

Satan, an Instrument of God

*“O the depth of the
riches both of the
wisdom and
knowledge of God!
how unsearchable
are his judgments,
and his ways past
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who hath known
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been his
counsellor?”*

—Romans 11:33,34

OUR LESSON WILL EX-

plore a concept beyond the reasoning of human finite minds and, when we examine God’s Word, we find that his infinite wisdom planned it so. In Ezekiel’s prophecy, we find a word portrait of the glorious Lucifer in his original state. The prophet identifies him as the Prince of Tyrus (Ezek. 28:2) and the King of Tyrus (vs. 12). This corre-

sponds to his correct name—Lucifer.—Isa. 14:12-14

The Scriptures give certain details, and describe Lucifer in his pristine state. We read, “Behold, thou art wiser than Daniel; there is no secret that they can hide from thee.” (Ezek. 28:3) The prophet says that Lucifer was wiser than Daniel, yet God had

imprinted in Daniel's mind extraordinary wisdom, perfect judgment, and understanding of dreams and visions. (Dan. 1:17) Lucifer had even more than this, as no secret was hidden from him.

LUCIFER CREATED PERFECT

Concerning Lucifer, Ezekiel wrote, "Son of man, take up a lamentation over the king of Tyre, and say to him, 'Thus says the Lord God, "You had the seal of perfection, Full of wisdom and perfect in beauty." (Ezek. 28:12, *New American Standard Bible*) Lucifer was the pattern of beauty and wisdom in his original state, and this was stamped upon him. "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." (vs. 13) The precious stones of his covering are also included in the high priest's breastplate. (Exod. 28:17-20) The words 'Thou hast been in Eden, the garden of God' tells us that the one being portrayed is Lucifer before iniquity was found in him.

"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." (Ezek. 28:14) Lucifer was full of wisdom, perfect in beauty, anointed to cover, and set by God upon the mountain (kingdom) of God in Eden, the garden of God. He was anointed to that office, an honor reserved for priests and kings, and he was set so by divine appointment.

We have no conception of his beauty, but clues suggest that it was a glowing brilliance of perfection. “Thou wast perfect in thy ways from the day that thou wast created, till iniquity was found in thee.” (vs. 15) There was monumental pride: “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.”—vs. 17

LUCIFER’S FALL

Isaiah speaks of his arrogance and blasphemy. “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.”—Isa. 14:12-14

Pride was one cause of Lucifer’s rebellion, but these verses tell us of the incredible magnitude and depth of iniquity that caused his fall. His ambition was to be ruler over the sons of God. “Beautiful for situation, the joy of the whole earth, is mount Zion, on the sides of the north, the city of the great King.” (Ps. 48:2) Most blasphemous of all, he wanted to be like the Most High God. This boast, and the ambition to become ruler, seems to have developed as Lucifer beheld the first human pair with their procreative powers. He reasoned that if he could control them, he could gain dominion over all their offspring.

In both Ezekiel's and Isaiah's prophecies, it is shown that once sin entered into Lucifer, it completely took over his character. '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 thine iniquities, by the iniquity of thy traffick; 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." (Ezek. 28:18) Paul calls him 'the god of this world' who has blinded the minds of the people.—II Cor. 4:4

Despite Lucifer's fall, God's purpose from the beginning has not changed. "Gather my saints together unto me; those that have made a covenant with me by sacrifice." (Ps. 50:5) "Having made known unto us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure which he hath purposed in himself: That in the dispensation of the fulness of times he might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth; even in him."—Eph. 1:9,10

FREE MORAL AGENTS

God's plan from the very beginning was to have a divine family, made in the image and likeness of his Son, and to bring the entire human family to perfection, to eternal life in harmony with his perfect will. He has chosen to grant free moral agency to his entire creation, that he may be obeyed and worshipped from a loving and willing heart. The basis of free moral agency incorporates the possibility of

disobedience and rebellion. The mighty Lucifer, full of wisdom and perfect in beauty, exercised to the fullest extent his freedom of will to an unthinkable and unimaginable height of sin, carrying him far beyond the realm of repentance.

It has been suggested that God could have endowed his creation with no other choice but to obey him with no freedom of will, but to serve him in a robotic sense. This suggestion is repugnant to any reasoning human mind. No one would desire love that was not freely given as a choice from the heart, and neither would God. Freedom of will and choice must, of necessity, conform with righteousness.

