

The Whole Counsel of God
Study 5

**THE DEVIL AND HIS ANGELS:
THE OTHER SIDE OF THE DOCTRINE OF ANGELS**

(G. T. Tabert)

“For by Him all things were created, both in the heavens and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things have been created through Him and for Him.”

(Col 1.16)

“And there was war in heaven, Michael and his angels waging war with the dragon. The dragon and his angels waged war and they were not strong enough, and there was no longer found a place for them in heaven.”

(Rev 12.7-8)

Creation has two levels as Col 1.16 points out: heaven and earth, visible and invisible. The spiritual and heavenly realm was created good and holy, but it is now divided into two sides. 1Tim 5.21 refers to the elect angels in the presence of God. The idea of chosen angels presupposes that the angels are divided into two sides, those whom God chose for himself to belong to him and those who are unholy and rejected by God. Jesus referred to the sum of all the angels who are evil as “the devil and his angels” for whom the eternal fire was prepared (Matt 25.41). Revelation 12.7-8, quoted above, presents the two sides of the angelic realm in a final war in heaven in which the holy angels win. The biblical teaching is clear on this: the angels are divided into two sides, the holy and the evil. In this study, we will take up what the Bible teaches about the devil and his angels. This is the other side of the doctrine of angels.

Setting up the present study

We noticed in our previous study, that the Bible does not take up the theme of angels as a subject by itself. God and not angels is revealed throughout the scriptures. We only come to see angels and learn of them as they function within the revelation of God. This is also true of the devil and his angels. Though they are the enemies of God, they only come into view within scripture as the revelation of God unfolds. In our study we are interested in knowing God and not the dark forces.

Darkness exposed by the light

We saw that the holy angels stand to the side of our relationship with God. They serve in God’s relationship with us, carrying out his will toward us, but they do not stand between us and God. We are not to relate to them but to God directly. One mark of the angels in revolt against God is that they have moved between the relationship between people and God. This means that people’s relationship with God is entangled with the devil and his angels, and this places the subject of the unholy angels closer to our life and struggle than that of the holy angels. People are oppressed by the devil and struggle under the dominion of evil. As we come to see Satan’s role in our temptations and in the stubborn hold of evil over the world, we tend to think on him, and even become preoccupied with him. The danger here is that the mind focuses on the darkness that it perceives. But, here we face a danger and must decidedly take our stand in the light of biblical revelation.

The devil and his angels are the authority of darkness (Col 1.13) and the world forces of this darkness (Eph 6.12). The dominion of Satan is darkness, according to Acts 26.18. To fix the gaze of the mind on Satan is to stare into darkness, and darkness does not give light. Jesus said of Satan, “Whenever he speaks a lie, he

speaks from his own nature, for he is a liar and the father of lies” (Jn 8.44). Satan will never make the truth about himself known, so that we can never know him by seeking to relate to him or by his effect on our minds. He ever works to blind the minds of people (2Cor 4.4). Satan does not disclose or reveal himself. He is only exposed by the light of God’s self revelation. It is only as we see God revealed that we can get a true view of Satan. This means that our study must be first of all a study of the revelation of God in the way he deals with evil.

The devil and his angels in the unfolding biblical revelation

There is a marked difference between the Old and New Testaments in the view they present of Satan and his angels. Satan stepped onto the stage in tempting Eve. But, we must take note of the fact that he appeared under a total disguise as a serpent. It is only in the NT that the serpent is identified as the devil (Rev 12.9). Satan as a malicious angel is only mentioned three times in the OT (Job 1 and 2; Zech 3.1; 1Chr 21.1). There is no vision of Satan as the ruler of demons in the OT. In fact, in the OT there is no clear conception of demons (there is a vague reference to an anonymous evil spirit in 1Kings 22.21-22 and the cryptic references to the heavenly ruler of Persia and Greece in Daniel 10 but their connection with Satan is not stated). Before Christ, the devil is simply seen as an angel who appears in the heavenly court before God to accuse those whom God accepts (Job 1 and 2; Zech 3.1) and who uses his angelic power to incite them to sin (Job 1 and 2; 1Chr 21.1). In his role as accuser and the one who works to turn people against God, he is under God’s sovereignty. In the OT he is not seen as heading up a kingdom independently from God.

With the Gospel account a marked change is seen. Before Jesus stepped into his public ministry, he was tempted of the devil in the wilderness. Here is the only time in scripture where we see the devil in a face to face conversation with a human being. He speaks directly as the devil rather than working on the mind through some instrumentality. In the OT, Satan is seen only conversing face to face with the LORD in the heavenly court. Before God Satan has no disguise, and the only man before whom he was directly seen was the Son of God. All other people have only an indirect encounter with the devil in which the enemy operates through an instrument. Also, as soon as Jesus stepped into public ministry, anointed by the Spirit to proclaim the gospel of the kingdom, we see demons crying out before him. For the first time in the history of revelation, demons as spirits are brought into view. It is Jesus who is the first in scripture to speak of the devil and his angels (Matt 25.41).

The fact that it is first in the Gospels that the devil and his angels are brought into direct view is significant for our study. Satan and the demons are only exposed as God is disclosed. In the OT we see YHWH on his throne, and Satan is only seen in his role within that court. In the NT God is fully revealed in his Son as a man, and in the full revelation of God we have the full exposure of Satan and the demons.

We should notice something of the background to the light shone on the kingdom of darkness by Jesus. There is a marked difference in the manifestation of demonic activity between the Old and New Testaments. In the OT we do not read of demon possession. The great problem of the OT was idolatry. From 1Cor 10.20 we learn that behind the idols were demons. The idol was only a mask of a demon so that while the idol was nothing (1Cor 8.4), the person who sacrificed to the idol sacrificed to a demon. This demonic presence accounted for the spiritual compulsion in idol worship. People were led (1Cor 12.2). But, the demonic side is not brought out in the OT. The OT only focused on the fact that the people of Israel were not to have other gods beside the LORD and that they were not to make an idol. Demons in the OT operate totally under disguise, and the OT scriptures deal with man in relation to the mask. Associated with idolatry was the practice of the occult, but in the OT this is not tied to demons directly for demons are not in clear view. The practitioners of the dark arts were mediums who supposedly contacted the spirits of the dead, another disguise for the demons.

By the time we come to the story of Jesus, things have changed dramatically in the Land of Israel. Demons were possessing people in the land, and the demon possessed were even attending the synagogue (Mark 1.21-28). The impression that the Gospels give is that many in the land were demon possessed (Mk 1.34) so that there was a priority on casting out demons (Matt 10.1; Mk 3.14-15; Lk 10.17). Oppression by the devil marked the land (Acts 10.38). The Pharisees had their view of an organized kingdom of evil in which

Beelzebul was the ruler of demons (Matt 12.24). Jesus pointed out that their logic on the kingdom of evil was wrong (Matt 12.25-29). But, while they were wrong in their understanding of how Satan worked, Jesus affirmed the fact that what they noticed was correct—there was an organized kingdom of evil in which Satan was the ruler of demons.

Jesus' authority over demons was the sign that in him the kingdom of God has come upon the people of Galilee (Matt 12.25-29). Jesus' brought the kingdom of God near, and this kingdom was asserted in his authority over Satan, the ruler of demons. It is in this confrontation of two kingdoms, that Satan and the demons are exposed and brought into view as a kingdom of darkness.

The revelation of God in Christ was completed in the risen and ascended Lord who sent the Spirit down to his disciples. As the gospel spread throughout the Gentile world, which was under the hold of demons and idolatry, the full extent of Christ's victory and authority in heaven became evident. The fact that the nations were held in a spiritual identity under idolatry pointed to the fact that they were under demon rulers, and the fact that no nation apart from Israel came to a collective worship of the true God showed how strong the hold of the demonic rulers was over the nations. The breakthrough in this spiritual strangle hold of the authority of darkness occurred through the death, resurrection and enthronement of Jesus Christ. Paul referred to this in Col 2.15. Through the cross Christ disarmed the rulers and authorities, and in his triumph over them he made a public display of them. The view of the demonic hierarchy that ruled the whole world was only opened up in the event by which all rulers and authorities were disarmed. The full extent of evil powers is only disclosed in God's full victory over them. Christ is enthroned above all angelic rule and authority (Eph 1.20-22). Believers who are seated with Christ in heavenly places (2.6) have their war with the spiritual rulers in heavenly places (Eph 6.12). Jesus on earth drew into clear view the reality of Satan and his demons. But, the ascended Lord in heaven has brought into view the full extent of the cosmic kingdom of darkness over the whole world of nations. The last book of the Bible is the revelation of Jesus Christ, and in this revelation we see Satan in his full authority over all of human history, and we see his final fall from heaven and his being cast into the lake of fire.

Our review shows that we can only see the devil and his angels in the light of the revelation of God. In this revelation, Satan and the demons only come into view in the unfolding of God's government of the world. While God remains in heaven, Satan is only seen in his role in the heavenly court. In relation to mankind he must operate under disguise and through physical instrumentality. He does not show himself. When the Son of God came to earth and by the Spirit brought the kingdom upon the people, Satan and the demons are fully exposed in their encounter with Christ. His enthronement in heaven to hold the authority over all brought to view the full hierarchy of angelic orders, and we see the kingdom of evil as a cosmic kingdom. As we receive the revelation of Jesus Christ carrying out God's judgment of the world to make the kingdoms of this world to be the kingdom of our God and of his Christ, we see Satan in his full authority over the world and in his demise and judgment.

Our study

We will carry out our study in two parts. The first part will be on Satan and the second on his angels or the demons. Satan is the only evil angel who has access to God's throne to accuse and interfere in God's relationship with us. Demons do not represent evil before God but work on human beings. They have their role and power under Satan. If Satan did not secure the separation of people from God or the right to tempt people, the demons could not do their work on and in people.

In Satan we see the way all evil must work, for it must work between God's relationship with mankind. At this level, evil is seen as united in principle for God is one and Satan must work with the way God relates to people. In demons we see the way spiritual evil works on and in people to sway and hold people in bondage. At this level we do not observe a unity in operation but a chaotic and discordant array of ideas and conflicts. We see the confusion of the many gods and systems of religion. We see the discordant and even contradictory false ideas and doctrines that they inspire. We see the way evil people are in contradiction and conflict with each other. In the demon possessed we see how people are deranged. At the level of demonic activity, we see that evil brings about chaos and contradiction and not unity. But, this all happens under the work of Satan, one evil angel who must work in between God's relationship with man.

