

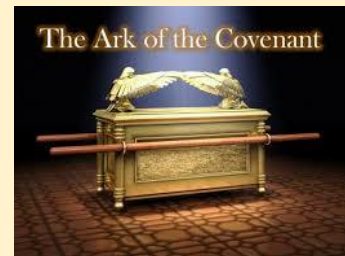
Study Guide #2: The Origin of Sin

Introduction

Where did sin, or evil, come from? Who is responsible for it? And what is it? We explore the first 2 questions in this Study Guide and the third question in the next Study Guide.

Question #1: Is the Devil a real being or simply a metaphor for evil in the world? If he is real, where did he come from?

Answer: The Devil is a real being. Revelation 12:9 calls him **“the Devil and Satan,”** who had **“his angels”** who were cast out of heaven with him (NKJV). Ezekiel 28 tells us more about him. That chapter contains a proclamation against the king of Tyre, but suddenly it becomes clear that the prophecy has *telescoped* beyond that leader to **“the anointed cherub who covers”** (v. 14, NKJV). A cherub seems to be an order of angels who were often, but not exclusively, associated with God’s throne (Exodus 25:17-22; Psalm 99:1; Ezekiel 10:1-2). Reference to the **“cherub who covers”** is to one of the two angels surrounding God’s throne as represented by the mercy seat on the Ark of the Covenant in Exodus 25. This angel must have been very special to be one of the covering cherubs. Ezekiel 28 says he was adorned with all kinds of jewels (v. 13) and apparently could sing multiple parts at once since timbrels and pipes (v. 13) were part of his anatomy. Verse 15 says he was created perfect, but the sin of pride in his own beauty corrupted him and caused him to sin (v. 17). Read Ezekiel 28:11-19. Since Revelation 12:7 & 9 both refer to **“his angels,”** it appears that this Satan (or the Devil) is an angel also! Could Ezekiel 28 then be referring to Satan also?



Question #2: Is there any other evidence that the Devil is an angel?

Answer: Yes. Isaiah 14:12-16 speaks about a being in heaven called Lucifer who was said to be cast out of heaven because he desired worship for himself. Lucifer is a name that means “son of the morning,” “morning star,” “light-bearer,” or “day star.” In II Peter 1:19, Jesus is called the **“morning star”** (NKJV), and in Revelation 22:16 Jesus calls Himself **“the Bright and Morning Star”** (NKJV). This close association of Lucifer’s name to one of Jesus’ titles indicates that Lucifer was a very close being to Jesus until his pride emerged. Clearly, then, Lucifer is the same angel referenced in Revelation 12 and Ezekiel 28. Therefore, we conclude that the Devil is a real being—an angel who went bad.

Question #3: What are angels in relationship to human beings?

Answer: Angels are created beings of a higher order than mankind because they can appear as people (Genesis 19:1, 5; cf. 18:22; Luke 1:19, 26), change their appearance (II Corinthians 11:14), and can travel at supernatural speeds (Daniel 9:21, 23; 8:15-16). This is certainly one reason that Satan and his fellow evil angels are spiritually dangerous because such creatures could easily deceive people by appearing to be other than what they are. [NOTE: Angels are definitely *not* spirit beings of deceased people, as popularized in the movie “It’s a Wonderful Life” and television series like “Highway to Heaven” because angels existed in heaven before sin entered the earth, which means before the death of any human beings. It was Satan himself who tempted our first parents on earth to sin in the first place, according to Genesis 3:1-6; cf. Revelation 12:9’s reference to **“that serpent of old”** (NKJV) with Genesis 3:1.]

Question #4: What does the name Satan mean? And how does he operate?

Answer: The name of Satan means “adversary,” which is a good name for him since he is called **“the accuser of our brethren”** (Revelation 12:10, NKJV). According to Revelation 12:9, Satan’s M.O.¹ is to use deception. Apparently, he is very good at it because he persuaded one-third of heaven’s angels to side with him, which led to a war in heaven that he lost, causing him and his angelic followers to be cast out of heaven (Revelation 12:4, 7-9). Revelation 12:4 says that his **“tail”** drew a third of the angels and threw them to the earth. A tail is used as a metaphor in Isaiah 9:14-15 to indicate the false prophets’ use of deceit



Devil with Horns & Pitchfork

to ensnare people, so there is no need to think that Satan has a literal tail. [NOTE: The traditional, red-costumed Devil with horns and a pitchfork was a Medieval caricature of Satan that hardly fits the description of a powerful angel. He probably is delighted that people think of him in that way, though, because then he’s not taken as seriously as he ought to be.]

Question #5: What kind of deceit did Satan use in heaven?

Answer: According to Ezekiel 28:16, 18, Satan engaged in **“the abundance of...trading”** (v. 16, NKJV) and **“the iniquity of...trading”** (v. 18, NKJV). The Hebrew word for **“trading”** means “to move around in trading” either in products or words. In reference to Satan, it would mean trading in words, which means that he engaged in “slander,” obviously slander against God. He must have accused God of being unfair and unjust because God would not acknowledge his claim to be equal to Him and worthy of worship (Isaiah 14:12-14). He continues the same M.O. on the earth, where he first persuaded Eve that God was unfair in withholding the fruit from the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil and that by eating it, she would become like God (Genesis 3:1-5; cf. 2:17).

Satan’s evil nature is to deceive by enticing people to do things that violate God’s instructions under the guise of some supposed benefit if they do it. Beware that Satan plays to our own selfish interests!

¹ *Modus operandi*, which is Latin for “method of operation.”

