

The Gospel Unashamed

"From the cowardice that shrinks from new truth, from the laziness that is content with half-truths, from the arrogance that thinks it knows all truth, O, God of Truth, deliver us."

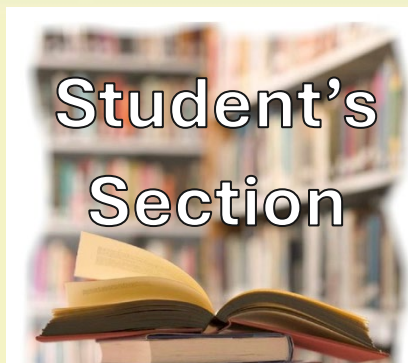
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The Alleged Fall of Satan in Ezekiel 28

By Levi Leger

*Note: NASB used as Text

One of the more controversial topics in the study of the book of Ezekiel is the twenty-eighth chapter and its proper interpretation. The controversy concerns language used in Ezekiel's denouncement of the king of Tyre that sounds like it could be details that are true of Satan as well. This language, though highly poetic, sounds like it could be a description of Satan, his pride, and the nature of his sin against God. With this view in mind, this article will discuss those passages which are particularly interesting as they relate to this topic, rather than try to write an

exposition of the chapter as a whole.

"Again the word of the LORD came to me saying, 12 '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. 13 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. 14 You were the anointed cherub who covers, And I placed you *there*. You were on the holy mountain of God; You walked in the midst of the stones of fire. 15 You were blameless in your ways From the day you were created Until unrighteousness was found in you. 16 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. 17 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 28:11-17**

Upon examination of this language, the student of God's word finds that he is confronted with seemingly only two possible conclusions.

1. Ezekiel is using highly figurative, highly poetic language to describe the fall of the king of Tyre.
2. He is describing the fall of Satan and saying that the king of Tyre, in his great pride, was like the Devil in his own fall.

Verses 11-17 provide the most intriguing points which face the interpreter of this passage. In general, opinion is greatly divided as to the actual interpretation of the chapter. The response most often to be found among those who reject this passage as speaking of Satan is the fact that Ezekiel directly refers only to the

king of Tyre and not to Satan in this chapter.

While this point is conceded, there is nevertheless some language that one must strain to the very limits of figurative communication in order to apply it to the king of Tyre.

One such example comes from **Ezekiel 28:12** where God says through the prophet, "...You had the **seal of perfection**, full of wisdom and perfect in beauty."

In this verse, the phrase that is crucial is the first part of the section just quoted. Of prime importance is the reading of the actual Hebrew, which literally means "the sealing of a plan". The Hebrew, then, suggests that the being referred to here was the completion or consummation of a plan; or, to put it another way, the final piece of the puzzle. It is easy to dismiss this passage as being merely symbolic language that the prophet is applying to the king of Tyre, but it cannot be denied that this is using figurative language to a level of hyperbole not often found in Scripture.

In what way was the king of Tyre the completion of a plan? The context would seem to require it as being God's plan (**cf. Ezekiel 28:14a**). While it is certainly true that God used even pagan kings as part of His plan, the king of Tyre is never referred to as being God's servant in the same way that Nebuchadnezzar or Cyrus are in Scripture.

However, if this passage were viewed as relating the fall of Satan, whom the king of Tyre

resembled in his own fall, then this passage is not difficult to understand. Considering that Satan himself was in Eden and that he is the ruler of this world (**John 12:31**), it is clear from Scripture that Satan is indeed powerful, and it is not difficult to see how Satan could have completed God's plan in some way. To simply dismiss this phrase as poetic imagery is to ignore the strong statement being thus made about a pagan king.

In the next verse, another phrase of interest is found. There, we read that,

"You were in Eden, the garden of God...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**

Thus the prophet Ezekiel places the king of Tyre directly in the garden paradise where the Creation of man began, in the midst of the perfect paradise that God had created for Adam and Eve. While it is certainly possible to interpret, as some do, the term *Eden* as being simply metaphorical for some pagan counterpart, that leaves the interpreter of this text with the conclusion that God inspired Ezekiel to take this term, associated with sinless perfection and paradise, and lower it to the level of a pagan king's garden, temple, palace, etc.

The phraseology also suggests that the king of Tyre was in the *presence* of God, since God Himself was in Eden (**cf. Genesis 3:8**). Again, the interpreter of

God's word must consider the statements that Ezekiel is making before he dismisses everything as poetic or figurative language. In what way was the king of Tyre in God's presence?