We can use the metaphor of an army to clarify the difference between the devil and the demons. The devil is like the general, the demons are like the soldiers, and demonic rulers are like the chain of command in the army. The general works out the overall strategy. At this level the battle is unified. It is a mind game and all is logical. But, the battle is fought on the ground, and there the scene is chaotic. It is important to know the strategy of the general that directs the enemy's forces as a whole, but we also must understand the combat on the ground if we are to effectively fight against the enemy. The Bible shows us the battle at both levels, and to cover this effectively, we will carry out our study in two parts.

PART I. THE DEVIL

In a study on Satan, it is tempting to follow the temporal order and begin with the origin of Satan as the evil one and then proceed to look at his role and trace his career to his final doom. But, this is not the order in which the Bible opens up the subject of Satan to us. Biblical revelation does not give us a direct account of how this angel became the Satan, the adversary who works against God and his people. Revelation only lets us see Satan in his actual role as the adversary as he gets between God's relationship with his people and the world. That means that we only are made to see Satan in the way he works in the course of history. Then it is only through this view of the workings of the devil that the Bible gives a perspective on what lies behind his work as God's adversary. We will follow the logical order of revelation and begin with the direct view that the Bible gives us.

A. THE ROLE OF SATAN

The Bible presents Satan in three major roles. He is first presented as the adversary and accuser before God. Then he is presented as the tempter who tempts people to turn them against God in sin. Finally, he is shown to be the ruler of a vast kingdom of demons and of the world in its alienation from God. These three roles are integrated and present one view of the devil as the one who gets between and seeks to take over God's relationship with mankind.

1. Satan in heaven as the accuser and adversary: Satan before God

The spiritual opponent of God is only referred to directly in the OT in three passages (1Chr 21.1; Job 1 and 2; Zech 3.1-2). In these passages he is called *Satan*, and in the LXX this Hebrew word is translated with *diabolos* from which we get our word devil. The NT uses both the Hebrew title, Satan, and the Greek term *diabolos* for this evil spirit.

a. The concept of satan and diabolos

i. Satan

In the OT a *satan* is a personal adversary who rises up with a charge against a party to deny that party any favour and to ensure its ruin. We have an example of this role in 2Sam 19.18-23. Shimei pleaded for mercy from David for the sin of cursing the king as he fled from Jerusalem. Abishai the son of Zeruiah stood up to make the case against Shimei: "Should not Shimei be put to death for this because he cursed the LORD's anointed?" David replied, "What have I to do with you, O sons of Zeruiah, that you should this day be an adversary (*satan*) to me?" Abishai raised a charge against Shimei that suggested that it would be wrong for David to show him favour. He became the adversary opposing the king in any show of favour, and he was Shimei's adversary is seeking his death. This role of the *satan* is seen in Psalm 109. David's enemies spoke against him (vv 1-6), and David asked God to appoint a *satan* (a legal adversary in court) who will accuse his enemy and press the charges against him so that he will be found guilty (vv 6-7). Those who rose up against David as *satans* spoke evil against his soul to seek its ruin (v 20, 29; Ps 71.13).

Satan as the accuser of the righteous (Job 1 and 2)

The role of the *satan* is fully played out by Satan in Job 1 and 2 and Zech 3.1-2. The setting of the Satan's role is the heavenly court (Job 1.6). Satan appears among the sons of God, the angels, and God points out Job to Satan for his blamelessness. Such a recommendation of a man from the king of the universe displays an intension of showing great favour. Satan plays his role as the *satan* by raising a charge against Job. He cannot accuse Job of any wrongdoing so he accuses him of human nature which only fears God for favours shown. By this Satan opposes God in the favour that he shows to Job.

Satan did not have a legal case against Job, for Job did not transgress, but he built a moral case against the favours God was showing to him. In this Satan acted as the adversary in every way. He opposed God in the favour he showed to Job, he accused Job of a lack of integrity, made his challenge in the divine court to

allow him to ruin Job and he did this all to pressure Job into turning against God. He did this all on a charge that amounted to a mere suspicion, but notice that he presents the suspicion as a bold fact.

Satan as the accuser of the sinner whom God accepts (Zechariah 3)

Zechariah 3.1-2 presents another scenario. This time Joshua the high priest was standing before the LORD. The priest had failed and the priests were in exile in Babylon with Judah. Now it was time to reinstate the high priest in Jerusalem, and this meant that Judah could resume the worship within the covenant of the Law. Satan acted as the accuser. Zechariah wrote, "...and Satan standing at his right hand to accuse (lit, to *satan*, the verb form) him" (v 2). To act as *satan* is to play the role of the adversary in a court of law by pressing the charges against him.

In Job's case, Satan could not point to any fault. In the case of Joshua it was different. Joshua was clothed with filthy garments (v 3). He was a brand plucked from the fire (v 2). Satan had a clear case against the high priest, and he pressed it against the LORD restoring the priesthood. If he prevailed in the heavenly court, the returned exiles could not take up the covenant relationship with God again.

ii. Diabolos

The Greek word *diabolos* means slanderer or false accuser. This is how it is used in the NT for people (1Tim 3.11; 2Tim 3.3; Tit 2.3). The Greek word takes up the principal aspect of the role of Satan in the OT. Satan brings malicious accusations against people.

Peter, in writing to a Greek speaking audience, ties the term, *diabolos*, to the Hebrew idea of the *satan* as the adversary in a court. He writes, "Your adversary, the devil, prowls about like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour" (1Pt 5.8). The word he uses for adversary is *antidikos* which was used for an opponent in a legal suit. This is the idea of the *satan* in the OT. The title *diabolos* pinpoints the specific action of the *antidikos*: he accuses the believers. This role of accusing or bringing charges against someone is highlighted in Rev 12.10. The one "who is called the devil and Satan" (v 9) is "the accuser of our brethren, who accuses them before our God day and night" in heaven.

Both 1Pt 5.8 and Rev 12.10 refer back to Job 1 and 2. Peter says that our adversary the devil "prowls about...seeking someone to devour." This idea is taken from Job 1.7 and 2.2. Satan told God that he had come "From roaming about on the earth and walking around on it." The image of the roaring lion who devours comes from Ps 22.13 where the enemies around the cross are seen "as a ravening and roaring lion" with a gaping mouth accusing the righteous sufferer and ready to kill him. This all fits with Peter's concern. He is encouraging persecuted Christians who are suffering principally by being slandered for their faith and godly life. Just as Satan moved the Sabeans (Job 1.15) and Chaldeans (Job 1.17) against Job's property, so this adversary is moving the world against the Christians to ruin them.

1 Peter 5.8 looks at the devil's work against the Christians, and Rev 12.10 looks at his role before God. We must keep in mind that the *satan* of the OT was the adversary of the judge who shows favour and of the person being shown the favour.

iii. The two sided role of the accuser

Satan's work before God as accuser and toward us as devouring lion are integrated. The book of Job shows the connection. Satan's aim was to turn Job from fearing God (Job 1.8 and 2.3) to cursing God to his face (1.11 and 2.5), i.e., to openly turn against God. To devour Job Satan must secure God's permission to try his faith. In the role of the accuser, he presses God to submit Job's faith to trial, and when God grants this he is free to try to devour him. Both as the accuser and as the one who seeks to draw people to his side, Satan works with his insight into human nature. He spells out his psychology in Job 1.9-11 and 2.4-6.

Satan sees man's attitude toward God governed by the physical world, both the world of things around him (Job 1) and his body (Job 2). He reasons that man lives for his physical wellbeing and life. Interestingly, this is the domain of angelic power. We saw in our previous study that angels can wield power over the physical world, though they can only do this if the power is delegated to them by God. Satan is making the

case that man's soul is wholly oriented to the side of reality that is the jurisdiction of angels and not to the spiritual side of the direct relationship with God. His challenge to God is that man is oriented to that which is the domain of angels rather than to God and so asks for permission to prove it.

b. The great challenge Satan presents before God

Satan as the adversary of God raises a huge challenge. God is more powerful than Satan, and Satan knows this. He must apply to God for the exercise of his own power over the physical world. But, for God to deny him the opportunity to try him or for God to defeat him with greater power would be to concede Satan's point: that it is not a matter of spiritual integrity but only of the exercise of power. God would be greater than an angel but in principle he would not be different because he would only be exercising the kind of power angels can wield. As the judge and governor of the world, God must establish justice as the foundation of the exercise of his power. To do this God must establish that the relationship between him and his people is not at bottom one between his people and the physical world and physical wellbeing. To do this, the physical blessings must be temporarily suspended so that the true nature and integrity of the spiritual relationship between God and his people can be demonstrated.

The question about the integrity of the spiritual relationship between God and his people does not arise with God. God reads the heart and he is the one who is the cause and support of faith in the true believer. The challenge is raised by a creature who does not see the heart and does not know the deep causes of the spiritual relationship rooted in God. Satan is the creature who raises the challenge. He is an evil genius and will ever see things from the point of view of evil that casts all apparent good in an evil mould and gives all that seems right an evil interpretation. We see this in the case of Job. There was no fault seen in him, so the devil attributes his very integrity to evil motives.

The issue that Satan presses before God is not limited to Satan. Jesus said in Matt 16.23, "Get behind Me, Satan! You are a stumbling block to Me; for you are not setting your mind on God's interests (lit., the things of God), but man's." Jesus is speaking to Peter here, but the fact that Matthew preserves the Hebrew word, Satan, in the translation into Greek shows that Jesus is not simply addressing Peter as an adversary. Rather, through Peter he is addressing Satan. Why? Peter raised up human sympathy to rebuke Jesus in his determination to go to Jerusalem and suffer and die. In the Greek, Peter says, "Mercy on you (or pity you), Lord, this shall not happen to you" (v 22). Here Peter is working with the devil's own psychology: people only think in terms of their physical wellbeing and life in this world. The devil cannot think the thoughts of God but only of the creature. He can appreciate the way people think, but he cannot think the way God thinks. We must apply this insight to his challenge before God.

The integrity of a true believer's relationship with God cannot be seen by the human eye. The mind conceives of the problem and raises doubts about it. The way human nature works in this world, the integrity of faith can always be called into question. Now God knows what is real, but the point of what he does on earth is not that he knows. Rather, it is that what is true to God be manifested in this world, and through this God's glory is displayed. For this we were created as the image of God, so that God's own glory would be displayed in mankind within the physical world. It must become visible and seen. God's purpose in his own people on earth is to work out the manifestation of his glory, and to achieve this God lets our faith be tried.

c. The accuser within God's purposes

Satan can only carry out his work as the accuser in the heavenly court and before God. What he does in trying those of faith, he can only do under God's government of the world. This means that Satan's role in challenging God's relationship with his people is played out within God's purposes and the way he rules over all.

i. *The role of the trial of faith*

The book of Job shows that God's purposes, by which he governs the world, are not defined by the desires of human nature or the flesh. God points to the integrity of his relationship with his own and he does so before Satan. This means that God will do all to silence his adversary. He will clear his people of any challenge. In the demonstration of the integrity of the relationship between God and his people, Satan is defeated and refuted, and God will hold this up before Satan. For this God will allow great trials and even the temporary control of evil in the world.