Question #6: If Satan is the cause of all evil in the universe, why did God create the Devil in the first place? Surely, as God, He knew what Lucifer would choose to become one day?

Answer: *First*, God didn't create the Devil. He created a beautiful angel called Lucifer. But since **"God is love"** Personified (I John 4:8, 16, NKJV), He created Lucifer with free will, for love requires free will to exist. You can't make anyone love you; if God programmed beings to "love" Him, it would not be love at all, for love must be freely given in order to be love. No, Lucifer chose to make the Devil out of himself. *Second*, if God had refused to create Lucifer because He knew what Lucifer would become, then God would in essence have denied Lucifer his free will. Although no one else but God in the entire universe would have known this, God is 100 percent consistent with His own character. As such, He could not have refused even in His own mind to create Lucifer.

Question #7: But when Lucifer first sinned in heaven, why didn't God destroy him right then? That could have avoided all of the suffering caused on this planet because of Satan.

Answer: We hate to sound like a broken record, but once again the answer is because **"God is love"** (I John 4:8, 16). If God had destroyed Lucifer when he first sinned, the other angels in heaven—and perhaps other intelligent creatures on other worlds—would have had doubts about God's character and served Him out of fear. But since **"God is love"** and desires love from His intelligent creatures, He must allow Satan to prove what the principle of selfishness leads to. In this way, the other perfect beings would be able to see that Satan was wrong *and* dangerous, and sin would never rise again after God finally ended it.

Question #8: How could a perfect and beautiful being, who lived next to God in heaven, choose the path of selfishness? It seems preposterous!

Answer: Perhaps that's the greatest mystery of all! Yet Lucifer chose to look at himself until the idea emerged in his mind that he was worthy of worship. His beauty and high position around God's throne eventually led to this inward selfishness until it spilled out in a campaign of slander and eventually in open rebellion. It is indeed preposterous that any created being could think himself to be equal with the uncreated Creator-God. We may not comprehend how that could have happened, but the Scriptures say that it did.



Beautiful Angel

Question #9: Why were Satan and his angels cast to the earth rather than to some other place?

Answer: Of course, if they had been cast to some other world, *those* intelligent creatures would be asking themselves the same question right now instead of us. The Bible does not tell us why they were cast to the earth, but the fact that they were suggests that Lucifer may have been jealous over the creation of this planet in that he wasn't consulted in the planning. It may also have to do with the idea that mankind was created

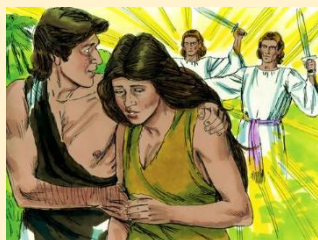
in the image of God (Genesis 1:26-27), so that when Satan lost the war in heaven, he sought to attack God by attacking those made in His image. Or perhaps it was a combination of both reasons. The Scriptures simply do not reveal this in any manner.

Question #10: How did evil gain a foothold on planet Earth?

Answer: When God created Earth and life on it, He pronounced it all to be “**very good**” (Genesis 1:31, NKJV). Since God is Goodness Personified (see Explorer I, Study Guide #3), we would indeed expect that He created everything to be absolutely perfect. That must have therefore included the first human couple, Adam and Eve (Genesis 2:18-3:20). There was no hint of evil or selfishness anywhere on the planet.

When Satan and his angels were cast out of heaven to the earth, Satan sought to deceive our first parents. Adam and Eve were told not to eat the fruit of one tree in the Garden of Eden, identified as the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil (Genesis 2:16-17; 3:2-3, 6). Of course, God would not have made an evil tree or bad fruit. Therefore, it must have been a test of loyalty to allow Adam and Eve to perfect their characters. Although they were created perfect in *nature*, *character* is something that intelligent beings must *develop*—they’re not born with it. Thoughts lead to words; words lead to actions; actions form habits; and habits form the character. So character is that which describes a person only after he has created a trend of his life, or a particular tendency toward certain habits. The real issue regarding character relative to God is whether or not a being will maintain his loyalty to Him. That’s the reason that God had to develop a test of loyalty for Adam and Eve. [NOTE: This character of perfect loyalty—when a being has demonstrated that he will never knowingly choose to depart from God’s will—is a valuable lesson to be learned because it has application to the Christian life of sanctification and to Christian perfection—although not *perfectionism*!]

It turned out that God’s test of loyalty for Adam and Eve was the easiest test He could have designed. In Genesis 3:1-6, Satan was located in the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil—the only tree that God had warned our first parents to stay away from. That strongly suggests that (1) God confined Satan to that one place on earth, and (2) that Satan’s angels were not even allowed in the whole Garden of Eden. Although the Bible doesn’t explicitly say this, it appears logical that after a period of time, if Adam and Eve had not yielded to Satan, God would have sent him and his angels elsewhere. Then He would have allowed Adam and Eve to eat the fruit of that tree because the test of loyalty would have ended.



Adam & Eve expelled from
Eden

According to Genesis 3:1-6, one day Eve wandered near the forbidden tree and entered into a conversation with Satan, who talked through a serpent. He persuaded her that God was denying them the privilege of becoming like Him by forbidding them to eat the fruit of that tree. The Scriptures say that **“she took of its fruit and ate. She also gave to her husband with her, and he ate”** (v. 6, NKJV). Thus, they both failed the test of loyalty by sinning (disobeying) against God. This is what Christians call the “fall of man”—it’s his fall from perfection into the spiritual pit of sin.