

Swept off your Feet

Beyond Worship-as-Usual

Connecting with God for a Strong Finish

CHAPTER 3

Fallen Angels

Created to be a stellar angel, Lucifer possessed radiant attributes. The name Lucifer means daystar, star of the morning, light bearer, or shining one.¹ In Isaiah 14:12, the NKJ renders the Hebrew word *Heylel* as “*Lucifer*”. The NAS renders it “*star of the morning*”, the NIV “*morning star*”, and the ESV “*Day Star*”.

God optimized features in Lucifer for generating glowing expressions of praise. The Hebrew verb *halal*, most often translated in the Bible as praise, means to shine, to flash forth light, to be clear in sound or color, to rave and boast, or figuratively to shine God's favor. The noun *Heylel* (Lucifer) comes from the same primitive root word *Halal* (praise). In Hebrew script, they appear as הֵיִלֵּל and הָלַל respectively. God intended Lucifer to shine like a star among heaven's host—to flash light in a luminous symphony of praise.

Either through a semantic shift or through careless interpretation, expressions of praise have become acts of worship. Perhaps Satan implemented a cunning scheme of sedition to substitute praise (*Halal*) for worship.

¹ <http://www.biblestudytools.com/> (retrieved 7-29-11)

Lucifer's Ambition Clashed with God's Authority

With outspoken arrogance, Lucifer announced his intention to become more than an angel. He declared, *"I will ascend above the tops of the clouds; I will make myself like the Most High"*.² Designed to be an anointed cherub, Lucifer sought an extreme makeover.³ Created for celestial service, he pursued exaltation beyond personal merit. Instead of becoming more godlike, Lucifer became an evil adversary; Satan literally means adversary.

After Lucifer became Satan, praise and worship digressed from its original design. Renegade ambition corrupted the celestial precedent, bending an undisclosed number of angels away from God. Treason severed the cohesive bond that once integrated holy angels in a paradigm of praise. Demonic opposition spoiled their collective sound of admiration and commendation. When Lucifer abandoned heaven's protocol for reverence, pride and insubordination infected heaven's consensus for worship.

We can only imagine how different the spiritual atmosphere may have been before Lucifer became Satan. Prior to this insurrection, crescendos of praise amplified a thoroughly unified multitude of worshipers. Aware of God's worth, single-minded angels extended praise with coherent enthusiasm. The word enthusiasm comes from the Greek word *entheos*, which means inspired by God.

Divine inspiration continues to motivate angelic responders today. Devoted archangels join loyal Seraphim and Cherubim as they charge the heavens with highest praise and deepest worship. From realms of intimate communion, angels radiate praise beyond visible spectrums and audible tones. They delight God's supernatural senses with stunning sights and glorious sounds.

² Isa 14:14 NAS

³ Eze 28:14 NAS

Late Breaking News

Rebellion in heaven temporarily distracted worshipers on earth from showing their Heavenly Father what He seeks. When Adam and Eve yielded to Satan's rival temptation, worshipers on earth changed the direction of their bow. Humanity collapsed headlong into a black hole contaminated with spiritual darkness.

Selfish ambition distorted the truth about God and pride twisted the reason for living. As a result, reverent responders failed to materialize in the biblical record for about two thousand years. Eventually Abraham and Job made the inspired headlines by offering God an appropriate response of worship.

Despite dire consequences, Satan refused to abandon this ill-conceived ambition for godhood. He tempted Jesus in the wilderness to bow before him in worship—a posture that God alone deserves. Satan pressed the Savior of the world saying, *"All these things [i.e., material kingdoms] I will give You, if You fall down and worship me."*⁴

The Bible does not describe Satan soliciting worship from any other angel or person. Of the four biblical references to antichrist, none mentions worship.⁵ Nonetheless, Revelation 13 and 14 describe groups of people who worship *"the dragon... who was thrown down, the serpent of old who is called the devil and Satan"*.⁶ Some individuals also worship the beast and an image of the beast.⁷ John noticed that:

...the whole earth was amazed and followed after the beast; they worshiped [proskuneo] the dragon because he gave his authority to the beast; and they worshiped [proskuneo] the beast, saying, "Who is like the beast, and who is able to wage war with him?" (Rev 13:3, 4 NAS)

⁴ Matthew 4:9 NAS

⁵ 1 John 2:18, 22; John 4:3 and 2 John 1:7 all mention antichrist

⁶ Rev 12:9 NAS

⁷ Rev 13:8, 12, 15 and Rev 14:11

John also wrote:

All inhabitants of the earth will worship the beast—all whose names have not been written in the book of life belonging to the Lamb that was slain from the creation of the world. (Rev 13:8 NAS)

Opposing Motives

While God seeks worshipers for who they are, Satan covets worshipers for what they might give him. These opposing motives mark a distinct battle line between God and Satan.

