

The Career of Satan

by Lewis Sperry Chafer

Satan was created perfect in all his ways, mighty in power, and full of beauty and wisdom, but he proposed a stupendous project in his heart to become like the Most High, which led to his fall and future judgment.

Scripture: Isaiah 14:12, Ezekiel 28:12, Luke 10:18, Revelation 12:7, Revelation 20:1

Topics: "Satanic Influence", "Spiritual Warfare"

Description

Lewis Sperry Chafer delves into the past, present, and future of Satan, starting from his creation and perfect state to his rebellion and ultimate defeat. The Scriptures reveal Satan's early career as the anointed cherub who fell due to pride and sought to exalt himself above God. Despite his defeat by the Second Adam, Christ, Satan continues to rule as a usurper until his final banishment to the lake of fire. This sermon emphasizes Satan's influence on the world and the importance of understanding his tactics in the ongoing spiritual battle.

Transcript

This chapter is a brief outline of the past, present and future of Satan, which is taken up at this point both that the following chapters may be more easily studied and because of the fact that those passages which deal most directly with his earliest condition are closely interwoven with predictions of his future and final defeat.

Revelation in regard to Satan begins with that dateless period between the perfect creation of the heavens and the earth (Gen. 1:1) and the desolating judgment which ended that period, when the earth became waste and empty (Gen. 1:2; Isa. 24:1; Jer. 4:23-26). One passage, Ezek. 28:11-19, deals at length with Satan and his relation to that age. In this Scripture Satan is evidently described under the title of "The King of Tyrus." Like the Messianic Psalms,--wherein the Psalmist is apparently referring to himself, though statements are made and conditions described that could only be connected with the Messiah, the Son of God,--so, here, that which is addressed to "The King of Tyrus" is, by its character, seen to be a direct reference to the person of Satan; for no similar person to whom this description could apply is revealed in Scripture. In the previous as well as the following chapters the final judgment of Jehovah is pronounced upon the enemies of His chosen people. Satan is distinctly numbered among these enemies in I Chron. 21:1; and his record and judgment naturally appear in this list.

Every sentence of this extended passage is a distinct revelation and is worthy of long and careful study. Only a passing reference can be made to it here. The passage is as follows:

"Moreover the word of the Lord came unto me, saying, Son of man, take up a lamentation upon the King of Tyrus, and say unto him, Thus saith the Lord God; Thou sealest up the sum, full of wisdom, and perfect in beauty. Thou hast been in Eden the garden of God; every precious stone was thy covering, the sardius, topaz, and the diamond, the beryl, the onyx, and the jasper, the sapphire, the emerald, and the carbuncle and gold: the workmanship of thy tabrets and of thy pipes was prepared in thee in the day that thou wast created. Thou art the anointed cherub that covereth; and I have set thee so: thou wast upon the holy mountain of God; thou hast walked up and down in the midst of the stones of fire. Thou wast perfect in thy ways from the day thou wast created, till iniquity was found in thee. By the multitude of thy merchandise they have filled the midst of thee with violence, and thou hast sinned: therefore I will cast thee as profane out of the mountain of God: and I will destroy thee, O covering cherub, from the midst of the stones of fire. Thine heart was lifted up because of thy beauty, thou hast corrupted thy wisdom by reason of thy brightness: I will cast thee to the ground, I will lay thee before Kings, that they may behold thee. Thou hast defiled thy sanctuaries by the multitude of thy iniquities, by the iniquity of thy traffic; therefore will I bring forth a fire from the midst of thee, it shall devour thee, and I will bring thee to ashes upon the earth in the sight of all them that behold thee. All they that know thee among the people shall be astonished at thee: thou shalt be a terror, and never shalt thou be any more."

This passage describes much of the early and latter career of Satan. Twice is his creation referred to. In verse fifteen it is stated that he was created perfect, and in verse thirteen that perfection is set forth in detail by the suggestive symbols of precious gems. He was also "full of wisdom," "perfect in beauty," filling up the sum of perfection. In verse fourteen he is called the "anointed cherub that covereth." By this the purpose of the Creator is revealed. The general interpretation of this verse is that Satan was created as a guard or protector to the throne of the Most High. This is reasonable. Like the golden cherubim, covering the visible mercy seat in the Holy of Holies of the earthly tabernacle, he was created a guard and covering cherub to the heavenly center of Glory. It is expressly stated that he was located by the Most High upon the holy mountain of God, the mountain of God being a symbol of the center of God's power, government, and eternal throne (Ps. 48:1; 68:15; Isa. 2:2). Over this exalted throne Satan was set as a covering cherub. He is also said to have been in "Eden, the garden of God," which is evidently another Eden than that in which Satan appeared as a serpent. It is probably a reference to the primitive creation, and the whole passage suggests a position of great authority for which he was created and anointed; a position from which he fell, drawing with him a host of beings over whom he had governing influence and power.

