

## **Ezekiel's Prophecy to the King of Tyre**

**Intro:** One of the most mysterious and often asked questions believers ask is, "Where did Satan come from?" Students of Scripture have long looked for the answer to this question in the Bible; and one of the most frequently quoted verses about Satan is the prophecy of Ezekiel 28:11ff addressed to the King of Tyre.

**Does this passage tell us of the origin of Satan? What is the meaning of the enigmatic language that describes the king of Tyre? Let's take a careful look at this text together.**

### **Background of the Text**

*This passage is a part of a collection of prophecies concerning the nations around Israel given to Ezekiel around the destruction of Jerusalem. They predict God's judgment on those who gloated over Israel's fall and who took advantage of it.*

*More specifically Ezekiel was given several oracles concerning the seacoast city of Tyre (Eze. 26:1-28:19). Our text is an oracle addressed to the king of Tyre, Ethbaal.*

### **God's description of Tyre's King**

#### ***The King's glorious perfection and blessing***

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. (Ezekiel 28:12)

You were in Eden, the garden of God; every precious stone was your covering: The ruby, the topaz, and the diamond; The beryl, the onyx, and the jasper; The lapis lazuli, the turquoise, and the emerald; and the gold, the workmanship of your settings and sockets, was in you. On the day that you were created they were prepared. (Ezekiel 28:13)

You were the anointed cherub who covers, and I placed you there. (Ezekiel 28:14a)

You were on the holy mountain of God; you walked in the midst of the stones of fire. (Eze. 28:14b)

You were blameless in your ways from the day you were created, until unrighteousness was found in you. (Ezekiel 28:15)

#### ***The King's corruption and judgment***

By the abundance of your trade you were internally filled with violence, and you sinned; therefore I have cast you as profane from the mountain of God. And I have destroyed you, O covering cherub, from the midst of the stones of fire. (Eze. 28:16)

Your heart was lifted up because of your beauty; you corrupted your wisdom by reason of your splendor. I cast you to the ground; I put you before kings, that they may see you. (Ezekiel 28:17)

By the multitude of your iniquities, in the unrighteousness of your trade, you profaned your sanctuaries. Therefore I have brought fire from the midst of you; It has consumed you, and I have turned you to ashes on the earth in the eyes of all who see you. (Ezekiel 28:18)

All who know you among the peoples are appalled at you; you have become terrified, and you will be no more. (Ezekiel 28:19)

***What is the meaning of these enigmatic phrases? How could the King of Tyre be in Eden? How could he be an anointed cherub? How could he be on the holy mountain of God? Is there a reference to another person behind the King; and if so, who is it?***

### **Exploring the Prophecy**

***Some believe that the King of Tyre is described with the background of Satan in view.***

A very popular view today is that the King of Tyre is metaphorically being compared to Satan. Thus, it is suggested that Satan was created by God and served in close relationship to God as a glorious cherub, covering His throne and walking on His holy mountain and having access to his inner presence. That Satan became proud because of his beauty and corrupt because of his wisdom and sinned against God in some violent way, rebelling against Him. Thus he was removed from his position, being cast to the ground and put before kings as a display of God's judgment.

Clearly many teachers embrace this passage as giving insight about Satan who was in the garden and who tempted the first human pair. They find in this text along with Isaiah 14, a text about "Lucifer", prophetic insight into the initial glory and fall of Satan.

May I suggest an alternative possibility?

***The King of Tyre is described with the background of Adam in view.***

Perhaps another explanation that might be worthy of consideration is that the King of Tyre is metaphorically being compared to the fall of the first man, Adam. Hence Ezekiel's picture gives us insight not into Satan, but into the experience of the first man. We can see a description of:

Adam's perfection and fellowship with God

*Adam was physically and intellectually perfect.*

He received the "seal of perfection". Are we to conceive of Adam as some kind of "ape man"? This might suggest that from the day of creation, Adam was a fully functional man, perfect in form and full of wisdom.

We see evidence of this in the creation account of his naming of the animals (Cf. Gen. 2:19-20). Adam was linguistically functional immediately and with the insight to give each animal its appropriate name.

*Adam was placed in Eden in a beautiful garden made by God.*

*And the Lord God planted a garden toward the east, in Eden; and there He placed the man whom He had formed. (Genesis 2:8)*

The word “garden” conveys the idea of a place “hedged around” and “Eden” is the Hebrew word for “delights”. Ezekiel’s prophecy appears to refer to this text (Eze. 28:14).

*As the first man, Adam was designated the priest of the human family.*

The meaning of the next phrase is difficult; but it is interesting to note that the precious stones that are said to adorn the first man were later to be formed into a breastplate for the high priest. As God’s priest Adam would instruct the human family in God’s law and lead them in the worship of God.

Gen. 2:11 indicates that Eden contained gold and precious gems.

*Adam was made keeper or guardian of the garden, an anointed “cherub”.*

*Then the Lord God took the man and put him into the garden of Eden to cultivate it and keep it. (Genesis 2:15)*

It is interesting that the verb in Gen. 2:15 “to keep” is “shamar” and can mean “to guard”. Interestingly the same word is found used of the cherubim in Gen. 3:24 when they are placed to “guard” the way to the tree of life.