This is what is alluded to in our opening scripture, ‘Who hath known the mind of the Lord, or who hath been his counsellor?’ God, who knows the end from the beginning, knew Lucifer would choose rebellion and has used this means to bring about his eternal purpose—to have a divine family in the image and likeness of his Son; also, to bring the entire human family to perfection and eternal life in harmony with his perfect will. God’s foreknowledge in no way influenced Lucifer’s betrayal and rebellion. Jesus said, “Have not I chosen you twelve, and one of you is a devil?” (John 6:70) Jesus had foreknowledge of Judas’ betrayal, but he in no way coerced Judas’ free will. So it was with God’s foreknowledge of Lucifer’s free choice.

SATAN—GOD’S CHISEL

Lucifer, having made the choice to sin and rebel, became an instrument God has used to have free reign over the human family so that they will learn the exceeding sinfulness of sin. It is this same

instrument God is using to polish and fit those who are prospective members of his divine family. Satan is God's chisel, or tool.

We are not told how long Adam and Eve were in Eden under the covering of Lucifer before sin entered. God provided only one prohibition to test their obedience and this was all that Lucifer needed. We recall his lie to Eve, "Ye shall not surely die." (Gen. 3:4) In this lie, he suggested that God was lying when he told Adam and Eve "in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die." (Gen. 2:17) That was rebellion of the most shocking degree, and this lie has endured throughout the centuries since it was first told.

This entrance of sin into Satan and its resulting introduction into the human family was known and permitted of God. The Scriptures testify that man has been redeemed, "with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot: Who verily was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you." (I Pet. 1:19,20) Satan's rebellion must also have been foreknown since the need of a Redeemer was foreordained.

LESSON FROM JOB

The underlying principles of free moral agency and the permission of evil are brought to our attention in the Book of Job. "Now there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the LORD, and Satan came also among them. And the LORD said unto Satan, Whence comest thou? Then Satan answered the LORD, and said, From going to and fro in the earth, and from walking up

and down in it. And the LORD said unto Satan, Hast thou considered my servant Job, that there is none like him in the earth, a perfect and an upright man, one that feareth God, and escheweth evil? Then Satan answered the LORD, and said, Doth Job fear God for nought? Hast not thou made an hedge about him, and about his house, and about all that he hath on every side? thou hast blessed the work of his hands, and his substance is increased in the land. But put forth thine hand now, and touch all that he hath, and he will curse thee to thy face. And the LORD said unto Satan, Behold, all that he hath is in thy power; only upon himself put not forth thine hand. So Satan went forth from the presence of the LORD.”—Job 1:6-12

In this conversation, it is God who brings Job to Satan’s attention. Then Satan replies that Job’s faithfulness is only because of the prosperity he enjoys and the good life with which God has blessed him. He claims that God has put a ‘hedge’ around Job to protect him and if that were taken away, Job would curse him. God then tells Satan, ‘Go ahead, all that he has is in your power, only do not put your hand on him.’

PERMITTED TO TEST GOD’S PEOPLE

Satan knew that he must have permission to work his evil on Job. He would have no power over the situation unless it was granted him. He was also convinced he would succeed in destroying Job’s faith because he knew God did not coerce his subjects. He knew that Job was a free moral agent. Having God’s permission, Satan began to work on him. He lost all his flocks, his property, and his

children. Yet, with all this, he fell down and worshipped God, saying, "Naked came I out of my mother's womb, and naked shall I return thither: the LORD gave, and the LORD hath taken away; blessed be the name of the LORD. In all this Job sinned not, nor charged God foolishly."—Job 1:21,22

Continuing we read, "Again there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the LORD, and Satan came also among them to present himself before the LORD. And the LORD said unto Satan, From whence comest thou? And Satan answered the LORD, and said, From going to and fro in the earth, and from walking up and down in it. And the LORD said unto Satan, Hast thou considered my servant Job, that there is none like him in the earth, a perfect and an upright man, one that feareth God, and escheweth evil? and still he holdeth fast his integrity, although thou movedst me against him, to destroy him without cause. And Satan answered the LORD, and said, Skin for skin, yea, all that a man hath will he give for his life. But put forth thine hand now, and touch his bone and his flesh, and he will curse thee to thy face. And the LORD said unto Satan, Behold, he is in thine hand; but save his life. So went Satan forth from the presence of the LORD, and smote Job with sore boils from the sole of his foot unto his crown."—chap. 2:1-7

Once again Satan received permission to afflict Job with a loathsome disease of sore boils from head to toe. His wife urged him to curse God and die, "But he said unto her, Thou speakest as one of the foolish women speaketh. What? shall we receive

good at the hand of God, and shall we not receive evil? In all this did not Job sin with his lips.” (vs. 10) Later, in addition to this suffering, Job’s so-called friends came to him to convince him that he must have sinned to cause all this suffering.

