

The Fall of Satan

A. How did he fall?

In Ezekiel 28:15 we see that Satan fell when unrighteousness was found in him. We are not given the time of when this fall took place. We are not given the manner or cause either, other than unrighteousness was found in him. The unrighteousness that was found in him must have included his pride, as in verse 17 we see that his heart was lifted up because of his beauty. His perfect wisdom was corrupted by his perfect beauty.

The precipitating cause of Satan's fall was his pride, but the ultimate cause of why he became proud after being created perfect in every way is a mystery.

1. Theodicy

Theodicy is a vindication of the justice and holiness of God in establishing a world in which evil can exist.

a. Wrong theodicies

Erroneous theodicies include Monism and Dualism. Monism holds that the universe is made up of a single substance. Therefore, evil as such does not exist, and good and evil are of the same substance so there are no moral absolutes.

Dualism holds that the universe is made up of two substances. In this view evil exists independent of good and is equally as powerful. If both are equal, then what difference does it make which is followed?

These views can lead to license or legalism.

b. Proper theodicy

God is immutably holy, righteous and perfect. At no time can God be in the presence of sin without judging it or at least without contemplating judging it, as with Satan standing in God's presence in Job 1. God is waiting for the appointed time for Satan to receive his just punishment. God is not the author of sin, He is constitutionally unable to perpetuate sin (Psalm 5:4; James 1:13).

Psalm 5:4, "For Thou art not a God who takes pleasure in wickedness;
No evil dwells with Thee."

James 1:13, "Let no one say when he is tempted, "I am being tempted by God"; for God cannot be tempted by evil, and He Himself does not tempt anyone."

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God is in control, even of the evil that happens in the world. Evil is not outside of God's sovereign control, but He is not the cause of it.

Ephesians 1:11, "Also we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to His purpose who works all things after the counsel of His will."

Isaiah 43:11, "I, even I, am the LORD;
And there is no Savior besides Me."

By divine permission God decreed the entrance of sin into His created order, but He is not culpable.

According to the Westminster Confession: "God from all eternity did, by the most wise and holy counsel of his own will, freely and unchangeably ordain whatsoever comes to pass; yet so as thereby neither is God the author of sin, nor is violence offered to the will of the creatures, nor is the liberty of contingency of second causes taken away, but rather established."

One way to understand evil, is as privative. In other words, evil is the absence of good just as darkness is the absence of light, therefore, by definition, evil always existed potentially as the privation of God's righteousness. This is different from dualism in that it recognizes that evil only existed potentially, not actually before.

Satan was perfect but not incorruptible. He was untempted, uninfluenced from without, living in a perfect environment, but was capable of falling. He had no enticement or inducement to sin, yet he did.

According to Augustine, Satan was corruptible and became corrupted, "thus the true cause of the blessedness of the good angels is found to be this, that they cleave to Him who supremely is. And if we ask the cause of the misery of the bad, it occurs to us, ... that they are miserable because they have forsaken Him who supremely is, and have turned to themselves who have no such essence. ... If the further question be asked, What was the efficient cause of their evil will? There is none. For what is it which makes the will bad, when it is the will itself which makes action bad? And consequently the bad will is the cause of the bad action, but nothing is the efficient cause of the bad will ... For when the will abandons what is above itself, and turns to what is lower, it becomes evil – not because that is evil to which it turns, but because the turning itself is wicked. Therefore it is not an inferior thing which has made the will evil, but it is itself which has become so wickedly an inordinately desiring an inferior thing."

B. Why did he fall?

Can God create another God? No. If God were to create any being, that being could not be infinite as God is infinite, since that being would have a beginning. What God can do is create a being who is the most powerful creature among all of creation, and this is what He seems to have done with Satan. Just as only God can be infinite, only God cannot be corrupted. Creatures can be evil because they are created beings, and evil is the absence of God. God is absent from His creation when it turns from Him. Sin can only exist apart from God. It is by God's grace alone that any creature can

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be good, for without His intervention no one would do any good. Satan's fall therefore had to do with his own turning from God, and God's allowance of it. That Satan fell proves that even the greatest of created beings is not above sin or evil apart from God.