Job went through extreme suffering in the process of God proving the integrity of his faith. God never apologized to Job for what he put him through. Rather, God used the whole ordeal to deepen Job's humility and repentance before God (Job 42.1-6). In the end, Satan's work as the accuser only served God's purposes in the life of Job. This role of trials, which are motivated by the devil's work through the world, is taken up in the apostles' teaching. Tribulations work to bring about proven character which in turn brings about hope (Rom 5.3-4). Peter gives full expression to the attitude of true faith in trials in 1Pt 1.6: "In this you greatly rejoice, even though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been distressed by various trials, that the proof of your faith, being more precious than gold which is perishable, even though tested by fire, may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ."

ii. *The defeat of the accuser*

The defeat of the devil as the accuser before God must be brought about by the people of God. As Job overcame the trial of faith, the devil was defeated before God. This principle is brought out in Rev 12.10-11. It is said here that the devil accuses the brothers day and night. This means that he continually holds the world in a state in which it is a trial to faith. Of the brothers whom he accuses it is said, "And they overcame him because of the blood of the Lamb and because of the word of their testimony, and they did not love their life even to death" (v 11). This verse points out three elements in Satan's accusation of the believers and their victory.

The blood of the Lamb points to the problem of actual sins committed. Here we are looking at the type of charge brought against Joshua the high priest in Zechariah 3. The high priest stood before God with filthy garments. His sins were openly displayed. Satan's accusation pressed on God that Joshua could not be accepted. Since God's choice and grace are challenged, it is the LORD that must deal with the accuser. The answer to Satan was, "The LORD rebuke you, Satan! Indeed. The LORD who has chosen Jerusalem rebuke you!" (v 2). Satan was forever rebuked in his challenge to God's choice of sinners by the blood of the Lamb. Paul refers to this in (Rom 8.31-39). In Revelation, the people of God have been released from their sins (1.5) and were purchased for God (5.9). This means that no charge against them can stand to separate them from God.

We should add that the devil's accusations are not whispered into our minds. He does not accuse us before ourselves but before God. His accusations do not serve to get us down on ourselves but to secure the opportunity to try our faith in the world. Even when a believer lives with a clear conscience and knows of nothing against him, he is being accused and the devil has the space to try his faith by the means that God leaves at his disposal.

Satan also presses the fact that people will give up their faith in Christ. This is the type of charge raised against Job: that he would give up fearing God. Such a charge is overcome by "the word of their testimony".

The saints are able to keep the word of their testimony because "they did not love their life even to death." This touches Satan's psychology on which he counts and with which he works.

Jesus through the cross based discipleship on the principle of victory over Satan's psychology. We saw that Jesus pointed out that the Satan sets his mind on the things of man (Matt 16.23). By leading the disciples in the way of the cross, he dealt with this issue. He made the denying of one's self and the taking up of the cross as the steps into discipleship (v 24), and laid down the principle of life as, "For whoever wishes to

save his life shall lose it; but whoever loses his life for My sake shall find it” (v 25). The way of the cross undercuts Satan’s psychology and his hold over the true disciple.

2. Satan on earth as the tempter: Satan working on the human mind

Before God in heaven, Satan is the accuser. He also works on earth exerting his influence on the human mind. In this work he is the tempter and deceiver. The devil appeared on the stage of history in the Garden of Eden in this role, but there he worked under the disguise of the serpent. He is seen in the role of the undisguised tempter in the wilderness where he tempted Jesus, and it is from this incident that he receives the title, the tempter (Matt 4.3).

a. Clarifying temptation and the role of the tempter

We human beings experience temptation, and so it is not surprising that people think of the devil principally as the tempter, but there is much confusion in the way people think here. First, we must keep in mind that the devil’s role is not principally that of tempter. His very name, Satan, points to the fact that what defines him first of all is his role before God as the accuser. Having to work before God places him in subjection to God and ensures that he can only work within the purposes of God. We must ever keep this in mind. Every creature has its principal identity before God, and this is true of God’s adversary as well.

Another source of confusion about the devil as the tempter rests in the confused notions people have about temptation. So, we should begin by clarifying what is involved in temptation. One problem for us arises from the fact that the Greek word for temptation (the verb *peirazo*, and the noun *peirasmos*) is used for three English terms: test, trial and temptation. When we speak of the role of the devil, we are looking at trials and temptations. Both prove to be a real challenge to the Christian, but they represent different experiences and challenges to our faith.

James in the first chapter of his letter addresses each, both trial and temptation. He begins by saying that we should consider it joy when we encounter various trials for they are a testing of faith which has a good effect on us (vv 2-4). The man who preserves under trial is pronounced blessed (v 12). The trials he is speaking of are those posed by difficult and trying circumstances, and for these he uses the noun *peirasmos*. James gives an example of such trials in chapter 5.1-9, and he uses Job as an example of a man who is considered blessed for enduring trials (5.10-11). The story of Job shows the role of the devil as the accuser in such trials of circumstances. He presses God with his accusations to remove the hedge around those who have faith in him to have their faith tested by harsh and cruel circumstances and losses which would make the flesh turn the mind against God. In such trials, the devil does not act directly as the tempter. Rather, he counts on the adverse experiences to work on the mind to turn the heart against God. This is the psychological wisdom that he works with as the accuser. In the case of Job’s wife, he succeeded. She told Job to curse God and die (Job 2.9). The trials also pressed Job’s friends to speak of God that which was not right (Job 42.7) and their words worked on Job’s mind to declare what he did not understand and was beyond his grasp (42.3). The devil stood behind it all. He did not work as the tempter who suggests things directly to the person, as in the case of Eve, but counted on the trying circumstances to put the mind under pressure to sin against God in one way or another.

James also addresses what we would call the temptation to sin in Jas 1.13-17. For this temptation, he uses the verb *peirazo*. Now it is not the state of things that tries us but the active temptation to sin. James says that no one is to attribute the process of temptation to God for God cannot be tempted by evil and does not tempt anyone. Every good and perfect gift comes down from the Father of lights and nothing else (v 17). God is the source of all good and cannot be the source of sin. Here we must make a distinction in God’s relation to trials and temptations. In the story of Job, Satan used authority delegated by God to try Job. God took responsibility for the use of his power in governing the world. He said to the devil, “...you incited Me against him to ruin him without cause” (Job 2.3). Through the dialogues, Job and his friends have to struggle with the way God is governing the world, and at the end God takes full responsibility for all that happened. He never told Job that it was the devil’s fault. This means that James cannot divorce God from trials. In so far as they happen under God’s government of our world, they are for good, and this is James’

point in Jas 1.2-4. Temptation to sin that works within us is another matter. God cannot be the source of sin.

James does not attribute the temptation that makes us sin to the devil. Rather, the source of the temptation is traced to our own lusts which is conceived within us (in our body) and gives birth to the outward act of sin (Jas 1.14-15). But, in the two accounts we have in scripture of the devil working as the tempter, we see him at work behind the development of sin within us that James traces. The devil cannot make us sin. If he did the sinning in us, then the sin would not be ours. He only works to secure the development of sin within us. Temptation works at two levels. It works on the mind and in our flesh. Satan's work as tempter is at the first level: he works on the mind. Here lies the difference in his role in trials and his work as the tempter. In trials he ensures hardships under which the mind struggles with spiritual issues. As tempter, he works directly on the human mind.

James points to the devil's role in his call to repentance in Jas 4.10. The sins from which they must repent had their source in their pleasures (v 1). But, in turning to God, they had to submit to God and resist the devil (v 7). The devil does not originate the lust, but he blocks submission to God. He is the evil that works in the spiritual realm above man.

We have distinguished two levels in the genesis and development of sin. The apostle Paul, in Eph 2.1-3, lays out these two levels in the case of those who are dead in sins. The Satanic level is stated as follows, "...in which you formerly walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, of the spirit that is now working in the sons of disobedience" (Eph 2.2). This is Satan's ongoing work on people. It is not their own doing. Paul follows this with an account of the human side: "Among them we too all formerly lived in the lusts of our flesh, indulging the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, even as the rest" (v 3). Under Satan's power, people live in the lusts of their flesh, i.e., their human nature, and this makes them guilty as children of wrath.

b. The tempter at work

The scriptures only give us two accounts in which we see the tempter at work. They are the first temptation to sin in the Garden (Genesis 3) and the temptation of Jesus in the wilderness (Matt 4.1-11; Lk 4.1-13). Here we see his genius as tempter and the nature of the spiritual deception he carries on. We will not do a detailed study of these passages but will simply point out key features in his temptations.

i. Cunning as the mark of the tempter (Gen 3.1)

The story of the temptation of Eve begins with the comment, "Now the serpent was more crafty (or cunning) than any beast of the field which the LORD God had made" (Gen 3.1). This comment points to cunning as the mark of the tempter. The Hebrew word translated with *crafty* or *cunning*, is used in a good sense as *prudence*. It is associated with wisdom in Prov 8.12 where wisdom says, "I, wisdom, dwell with prudence, and find knowledge and discretion." This prudence is a desirable virtue (Prov 12.16; 13.16), but it can be cunning and craftiness (Job 5.12; 15.5; Josh 9.4). Wisdom will only do what is right, and it has its beginning in the fear of the LORD, but prudence is that intellectual capability given by God that can be used with wisdom or without it for selfish ends. In all his ways as accuser, tempter and ruler, Satan displays this superior intelligence as cunning, but we see it especially in his role as the tempter.

The comment in Gen 3.1 points to the created faculty, which is a good gift, out of which sin arose. It also points us to the intellectual realm as the area in which Satan works as the tempter.

ii. The tempter works on the mind

Satan worked on Eve's mind. He could not make her sin. She sinned out of her own lusts. This is clearly stated in Gen 3.6. She was moved to act by her desire of food, for beauty and for intellectual advancement. Sin developed in her just as Jas 1.14-15 states. In the case of Jesus, the tempter also engaged his mind, but Jesus resisted him completely at this mind level.

iii. *The tempter works with the word of God*

In the garden

Both in the Garden and the wilderness, the tempter worked with the word of God. The only word that Adam and Eve had from God in the Garden was the command of Gen 2.16-17. Satan took this command up. He was the first to engage in the exegesis of God's word, and intellectually he was brilliant. If God said that they were free to eat from any tree but one, then it is technically correct that he did not let them eat of any tree. He certainly interpreted the name of the tree correctly. It was not the tree of death but of knowledge, and eating of it would not in itself give death but knowledge that would make Eve and Adam like God. God confirmed this interpretation in Gen 3.22, and it was separation from the tree of life that carried out the judgment of death.

