All sin is serious and all sin affects others. But sin in high places is more serious and its ramifications more widespread. Satan's sin affected other angels (Rev. 12:7); it affects all people (Eph. 2:2); it positioned him as the ruler of this world (John 16:11); it affects all the nations of the world, for he works to deceive them (Rev. 20:3).
- Satan's aim is to create a system that rivals God's kingdom but which leaves Him out. The cosmos is evil because it is independent of God.

God and His Ways

- Satan must make the value of his godless system seem attractive. Thus he works to make people give top priority to self as number one and to the here and now as the most important. Satisfy the lusts of the flesh, Satan counsels. Try to get what the inordinate desires of the eyes make you covet. And build a self-sufficient, arrogant attitude that arises from boasting about the possessions one has in life. This selfishness is, of course, the prevailing philosophy of the world, and it comes from Satan who promoted himself from the beginning.
- Satan also seeks to focus people's attention on the present rather than on eternity. That is why John reminds us (1 John 2:17) that the world passes away but the one that does the will of God abides forever. Thus Satan seeks to achieve his purpose by trying to change our priorities (self first) and our perspective (here and now more important). In reality the truth is that God is first and eternity most important.

Notes

The word "cosmos" is used 185 times in the New Testament, 105 of which occur in the writings of John. The universe is called the cosmos because it is an ornament of harmonious relationships (Acts 17:24). The inhabited earth is also designated by the word "cosmos" (Rom. 1:8), as are the people who live on the earth (John 3:16, 12:19). It is the people of the world whom God loves and for whom Christ died (John 3:16; 1 John 2:2).

But usually the New Testament views the cosmos as an orderly system that functions apart from God. Here is a suggested definition: the cosmos world is that system organized by Satan, headed by Satan, and run by Satan, which leaves God out and is a rival to Him.

Satan is called the morning star in Isaiah 14:12. The Latin equivalent is Lucifer which, on the basis of this passage, became a name for Satan.

Satan's position over this world is seen in several titles given to him: "ruler of this world" (John 12:31); "god of this world" (2 Cor. 4:4); "prince of the power of the air" and "the spirit that is now working in the sons of disobedience" (Eph. 2:2).

Reference

God and His Ways Teacher's Edition, by Layton Talbert, Ph.D., BJU Press 2001.

Basic Theology, by Charles C. Ryrie, pp. 137-154.