However, if one were to view this passage as actually speaking of Satan, then this phrase presents no difficulty at all, since we know that Satan was indeed in the Garden and would eventually be dismissed. Then, the passage would be taking Satan's presence in the Garden (and his attitude therein) and applying it to the king of Tyre's fall from the splendor in which he lived.

Additionally, the latter portion of this verse creates complications for the interpreter of this passage, for it recalls language regarding God's instructions concerning the tabernacle (**see Ex. 25:10-16; 26:15-25**). Again, this suggests preparation for use in some function within the plan of God on the part of the king of Tyre that Bible students are not privy to and must assume either took place or again attribute to symbolic imagery on the part of God's prophet.

The word *created* is also interesting and would seem to suggest the original beginning of the being under discussion here. Could this merely be a reference, as some have suggested, to the day of this pagan king's crowning? While this is not impossible, one wonders why all of this sacred Old Covenant religious language of service and use to God would be applied to the day of the king of Tyre's ascending the throne over a pagan nation. Further interest on

this point actually comes from **Hebrews 9:23**. There, the writer clearly indicates that the things of the earthly tabernacle were merely copies of heavenly ones.

Could Ezekiel be hinting at the existence of these heavenly things here in **Ezekiel 28:13** and in the verse to follow (to be discussed shortly)? If that be so, then one can easily see how this verse refers to Satan, who would have been present among these things and would have been in the service of God. Then, we would have an application (admittedly symbolic) of literal events that were true of Satan.

This seems to be more consistent with the passage and does not necessitate the hyperbolic extremity to which we would be forced to take the language. It certainly cannot be denied that people today often take what is true of one person's attitude or life and apply it to the behavior of someone else although the events were not *literally* true about the second person.

For the interpreter who does not see Satan in this passage, **Ezekiel 28:14** presents multiple problems: "You were the anointed cherub who covers, and I placed you *there*. You were on the holy mountain of God; you walked in the midst of the stones of fire."

Here, there are three points that should be noted.

First, in Scripture and particularly in Ezekiel, cherubim are associated with God's glorious presence (cf. **Eze. 1 and 10**). Also, this language brings to mind

the ark of the covenant over which cherubim were placed (see **Ex. 25:17-22**). In what way, then, was the king of Tyre the cherub who covers, i.e. covering the presence of God? The suggestion that the king of Tyre was the covering cherub of his own paradise does not keep in mind this word's continual association with God's presence, i.e. the fact that cherubim are always seen to be in the actual presence of the holy God of Israel and not a Gentile king's palace or the temple of his god.

Second, the phrase "the holy mountain of God" cannot be, as some have theorized, synonymous with the earlier phrase "the garden of God"; for there that phrase is equivalent to Eden, and such an identification here does not seem appropriate. The term *holy mountain* in Scripture is often used of Jerusalem and prophetically of the Church, although it does have at least one usage where it seems to refer to Heaven (cf. **Isa. 14:13**). Contextually speaking, then, the phrase as used here in Ezekiel seems to be best identified with the usage in Isaiah and is thus referring to Heaven. Therefore, we must assume that Ezekiel is depicting the king of Tyre as symbolically residing in Heaven, the very dwelling place of God.

This is not impossible, however, this being a reference to Satan instead is certainly plausible, for there can be no question that Satan had (at least at one time) direct access to God's presence (**Job 1:6; 2:1**). If the ancient identification of Satan as a fallen angel is correct (cf. **II Cor. 11:14**),

then the Devil did at one time reside in Heaven.

Third, the phrase "stones of fire" is of importance. The most common interpretation is that this term concerns the manifestation of God's power (cf. **Ex. 19:16; Ps. 18:8,12**). This identification certainly seems plausible, but again, it places this proud king of Tyre in the very midst of the awesome presence of God. However, to identify this passage as referring to Satan who *did* reside in the amazing presence of God whom the king of Tyre did resemble in his pride lessens the extreme position required by the interpretation of this verse as offered by those who do not see Satan as part of this chapter.

As Ezekiel continues his denunciatory proclamation, there is yet more terminology that sparks controversy for the minds of the interpreters of the Bible.

Continuing in this passage we read, "You were blameless in your ways from the day you were created, until unrighteousness was found in you." **Ezekiel 28:15**

At first glance, there is nothing wrong with interpreting this passage as referring solely to the king of Tyre. *Blameless* here could simply mean nothing more than uprightness of conduct as king. However, this interpretation does bring to light the following question: Would God see the ways of a pagan king with his pagan worship as blameless and without fault? To apply this passage only to the king of Tyre requires the interpreter of this verse to conclude that the

unrighteousness referred to here is the pride of this Gentile king and the violence with which he obtained his wealth, an interpretation postulated by some biblical scholars. This interpretation is somewhat difficult as it overlooks the pagan worship of this king.