We have taken note of his intellectual brilliance, but we should also see his dark side come through. He made what was a generous provision to eat of all trees except one look rather stingy by looking at it from the point of view of what is denied rather than given. In this way he shows that he looks at God from an evil point of view. Also, he turned the mind away from what God put forward and what was simple to grasp: the command to obey. He got Eve to put the command to obey behind her. Finally, he aroused the mind to pursue self-deification and made Eve forget her relationship with God. On the intellectual side he is brilliant, and on the moral side (the side of relational duty) he is dark.

God did not explain the meaning of the tree or the way death would happen. Intellectually he left Adam and Eve naïve. What was plain was the command, and Eve grasped that. God made Adam and Eve begin with obedience and not with intellectual understanding. Satan turned this order around. He put intellectual understanding in the foreground and led Eve to be guided by her intellect rather than by obedience. The tempter took up the mind's understanding of the word of God and turned things around so that Eve would follow her intellectual understanding against God's command. He did not take the word of God away in the sense of obliterating its text. Rather, he took over the mind's hold of the word.

In the wilderness

We see the tempter working with the same strategy in the temptation of Jesus. The temptation took place immediately after God declared that Jesus was his beloved Son (Matt 3.17). So, the tempter took this declaration up and began, "If You are the Son of God..." (Matt 4.3). When he saw that Jesus would live "by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God" (v 4), he presented a word that Jesus could prompt God to keep for him (vv 5-6). Finally, the tempter took up the LORD's promise to his Son in Ps 2.8. God's declaration, "This is my beloved Son" in Matt 3.17 answers to the Lord's decree in Ps 2.7. God promised to give all the nations to his Son, and the devil now offers this to Jesus. In Lk 4.6 we learn what the force of this offer was. The devil claimed that the kingdoms of the world were given (by God, this was understood) to him and he gives them to whoever he wishes. The devil pointed out a reality: if Jesus was to have the nations of the world to rule in the present, he would have to receive them from him. The devil offered to give the nations to Jesus and so fulfill what it means for him to be the Son of God according to Psalm 2. Of course, he would deny the real point of the biblical text which says that God would give the nations to his Son and so instate him as the Son of God.

The cunning of the tempter is unmistakable. He used the word of God and wanted to direct Jesus as to what it should mean. He focused on what it would mean for him to be the Son of God in his present situation. He suggested that as the Son of God he should use his power to feed himself. If he would live by the word of God, let him act to prompt the experience of God saving his life. He should take the kingdoms of the world now. But, the evil spirit is also displayed. He would have Jesus act on his own to meet his needs rather than rely on God. He would have him force God to fulfill his promise. In effect he would control God rather than depend on him. Is this the way the Son should act? It's Satan's spirit. He also suggested that Jesus take the kingdom now rather than let the Father give it to him in his time. The Father-Son relationship is one in which the Father gives to the Son and the Son is ever in a position of receiving from the Father. The height of his audacity is that he proposed to take over the role of the Father by being the one who gives the Son the nations to rule over. He wanted to take over God's role in the life of the Son. If you think of what this means for the relationships with the trinity, Satan's bid is horrendous. He would not stop short of getting

into the Godhead itself. Not a blast of power, but the perfect obedience of the Son to the Father kept him out.

iv. The tempter and God

As tempter, Satan works against God. But, we must see how he still must work under God. Satan could only act as tempter in the Garden because God gave his law. As Paul points out in Rom 7.7-13, sin can only come into action where there is a law, a commandment. We see this in the first temptation. If God had not given a commandment, Satan could not have found an occasion to tempt Eve to sin. The tempter found the same occasion with Jesus. He used the word that God declared.

We are not told whether Satan as the accuser challenged God to let him tempt Eve. This was probably not necessary. By placing man under a law, God set man up to be tried. As the image of God, man in his created state would not sin on his own. He was created to take what he is from outside of himself. So, the very fact that God placed a law before mankind gave the tempter the occasion to try mankind.

c. The role of the tempter among the people of God

The temptation of Eve and of Jesus share one unique feature: they both were tempted in a state of sinlessness. No one else has been tempted by the devil in this state. Not even Adam was tempted directly by the devil. Once sin was introduced through the woman, it worked through the human relationship. What is the devil's role as tempter in the lives of those who have a sinful human nature? We will only look at the cases where the scriptures say that the devil acted as tempter.

i. Satan moved David to sin (1Chr 21.1)

The OT only relates one incident (after the temptation of Eve) in which the devil moved someone to sin, and that is in 1Chr 21.1. The mention of Satan suggests that this must be understood as coming out of the court of heaven. The parallel passage in 2Sam 24.1 confirms this. The anger of the LORD burned against Israel, and this was behind the whole incident. We are not told what aroused this anger of the LORD, only that it was against Israel. This is parallel to 2Sam 21 in which God brought a famine over the land after David was established on the throne because of Saul's genocide against the Gibeonites. God's anger in 2Sam 24.1 may go back to Israel's rejection of God as their king by demanding a human king. God gave David to the nation, and Israel showed its own sinfulness in joining Absalom and then Sheba in revolt against David. David was restored to the throne, and the kingdom was established not by the merits of Israel but by the faithfulness of God to David, a man after his own heart. By the time referred to in 2Sam 24.1, David was nearing the end of his reign and leaving Israel with an established kingdom. Israel, however, was not worthy of this, and the anger of the LORD burned against the nation. In light of the vision of the heavenly court in Job 1 and 2 and 1Kings 22.19-23, the matter would have come up in the heavenly court where Satan pressed God to let him move the king to commit a sin that would bring God's judgment on the nation. We are told what happened in 1Chr 21.1. Satan moved David to commit the sin of numbering the people, which was such an obvious sin that even Joab, who was not known for spiritual or moral sensitivity, protested. Here we see David, who otherwise was very sensitive in spiritual matters, moved to proceed with an obvious error. Satan the accuser acted as the tempter to sin, but in doing so he worked under the government and judgment of God. God used this all to establish the site on which the temple was to be built. The whole incidence pressed the need for atonement as necessary for the kingdom.

ii. Satan's demand to sift Peter

Satan as the accuser before God who acts as tempter is mentioned again in Lk 22.31-32. Jesus said, "Simon, Simon, behold Satan has demanded permission to sift you like wheat." Why was Peter of all the disciples targeted? He was chosen by Christ to be the spokesman and leader of the twelve. Just as Jesus was tried before he stepped into public ministry to preach the gospel, so Satan demanded that Peter be tried. There were evident flaws in Peter that Satan could point to as the accuser. He wanted to sift him and show

up the chaff in his character. Satan's intention was, no doubt, to utterly ruin the apostle. He counted on working on Peter's weakness to make him collapse totally.

Satan could not get access to Peter by his own will. He needed permission from God. The permission was granted, but Peter was supported by Christ's intercession. Christ spoke of his restoration and gave instructions for his ministry (Lk 22.32), and this shows that Satan could only sift him in the setting of the divine purpose for the apostle.

How did Satan do the sifting? Jesus' warning in Lk 22.46 to pray so that they would not enter into temptation suggests that Satan would sift Peter by tempting him and the others. We do not read of a mental temptation as that which Eve and Jesus underwent. Rather, Satan used the arrest of Jesus and then the people who questioned and accused Peter to put him under pressure so that he would deny Christ. Satan is working through circumstances and with his human psychology.

iii. Satan working in the church (2Cor 11.1-4,13-15)

Paul saw Satan working in the church of Corinth in the same way that the serpent worked on Eve's mind in the Garden. He saw that Satan's activity was on the mind (v 3) and its target was the word, which this time was the gospel (v 4). Instead of the serpent, Satan used the false apostles (vv 13-15).

iv. Satan's work of deceiving the nations (Rev 20.7-10)

In the vision of the book of the Revelation, history closes with Satan released from his prison after the millennium to deceive the nations and lead them in a revolt against the camp of the saints. Here Satan works as the tempter where a state of divine rule and grace was established.

The fact that Satan is released by God's command at the end of the millennium before the eternal state of the new heaven and the new earth is brought in is telling for our study. History ends the way it opened. God sets up mankind in a state of favour, but at both the beginning and the end Satan is allowed to test mankind. The history related in scripture shows that indeed life on earth is there for man to be set up by God's word and grace and then to be tested. It is through trials and by overcoming temptation that the people of God are proven and brought into their share in God's kingdom.

3. Satan over the world: Satan as the ruler

As accuser, Satan speaks against God's people and requests the occasion to try and to tempt them. As tempter, he works where God's word is given and where people are set up in God's favour. But, this is not the extent of Satan's work. Where the people are alienated from God, he rules and is god. He works before God, between God and man and then over mankind.

The NT opens up to us a twofold vision of Satan as ruler. The first is that of spiritual ruler, the god of this world, and the second is that of the spirit behind political rule.

a. The spiritual ruler of the world

As an angelic principality, Satan is the ruler of demons (Matt 12.24-29). Jesus also called him the ruler of this world (Jn 12.31; 14.30; 16.11). In Eph 2.2 Paul calls Satan "the ruler of the authority of the air" (lit. translation). The air is the invisible sphere immediately over mankind, and it refers to the spiritual atmosphere of the world. Paul goes on to explain that he is "the ruler...of the spirit that is now working in the sons of disobedience." The word *spirit* here is to be taken as impersonal and refers to the spirit of those who are disobedient to God and the gospel. Satan controls the world-spirit. Jesus pointed out that the Jews who were rejecting him were of their father the devil (Jn 8.44). Jesus is working with the principle of like father like son. Satan has imparted to his children his own spirit, and through this he is the spiritual ruler of the world or the ruler of the spirit of the world.