1. Isaiah 14

a. Addressed only to the king of Babylon

The language in verses 12-17 is unusual and some have argued that it parallels Canaanite mythology. Besides, the person being addressed is called a man (v. 16) and compared with other kings. This view argues that the phrase "you have fallen from heaven" in verse 12 is referring to a fall in political standing, not a literal fall from heaven. Another phrase that is explained figuratively is "son of the dawn" (v. 12), which is argued to refer to a pagan deity. The reference to "the mount of assembly" (v. 13) is explained as being a reference to a mountain to the north of Ugarit, and used in the passage in the same way that the Greeks made references to Mt. Olympus. Modern Jews are among those who reject the passage referring to an angelic being.

b. Addressed to both, the king of Babylon and Satan

Isaiah 14 has the same pattern as Ezekiel 28, where both Satan and the king of Tyre are addressed. Here we see the king of Babylon being addressed in verses 4-11, and Satan in verses 12-17. Though the insertion of Satan's description seems odd, the description itself fits well with Satan's description in Ezekiel 28. The term "star of the morning" (v. 12) is often used of angels, so its use here in reference to Satan would not be out of place.

The unwillingness to recognize the parenthetical reference to Satan here is more of a cultural handicap of us modern westerners than anything else. The use of "man" can be explained by its dual use in referring to both the king of Babylon and Satan.

"The descriptions have to be interpreted figuratively rather than literally therefore the single addressee view departs from a normative hermeneutic" (Sarles). The passage is written in a taunt song form, a form that pokes fun at an enemy. A parenthetical insertion in this form is not forbidden.

Ultimately it is the strong association of this passage with Ezekiel 28 that outweighs the single addressee theory.

2. The 5 "I Wills"

In Isaiah 14:12-17 we find five different times in which Satan asserts his will.

a. "I will ascend to heaven" (v. 13)

Satan was the highest ranking angel. As a cherub he had access to the throne, the presence, of God. But that was not enough for him. He wanted to make this his abode. He wanted to reside above the sphere that had been ordained for him. Ironically, redeemed sinners, who were created much lower than Satan and the angels, will be promoted higher than he was.

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b. “I will raise my throne above the stars of God” (v. 13)

“Satan was not satisfied to guard the throne of God. Instead, he wanted a throne of his own and replace God’s rule over the angels” (Sarles).

c. “I will sit on the mount of assembly” (v. 13)

Passages like Isaiah 2:2 and Psalm 48:1-2 help us identify this “mount of assembly” as the center of God’s (Millennial) Kingdom rule on earth from Jerusalem in the north. Satan wanted to rule over the earth.

Isaiah 2:2, “Now it will come about that In the last days,
The mountain of the house of the LORD
Will be established as the chief of the mountains,
And will be raised above the hills;
And all the nations will stream to it.”

Psalm 48:1, “GREAT is the LORD, and greatly to be praised,
In the city of our God, His holy mountain.
2 Beautiful in elevation, the joy of the whole earth,
Is Mount Zion *in* the far north,
The city of the great King.”

d. “I will ascend above the heights of the clouds” (v. 14)

The references to clouds usually refer to the divine presence. Therefore, this assertion in his part “seems to indicate that Satan is seeking to secure for himself some of the glory which belongs to God alone” (Sarles).

e. “I will make myself like the Most High” (v. 14)

Satan wanted to be like God. He coveted God’s sovereignty, authority, glory, etc. Satan wanted all that God had, but did not want to be the same as God, since clearly he was rejecting God’s character in coveting what only belongs to God. We can consider ourselves as an object lesson to Satan in that without God’s character the level of authority that Satan looked for cannot be obtained. It is Christ in us that allows for our future exaltation.

We see a sort of ascendancy in each of the five “I wills.” Satan goes from just wanting access to God’s sole abode in heaven to possessing the authority that is only God’s, to fully supplanting God.

C. What’s the effect of his fall?

1. Fall of some angels

As a result of Satan’s fall a rebellion of angels took place. It was at this point that evil became a reality and not just a potentiality (or possibility). Peace, the lack of discord between God and His creation, was disrupted as God’s rule was challenged. For the first time someone opposed God and “peace and righteousness could no longer exist at the same time” (Sarles).

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We find the fall of the other angels, a third of them, in Revelation 12.

2. Corruption of nature

The concept of total depravity does not begin with Adam, but with Satan. Satan's powers and faculties remained unchanged, but his intent and his use of them became twisted and in opposition to God's will.

3. Spread of sin

It was after Satan's fall that the non-elect angels fell. It was after his fall that he tempted Eve and that Adam fell. With Adam all of mankind fell as he was the federal representative of us all.

D. When did he fall?

Some believe Satan fell not just before Genesis 3, but before Genesis 1. They believe that Genesis 1:2's reference to darkness implies that this fall had already taken place. However, in Job 38:7 we see that all the sons of God, that is all the angels, shouted for joy. So it is more likely that Satan and his angels fell after the creation of the material universe.

Genesis 1:2, "And the earth was formless and void, and **darkness** was over the surface of the deep; and the Spirit of God was moving over the surface of the waters."

Job 38:7, "When the morning stars sang together,
And **all** the sons of God shouted for joy?"