Again, it is stated that Satan was perfect in all his ways from the day he was created. It is important to notice both that he was created, and that he was created perfect. Since he was created, he is not self-existent, and never can be free from his dependence upon the Creator. He may vainly propose to become independent, and even be permitted for a time to act under that delusion; but that would only delay the inevitable judgment that awaits him. He was created perfect, or was a perfect fulfilment of the Creator's intention. Satan was a free moral agent; capable of choosing evil, but not obliged to do so. That he chose evil must ever be his own condemnation; for the Creator had surrounded him with sufficient motives to choose the good.

The crime of Satan is partly revealed in verse sixteen and this is followed by an exact description of his final judgment as it is predicted in the book of Revelation.

The important teaching of this passage is of Satan's first position and power--a power and wisdom sufficient to guard the throne of God from every possible enemy, and a glory and beauty that would become the highest officer in the Court of Heaven. By this revelation his present position and power may

be estimated.

The revelation next in importance is that of his crime; this is clearly set forth in Isa. 14:12-20. Before reading this passage it should be noticed that the prophet's vision of Satan, here recorded, is from the time of his final judgment, and the prophet is looking backward over Satan's whole career. Much that is still future is, therefore, referred to as though it were past. The passage is as follows:

"How art thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning! How art thou cut down to the ground, which didst weaken the nations! For thou hast said in thine heart, I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God: I will sit also upon the mount of the congregation, in the sides of the north: I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will be like the Most High. Yet thou shalt be brought down to hell, to the sides of the pit. They that see thee shall narrowly look upon thee, and consider thee, saying, Is this the man that made the earth to tremble, that did shake kingdoms; that made the world as a wilderness, and destroyed the cities thereof; that opened not the house of his prisoners? All the kings of the nations, even all of them, lie in glory, every one in his own house. But thou art cast out of thy grave like an abominable branch, and as the raiment of those that are slain, thrust through with a sword, that go down to the stones of the pit; as a carcass trodden under feet."

Here Satan appears under a different title. When he is seen in the primal glory, as described in Ezekiel 28:11-19, he bears the earthly title of "The King of Tyrus" and when fallen from that sphere, he bears the heavenly title of "Lucifer, Son of the Morning." It is as though, being out of harmony with the Creator by his sin, he is out of harmony with every sphere in which he may appear. This glorious heavenly title, "Lucifer, Son of the Morning," speaks of his first place in the celestial sphere, when the morning stars sang together and all the sons of God shouted for joy (Job 38:7). It would indicate a position near to the unsurpassed glory of "The Bright and Morning Star," "The Sun of Righteousness" who shall yet arise with healing in His wings.

Satan is here again said to be fallen from heaven. Of this fall Jesus speaks in Luke 10:18, "I beheld Satan as lightning fall from heaven."

The reference in both of these passages is not to Satan's moral degeneration but rather to a great event when he was, because of his sin, driven from his place in glory and made to inhabit the earth and air (Eph. 2:2; 6:12; I Pet. 5:8). Yet he was granted the privilege of access to the presence of God (Job 1:6; Rev. 12:10).

Referring to these texts: In the first two chapters of the book of Job, Satan is seen appearing in the midst of other heavenly beings, before the presence of Jehovah; and there seems to be nothing unusual in the presence of Satan in this celestial company. To the question of Jehovah, "Whence cometh thou?" he replies, "from going to and fro in the earth and from walking up and down in it." From this revelation the important information is given that Satan, while inhabiting the earth and air, is free to appear in the presence of God. His occupation of the earth and air is also taught in Eph. 6:11, 12. Here believers are addressed as follows: "Put on the whole armor of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For our wrestling is not against flesh and blood, but against the principalities, against the powers, against the world rulers of this darkness, against the spiritual host of wickedness in the heavenlies" (R.V.). Another injunction to believers is contained in I Pet. 5:8, 9: "Be sober, be watchful: your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour: whom withstand steadfast in your faith."