As ruler of the world, Satan does not need to carry out the work of personal tempter. This he only needs to do where he seeks to move someone off of the ground of God's word. As 1Jn 5.19 says, the whole world lies in the lap of the evil one. He has the world, and he does not have to tempt it. He has imparted his spirit to those who are dead in sins. But, in his hold on the world he still works in the way by which he gained the world. We saw that he moved Eve from obedience to disobedience, and Eph 2.2 says that he is the spirit that is working in the sons of disobedience. He did not move all the people from obedience to disobedience but he holds them in the spirit of it. We also saw that he worked on the mind to twist the grasp of God's word. Paul calls Satan the god of this world who has blinded the minds of those who do not believe the gospel so that they might not see the light of the gospel (2Cor 4.4). Jesus said that it is the evil one, the devil, who comes and snatches away the seed of the word sown in the heart (Matt 13.19). As ruler of the world, Satan has to maintain his hold over people wherever the gospel is proclaimed. He does this by his effective strategy of working on the mind whenever the word of God is communicated to it.

b. The spiritual ruler over the kingdoms of the world

Revelation 12 presents a vision of Satan as the one who rules through the political powers in the world. He is seen as a sign in heaven. Verses 7-10 makes it clear that Satan is seen in his position in heaven as the accuser before God who uses his heavenly position and power to do his work. Satan is seen as a dragon with seven heads. Revelation 17.10 informs us that the seven heads represent a series of seven kings. Seven symbolizes a complete series in time, and the seventh head in the vision of Revelation is the completion of Satanic world rule. This indicates that the seven heads are the complete series of world empires through which Satan rules, which is indicated by the seven diadems on the seven heads. The dragon also has ten horns. A horn symbolizes a king. The number ten does not represent a complete series through time but the full set of powers that rule together. The beast of Revelation 13 wears his crowns on the ten horns, for he rules by the fact that the ten kings give him their authority (17.12-13), but the dragon wears his crowns on his heads for he rules through the complete series of world powers.

Satan as the spiritual ruler of the world stands over against the woman of Rev 12.1-2. The symbolism of sun, moon and twelve stars is taken from Joseph's dream of the whole patriarchal family, and this shows that the woman represents Israel (Gen 37.6-8). The woman is a sign in heaven and so is not to be simply identified with the earthly Israel. She is Israel as chosen by God and in her role in his purposes, and this is suggested by the allusion to the patriarchal family. The woman's one role was to bring the Messiah into the world (Rev 12.2).

The dragon with its seven heads is poised to devour the child to be born of the woman. This points to Satan's focus in ruling the world. God created man to be the ruler of the earth (Gen 1.26-27). Satan placed himself over man by bringing the human race under sin. His one purpose is to prevent God from fulfilling his purpose by bringing in the kingdom of God in which the kingdom over the world is given by God to the Son of Man (Daniel 7). He does not want God to be the source of rule over the nations. Satan has known all along that if God achieves this he would lose his hold onto his position as god of this world.

The child who was born to rule all nations was caught up to God and his throne (Rev 12.5), and through this Satan lost his hold on heaven's rule over the nations. The enthronement of Christ as the Man led to the war in heaven between Michael and his angels and the devil and his angels (v 7). With Christ having gained the position of heavenly rule over the world, the holy angels can successfully resist Satan in his use of his heavenly position to hold the nations under his power. This war ends with Satan and his angels being cast out of heaven, "and there was no longer a place found for them in heaven" (v 8). What this means is that Satan could no longer act as the accuser of the brothers, and this is due to the fact that on earth the brothers have completely overcome him in his accusing role (vv 10-11).

Cast out of heaven, Satan must pursue his course from earth. What he will do is raise up the beast from the nations as a man who claims to be god (Revelation 13), and through this one he will seek to exterminate from the earth the true worship of God. This great trial on those who worship God is no longer due to Satan's role as the accuser before God. Heaven's powers will be solely in the hands of the holy angels who will use it fully to judge the kingdom of the beast (the bowl judgments in Rev 15 and 16).

c. Satan's attainment

It is as ruler of the world that Satan's ambition is seen. He has placed himself into the position of God over the world. He gained his hold both as accuser and tempter. As accuser he gains a temporary hold of heaven's authority over the world to turn people away from faith in God. As tempter he takes over the word of God to man and so brings and holds people under his sway. In sin they are separated from God and in this state Satan rules them. As ruler he has attained to the position of god of this world.

In the face of Satan's threefold work of accuser, tempter and ruler, the believer is to do only one thing: to submit to God and resist the devil (Jas 4.7). When the accuser puts us under trials to test our faith, we must resist him by standing firm in faith. When the tempter works on our minds, we must resist him by holding to the word of God in its command to believe in God and obey. It is fatal to take up the intellectual challenge presented in temptation, for the tempter knows that if he can get us to put faith and obedience behind intellect, he has us. As spiritual ruler, Satan moves against us the whole hierarchy of spiritual rulers and authorities who seek to bring and hold all people in subservience to the spirit of Satan (Eph 6.10-13). In this battle, the believer must simply hold his stand, given to him in Christ, by withstanding.

We have the promise of scripture, that if we resist the devil he will flee from us (Jas 4.7). We are never called to go against him in an aggressive war. Satan is a heavenly being, and no creature of flesh and blood can attack him. Jesus never left it to his disciples to cast out the ruler of this world. Jesus as the Son of God achieved this, not by using force against him but by submitting to the Father's will and to the demand of God's judgment of death for sin. It is God who raised him from the dead and enthroned him at his right hand. It is this divine work that cast Satan out. When it comes to using power to oust Satan, God does not use us. That would be using us for what we were not created to do. God assigns this work of power to Michael and his angels in heaven, for angels were created to wield God's power over creation. God created mankind only to resist the tempter. This is set up in Genesis 2 and 3, and in our salvation God does not take us out of our created station.

B. THE FALL OF SATAN

We have surveyed what the Bible presents about Satan as a corrupted and wicked angel. The question naturally arises as to how he changed from being an angel created by God to becoming the enemy of God who has taken over the place of God in this world. We are accustomed to speaking of the fall of Satan as the event that began his evil career. Through this terminology, ideas are brought in that are contrary to what we have learned so far from scripture. Satan is often thought of as being a high ranking angel, the highest, who sinned and was cast down from heaven to hell. The idea of a fall is taken in a literal and local sense. In the subterranean regions, Satan gathered the angels who fell with him and set up his counsel, and from there he dispatches his demons to carry out his orders. Satan comes out of his abode beneath and works his evil on earth. He always has the feel or appearance of grotesqueness about him and his breath smells like sulphur.

The idea of Satan's fall from heaven is wholly wrong and dangerous. The Bible shows Satan as moving in the heavenly court with access to the presence of God. He is dispatched from the heavenly court to do his work on earth. As the ruler of the world, he rules from heaven. As the tempter, he does not appear or come across as feeling grotesque. Rather, he appears as an angel of light (2Cor 11.14). He speaks to the mind as the one who gives intellectual enlightenment and who opens the way for self improvement. As the ruler, he is the spirit that gives the dominion and the glory (which is a visual sense of grandeur and beauty) of all the kingdoms of the world (Lk 4.5-6).

The idea that Satan gives the sense of the grotesque comes from the very deception he works. He got Eve to decide on what was good by what seemed pleasing to her senses and imagination (Gen 3.6). In sin we decide what is good and bad by how it is pleasing or disagreeable to our flesh. As long as we think this way, Satan holds the mind. As the accuser, he uses his angelic power to make God seem very disagreeable to us, i.e., to our flesh. As the tempter, he appears as the angel who offers us what is very pleasing to us. As

the ruler, he holds in his power all that the flesh is stimulated by in this world. If what is evil is what is ugly to the flesh, then Satan has himself well established as the ruler of the spirit of those who are in the flesh.

Our study so far enables us to set forth the profile of Satan. He is an angel in heaven. He was created good, but he has corrupted himself. The height of his sin is seen in his attainment as ruler of this world. He has the ambition to take over God's position. When he became corrupt, God did not expel him from heaven but left him in his angelic rank.

The Bible gives no direct account of Satan's act of turning against God. But, through his work in taking over human rule, the Spirit of God gives us a vision into the nature of Satan's self-corruption.

1. Beclouded with conceit

Paul gives us an insight into the nature of Satan's self-corruption in 1Tim 3.6. The apostle is giving instructions on who can become an overseer in the church. He writes, "...and not a new convert, so that he will not become conceited and fall into the condemnation incurred by the devil." The word translated *conceit* is *tuphoo*, and this Greek term means to wrap in smoke. It is used for conceit, but the point that is emphasized is not so much the high view of oneself but that one is deluded about oneself. This is a danger in spiritual ministry and the use of gift, as Paul warns in Rom 12.3. Christians are not to think more highly of themselves than they ought to think, but are to think with sound judgment as God has allotted to each a measure of faith. The danger in placing a young Christian into the position of overseer is that he will be tempted to think of himself in an unrealistic way. He will become beclouded in his mind by conceit. Paul says that by this conceit he will "fall into the condemnation of the devil" (this is the literal translation). Some have argued that the sense is that the devil will condemn the conceited overseer. This goes against the sense of the rest of scripture. The devil is not our judge. He is the one who is condemned by God. The devil's sin is that while he is simply an angel he thinks of himself as God and seeks to act as God. All that we have learned so far confirms that this is the real sin of the devil.

The image of a conceited elder is a very apt picture of the devil. The elder is in a place of leadership before God. He has been corrupted in that he thinks of himself and tries to act as someone that he in actual fact is not. He is beclouded by his over inflated and unrealistic view of himself. In this corrupted spiritual state, the elder still stands in the position of overseer, but in this position he is condemned.

2. The pride of a ruler

The conceit that Paul warns against was fully acted out on the stage of world history by great ancient rulers, and the prophetic vision has penetrated through this to seeing the real spirit behind it. It is this vision that enables us to see the self-corruption of Satan.

a. Of human and divine rule

In the ancient world, what happened in the world of nations was seen as inseparable from the world of gods. Each nation and city was identified with its gods. All wars on earth were seen as wars between gods. When one people conquered another, that people's gods, or main god, was seen as more powerful than the gods of the conquered land. When YHWH judged Egypt, the gods of Egypt were judged and YHWH was established as greater than those gods. When Israel entered the land of Canaan, the nations that fought against Israel actually took up the battle under their gods against YHWH. When Israel won, YHWH was seen as the Most High. This also means that in the eyes of the ancient world, when Israel was defeated or turned to Baal, YHWH was defeated and demoted. To understand the conflict of the OT, we must grasp the profound spiritual issues in question. In a world of gods, who is the Most High?

A king on earth was seen as the earthly counterpart of the ruling authority in the heavens. This means that the king was seen as identified with the ruling god of his nation or city state. The kings who built great empires, subdued other nations and ruled the lands of other gods were seen as exalted over the gods of

other peoples and lands. When these deified rulers came up against YHWH who was on Mt Zion, they naturally presumed to be above him. This was seen as an exaltation of the king above the Most High. God through the word of the prophets addressed this presumption.

