

TUTORIAL
1.14

Lucifer rebelled against God

See Tutorial 1.6 notes for overall instructions.

The portions of Scripture referred to in this tutorial are: ***Ezekiel 28:12-19, Isaiah 14:13-15.***

Last time

Through the Narrative of His Word, God told us the details of how He had completed the creation of the image-bearing race He had planned. Knowing that it's not best for the man, Adam, to be alone, God says he'll make him a companion. Having seen and named all the other, lesser, animal beings, Adam finds no companion among them. When Adam meets the woman, made from his flesh and bone, he recognizes in her his perfect companion. This, the first and archetypal marriage, is pure and perfect as God intended.

The angels and their leader, Lucifer

Before continuing with the Narrative, we need to fill in some background, which would have been familiar to the original Hebrew audience at the time these early parts of God's Story were being recorded. A tragic, calamitous event – a series of events, in fact, a chain of terrible choices - that would have enormous significance for the lives of Adam and Eve, for creation, and the future of the human race.

You'll remember that before we jumped into the Narrative, God's Story, as recorded in the Bible, we noted that He'd created a huge number of servant beings, messengers - angels - to undertake His purposes. As created beings they were, of course, inferior to God, but nonetheless had the necessary understanding and capabilities, real power and authority, to fulfill the tasks and responsibilities given them.

Lucifer - meaning Morning Star - the greatest among them (and like them created, of course, perfect by God) was a being of enormous authority and power. His position was pre-eminent among all created beings, the closest in fact to God's throne itself.

Rebellion

But here's the astounding thing. Instead of continuing faithfully and gratefully to serve God, the One to whom Lucifer owed all his authority, wisdom and capabilities in the first place...Lucifer rebelled.

As part of His Narrative, God would include a description of these events written by His prophet Ezekiel many centuries later. Ostensibly a funeral song for the King of Tyre, verses 12-19 of chapter 28, are also a tragic account of Lucifer as he was and as he became.

It describes him becoming entranced with his own "exquisite" beauty and corrupted by his own splendour, consumed with his lofty position...until he freely chose... (remember how God always give free choice to personal beings He creates)...he freely chose to rebel against God,

Forgetting his created, contingent, dependent existence, he even aspired to equality and perhaps dominance over God as supreme ruler of all things.

Another prophet, one of God's appointed storytellers, Isaiah, would give an account (Chapter 14:13, 14) of Lucifer making ridiculous, outrageous, statements that he would go up to heaven and be "like the Most High". Also remarkably, numerous other angels followed Lucifer in his rebellion.

God's response

Of course, it goes without saying that none of this took God by surprise. As we noted earlier, His knowledge of all things is complete, exhaustive. Likewise, God's sovereign rule was in no way threatened by this rebellion. Later, again through the words of Isaiah, (14:15) God would dismiss out of hand even the slightest possibility of success for Lucifer's plan. Asserting that, far from ever reaching the unattainable position Lucifer aspired to, he would be "brought down to the place of the dead, down to its lowest depths".

So the former leader of God's spirit messengers, trusted and favoured, was stripped of his position and, along with the other rebellious angels, expelled from God's holy presence, from Heaven.

Satan, present and future

From this point on in God's Story he would usually be called *Satan* - the Enemy - and his spirit followers *demons, devils, unclean or evil spirits*. So even as God writes His Story - the way things were, are and will be - Satan became the self-appointed leader of every effort to write a conflicting Story or stories. He and his fallen spirit followers are implacably committed to their original goal of usurping God's sovereign rule. Their hatred and enmity inevitably extended to the race of humans, created in God's image and given that original caretaker role over the earth.

Later, God's Narrative tells us more about Satan's activities, depicting him in one place as a vicious, wild animal, prowling the earth for victims to consume. Indeed, Satan is about to enter the Story of God's interaction with human beings in a way that would prove to be earth-shattering in a quite literal sense.

Taking a brief glance ahead, it's worth noting here where the Story will end for Satan and his hordes of demons. God's Word tells us that a place of punishment, a "lake of fire" has been prepared for him, for them. If God truly is writing the Story as well as telling it to us, as we know He is, then the future for His Enemy and enemies, is grim to say the least.

Is this for real?

As we hear these stories about angels, demons, attempts to supplant God, places of punishment and so on, how are we to take them? Should we in the 21st century be expected to take them seriously – even as believers? After all, they do sound not unlike the plot of a movie, or a video game, or some science fantasy book. Or perhaps we've heard these things dismissed as myths and legends, on the level of the epic tales of other cultures and religious traditions. But let's consider this. Wouldn't a cunning, malevolent Enemy want people to think that about God's Story? Wouldn't he want it dismissed as just one among many stories? Wouldn't he want people to feel clever and sophisticated so that they'd see it as symbolic, a religious cautionary tale perhaps, but not to be believed as a true account of actual events?

And wouldn't a clever adversary of God's see to it that there were many other versions in all kinds of media, so that God's True Story would sound vaguely familiar, just without the special effects and good cinematography?

At the end of the day, like Lucifer, like Adam and Eve, on all different levels each of us is faced with the choice of whether we'll put ourselves in the role of our own storytellers, whether we'll listen to others wanting to do so, or if we'll simply and humbly be listeners to God's Story.



DISCUSSION POINTS

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1. In what ways, if any, do you think that popular culture – TV, movies, video games etc. – might affect how many people

would relate to the Bible's portrayal of angels, Satan, demons etc.?

2. How much impact would you say it has on your daily life that, as God's Word tells us, a whole domain exists which is inhabited by spirit beings?
3. Have you heard about any religions or worldviews that portray reality as an endless battle between good and evil, positive and negative etc.? If so, comment on any similarities or differences you see between those ideologies and the Bible's account of God's relationship to Satan and his rebellious angels.