

THE UPWARD CALL

*Brethren, I do not regard myself as having laid hold of it yet;
but one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and reaching forward to what lies ahead,
**I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God
IN CHRIST JESUS.***

(Philippians 3:13-14 NASB)

#03-09121

The Crooked, Ancient Serpent

May 6, 2009

Please read this in light of issue #03-09120, May 4, 2009, *In the Beginning God Created*.

It is a sure thing that most of us have been taught that Satan was created a perfect, beautiful angel, but his pride got the best of him, and he fell in sin when he sought to rise above the throne he was given, even to rise to the level of God. This teaching is based on Isaiah 14 and Ezekiel 28. However, a careful study of these texts presents some difficulties that cannot be resolved if they are left to apply to Satan. For example, Ezekiel 28 is about the king of Tyre, a human and not an angel. The Lord God stated: **“Will you still say, ‘I am a god,’ in the presence of your slayer, though you are a man and not God, in the hands of those who wound you? You will die the death of the uncircumcised”** (Ezekiel 28:9-10a NASB). Scripture clearly states that he is a man who was created and is subject to death, something to which angels are not subject. The king of Tyre has gone the way of all mankind. Further, an argument could be made that this describes Adam who, before his fall, was perfect in beauty, walking in the garden of Eden. He was a covering cherub because he possessed the throne (canopy) over the earth at that time. He was the first king of the earth. Also, Isaiah 14:12 is often incorrectly translated as referring to Lucifer, son of the morning, which most people believe speaks of Satan before his supposed fall. However, the word *Lucifer* is not the proper translation from the original Hebrew. The word should be rendered *howl*: **Howl, son of the dawn!** On careful examination of Isaiah 14:9-17, it should become apparent that this does not refer to Satan and some fall in the past but most likely refers to the lawlessness of man that has gone forth in an attempt to conquer the world (Revelation 13:1-6). **Is this the man who made the earth tremble, who shook kingdoms, who made the world like a wilderness and overthrew its cities, who did not allow his prisoners to go home** (Isaiah 14:16-17 NASB)? This is a description of *lawless mankind*, the man of sin, the man of lawlessness, the son of stubbornness energized by Satan’s power.

Today, Satan is the prince of the air associated with this earth. As such, he is still in the heavenly places (not in a fictitious *hell*) as the accuser of the brethren (Revelation 12:10). In *The Revelation of Jesus Christ*, John perceived a battle between the dark angelic forces in heaven and the Lord’s angelic hosts.

And the great dragon was cast out, the ancient serpent called Adversary and Satan, who is deceiving the whole inhabited earth. It was cast into the earth.... (Revelation 12:9 CV)

In this description of Satan, we discover the key to his origin. He is called *the ancient serpent*. In Job, considered one of the oldest writings of Hebrew Scripture, there is a reference to the serpent.

By His spirit the heavens were made seemly, His hand travailed with the fugitive [crooked, fleeing] serpent. (Job 26:13 CV [GB, REB])

First, by His spirit, God made the heavens. There were no hands involved and there was no effort on His part. It was done with ease. The word *seemly* means “pleasing in appearance, suitable, proper, or fitting.” This is how the heavens were created, and we could say that it was a pleasing sight. It was good!

Second, by His hand, God made or formed the fugitive, crooked or fleeing serpent. It was not done by His spirit but by His hands, which implies an effort on the part of God. We labor with our hands and when we do, the object of labor is at a slight distance from our body. In like fashion, God labored over or travailed with the serpent, keeping it at a distance. In other words, God travailed in forming the serpent. The forming of this creature was not suitable or seemly; it was, we could say, dirty work.

Why would God travail over the making of the serpent? There is only one answer that makes any sense; the serpent was not something pleasant. It could be said that in the garden of Eden, the ancient serpent was odious, something unpleasant. John the apostle gives us the answer.

He who is habitually guilty of sin is a child of the Devil, because the Devil has been a sinner from the very beginning. The Son of God appeared for the purpose of undoing the work of the Devil. (1 John 3:8 WNT)

In this one verse, there is little doubt that the devil, who is the ancient serpent, was a sinner from the very beginning. But there is more.

You are of your father, the Adversary, and the desires of your father you are wanting to do. He was a man-killer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, for truth is not in him. Whenever he may be speaking a lie, he is speaking of his own, for he is a liar, and the father of it. (John 8:44 CV)

In other words, the ancient serpent was created a sinner, and this is why God had to form him from a distance with His hands and why it was such travail to God. Satan was created a sinner and a man-killer, the waster, to be the adversary of God and of mankind.

Jehovah declared to Isaiah: **I have created the waster to destroy** (Isaiah 54:16 ASV; also CV, KJV, JPS, LITV, MKJV); and **I form the light, and create darkness; I make peace, and create evil. I am Jehovah, that doeth all these things** (Isaiah 45:7 ASV; also DNT, GB, HNV, LITV, MKJV).

With these verses, there should be little doubt that God created evil itself and created the serpent to be the administrator of evil.

In the day of the Lord, the Lord will come and deal with the man-killer, the ancient serpent, the dragon (monster). Isaiah was given a prophecy of that day.

For behold, the LORD is about to come out from His place to punish the inhabitants of the earth for their iniquity; and the earth will reveal her bloodshed, and will no longer cover her slain. In that day the LORD will punish Leviathan the fleeing [pearing] serpent, with His fierce and great and mighty sword, even Leviathan the twisted [crooked] serpent; and He will kill the dragon who lives in the sea. (Isaiah 26:21-27:1 NASB [GB])

When all these Scriptures are looked at together, it becomes apparent that they refer to one and the same being: **And the great dragon was cast out, the ancient serpent called Adversary and Satan, who is deceiving the whole inhabited earth** (Revelation 12:9 CV). This being or entity was created evil and a sinning adversary; it was created this way to be God's means by which to introduce sin (missing the mark) into His creation. Like a great physician, God created and then injected this evil into His creation in accord with His plan to bring about His purpose of the eons. Why is this part of His plan? Because, to truly know God's character and nature of love, mankind needs a contrast to His character and nature of love! How else do we know love and good if we do not know hate and evil?

Further, as seen in the lives of Job and Paul, God uses Satan to make His vessels fit for His kingdom.

Job was a righteous man, and Satan was allowed to test him. In the first test, God told Satan he could not touch Job's body, but then He gave him permission to touch his body but not to kill him (Job 1:12; 2:6). In the end, God received the glory from Job's life. **"I have heard of Thee by the hearing of the ear; but now my eye sees Thee; therefore I retract, and I repent in dust and ashes"** (Job 42:5-6 NASB).

Paul was given abundant revelations from God, and, most likely, to keep Paul from exalting himself and creating a "ministry" centered on himself, God sent a messenger (an angel) of Satan to buffet Paul the rest of his life (2 Corinthians 12:7). Paul asked for the messenger to be taken out of the way, but the Lord answered: **"My grace is sufficient for you, for power (My power) is perfected in weakness"** (2 Corinthians 12:9 NASB). Thus, God used Satan to keep Paul from relying on himself.

We must keep a proper perspective. In both cases, it is important to note that Satan was limited in what he could do. Satan cannot work outside the will of God and is used by God to bring about His purpose. However, let us not make the mistake of giving credit to Satan for everything bad or evil. We must not forget that man partook of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, and sin reigns in his body of death. Man can create his own mischief without the aid of Satan and the demonic host.