



Where Did Satan Come From?

DISCOVERING GOD'S WORD BIBLE STUDY SERIES

Q&A NUMBER: 65

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Where did Satan come from? Is he a fallen angel? Did God create this very wicked being? There are many questions surrounding the origin of the one the Scriptures call “Satan.” Fortunately, the Bible does help us arrive at some definitive conclusions about Satan’s origin. Let’s investigate.

Does It Matter?

Before we specifically investigate the questions involving Satan’s origin, we need to consider whether the answers to this question even matters. For, as we will see, we do not have every piece of information that we would like to have concerning Satan. Yet, there have been many people who have developed sensational ideas about Satan and his origin based upon very little information that is actually presented in the pages of the Scriptures. So, we must consider whether Satan’s origin truly matters.

In some respects, Satan’s origin does not matter. For instance, regardless of how Satan came into being, the Scriptures repeatedly warn us about our adversary, the devil, who walks about like a roaring lion seeking someone to devour (see 1 Peter 5:8-9). This great enemy must be resisted because he is wanting to destroy us spiritually. These things remain true regardless of how Satan came into being. Therefore, our responsibility toward Satan is the same no matter how he came into being.

But, in some respects, Satan’s origin does matter. For instance, there are some definite conclusions that we can and should reach concerning his origin. Particularly, it is essential to recognize that Satan is a created being. If he was not created (i.e. if he was eternal), this would put him on the same level as God in that respect. Certainly, this kind of belief would have significant consequences as to whether we could overcome Satan’s temptations or not. Furthermore, if Satan is a created being, we need to consider whether God is responsible for creating evil. If He is, this

also has a significant impact on how we view sin, evil, and suffering in this world – and whether or not we are responsible for our own sin.

Therefore, we do possess some good reasons to be interested in how the Bible answers this question. However, we also must recognize that we have not been given the answer to every question about Satan's origin we could come up with. Yet, we have been given all the information we *need* to know and we must simply leave the rest to God. For instance, 2 Peter 1:3 says that we have been given all things that pertain to life and godliness. Thus, everything that we need to know in order live in a way that pleases God has been revealed to us. But, Deuteronomy 29:29 says that the “secret things belong to the Lord our God.” It is only that which is revealed that belongs to us. So, we must determine to draw the proper conclusions and make the right applications from those things that have been revealed – and not be concerned about the things God has not chosen to reveal to us.

A Fallen Angel?

Perhaps the most common explanation about Satan's origin is that he is a fallen angel. It is commonly believed that Satan (commonly called “Lucifer”) was a very powerful angel who rebelled against God in Heaven and was, consequently, cast from Heaven. Typically, this story (or a similar one) is presented as being entirely factual. However, please consider the following passages and examine for yourself whether the Scriptures present this as absolutely factual information about Satan.

First, consider Isaiah 14:12-14. The passage references one who is called “Lucifer.” It says that “Lucifer” had “fallen from heaven,” being “cut down to the ground.” Furthermore, he is said to have “weakened the nations” and determined to ascend into Heaven and exalt his throne “above the stars of God.” Yet, because he attempted to exalt himself to “be like the Most High,” he would be “brought down to Sheol” and to “the lowest depths of the Pit.”

Yet, the problem is that this passage never mentions Satan. Although Satan has often been forced into this passage, an individual must ignore the actual context in order to arrive at this conclusion. In fact, even the name “Lucifer” has been widely interpreted to mean “Satan” because of the misapplications from this passage. No where in Scripture does the Bible refer to Satan in this way. In fact, the term “Lucifer” was a Latin word that meant “light-bearing” and was applied to the planet Venus when it appeared as a morning star. Then, instead of applying this term to Satan, Isaiah was referring (in vivid language) to the fall of the Babylonian kingdom and the king of Babylon. This is the entire context of Isaiah 14. Now, why would Isaiah insert a random section in this context to teach about the origin of Satan? The fact is that he did not do so – as there is nothing in the text that suggests such a transition from the fall of the Babylonian kingdom.

Second, consider Ezekiel 28:12-16. The text references one who was in the Garden of Eden, with every precious stone as a covering. He is pictured as being “the anointed cherub who

covers” and being perfect from the day he was created – until sin was found in him. He became filled with violence and was, therefore, cast out by God from His mountain “as a profane thing.”