We have looked at the way the pagans saw the relationship between men and gods. We must also see this from the point of view of the scriptures. In the view of the Bible, an idol is nothing and there is only one true God, but that does not mean that the pagan gods had no reality behind them. The OT declares that YHWH is above all gods. The reality behind this is stated by Paul in 1Cor 10.19-20: behind the idols were demons. So, behind the conflicts on earth are the spiritual wars in the heavens. This is confirmed in Daniel 10 where we are told of the rulers of Persia and Greece as angelic rulers behind the earthly empires. The succession of Persian kings and then of Greek kings each had behind them their demonic principality. The NT confirms this in the vision of the seven headed dragon of Revelation 12. The rise of the beast brings out the relationship between the dragon and a head clearly. Satan is the invisible source and power behind the last emperor. Satan's final assault on God is seen in the face of the beast. As the beast arises to be god over all, so Satan is seen in his final attempt at acting as god in the invisible realm of spirit.

Once we understand the biblical outlook on the relationship between earthly and heavenly powers, we can fully appreciate the prophetic vision of the exaltation to godhood in the heavenly realm.

b. The king of Babylon and self-exaltation in the heavenly court (Ish 14.12-15)

Isaiah 14.12-14 has been taken as the passage that depicts the fall of Satan. Isaiah is addressing the star of the morning, which is the morning star or the brightest star in the night sky. This star appears in the eastern sky before the rising of the sun, and Isaiah refers to this by calling him, "son of the dawn." The name of this star in Latin is Lucifer, and from the Latin translation of the Bible we get the name Lucifer for the Satan as the angel who fell. As the morning star is the brightest and comes before the sun, so Lucifer is seen as the highest and the brightest who is next to God in the constellation of angels.

Isaiah depicts this morning star as a heavenly being who had the purpose of raising his throne above the stars (v 13). This means that he would exalt himself to be king of the angels, a place that belongs to God. He wanted to sit like the LORD in the heavenly assembly, presiding over the court of angels. Rising above all, he wanted to make himself like the Most High (v 14). For this sin he will be judged and cast down to Sheol, the place of the dead (v 15).

The vision of Isaiah fits the profile of the devil as the ruler of the world that we have established from scripture. It also agrees with Paul's statement that the sin for which Satan is condemned is the sin of a deluding conceit in which he imagines and purposes himself to be what he in actual fact is not. The spirit of self-deification is indeed the spirit of the devil. We saw that he acts as God by imparting his spirit to mankind. In the first temptation, he tempted Eve to become like God by taking to herself the knowledge that belonged to God. His final act is to cause the Antichrist to exalt himself as God on earth. The profile of the morning star in Ish 14.12-15 fits Satan, but an objection has been raised against taking this prophecy as depicting the sin of the devil.

The little passage on Lucifer or the morning star is part of a taunt against the king of Babylon (Ish 14.3). In the verses surrounding Ish 14.12-15, the prophet is speaking of the fall of a king on earth. So, can we take this vision of the morning star as a vision of the fall of Satan? Several considerations cause us to answer in the affirmative.

i. Seeing Satan through the sin of the king of Babylon

Seeing Satan through his instruments

We will begin with a general consideration. Satan appeared on the stage of history through the serpent, a creation of the LORD God (Gen 3.1). What the serpent did, Satan did, and the curse on the serpent really is a curse on Satan. This means that in the fact that the serpent has been made to creep on its belly and to eat dust all the days of its life (Gen 3.14), we have the representation in the physical world of God's curse on

Satan. Indeed, the angel must run his course on earth and so is placed by God in a position in which God through man will defeat him.

In the last book of the Bible, Satan is seen and characterized in the form of the world empires through which he rules as the spiritual genius (Revelation 12). Satan is seen through the physical and visible instruments he works, and he is judged in the judgment passed on those instruments. The judgment of the completed series of world powers in the seventh head is the judgment of Satan. Seeing Satan in the heavenly side of the taunt against the king of Babylon fits within the pattern and outlook of scripture.

Babylon in the prophetic vision

As we turn to Isaiah 14, we must begin by noticing that Isaiah is not speaking of any specific historical king of Babylon. He is speaking of a king that rules through the whole Babylonian kingdom; this is the emperor of the whole empire. This king is at the least a personification of Babylonian rule. He is like the archetype of which the Babylonian kings on earth were the type. One has to at least say that in Ish 14.12-15 the prophet is seeing through the earthly type of king to the spirit behind it and what that spirit is in relation to God. Modern interpreters may limit this to mere poetry, but prophets work with reality. What they see is a reality. It really exists. In the imagery of the dragon in Revelation 12, the Babylonian kingdom is one of the heads and the king of this kingdom is the dragon whose head it is.

We should also notice that Isaiah is seeing the fall of this king of Babylon as the basis for the final salvation of Israel in 14.1-2. He is addressing more than the end of the historical kingdom of Babylon. He is speaking of the fall of that power that has brought all other kingdoms down and laid the earth waste (vv 16-17). The end of this power will be the final salvation of God's people. The Babylon of the prophetic vision in Isaiah represents the world power and the whole civilization that ruins the earth and prevents Israel from entering its salvation on earth.

In the Biblical vision, Babylon has a super-historical position. It overshadows all of history. This goes back to Gen 10.8-11 which relates the founding of the first kingdom by Nimrod. "The beginning of his kingdom was Babel...in the land of Shinar" (Gen 10.10), and from there civilization spread out (v 11). The beginning of the history of civilization in our world was in building of Babel (Genesis 11). Babylon is the cradle of civilization and the first of kingdoms.

The Host of heaven and the kings of the earth

Isaiah takes up again the vision of the cosmic judgment of the earth in chapter 24. The totality of the judgment is presented as follows:

"So it will happen in that day, that the LORD will punish the host of heaven on high, and the kings of the earth on earth. They will be gathered together like prisoners in the dungeon, and will be confined in prison; and after many days they will be punished. Then the moon will be abashed and the sun ashamed, for the Lord of Hosts will reign on Mount Zion and in Jerusalem, and His glory will be before his elders" (Ish 24.21-23).

This passage makes clear that there are both the host of heaven and the kings on earth opposed to God. The host of heaven is the multitude of angels who are the ruling spirits of the nations, and the kings are their counterparts on earth. God will judge evil entirely, not just on earth but also in the heavens. Both heavenly and earthly rulers will be imprisoned together. The judgments on earth are the judgments of the ruling spirits. This will be the basis for the kingdom of God in which God rules, and his elders who represent the rule of his people share in his reign.

Isaiah 24.21-23 gives the framework for understanding the taunt against the king of Babylon in chapter 14. The judgment carried out on earth against Babylon (Ish 14.4-11 and 16-21) is the fall of the angelic ruler (vv 12-15). The host of heaven, i.e., all the ruling demons, have their embodiment in the earthly kingdoms, and the judgment of the latter is the judgment of the former, just like the spirit of the former is the spirit of the latter.

ii. *The vision of Lucifer*

Now that we have shown how the vision of Ish 14.12-15 functions, we can look at it for our understanding of the fall of Satan. We must keep in mind that the prophet is seeing the spirit behind the king of Babylon. So, there is a parallel between the earthly and the heavenly sides.

The king of Babylon received a throne and authority on earth from God. All authority is from God. Just as the king of Babylon was the highest king on earth, so this star or spirit in heaven was the brightest. This position is a dignity he has been given.

The prophet declares his fall from heaven, and then switches the metaphor to the felling of a tree on earth: "You have been cut down to the earth" (v 12). This fall occurs in the final fall of Babylon. The kingdom raised over the earth like a great cedar is felled. The fall of Lucifer that takes place in this fall of the world-empire is future.

The cause for the fall of the star in heaven is the sin of self deification. We have an account of the earthly side of this in the action of Nebuchadnezzar related in Daniel 3 and 4. The bright star's self deification is not simply his first sin. It is his attitude and purpose throughout his career. Satan's purpose in all that he does is to establish himself as god over all. He knows that God is the eternal in the heavens and that he cannot remove him. What he works at is to establish himself in the position of heaven's rule over the world. To do this he must work from the earth up. He wants to replace God in the court that rules over earth by securing the position of providing the genius of the rule of man on earth. This is the spirit working through world rulers, and serious reflection shows how real this is. The ascent that Isaiah presents is the movement of Satan throughout history.

Satan's purpose of self deification is presented in five statements of "I will." They mark the upward steps to self deification.

- 1) "I will ascend to heaven." Heaven is the sphere of divine rule over the earth, and here Satan wants to establish himself. His purpose in this is opened up in this further resolve.
- 2) "I will raise my throne above the stars of God." Satan's counsel is to exalt himself above the station of an angel. He is not content to be the brightest among stars but he purposes to be over them as king. To this end he wants to elevate his throne over angels. He wants to take over the whole created order.
- 3) "And I will sit on the mount of assembly." The holy mountain is the place elevated over the world where God sits as king in his assembly (Ps 48.2-3; 68.15-18). His resolve to sit points to the aspiration to be king over the angels. In his second statement he resolves to plant his throne, and in this one he purposes to take his seat as king.
- 4) "I will ascend above the heights of the clouds." The mountain is the contact between earth and heaven, and it symbolizes the divine rule over the earth. The clouds symbolize a heavenly station that is above the mountain. It is associated with God, whose divine position is higher than the fact that he is ruler over the earth. Satan cannot be content with merely being the god over creation. He cannot stop in his ambition. In the first three resolves, he looks down to make sure that every creature was beneath him. Now he looks up to make sure that no one is above him, and here he eyes the position of God. This leads him to the height of his sin.
- 5) "I will make myself like the Most High." Satan's goal is to attain the position of the Most High. In reaching for this, he denies God his position and glory as the Most High. This sin goes beyond the sin of taking over God's rule over creation. It takes from God his unique glory, and this is the aim and purpose in all Satan does.

After Lucifer has reached for the highest position, the very place of Most High, the prophetic word takes over. He cannot say another "I will." The word of God takes over and says, "Nevertheless you will be cast

down to Sheol” (v 15). We should notice the parallel in the first sin of mankind. When Adam and Eve made themselves like God, they were exiled from the Garden and sentenced to death.

Satan seeks to attain and establish his position as god over all through his working on earth by inspiring and ruling through world rule. In the judgment of his kingdom on earth, he is judged. When Lucifer goes down, no one honours him. He is seen by all for what he really is. Rather than being God, he is seen as the great destroyer who destroyed the earth. He will go down in shame. As he is working to raise himself to being like God, he is discrediting himself in history. God makes history run its course to establish that he alone is God and to fully demonstrate that the usurpation of his place as God is evil and shameful. We see this in the vision of Rev 20.1-1-3. After Satan has drawn the kingdoms of the world to their ruin, he will be locked up in the abyss. Then in the millennium the salvation of Ish 14.1-2 will be enjoyed. At last Satan will be cast into the lake of fire and join all that he has brought to this end.