In the end, international warfare will revolve around worshipers and the focus of their worship. Every created being will worship God based on accurate information or they will worship a fallen angel based on deception and fear. Ultimately, the truth about God will prevail and everyone on earth will worship Him.

"All the earth will worship You, And will sing praises to You; They will sing praises to Your name." Selah. (Psalm 66:4 NAS)

Demons Know the Truth about Jesus

Jesus was a lightning rod for demonic activity, for *"whenever the unclean spirits saw Him, they would fall down before Him"*.⁸ Along with their host, they shouted the truth saying, *"You are the Son of God!"*⁹ Contrary to curious crowds and the religious intelligentsia, when a demonized person encountered Jesus he or she fell prostrate at His feet. When confronted with the truth personified, demons recognized what they saw. They believed the truth, trembled in fear, and fell down before Him. James wrote:

*You believe that God is one. You do well; the demons also believe, and shudder [from the Greek word *phrisso*, which means to bristle, to stiffen, to stand up, to shudder, to be struck with extreme fear, or to be horrified]. (James 2:19 NAS)*

⁸ Mark 3:11 NAS

⁹ Mark 3:11 NAS

Demons are spiritual beings. They demonstrate an astute echo of worship in spirit and truth. Since sights and sounds do not blind them from spiritual reality, they strike an unmistakable pose of reverence while proclaiming the truth about Jesus' identity.

Seeing Jesus from a distance, a Gerasene man possessed by a legion of demons ran up and bowed down before Him (translated from *proskuneo*, the most common Greek verb in the New Testament for worshipping God). Shouting the truth with a loud voice, he addressed Jesus as "*Son of the Most High God*".¹⁰ Consistent with the response of other unclean spirits, he bowed down and spoke the truth.

The sights and sounds associated with Jesus the man, did not conceal His identity as God, from evil spirits. With supreme power and sovereign authority, Jesus evoked a facedown response from demons. The Son of God literally swept them off their feet. While arrogant political rulers and obstinate religious leaders stood erect, demoniacs fell flat on their face.

Convinced of the truth, unclean spirits venerated Jesus in word and deed. Like Satan, who craved facedown worship from Jesus, they recognize the significance associated with this demonstrative act. The body language of prostration speaks louder than words. A deferential bow conveys profound reverence punctuated with humble submission.

Other individuals fall short, i.e. fail to fall, when they underestimate the glory of God's status. Though human opinions may influence a more casual response, they cannot change the awesome truth about God. Jesus may seem veiled, abbreviated, or distorted but the veracity of His divine nature and eternal power remains true nonetheless.

Idols Bow in God's Presence

After killing 34-thousand Israelites in battle, the Philistine army captured the Ark of the Covenant.¹¹ Moving it from Ebenezer to Ashdod,

¹⁰ Mark 5:6-7 NAS and Luke 8:28 NAS

¹¹ 1 Samuel 4:1-11

they placed it in Dagon's temple. When their champion idol Dagon encountered the seat of God's presence, it too fell facedown—on two successive occasions.

*Then the Philistines took the ark of God and brought it to the house of Dagon and set it by Dagon. When the Ashdodites arose early the next morning, behold, Dagon had **fallen on his face** to the ground before the ark of the LORD. So they took Dagon and set him in his place again. But when they arose early the next morning, behold, Dagon had **fallen on his face** to the ground before the ark of the LORD. And the head of Dagon and both the palms of his hands were cut off on the threshold; only the trunk of Dagon was left to him. (1 Samuel 5:2-4 NAS)*

This inanimate idol responded with facedown reverence when it experienced God's presence.

Compulsory Prostration

Isaiah described Lucifer in a state of deposed weakness. Using two rhetorical questions, he reveals a once stellar angel reduced to a bed of maggots covered with worms.