The word “cherub” ordinarily raises images of winged creatures or griffins that surrounded God and this is how they are often portrayed in theophanies of God; but in this case, God made Adam himself a “cherub”, that is, a guardian of His presence. He would ensure that no one would encroach upon this sacred garden where God appeared. Of course, this position was given in view of the assumption that Adam and Eve be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth with the offspring that would come from them.

*Adam had an intimate spiritual relationship with God.*

Clearly the Genesis account indicates that God spoke to Adam and revealed himself in some way.

Perhaps it is possible to conclude from this text that God manifested Himself in a theophany in Eden on a mountain there. The stones of fire are possibly a reference to the protective wall that existed around this manifestation of God (Cf. Zech. 2:5). Adam as the first man was given the privilege of coming into God’s

presence, of walking on those stones into God's presence.

*In this condition, Adam lived for some time with Eve his wife and perhaps with children they had in the garden and who may have gone out of the garden to fill the earth (Cf. Gen. 4:16; 5:1-4) It was a perfect world in which they lived; but there was one test of Adam's loyalty. A tree placed in the middle of the garden would test his resolve to be content with all that God had given him and worship Him, or whether he would succumb to the temptation to be a god himself and seek what was not rightfully his. Of course we know the story well.*

#### Adam's fall

*Everything was perfect "until iniquity was found in him".*

He listened to the voice of the serpent, hoping to become as god (Cf. Gen. 3:5-7). But why? What motivates a man to seek to be a god? Were not the seeds of pride already planted in his heart?

*Your heart was lifted up because of your beauty; you corrupted your wisdom by reason of your splendor. (Ezekiel 28:17)*

It seems more reasonable to argue that Adam's transgression was not merely an unfortunate split-second choice to eat of the tree and please his wife; but the outgrowth of too much self-admiration and pride that culminated in this transgression presented by the tempter at the right time.

*For that choice Adam was to pay a severe price. All that had possessed was lost.*

By his sin, His role as priest of his family would now bring only profanation to the sanctuaries of God.

He was driven from the presence of the Lord (or as Ezekiel put it, "cast as profane from the mountain of God, destroyed from the midst of the stones of fire").

He was "cast from the mountain of God to the ground" to be a display to kings of what happens when they exalt themselves.

The job of guardian of the garden would be given to other beings to whom the task was given (Gen. 3:24).

Just as Adam had once been designated to guard the garden, now another would guard it from him as well!

Adam was forced to surrender not only the perfect fellowship with God but also the maintenance of the perfect physical life he had enjoyed. The ground was cursed; His judgment was death, "from dust you are, to dust you shall return" (Gen. 3:18).

*But what does this all have with the king of Tyre?*

***The King of Tyre had his own “Adam” experience.***

The language of Adam’s fall is easily adapted to this wicked king who had it all; but who in pride, self-centeredness, and discontentment sought what was not rightfully his. The ideas of the lament of Ezekiel 28:11ff are anticipated in the first oracle concerning the king of Tyre.

*He too had lived in Paradise, the priest and guardian of His own Eden, exalted and blessed by God; but this was not enough. He too wanted to be a god (Cf. Eze. 28:2)*

*He was carried away with his beauty and wisdom (Cf. Eze. 28:3-4).*

*He was to be filled with the unrighteousness of his “trade” (Eze. 28:5)*

*He was filled with a pride that was to be his downfall (Eze. 28:6)*

*He would suffer the consequences of death and destruction like his predecessor (Eze. 28:7-10).*

The king had said: ‘I am a god, I sit in the seat of gods, in the heart of the seas’;

God has responded, “Yet you are a man and not God, although you make your heart like the heart of God—“

Though he aspired to be a god, he really was only “a man” (in Hebrew “adam”) a fallen man who would suffer the consequences of his fall.

It was fitting that the prophet Ezekiel impress upon the king of Tyre that, like Adam, he too would suffer the consequences of his attitudes and actions.

But what does it have to do with us?

**Lessons for us**

***Perhaps no one will ever know the exact meaning of Ezekiel’s words to the King of Tyre. And ultimately it does not matter whether the referent for the language is Satan or Adam or even some other figure; but it would be hard to miss the import of the oracle.***

***We too need to beware of too much self-admiration.***

It has been said that pride is the genius of all sin. To defy the law of the Lord we have to exalt ourselves above Him. We have to believe that our thinking is as good as His. Pride prepares the way for sin and its fall.

***We need to see the blessing of being where God put us and be content with that!***

So often human beings are not content to be what they are, the creature of God made for fellowship with Him.

So often we want more and it causes us to choose sin because we think it will impart to us more than what God has granted.

***We need to recognize the consequences of our choice.***

Content and obedient we can enjoy the fellowship and life of God. Proud and disobedient we will lose it all and inherit only death and destruction.

**Conclusion: Does Ezekiel 28 answer the question, “Where did Satan come from?” Probably not! But, perhaps we’re asking the wrong question. The more important question is what is he doing and where is he going? And that the Bible clearly answers:**

*What is he doing? He goes about as a roaring lion seeking someone to devour! He will not be content until he has become the god of your life. Where is he going? The fires of hell have been prepared for him and for his angels and all who join in league with him.*

**But if you have listened carefully, you’ll already know how to overcome him!**