The popular idea of the fall of Lucifer is taken, at least in part, from Isaiah’s address to the morning star in Ish 14.12, “How you have fallen from heaven, O star of the morning.” In Isaiah’s vision, this fall did not take place in the distant past. It is a prophetic statement and will take place in the judgment of the history of civilization as we know it. Lucifer is still in his purpose of ascent, and in his course he is ruining the earth. After he has brought the kings of the earth down, he is cast down to join them. So, the vision of the fall of Lucifer concerns the future. The NT view of the fall of Satan agrees with this as we shall see.

c. The king of Tyre and the corruption of the anointed cherub (Ezekiel 28)

Ezekiel 28 gives a parallel to the vision of the king of Babylon in Isaiah 14. This time the ruler or prince and the king of Tyre are in view. Like Babylon, Tyre was an international empire. The difference was that while Babylon was an empire built by military might that ruled the civilized world, Tyre was a commercial empire that ruled the seas and built up vast material wealth through trade.

Ezekiel gives two addresses against the ruler of Tyre. The first is addressed to the leader or the prince of Tyre (vv 1-10). Here he speaks of a ruler on earth. The second is addressed to the king of Tyre (vv 11-19). Here he addresses the king as a heavenly cherub. What we noticed earlier about the relationship between kings and gods in the pagan view and between the spiritual and earthly rulers in the prophetic view applies to Ezekiel’s vision.

i. The earthly ruler: a man who claims to be a god (Ezk 28.1-10)

In his addresses to the earthly prince of Tyre, Ezekiel addresses the ruler’s claim to be a god. His heart was lifted up so that he said that he is a god. The prophet’s message is that while he has made his own heart like the heart of God he is only a man and not God. In his heart he thought and purposed like a god, but this was only in the heart. In actuality he was just a man (v 2). Ezekiel traces the conceit to its source. The prince of Tyre was gifted with wisdom and through this acquired great wealth for himself, and this made him lift up his heart (vv 3-5). Because he made his heart like the heart of God (v 6), God would bring him down to the pit so that he will die the death of the slain (vv 7-8). This will refute his claim to being a god and prove that he is just a man with a shameful end (vv 9-10).

Ezekiel’s prophecy against the ruler of Tyre is reminiscent of Adam and Eve. They made their hearts to be like the heart of God by taking to themselves the knowledge of good and evil. For this God drove them out of the Garden and cut them off from the tree of life. God’s final word to Adam was, “Dust you are and to dust you will return.” In death man realizes that indeed he is not like God, contrary to his claims.

The ruler of Tyre is like the king of Babylon in his claim to deity. But, in his case this ultimate sin is a matter of conceit rather than of ambition. The spirit of the king of Babylon was that of making oneself like the Most High which is a matter of ambition. The ruler of Tyre only claims to be a god seated among gods. He makes this claim because of his vast wealth acquired by his wisdom. The difference between the two rulers is due to their different positions. The king of Babylon is a conqueror who takes power by his own conquest. The ruler of Tyre finds himself in what appears to be super human wealth with an international

trading empire. He sees himself as having the glory of a god. If the king of Babylon shows the spirit of political ambition which rises up to take the highest position, the spirit of the ruler of Tyre is that of becoming conceited in one's giftedness and one's wealth and claiming to be a god because of the glory he has been endowed with. This sin of claiming to be a god opens up another perspective on the sin of Satan in heaven.

ii. *The heavenly king: a cherub who has fallen (Ezk 28.11-19)*

Behind the self exaltation of a human ruler, Ezekiel sees the spirit of the self corruption and fall of a heavenly ruler. In the conceited claim to be a god on earth, the prophet sees the fall of a cherub. The heavenly ruler is over the earthly one as a king is over a prince. By the way, we see this two way movement in Revelation 12 and 13. Behind the deification of the beast, a man on earth (Rev 13), is the fall of a heavenly principality, the dragon (Rev 12).

Ezekiel presents the heavenly king as the counterpart of the earthly. The ruler of Tyre was gifted with surpassing wisdom (v 3). So the cherub is addressed, "You had the seal of perfection, full of wisdom and perfect in beauty" (v 12). The ruler claimed to "sit in the seal of gods in the heart of the sea" (v 2). The cherub was in Eden, the garden of God. Eden was the perfect place where mankind lived in fellowship with God. The Eden Ezekiel refers to is the heavenly counterpart of the earthly one. The ruler amassed great wealth, especially in silver and gold (v 4). The cherub was decked out with all precious stones (the full array of created glory) set in gold (v 13). Silver, the inferior metal, is not even mentioned. Unlike the earthly ruler, the cherub did not acquire his wealth and glory but all was prepared on the day he was created (v 13). The faculty of wisdom, which makes him like God, the position of fellowship with God and the full array of glory were his, given in his creation. The endowments of the earthy ruler were but a shadow of this.

After having set up the king to be parallel with, but far superior to, the earthly ruler (vv 12-13), the prophet addresses him in his heavenly role (v 14). In this role, the earthly ruler does not compare with him. The heavenly being was the anointed cherub who covers. The cherubim were the highest order of created beings that were most closely linked with God, providing his throne and chariot (see the previous study). This being was not simply a cherub but the anointed cherub. The idea of the anointed comes from the king as the Lord's Anointed. This being was the cherub king. As one of the cherubim, he was one on whom God was enthroned, but as anointed he was given a royal position over the others. He is depicted as the highest angel.

The role of the anointed cherub was to cover. The cherubim functioned to establish God's holiness, his holy distance from all other creatures. The king cherub had the highest position to cover the glory of God. His high position is seen in that he "walked in the midst of the stones of fire" (v 14). The allusion is to the heavenly fire associated with God's throne and chariot that goes out as lightning bolts (Ezk 1.13; 10.2; Ps 104.4; Rev 4.5). In Ezekiel's vision of the chariot of God, the coals or stones of fire are seen in the midst of the cherubim, but the anointed cherub walked in the midst of the stones of fire. This means that he was right at the center of God's throne and was only under God. There may be a contrast drawn with the claim of the earthly ruler that he sat among the gods in the midst of the sea (v 2). This cherub actually was in the midst of the heavenly beings.

In describing the fall of this exalted cherub, Ezekiel gives us an insight into the genesis of evil. The prophet said, "You were blameless in your ways from the day you were created until unrighteousness was found in you" (v 15). The unrighteousness found in him corresponds to what was behind the self exaltation of the earthly ruler of Tyre: the abundance of trade or wealth (v 16 and v 5) and the corruption of his wisdom by reason of his splendor (v 17 and v 5). This cherub became self conscious. He stood between God and the other angels. He was endowed with all his glory to communicate the glory of God to the other angels, and in this interchange he had his riches. He became conscious of his own beauty and this caused him to corrupt his wisdom and take up the counsel of inner violence—to take things for himself by force.

We have seen how Ezekiel's vision draws on Genesis 3. God judged the serpent for tempting Eve by cursing it above every beast of the field and making it go on its belly (Gen 3.14). In this cursed state, the

serpent will be crushed by the seed of the woman (Gen 3.16). Ezekiel takes up the counterpart of this in Ezk 28.16-19. God cast the cherub out from the mountain of God as profane, as unholy, and out from the midst of the stones of fire (v 16). To be cast from the mountain of God means that he was removed from his position in the reign of God. He lost his anointing. He no longer holds the place of cherub king. The holy angels are not subject to him now. To be destroyed from the midst of the stones of fire is to have one's place removed from among the cherubim. He lost both his reign among the holy angels and his place among the cherubim. The reason for this judgment is that he became profane. Ezekiel does not look at Satan's ambition but at the sin of becoming unholy. The cherubim were created to protect the holiness of God on his throne, which means the holiness of his reign. The anointed cherub violated holiness and so was cast out of office.

In v 16 Ezekiel presents the judgment that took place in heaven as soon as the sin of profaning himself took place. In v 17 the prophet turns his gaze to the earth and looks at this being cast to the ground. This answers to the cursing of the serpent to go on its belly to eat dust. The reason for Satan being cast on the ground is the corruption of his wisdom. This answers to the serpent's cunning in Gen 3.1.

Ezekiel 28.17 gives us a complete profile of Satan's fall. His heart was lifted up because of his beauty. This is the beauty he was created with and possessed as the anointed cherub in heaven (vv 12-13). The lifted up heart caused him to corrupt his wisdom. The wisdom he was created with was used to seduce mankind away from God. Satan knew from his own experience as the king of cherubim that when the creature made himself to be like God he would be cut off from God, and this he sought to achieve in his corrupted wisdom. Interestingly, the law forbidding the eating of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil touched on the sphere of the cherubim of which he was one. This law set the boundary between God and man and established the distance of holiness between God and man. When the law was broken and the boundary crossed, the cherubim were stationed to prevent man from crossing back to take of the tree of life. Ezekiel's prophecy makes us see how Satan in tempting Eve worked in a twisted way in his created sphere, but now he worked to violate rather than establish holiness.

The result of Satan's corruption of his created wisdom was that he was cast to the ground in the view of kings that they may see his degraded state. Here the prophetic vision enters human history. God is working to make it evident that he is the corrupter of wisdom which is the very faculty needed to successfully rule (Prov 8.12-18). The history of human rule is destined to expose Satan as the genius of anti-wisdom. He still has the created faculty of intelligence which is associated with wisdom before God (Prov 8.12), but he uses it as cunning and anti-wisdom.

Ezekiel 28.18 sets forth the character of Satan's ways on earth through his instruments. He works a multitude of iniquities which are committed in the unrighteousness of his trade. Here we are returning to the earthly scene that was looked at in the prophecy against the earthly ruler of Tyre. Satan rules a kingdom of international trade and wealth. This he boasted of before Jesus. "And he led Him up and showed Him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment. And the devil said to Him, 'I will give You all this domain (lit., authority) and its glory; for it has been handed over to me, and I give it to whomever I wish. Therefore if You worship before me, it shall be Yours'" (Lk 4.7). This kingdom, with its impressive power and glitter is his, and he trades it for worship and the establishment of his godhood. In his hold over the power and wealth of the world, he multiplies iniquities in the earth.

Satan does not only control the interchange of power and commerce in the world. He also builds his religious system in his sanctuaries. His mark in the domain of the holy is profanation. He profaned himself in heaven, and profanes all worship on earth. His sanctuaries are all temples of idolatry and abominations. This religious side of his rule is built up by material wealth, i.e., trade. The temples of the world house the corrupt wealth of the world, and its gods which are constructed from the wealth sanction the corruption. Satan does not get rid of the idea of the holy. He profanes it.