While it is true that God may not have held this king to the same standards as He would have held His own people (**cf. Acts 17:30**), it still forces us to conclude that God expected less of this king regarding his form of worship while holding him to higher standards regarding his pride and how he obtained his wealth. Additionally, verse sixteen reiterates the terminology of verse fourteen, stating that he (the king or Satan) has been removed from God's presence. This again creates the issue discussed above when one considers the implications of such a figurative interpretation of verse fourteen.

The twenty-eighth chapter of Ezekiel is one that provides the student of the Bible with an interesting controversy. There is no doubt that its primary function was to denounce the king of Tyre, but the deeper question rests in just how this denunciation was written, whether this is only speaking symbolically of the king of Tyre or truthfully of Satan to whom the king of Tyre is being compared to in this passage.

Those who choose to see this chapter as symbolic see no problem with the seemingly extreme statements being made regarding a pagan king while those who see Satan as being

described here believe that the lack of a direct reference to the Devil is compensated for by the terminology that better fits a heavenly being as opposed to a Gentile king.

Regardless of the true interpretation, the clear teaching of this passage is that pride can lead to a great fall and that all individuals should humble themselves before God and His sovereign will. All should be aware that whatever gifts we have are from God, and that any attitude other than gratefulness regarding our blessings is fraudulent and likely to lead to a humbling of our position and our perceived greatness.

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Was Paul Ever Married?

We know that Paul was not married when he wrote to the Corinthians. In chapter seven, he says that it is good for the unmarried to remain as he is, that is unmarried. In chapter nine, he asks the rhetorical question about whether he had the right to take along a believing wife like other apostles. This is a question that he could ask only if he was without a wife at that time.

"7 For I wish that all men were even as I myself. But each one has his own gift from God, one in this manner and another in that. 8 But I say **to the unmarried and to the widows: It is good for them if they remain even as I am;** 9 but if they cannot exercise self-control, let them marry. For it is

better to marry than to burn with passion." **I Cor. 7:7-9 (NKJV)**

"Do we have no right to take along a believing wife, as do also the other apostles, the brothers of the Lord, and Cephas?" I Cor. 9:5 (NKJV)

While some argue that Paul places himself among the divorced or widowed in the **I Cor. 7:8** passage, I see nothing in the context that demands this. He is simply discussing whether the unmarried should marry given the "present distress" the Church was in at that time. He argues that it is good to remain unmarried like he is, but only if you can exercise self-control.

"1 Now concerning the things of which you wrote to me: It is good for a man not to touch a woman. 2 Nevertheless, because of sexual immorality, let each man have his own wife, and let each woman have her own husband...26 I suppose therefore that this is good because of the present distress--that it is good for a man to remain as he is:" I Cor. 7:1-2, 26 (NKJV)

There is much more to be said about this passage of Scripture, but those discussions are not relevant to the question at hand.

Since we know that Paul was not married when he wrote the letter of I Corinthians, the question becomes, was Paul ever married?

There are some who insist that Paul was married and either divorced or widowed. Some go as far as to suggest that his wife

might have been martyred, perhaps even by Paul himself before his conversion. While any number of scenarios are possible, not all of them are plausible or probable.

As we consider this question, we need to remember that a chain is only as strong as its weakest link. The conclusion that Paul was married at one time and then divorced or widowed requires a chain of reasoning. I propose that we examine each link in this chain of reasoning and check them for weaknesses. We will begin with the first link in the chain.

Link 1: Paul cast an official vote against Christians.

This is based on the statement Paul made to King Agrippa.

“This I also did in Jerusalem, and many of the saints I shut up in prison, having received authority from the chief priests; and when they were put to death, **I cast my vote against them.**” **Acts 26:10 (NKJV)**

While “vote” is certainly a legitimate and acceptable translation for the Greek word, *psephos*, here, the question is whether this refers to an official vote or whether it is simply a way of Paul saying that he was in full agreement with their deaths. The commentators and language experts are divided on this point. Consider a few of their comments below:

“Lit., *laid down my vote*...Some suppose that Paul here refers to casting his vote as a member of the Sanhedrim; in which case he

must have been married and the father of a family. But this there is no reason for believing (compare 1 Cor. vii. 7,8); and the phrase may be taken as expressing merely moral assent and approval.” *Vincent’s Word Studies in the New Testament*