*'Have you [Lucifer, vs. 12] also become as **weak** as we? Have you become like us? Your pomp is **brought down** [Hebrew, yarad also means to **lay prostrate**] to Sheol, And the sound of your stringed instruments; **the maggot is spread under you, and worms cover you.**' (Isaiah 14:10-11 NKJ)*

Attempting to be godlike undermines the fundamental premise of a worshiper. This arrogant ambition transformed Lucifer from a shining daystar into Satan the fallen adversary.¹² Wanting to be "like the most high" caused an abrupt expulsion from heaven. Along with a number of complicit angels, Satan fell to the ground in a posture of compulsory

¹² <http://bible.crosswalk.com/Lexicons> (1-12-2011)

prostration, one that resembles facedown worship. Isaiah further details this involuntary plunge:

*“How you are **fallen** from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning! How you are **cut down to the ground** [a forced bearing similar to bowing], you who **weakened** [Hebrew, *Chalash* also means to disable or **prostrate**] the nations! For you have said in your heart: ‘I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God; I will also sit on the mount of the congregation on the farthest sides of the north; I will ascend above the heights of the clouds, I will be like the Most High. Yet you shall be **brought down** to Sheol, **to the lowest depths** of the Pit.’” (Isaiah 14:12-15 NKJ)*

Though created to be a worshiper, Lucifer was not content venerating another. He sought to make himself more than an angel. Violating angelic privilege, Lucifer coveted godhood at an exalted place that belongs exclusively to God. He craved divine eminence, which no one but God deserves.

Motivated by selfish ambition, Satan challenged God for the rank of divinity. Failing in this quest, he still attempts to deceive others. Jesus addressed pharisaical thinkers in His day who were sympathetic to Satan’s desire. Jesus told them:

*You are of your father the devil, and you want to do the desires of your father. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth because there is no truth in him. Whenever he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own nature, for he is a liar and **the father of lies**. (John 8:44 NAS)*

The word devil comes from the Greek word *diabolos*, which means false accuser or slanderer. Operating as a patriarch of deception, Satan vies for illegitimate worship. He is “*the father of lies*”, who manipulates the facts about us and assaults the truth about God. With obsessive propaganda, the devil promotes a depraved agenda. It is doomed to fail.

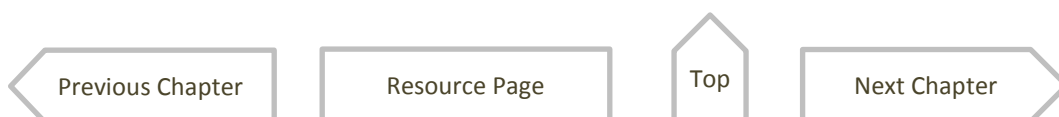
Satan does not deserve anyone’s worship. He is the epitome of evil. Every thought, word, and deed comes tainted with evil motives and vile associations. Satan’s credentials fail on every account to justify veneration. He possesses no attribute, accomplishment, or promise affiliated with divinity. He never has and never will qualify for the homage that belongs to God.

While the devil may offer and display limited supernatural power, he lacks divine substance. Contaminated with excessive pretense, Satan fails every benchmark for receiving gestures of worship. He is not eligible because he is not worthy. He never was—he never will be.

Jesus told 70 disciples that He saw Satan fall like a bolt of lightning from heaven.¹³ Forcefully driven to the ground, Satan assumes a stance of involuntary weakness and compulsory prostration. God brought Lucifer very low for craving a state of unmerited exaltation.

Propelled by God’s judgment, Satan plummeted from heaven to the earth. Because Lucifer failed to maintain a reverent posture of deference in worship, God cut him down to the ground. Desiring to become more than God made him to be, this angel found himself excluded from heaven’s glorious reward. Satan forfeited the only reliable vantage point for discerning truth. Rather than abiding in God’s presence, maggots infest his mattress while worms soil his covers.

This fatally flawed creature falls short of Lucifer’s original potential. Though occasionally disguised as an angel of light, Satan completely misses the mark as an object of worship. Destined for torment in a lake of eternal fire, the devil’s future remains sealed in a state of justified separation. In perpetuity, he will occupy an inferior position.



¹³ Luke 10:18 NAS