GOD VINDICATED

God’s action in this confrontation was that he removed the hedge and permitted Satan to have full power in afflicting Job. No force was applied to Job, but God was vindicated by speaking to Job out of the whirlwind in chapters 38-41, where the marvels of creation in which wisdom, power, and the care of God were presented to Job’s mind. God did not explain the cause of his suffering, but Job became so sure of God that he accepted his affliction to be in harmony with God’s righteousness. The vital lesson in this experience was that Job learned to trust God implicitly, and said, “I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear: but now mine eye seeth thee.” (Job 42:5) “And the LORD turned the captivity of Job, when he prayed for his friends: also the LORD gave Job twice as much as he had before.”—vs. 10

Job’s experience depicts God’s method of proving his people entirely without coercion, leaving them with free choice. He does this by removing the hedge and allowing Satan to use his power in a limited way as he did with Job. By doing this, God is completely vindicated. This becomes the way of polishing his new creation by the tool, or chisel, ordained for this very purpose.

Through the many centuries of Israel’s experiences, their disobedience, rebellion, falling into

idolatry and sensuality became proof of Satan's controlling influence and his desire to corrupt those whom God called his people—the fleshly seed of Abraham. Israel was admonished by its prophets but, as a nation, they gave in to their fleshly desires and succumbed to Satan's influence.

SATAN'S ULTIMATE CHALLENGE

A further step in God's plan is alluded to. "I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel." (Gen. 3:15) Satan knew that Jesus was the great *Logos* by whom all things were made, including himself as Lucifer. This was a fearful development and he took steps to protect his evil empire. King Herod became a willing tool of Satan when he ordered the slaughter of every male child two years and under. God knew Satan's ambition and through his overruling providence protected the young boy Jesus.

When Jesus, at the age of thirty presented himself to John to be baptized by water immersion in the Jordan, Satan knew that the firstborn of God had now become the firstborn of many brethren. "Jesus, when he was baptized, went up straightway out of the water: and, lo, the heavens were opened unto him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and lighting upon him: And lo a voice from heaven, saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased."—Matt. 3:16,17

Jesus was anointed with the Holy Spirit in the likeness of a dove alighting upon him, which was an outward representation of God's power coming upon him. Jesus became conscious of a great change

in his condition and relationship to his Father because of the Spirit being poured without measure upon him. John was granted the privilege of seeing this demonstration, and hearing the voice, so that he might bear witness to this historic event in God's plan. It is doubtful that anyone else saw or heard anything. However, Satan was surely attentive to this event, planning and plotting how to neutralize, or corrupt, this beginning of God's divine family.

TEMPTATIONS REJECTED

Immediately after the events surrounding Jesus' baptism, we read, "Then was Jesus led up of the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil." (chap. 4:1) The heavens were then opened to Jesus' perfect mind. Time was required to ponder, to meditate upon, to pray and commune with the Father. Yet, at this very time, we are told that the Spirit led him into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil, and Satan received permission to tempt him at this crucial time. Without doubt, Jesus had spent this time recalling to mind all the prophecies concerning himself. He had a perfect memory, and gained a complete understanding of the plan of God which was necessary before beginning his ministry.

Satan selected what he considered the perfect time to tempt our Lord. However, Jesus rejected every offer by quoting scripture, and counteracting each proposal of the Adversary. It is interesting to note that Satan also quoted scripture to Jesus, but misapplied it. "He shall give his angels charge over thee, to keep thee in all thy ways. They shall bear

thee up in their hands, lest thou dash thy foot against a stone.” (Ps. 91:11,12) He quoted this when suggesting that Jesus should cast himself from the pinnacle of the Temple to recklessly prove that he was the Messiah. Satan knew this would be tempting God, and something he was accustomed to doing and apparently getting away with. Jesus repelled any suggestion of tempting God by rejecting the temptation.

Satan’s arrogance exposed itself to the full when he suggested that all the kingdoms of the world would he give to Jesus if he would fall down and worship him. This indicates that the kingdoms of the world actually did belong to Satan at this time (II Cor. 4:4), but this was only by God’s permission. This suggestion to Jesus was simply an attempt to thwart God’s plan for his only begotten Son, who was a free moral agent. God’s plan was that by obedience, suffering, death, and subsequent resurrection, Jesus would eventually become King of Kings and Lord of Lords. Jesus once again rejected Satan and defeated him by the Word of God.