“‘I cast down my pebble’ (a black one). The ancient Greeks used white pebbles for acquittal (Re ‘2:17), black ones for condemnation as here (the only two uses of the word in the N.T.). Paul’s phrase (not found elsewhere) is more vivid than the usual *katapsêphizô* for voting. They literally cast the pebbles into the urn...If Paul’s language is taken literally here, he was a member of the Sanhedrin and so married when he led the persecution. That is quite possible, though he was not married when he wrote 1Co 7:7, but a widower. It is possible to take the language figuratively for approval, but not so natural.” *Robertson’s Word Pictures*

“...*gave his voice*, exerted all his influence and authority, against them, in order that they might be put to death...” Clarke

“Paul was not a member of the sanhedrim, and this does not mean that he voted, but simply that he joined in the persecution; he approved it; he assented to the putting of the saints to death.” Barnes

“Paul was not one of the council, nor, that we read of, in any office or place to judge any person; besides, the Jews are thought to have had no power of life and death; and that St. Stephen was

slain rather in a popular tumult, than legally: but Paul may be said to do this, by carrying the suffrages or sentence to the Roman man president, or any others, to get it executed (for so the words will bear); and howsoever, by his approving, rejoicing at, and delighting in their condemnation, (which was indeed giving his voice, as much as he could, against them), this was verified.” Poole

“Belonging to the Sanhedrin was held in such repute that it would be incredible to think that Paul could have belonged to it, appeared repeatedly before it on trial, and still did not refer to his membership one single time...this voting must have been a figurative expression meaning that he cast his voice and influence against the Christians.” L. Edsil Dale

We see similar statements elsewhere in Acts where Paul is consenting to Stephen’s death, with no reference to any formal vote.

“And when the blood of Your martyr Stephen was shed, **I also was standing by consenting to his death**, and guarding the clothes of those who were killing him.” **Acts 22:20 (NKJV)**

“**Now Saul was consenting to his death.** At that time a great persecution arose against the church which was at Jerusalem; and they were all scattered throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria, except the apostles.” **Acts 8:1 (NKJV)**

While it is certainly possible that Paul cast an official vote against Christians, it is far from certain.

This link is not without its weaknesses.

Link 2: Paul was a member of the Sanhedrin.

Based on their conclusion that Paul cast an official vote against Christians, some conclude that Paul was a member of the Sanhedrin. But we must ask whether this conclusion is necessary. There are some other possibilities here.

B.W. Johnson suggests that Paul may have been part of a group appointed by the Sanhedrin.

“...some have held that Paul was a member of some lesser court appointed by the Sanhedrim to try the Christians.” *People’s New Testament*

L. Edsil Dale suggests another possible conclusion.

“He had special permission from the Sanhedrin to arrest and to bring Christians to their trial and death. In this sense he voted against them. For all practical purposes he acted for the Sanhedrin as their agent. What one does by commission, he does himself.” *Acts Commentary*

While it is reasonable to conclude that Paul was a member of the Sanhedrin if he cast an official vote against Christians, it is not a certain conclusion. Paul may have been part of a group that tried to influence the Sanhedrin and cast his vote among that group. He may have been part of any number of other groups and cast his vote there.

We must also remember that the Sanhedrin did not have the power to execute anyone. They had to make their case to Rome if they wanted to put someone to death. Paul is certainly a good example of that. If the Sanhedrin could have put him to death themselves, they surely would have done it. Instead, they appealed to the Roman government. The same can be said of Jesus. In what sense, literal and formal sense could a member of the Sanhedrin cast their vote for anyone to be put to death? Only metaphorically could any of the Jews cast their vote for the death of a Christian. Clearly, Christians were put to death, but they could not be legally condemned to death by the vote of the Sanhedrin.

But there is another weakness to this link. If Paul was a member of the Sanhedrin, why did he never say so. Paul gives his “Jewish credentials” in a number of passages, yet he never claims to be part of the Sanhedrin. This would seem like an important point to make if it were true. Consider some of these passages below:

“I am indeed a Jew, born in Tarsus of Cilicia, but brought up in this city at the feet of Gamaliel, taught according to the strictness of our fathers’ law, and was zealous toward God as you all are today.” **Acts 22:3 (NKJV)**

“They knew me from the first, if they were willing to testify, that according to the strictest sect of our religion I lived a Pharisee.” **Acts 26:5 (NKJV)**

“Are they Hebrews? So am I. Are they Israelites? So am I. Are they

the seed of Abraham? So am I.” **II Cor. 11:22 (NKJV)**

“And I advanced in Judaism beyond many of my contemporaries in my own nation, being more exceedingly zealous for the traditions of my fathers.” **Gal. 1:14 (NKJV)**