With the profanation of the idea of the holy, Satan reaches the height of his sin, and here God judges. There is a key note sounded. The highest sin is the sin against the holiness of God. Even the political ambition of Lucifer is judged when it crosses the boundary between the Creator and the creature. God's judgment of the cherub answers to the place from which he fell. He walked in the midst of the stones of fire. Cherubim are

associated with the holy fire that comes from the presence of the LORD to consume all who would profane the holy. Satan was cast out from the midst of the stones of fire, for an unholy being cannot be a minister of God's holiness and of his holy judgment on all who would transgress. But, at the end, God will bring fire out of the midst of the fallen cherub to utterly destroy him on earth (v 18). There is an irony here. The one who stood in the midst of the fires of holiness will be destroyed by fire for his violation of holiness throughout the world. He will end up on the receiving end of the fire associated with the cherubim.

The judgment of the anointed cherub takes place through history. It happens in the view of kings and all who know him among the peoples (vv 17 and 19). The final doom of which God is speaking happens in history as the world empire symbolized by Tyre is forever destroyed. So, we ought not to think that the judgment had already taken place when Ezekiel was prophesying. It is still not complete, but it is well on its way.

Ezekiel tells us that Satan was expelled from his office as the anointed cherubim. We must keep this limited to his office. Jude points out that Satan is still an angelic majesty (v 8). Not even Michael the archangel dared to pronounce against him a railing judgment but said, "The Lord rebuke you!" This agrees with what we learned about Satan's created stature from Isaiah and Ezekiel. He was the morning star among the stars. He was the highest angel. Ezekiel shows that he was of the highest order, the cherubim, and he was created at the top of that order, the anointed cherub. Though he became the Satan, the adversary, when Michael the archangel disputed with him he recognized that in created rank Satan is higher than he is and that he is only under God. This high created rank explains why Satan is the ruler of demons and why he has the created capacity to be the god of this world.

iii. Two perspectives on the rise of sin in heaven

The prophecies of Isaiah and Ezekiel are not first of all about the fall of Satan at the beginning of his career as the evil one. The theme of fall is truly prophetic. The prophets see Satan's total fall accomplished through history as God judges the empires which he inspires and rules. They trace the course toward this final judgment from his sin against God in heaven. This spiritual side of their visions is really about the genesis of evil before God in heaven. The visions expose the very spirit of evil that breaths through the godless rulers of the world. We would make a big mistake if we took these prophecies only to satisfy our curiosity about the origin of Satan. We must use them to see the rise of evil at the spiritual level and to recognize the evil genius that works through the rule in this world that puts itself in the place of God.

The two prophets give us two perspectives on the spiritual genesis of evil. Isaiah shows us how an angel in the heavenly court lifted himself up to be king of heaven, and this has its earthly counterpart in the rise of emperors who exalt themselves above God. Ezekiel shows us the genesis of evil from the other end. It is an inner fall. God created the cherub above all creatures, but by focusing on himself rather than on his duty to cover God's glory he was inwardly corrupted. Spiritual evil involves both a rising up to godhood from below and a fall from an exalted created state. Both movements take place on earth in the area of human authority. The first upward movement is found in conquerors. God gives them providentially the rule but they then exalt themselves over God. Others are endowed with wisdom and wealth; but as they become focused on self they are corrupted in their heart and make their heart like the heart of God. This is an inner fall. We can distribute the two movements between money and power. Power is the act of aggression by which people want to rise to the top. When money or great wealth is had, it infects the mind with a claim to being a god. Both the love of power and of money are corrupting forces, though the corruption works in different ways.

The first two petitions of the model prayer that the Lord taught his disciples take up the two concerns in the fall of Satan. The first is, "Hallowed by your name." This takes up the concern of Ezekiel's vision. We must ever keep as our first concern before God that in all things his holiness be established. The second petition is, "Your kingdom come." This takes up the concern of Isaiah's vision. It is not the kingdom of the creature that rises up to take heaven but the kingdom of God that comes down from above.

Paul's warned that the elder who becomes beclouded with conceit shows the spirit for which Satan was condemned. This spirit can work in the elder in either of its two manifestations. Where there is leadership

and a position of public dignity, there the human heart can be corrupted. A leader in the church can purpose to enthrone himself above other leaders and rule as God in the heavenly court, or he can be endowed with greater gifts and have a far greater share in the interaction with the church and then become focused on his elevated position and be corrupted. He is seduced in his own heart by his own wisdom and riches and will become inwardly violent as he takes to himself what belongs to God and his people. Many men and even Christian movements in church history have fallen from the heights of abundant spiritual giftedness and knowledge.

Paul warns, "...we all have knowledge. Knowledge makes arrogant, but love edifies. If anyone supposes that he knows anything, he has not yet known as he ought to know; but if anyone loves God, he is known by Him" (1Cor 8.1-3). The apostle said that love does not brag and is not arrogant and does not seek its own (1Cor 13.4-5). The anointed cherub could only be faithful if he loved God. When he sought his own, he fell inwardly. Satan is a ruler who is determined to uphold his rule. Where there is rule in the church, you can count on it that he wants to endow those who lead with his spirit. Here we must submit to God and resist the devil, and he will flee from us.

3. The biblical vision of Satan's fall

Our study of the prophetic visions of the rise of the spirit of evil before God has shown up two reference points for the fall of Satan. Ezekiel showed the fall that took place when Satan first sinned. He was thrust out of his position over the cherubim. This fall is parallel to the cursing of the serpent in Genesis 3. God has in a real sense already condemned and demoted Satan, though his complete judgment is yet to take place. Isaiah brings out another side. Satan is still working in his pride to ascend in heaven and establish himself as the ruler over all. If he can gain the rule over the world, then no matter how exalted God is in heaven, Satan has established himself as the god of creation. In his self exaltation, he is ruining the earth, and at the end he will be cast out of heaven into hell. In Isaiah's vision, this fall is still to take place. The vision of the fall of Satan in the NT takes up the view that Isaiah presents.

When the 70 returned and reported that even the demons were subject to them in Jesus' name, Jesus said, "I was watching Satan fall from heaven like lightning" (v 18). The NASB from which we quote takes special note of the imperfect tense that is used for Jesus' observation. The imperfect tense suggests a continuous action in the past. The force of this tense suggests that while the 70 were casting out demons, Jesus was seeing what was going on in heaven: he watching Satan's fall from heaven. The fall of Satan is not a local event, as if a body was thrown down from the height. Rather, it was the fall of a ruler who was losing his authority. Satan is the ruler of demons, and now his demons were being cast out. To fully understand this, we must grasp the full significance of the event.

First Jesus sent out the 12 disciple with authority to cast out demons. The twelve represented the 12 tribes of Israel. Then he sent out 70 (Lk 10.1). The number 70 answers to the 70 elders who joined Moses in going up Mt Sinai to God in Ex 24.1. The Lord also took of the Spirit that was on Moses and put him on 70 elders so that they shared in Moses' spiritual power (Num 11.16-17). The sending out of the 70 answers to this. Elders represent the people, and the 70 symbolize the full representation of the people of God. The success of their mission shows that Jesus' authority is successfully given to the people of God.

The demons immediately recognized Jesus as the Son of God and took a place under his authority. Neither the devil nor his angels ever had any authority over the Son of God. But, as the accuser the devil had a hold over people due to sin. Now in the fact that the demons were subject to the 70, a whole new reality dawned. Satan was losing his hold as the ruler of the age. When the authority of the Son of God is given to his followers, then the devil's own position in heaven as accuser and ruler of the world is in the process of being taken away.

Jesus' work in bringing about the fall of the devil from heaven was achieved through the cross. The sending out of the 70 only anticipated Pentecost and the formation of the church. In view of this, it is significant that Jesus sent out the 70 after the experience of the Mt of Transfiguration in which he spoke of his exodus with Moses and Elijah, and from there he set his face to go to Jerusalem to die (Lk 9.28-56). Only on the

basis of the commitment to the cross did Jesus give his authority to the 70 who represented the people of God. We must never think of his defeat of Satan apart from his commitment to the cross.

Jesus said that he saw Satan falling from heaven like lightning. The image of lightning is used for the second coming in Lk 17.24. The idea is twofold: lightning comes out of heaven and it is seen in all places at once. So, the fall of Satan is seen universally as the disciples of Christ defeat his power all over the world. In every victory that disciples have over Satan's power, we can see a vision of the fall of Satan out of heaven.

Jesus took up the theme of the ruler of the world being cast out of heaven and being judged in his closing discourses in the Gospel of John (Jn 12.31; 16.11). Through his return to the Father by way of the cross, Satan was judged and he lost his position as the ruler of the world, for the Son of God took the position as the Son of Man. The kingdom over the world was given by the Ancient of Days to the Son of Man in heaven (Daniel 7).

Behind his hold as the ruler of the world is Satan's role as the accuser, and as long as he could hold up the decrees of God's law against us for our sins his position is unassailable. About this occasion against us, Col 2.13-15 says that Christ "has taken [it] out of the way, having nailed it to the cross." Through this act the whole hierarchy of demonic rule, with Satan at the top, was disarmed or stripped away. Nothing could hold Christ back from taking the very throne of heaven above all angels as a man for us. The victory was decisive and final.

We should not think that Satan was fully removed from heaven the moment Jesus ascended to heaven. The NT makes clear that Satan is still the god of this world and the ruler of the power of the air. In Rev 12.10-11, it is stated that the devil accuses the brothers before God day and night. These are NT believers for they overcome by the blood of the Lamb and the word of their testimony. Satan still is a heavenly ruler. But, the fact that the blood has been shed gives the saints on earth the victory. When he stands before God he must stand before Jesus our Advocate and High Priest. He really has lost his ground as the accuser, for he has lost the ground of a broken law and the outstanding judgment on sin. He can at the most only succeed in having our faith tested, which only serves our spiritual growth. In this period, Michael and his angels, "...as the ministering spirits, sent out to render service for the sake of those who will inherit salvation" (Heb 1.14), are effectively resisting Satan's use of heaven's power for his ends. It will come to the point where Satan will be totally defeated in heaven. This will lead to his rapid demise. He falls from heaven to earth and sets up the beast. In this he is confined to working from earth. The powers of heaven now will not work against the saints but against Satan's last effort on earth to take the place of God. The defeat of the beast will result in Satan being locked up in the abyss, and his next stop is his eternal end—the lake of fire.

After Jesus Christ took away from Satan his place as ruler over this fallen world, all of history is the story of his fall. True to God's promise in Gen 3.15, the cursed creature is left to fight with the seed of the woman and in the fight to be defeated. That's history!