These two latter passages, taken together, restate with greater emphasis the revelation in regard to the present abode of Satan. That the earth and the air are his present abode must be accepted on the testimony of Scripture: in spite of the almost universal impression that he is now in hell.

In addition to this statement in regard to Satan's fall, the passage in Isaiah, which is under consideration, reveals two aspects of his present activity. He is first seen seeking to establish a throne for himself, and then as the promoter of confusion and terror in the Divine purpose in the world. This is followed with another statement of the certainty of his final judgment and banishment.

The crime of Satan is concisely stated in the fourteenth verse as being a purpose in his heart to become like the Most High. His heart was lifted up because of his beauty; he who was created and placed as the "Covering Cherub," with the high honor of guarding the throne of God, has corrupted his wisdom by reason of his brightness; he has struck at the throne he was set to protect. It was a purpose in his heart which would require the time of the ages to wholly destroy. There could be but one Most High, and the purpose of Satan to become like him could, naturally, be nothing less than an attempt to dethrone the Almighty.

The secret purpose in his heart reveals his method to be, not a violent attack upon the throne: but, like Absalom's, to steal the hearts of the unfaithful in the kingdom, and, through subtlety, to gain a government. He would thus become an object of worship, and attract attention from other beings to himself. To accomplish this, a hindering attitude must be assumed toward the purpose and projects of the Most High. No adequate appreciation can be formed of Satan's present projects and devices, and the motive that prompts them, without a clear understanding of his age-abiding attitude toward the Person of God.

There are two prominent events revealed in the history of Satan, falling within the period of time when he proposed in his heart to become like the Most High, and his yet future banishment and execution. The first of these was his meeting with and triumph over the first Adam; when he wrested the scepter of authority from man, by securing man's loyal obedience to his own suggestion and counsel. This earthly scepter Satan held by the full right of conquest, seemingly without challenge from Jehovah, until the first advent of the Second Adam; this meeting of the Second Adam, Christ, with Satan being the second great event which is revealed during this period in his career. Only the unfolding of the coming ages can reveal the magnitude of this terrible conflict. A glimpse is revealed from time to time of the unceasing effort of Satan to triumph over the Second Adam, as he had done over the first. He met Him in the wilderness, offering Him all he had gained from the first Adam, even the kingdom of this world; if only he might become like the Most High, and receive the obedient worship and adoration of the Second Adam, the Son of God. Again he is seen voicing his attempt to dissuade the Christ from His sacrificial death, through the impetuous Peter; and still again in the crushing attack upon the very life of Jesus in the Garden, when, it would seem, Satan attempted to take that life before it could be offered for the sins of the world.

However victorious Satan may have been over the first Adam, it is certain that he met a complete and final judgment and sentence in the Second Adam; and that bruising of the serpent's head was realized which was a part of the Adamic covenant. Referring to His Cross, Jesus said, "Now is the judgment of this world, now shall the prince of this world be cast out" (Jno. 12:31). And again in Jno. 16:11, "Of judgment because the prince of this world is judged." Still another Scriptural testimony to this great defeat of Satan is recorded in Col. 2:13-15: "Having forgiven you all trespasses; blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to the cross; and having

spoiled principalities and powers, he made a show of them openly, triumphing over them in it." It is, therefore, clear that, though Satan may have triumphed over the first Adam and thereby become the god and prince of this world; he himself was perfectly and finally triumphed over and judged by the second Adam in the Cross.

It is quite possible, however, that a sentence may be pronounced and made known some time before that sentence is actually executed. During such an interval a criminal is said to be under sentence awaiting his execution, which some higher authority has decreed. This period of sentence is that in which Satan appears in the present age; which age had its beginning with the Cross. Execution of this sentence would have banished him forever. That he is not banished is revealed in the fact that he, even after his judgment in the Cross, is referred to in Scripture as still being in authority over this world.

An illustration of Satan's present relation to this world may be taken from the history of Saul and David. It is natural that David, the first to occupy the Davidic throne, should be a type of Christ, the last and most glorious occupant of that throne (Luke 1:31-33). As there was a period between the anointing of David and the final banishment of Saul, in which Saul reigned as a usurper, though under Divine sentence and David was the God-appointed king: in like manner there is now a similar period in which Satan rules as a usurper, though under sentence; and the actual occupation of the throne by Christ is still future. In this period Satan, the rejected monarch, still rules; hunting to the death all those who have allied themselves with Christ, the God-anointed King.