SATAN’S TARGETS

Satan now turned his attention to Jesus’ followers. Since the heavens were opened to Jesus, he knew the danger that his followers would also face. He recalled the time when sin entered into Lucifer back in Eden, and said, “I beheld Satan as lightning fall from heaven.” (Luke 10:18) Jesus must have realized that one of his beloved but impetuous followers, Peter, would be in danger. After the last supper, he informed the twelve that one of them would betray him, and then he alluded to his

approaching death. “The Lord said, Simon, Simon, behold, Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat: But I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not: and when thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren.” (Luke 22:31,32) Here again, we see that no opposition was offered to Satan.

We see the Heavenly Father’s infinite wisdom manifest in permitting Satan to obtain access to the New Creatures in Christ Jesus, even those whom he has set his special love upon. Recalling God’s words to Satan concerning Job, he said, ‘Behold, he is in thy hand; but save his life.’ As with Job, the opposition of Satan is the very means by which God is vindicated without the use of force. Satan was aware that the New Creatures in Christ Jesus have free moral agency, and he felt confident that he could tempt and sway them to disobedience. However, this is the tool that God permits to prove the chosen ones.

Jesus’ prayer for Peter was all that stood between Peter and Satan, the enemy. The prayer did not fail and Jesus simply looked at Peter who broke down and wept bitterly. Satan had attempted to break Peter, but without coercion the prayer of Jesus strengthened him. After Pentecost, Peter was used mightily in the outworking of God’s plan.

On another occasion, the Apostle Paul had to severely remonstrate the Corinthian brethren because they continued to receive a brother who had committed incest. Paul wrote, “I verily, as absent in body, but present in spirit, have judged already, as though I were present, concerning him that hath so done this deed, In the name of our Lord Jesus

Christ, when ye are gathered together, and my spirit, with the power of our Lord Jesus Christ, To deliver such an one unto Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus.”—I Cor. 5:3-5

Again, we find Paul instructing the church to receive this man back into their midst and confirm their love to him. He said, “Sufficient to such a man is this punishment, which was inflicted of many. So that contrariwise ye ought rather to forgive him, and comfort him, lest perhaps such a one should be swallowed up with overmuch sorrow. Wherefore I beseech you that ye would confirm your love toward him.” (II Cor. 2:6-8) Later, we find not only this one who had sinned, but the whole Corinthian church in godly repentance, which Paul highly commended. (chap. 7:8-12) This episode is all the more striking when the one who was delivered unto Satan, as well as the church who failed to perceive their sin in letting him continue in his deeds, all repented fully and completely. Once again, the tool, or chisel, had been used as God’s polishing agent without force.

FURTHER TESTIMONY

Concerning Paul, we read, “I knew a man in Christ above fourteen years ago, (whether in the body, I cannot tell; or whether out of the body, I cannot tell: God knoweth;) such an one caught up to the third heaven. And I knew such a man, (whether in the body, or out of the body, I cannot tell: God knoweth;) How that he was caught up into paradise, and heard unspeakable words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter.”—II Cor. 12:2-4

“Lest I should be exalted above measure through the abundance of the revelations, there was given to me a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I should be exalted above measure. For this thing I besought the Lord thrice, that it might depart from me. And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me.”—vss. 7-9

The apostle tells us plainly that this ‘thorn in the flesh’ was given to him lest he be ‘exalted above measure’ from the abundance of the revelation that he saw in the third-heaven experience. He says it was a ‘messenger’ sent of Satan to buffet and afflict him. In this experience, God permitted the one who is the embodiment of pride—Satan—to work on the great apostle to perfect in him the grace of humility. Paul showed his submission to this chiseling work by saying he gladly would ‘glory’ in his infirmities that ‘the power of Christ’ might rest upon him.

Paul’s letter to Timothy is another scriptural example, where he wrote, “This charge I commit unto thee, son Timothy, according to the prophecies which went before on thee, that thou by them mightest war a good warfare: Holding faith, and a good conscience; which some having put away concerning faith have made shipwreck: Of whom is Hymenaeus and Alexander; whom I have delivered unto Satan, that they may learn not to blaspheme.”—I Tim. 1:18-20

Here we see Satan identified as an instrument used to teach these two not to blaspheme. This

shows, once again, God's method of removing the hedge and allowing the tool, or chisel, to perfect those who are running for the prize of the High Calling in Christ Jesus. If the chisel was used on the examples found in the Scriptures, we expect that it is used even now on the prospective members of the New Creation. The hedge may be removed so that the chisel may chip away the rough places in our characters.

As our opening scripture states, "How unsearch-able are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!"—Rom. 11:33,34

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