

SATAN - A FALLEN ANGEL?

Several years ago, an article was handed to me from the bulletin of a digressive church in Dallas, Texas. The title was, "SATAN- A FALLEN ANGEL?" Without giving any careful consideration to the Scriptures, the writer says, "It is generally accepted that Satan was once an angel who, because of rebellion, was cast out of heaven." To receive without question that which is "generally accepted" can cause us to be caught up in any number of errors in belief and practice. Thus, let us examine the Scriptures to see if these things are so.

The first of the five most common Scriptures referred to in this regard is Isaiah 14:12-14. While many will apply the "son of the morning" which is "fallen from heaven" to the devil, the context tells us that the reference is to "king of Babylon" in verse four. Having God's own words with regard to the purpose of this prophecy, we dare not speculate that this has any reference to the fall of Satan!

Ezekiel 28:11-19 is also used in an effort to describe the fall of Satan. Like our last reference, this also has the direction of God to a certain ruler. In this case, it is "a lamentation for the king of Tyre" (verse 12). In this, God likens him to Adam as he lived in the glory of the Garden of Eden. Like Adam, he fell in a manner described by haughtiness and corruption (verse 17). Once again, there is no room here for a description of the fall of Satan.

The words of Jesus to the seventy as they returned from their preaching of the kingdom, have often been used to prove that Satan is a fallen angel. It behooves us to examine the context of Luke 10:18 in order to understand His true intent. The disciples said: (17) "Lord, even the demons are subject to us in Your name." In verse (20), Jesus told them not to rejoice in the fact "that the spirits are subject to you, but rather rejoice because your names are written in heaven." Now, what does this have to do with "Satan falling like lightning from heaven?" Satan must of necessity refer to his instruments, the demons. Lightning is a symbol of rapidity or quickness. "From heaven" here has reference to the lightning, coming down from the clouds, and not Satan! Albert Barnes, in his commentary on this verse, says that we may paraphrase Jesus' words in this way: "I saw at your command devils immediately depart, as quick as a flash of lightning..." If Jesus' words, "I saw," had reference to some time before the beginning of time, what relationship would this have to the context?

Two passages in the book of Revelation have also been used in an effort to prove that Satan is a fallen angel. Before we consider these in this regard, let us be reminded that the book of Revelation is filled with signs and symbols. In fact, one commentator observes that the message of Revelation "was transmitted in code by signs and symbols." (Wallace, p.64). For this reason, we must take care not to stumble back and forth between the literal and the figurative interpretations of the signs in the book of Revelation.

In Revelation 9:1, John writes "...And I saw a star fallen from heaven to the earth...." Literally, the text should read: "I saw the star where it had fallen." If you will turn back to 8:10, you will see where the fall had taken place. Most will have little problem understanding the figurative nature of the locusts who were shaped like horses, with the sting of the scorpion, with the faces of men, and the hair of women, and teeth like lions! BUT they want to make the star Satan, and his fall from heaven to earth, LITERAL! A star has been used frequently in both the Old and New Testaments to stand for one who has the authority of a ruler (see Isaiah 14:12; Numbers 24:17). The word "heaven" denotes the dominion of these rulers (Ephesians 6:12-17). "Earth" is the lower plane which signifies defeat for these rulers. While there can be no doubt that there was an immediate application of this signification, it cannot have reference to Satan and his origin as a fallen angel!

Finally, we have Revelation 12:7ff which is supposed to tell us about a LITERAL war in heaven, in which Satan was defeated and cast out of heaven. If indeed the "war" was literal, Satan was not cast out of heaven until the kingdom began (verse 10) and the blood of the Lamb was shed (verse 11). Would you say then that Satan was still in heaven when he deceived Eve? The idea of Satan being "cast down" is explained by the "salvation" (verse 10) which was made possible by the "blood of the Lamb" (verse 11). It was in Christ's death that victory was made possible over Satan, once and for all!

Where did Satan come from? I will answer your question with another question, just as our Lord did on occasion (Matthew 21:23-27). Where did GOD and CHRIST and the HOLY SPIRIT come from? All we can know for sure is that Satan was active in the Garden, and whether or not he existed from eternity, or was created by God (which I sincerely doubt) we cannot know for sure! BUT take heed lest we should do violence to the Scriptures in an effort to quench our curiosity. Let us be satisfied with this: "The secret {things belong} to the Lord our God, but those {things which are} revealed {belong} to us and to our children forever, that {we}

may do all the words of this law." (Deuteronomy 29:29)

Gailen E. Evans