Again, this passage is commonly believed to be a reference to Satan once being pure while living in Heaven, sinning against God, and being cast out of Heaven. Yet, this passage identifies who the subject is – and it is not Satan! Instead, this passage says that the Lord was speaking about “the king of Tyre” (verse 11). Both Ezekiel 28:1-10 and Ezekiel 28:11-19 contain similar messages about this king. And, sarcastic language is used in both of these passages – indicating that this king really thought he was something. But, God would bring him low! Simply put, this passage has to do with the king of Tyre – and has nothing to do with Satan!

Third, consider Luke 10:18. The passage records Jesus as saying to the seventy who had been sent out and returned, “I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven.” This statement, when separated from its context, appears that Jesus is confirming part of the story that Satan was cast out of Heaven.

However, this is not so conclusive whenever you consider Jesus’ statement in its proper context. In context, the seventy Jesus had sent out “returned with joy, saying, ‘Lord, even the demons are subject to us in Your name’” (verse 17). Verse 18 is Jesus’ response to this statement. Then, in verses 19-20, Jesus continued to talk about the power and authority they had been given over the enemy and the fact that their names were written in Heaven. Therefore, Jesus’ statement in verse 18 is one of victory over Satan. In context, it *could* simply refer to this victory over Satan (which Jesus had been accomplishing Himself, see Luke 11:14-23), as symbolic language of Satan’s defeat.

Fourth, consider Revelation 12:7-9. This passage pictures a war that broke out in Heaven between Michael and his angels, and the dragon (Satan) and his angels. When they fought, the passage states that Satan and his angels “did not prevail, nor was a place found for them in heaven any longer.” Instead, the dragon was cast out and he has great wrath that would be demonstrated toward the inhabitants of the earth.

Once again, this passage is commonly said to describe the story previously identified concerning Satan’s origin. However, this is only the conclusion whenever John’s revelation is taken literally (and even this interpretation has problems). Instead, the student of the book of Revelation must recognize that the book contains a great deal of symbolic and apocalyptic language which must not be interpreted literally. Any attempt to take the book of Revelation literally will encounter many problems and will fail to understand the book properly. Please note that this passage does not identify this war as occurring prior to the time man was in the Garden of Eden. Instead, notice that the victory was “by the blood of the Lamb” (verse 11). Therefore, in context, this passage depicts a war that Satan was fighting with God and God’s people through the Roman Empire at that time (which engaged in widespread persecution of the church). Those Christians who died under Roman persecution would be saved by the blood of Jesus and those

who remained alive were to recognize that the devil had great wrath. Ultimately, the picture of this passage is that God is victorious over Satan.

Things We Know For Certain About Satan's Origin

Is there anything that we can know for certain about Satan's origins if these passages have often been misinterpreted and misapplied? Yes! In fact, there are some facts that we must understand properly.

First, Satan is a created being. God represents the only one who has not been created. Note that this includes the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Psalm 90:2, for instance, says that before the mountains, earth, or world was made, God was God – “from everlasting to everlasting.” Revelation 4:8 says that God was, is, and will always be. But, this same thing is never said or implied about Satan. Instead, Satan was created by God – along with every other thing that was created (see Colossians 1:15-17). Therefore, since God is eternal and Satan is created, God is greater than Satan.

Second, Satan is a spiritual being. Satan is not a being who is physical in nature (though he has taken the form of a physical serpent in the past, see Genesis 3). Instead, Satan is spiritual in nature. This is how Satan can exist for such a long period of time. The Scriptures force us to this conclusion. However, the Bible does not definitively say whether Satan is an angel or some other kind of spiritual being (as there are a variety of spiritual beings, see Revelation 4:6-8 as an example).

Third, Satan was created to possess free will. How could a perfectly holy God possibly create Satan? The answer lies in the fact that God created Satan as a spiritual being who was (at one time) innocent and pure. But, God created him with free will. This is the same way that God has created mankind. However, the Scriptures plainly teach that spiritual beings (generally) can exercise their free will and sin against God (see 2 Peter 2:4 and Jude 1:6). Likewise, the Scriptures teach that Satan chose to sin against God (1 John 3:8; John 8:44; 1 Timothy 3:6). Thus, God did not create Satan's wickedness. Satan himself is responsible!

Conclusion

Rather than engaging in endless speculation about Satan's origins, let's properly interpret and apply what the Bible has taught us about Satan – and leave the unknown to God. We have been given all of the information we need to know about Satan and how we should live to overcome his evil influences. Then, we should be thankful that our God is much greater than Satan!

Discovering God's Word Bible Study Series

Study Number: QA65

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