“4 though I also might have confidence in the flesh. If anyone else thinks he may have confidence in the flesh, I more so: 5 circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of the Hebrews; concerning the law, a Pharisee; 6 concerning zeal, persecuting the church; concerning the righteousness which is in the law, blameless. 7 But what things were gain to me, these I have counted loss for Christ.” **Phil. 3:4-7 (NKJV)**

In any of these passages, Paul could have simply said that he was a member of the Sanhedrin and rested his case, but he never does that. When Paul was before the council in Acts 23, he could have mentioned it, but he does not. It is hard to believe that he would not refer to this somewhere when we consider how often he found it necessary to defend his zeal for Judaism.

There seem to be some weaknesses in this link as well.

Link 3: Paul was married.

Based on the conclusion that Paul was a member of the Sanhedrin, we are told that he must have been married. After all, a man had to be married to be on the Sanhedrin, right?

That seems to be the case, based on the information that we have. However, we cannot be sure that was the case in Paul's day. Our source of information on this comes from the Talmud. The Talmud is a collection of teachings about the Torah and commentary on those teachings. This work dates from the fifth century A.D. That is quite some time after Paul's death. Just how old is the Jewish tradition that members of the Sanhedrin must be married? It is impossible to say with certainty.

Marriage was not the only requirement for members of the Sanhedrin. L. Edsil Dale says that Paul, "would have had to have been married, have had a family, and possessed a flawless physical body." An article on the Sanhedrin in the Jewish Encyclopedia cites one source from the third century as saying that "they must be tall, of imposing appearance, and of advanced age".

Regarding Paul's height, Matthew Henry says in his commentary on Acts chapter 9, that, "one of the ancients calls him, *Homo tricubitalis* – but four feet and a half in height".

Further, Paul was likely in his late twenties or early thirties at the time of his conversion and probably in his sixties when he died.

It seems that if we are going to rely on the Talmud for qualifications for members of the Sanhedrin, Paul likely did not qualify either in his physical stature or his age.

Furthermore, if Paul was married, we have to ask what happened to his wife? Was he a widower or

was he divorced? We simply have no way to know this, but it had to be one of these. This leaves us wondering why Paul did not refer to his own experience when writing about widows or divorced people. He had a perfect opportunity to do that when he discusses marriage in 1 Corinthians chapter seven. But all he does there is refer to himself as unmarried.

Paul does mention kinsmen and fellow prisoners who were in Christ before him. But this says nothing about his marital status at that time or earlier in his life. It simply means that he had family who converted to Christ before he did. If he was a widower because his wife had been martyred, then he had good reason to mention that too, but he never did.

"Greet Andronicus and Junia, my countrymen and my fellow prisoners, who are of note among the apostles, who also were in Christ before me." **Rom. 16:7 (NKJV)**

This link in the chain seems to have its own weaknesses.

Conclusion:

What can we conclude after looking at the chain of reasoning that leads us to believe Paul was married at one time? Is it possible that Paul was married before he became a Christian?

While it is possible that Paul was married at some point, we know that he was not married later in life. Further, we simply cannot say with any certainty that Paul was married earlier in his life. It seems to me that the weight of evidence

is against him ever having been married. However, we simply cannot be dogmatic about that either.

AS WE PARTAKE OF THE LOAF & THE CUP... A Communion Meditation

By Mike McDonald



O, welcome all ye noble saints of old
as now before your very eyes unfold
the wonders all so long ago foretold.
God and man at table are sat down.

Elders, martyrs, all are falling down;
Prophets, patriarchs are gath'ring round;
What angels longed to see
Now man has found.
God and man at table are sat down.

Who is this who spreads the vict'ry feast?
Who is this who makes our warring cease?
Jesus, risen Savior, Prince of Peace.
God and man at table are sat down.

Beggars, lame, and harlots also here;
Repentant publicans are drawing near;
Wayward sons come home without a fear.
God and man at table are sat down.

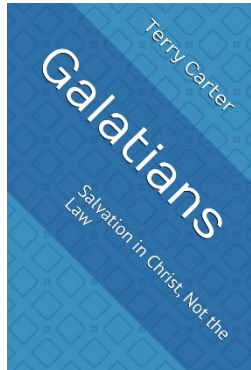
Worship in the presence of the Lord
With joyful songs and hearts in one accord,
And let our Host at table be adored.
God and man at table are sat down.

When at last this earth shall pass away,
When Jesus and His bride are one to stay,
The feast of love is just begun that day.
God and man at table are sat down.

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