Why Satan is thus allowed to continue his reign is perhaps but partly revealed. The real Church which is the Bride of Christ, is to sit with Him upon His throne (Rev. 3:21; I Cor. 6:2, 3; Matt. 19:28), and the present age must continue until that glorious heavenly people are gathered out from the world by regeneration. Again, it seems the course of Divine wisdom to make a sufficient and final trial of every claim of His adversaries; and when this age, with all its developments, shall have passed by, every mouth will be stopped, and the whole world and Satan will know their own failure and sin before God. They will stand self-condemned; and nothing could accomplish this but the testing, by actual trial, of all the self-sufficient claims of Satan and man. The sin of man has brought him under sentence too; and grace alone withholds his immediate execution (Jno. 3:18; Rom. 5:18, 19). Though the day of execution is, in the purpose of God delayed; it is, nevertheless, sure; and the time is fast approaching when an awful destruction of self-enthroned beings will be executed; and He alone shall reign, whose right it is to reign; "for He must reign until He hath put all enemies under His feet" (I Cor. 15:25). The Kingly Son shall yet arise and claim the nations of the earth and "break them with a rod of iron, and dash them in pieces as a potter's vessel" (Ps. 2:9).

It would seem that Satan cherishes the expectation of actually accomplishing his purpose until near the end of his career (though the demon testimony of Matt. 8:29 is suggestive on this point). Preceding his banishment to the pit, he is violently cast out of heaven and into the earth, according to Rev. 12:7-12; and his activity, from that time on is limited to that sphere. He is no longer granted access to God. The passage is as follows:

"And there was war in heaven: Michael and his angels fought against the dragon; and the dragon fought and his angels, and prevailed not; neither was there place found any more in heaven. And the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world: he was cast out into the earth, and his angels were cast out with him. And I heard a loud voice saying in heaven, Now is come salvation and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of His Christ: for

the accuser of our brethren is cast down, which accuseth them before God day and night. And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony; and they loved not their lives unto the death. Therefore rejoice, ye heavens, and ye that dwell in them. Woe to the inhabitants of the earth and of the sea! for the devil is come down unto you, having great wrath, because he knoweth that he hath but a short time."

Here Satan is pictured as being in great wrath as he is banished from heaven into the earth, "knowing that he has but a short time." After this short time, which is a terrible tribulation in the earth, Satan is bound and cast into a pit; this being an event in the glorious return of Christ to the earth, where He will reign on the throne of His Father David for a thousand years. Satan is confined to the pit during the same period, at the end of which he is released for "a little season." He then gathers an army for a last and terrible attack upon the government and people of God, which ends in his being banished to the lake of fire, where he meets his final and long predicted doom. These events are clearly stated in their order in the nineteenth and twentieth chapters of Revelation.

Satan is thus revealed as having been first created perfect in all his ways, mighty in power, and full of beauty and wisdom. While thus privileged, he proposed a stupendous project in his heart--himself to become like the Most High. Though cast down and yet having access to God, he is seen wresting the world scepter from man; and ruling as the god of this world, until the judgment of the Cross; and after that he still rules as a usurper. At the end of the age he is cast out of his access to heaven, into the earth; from thence to the pit; and, finally, is banished to the lake of fire forever.

This review of the career of Satan is made at this point in order to call attention to the direct and mighty influence he exerts upon the affairs of this world according to his varying positions and freedom.

After Satan rebelled, humanity, too, was thrown into an abnormal and almost universal attitude of independence toward God; and this continues beyond the Cross with increasing confusion and darkness, to the end of the age. The only exception to this rebellion is the little company of believers; and how terribly real is the tendency to the self-governed life of the old nature, even among these! When Satan is cast out of heaven and limited to the earth, there is tribulation upon the earth of which Jesus speaks in Matt. 24:21, and which is also referred to in Dan. 12:1. When Satan is bound and put in the pit, and the promised Kingdom of Christ has come, there is peace covering the earth as waters cover the face of the deep.

Can it be doubted that this mighty being is a living power, acting directly over the affairs of men, even in this self-glorying age?

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