

Who or what is Satan?

Most Christians believe that Satan is a fallen angel. Jesus did say, "I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven," but that's a long way from saying that he was, as supposed, originally created as some high-level angel that specialized in music, became proud, then fell bringing a third of the angels with him.

That is the traditional belief, one originating mostly in Catholic teachings¹, but what does Scripture say?

The Two Central Passages

Let's look at ISA 14:4-23 NKJV, a passage that's supposed to refer to Satan:

... that you will take up this proverb against the king of Babylon, and say:

"How the oppressor has ceased,

The golden city ceased!

⁵ *The LORD has broken the staff of the wicked,*

The scepter of the rulers;

⁶ *He who struck the people in wrath with a continual stroke,*

He who ruled the nations in anger,

Is persecuted and no one hinders.

⁷ *The whole earth is at rest and quiet;*

They break forth into singing.

⁸ *Indeed the cypress trees rejoice over you,*

And the cedars of Lebanon,

Saying, 'Since you were cut down,

No woodsman has come up against us.'

⁹ *"Hell from beneath is excited about you,*

To meet you at your coming;

It stirs up the dead for you,

All the chief ones of the earth;

It has raised up from their thrones

All the kings of the nations.

¹⁰ *They all shall speak and say to you:*

'Have you also become as weak as we?

Have you become like us?

¹¹ *Your pomp is brought down to Sheol,*

And the sound of your stringed instruments;

The maggot is spread under you,

And worms cover you.'

¹² *"How you are fallen from heaven,*

O Lucifer, son of the morning!

How you are cut down to the ground,

You who weakened the nations!

¹³ *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;*

¹⁴ *I will ascend above the heights of the clouds,
I will be like the Most High.'*

¹⁵ *Yet you shall be brought down to Sheol,
To the lowest depths of the Pit.*

¹⁶ *"Those who see you will gaze at you,
And consider you, saying:
'Is this the man who made the earth tremble,
Who shook kingdoms,*

¹⁷ *Who made the world as a wilderness
And destroyed its cities,
Who did not open the house of his prisoners?'*

¹⁸ *"All the kings of the nations,
All of them, sleep in glory,
Everyone in his own house;*

¹⁹ *But you are cast out of your grave
Like an abominable branch,
Like the garment of those who are slain,
Thrust through with a sword,
Who go down to the stones of the pit,
Like a corpse trodden underfoot.*

²⁰ *You will not be joined with them in burial,
Because you have destroyed your land
And slain your people.
The brood of evildoers shall never be named.*

²¹ *Prepare slaughter for his children
Because of the iniquity of their fathers,
Lest they rise up and possess the land,
And fill the face of the world with cities."*

²² *"For I will rise up against them," says the LORD of hosts,
"And cut off from Babylon the name and remnant,
And offspring and posterity," says the LORD.*

²³ *"I will also make it a possession for the porcupine,
And marshes of muddy water;
I will sweep it with the broom of destruction," says the LORD of hosts.*

The entire passage is directed at Babylon (specifically the king). It never mentions Satan! Babylon's origin is the tower of Babel, which attempted to exalt itself to the heavens and needed to be cut down. Note also all these points:

- Vs. 16 calls the subject a "man" as in the king; not an angel.
- Other passages which speak judgment to nations do so in a similar manner as the passage above:
 - *"The pride of your heart has deceived you, You who dwell in the clefts of the rock, Whose habitation is high; You who say in your heart, 'Who will bring me down to the ground?' Though*

you ascend as high as the eagle, And though you set your nest among the stars, From there I will bring you down,” says the Lord.” Obadiah 3,4 directed at Edom.

- Note the similarity of this with the Isaiah passage: they both aspired to be among (or above) the stars, and they both will be brought down from there.
- *“And you, Capernaum, who are exalted to heaven, will be brought down to Hades; for if the mighty works which were done in you had been done in Sodom, it would have remained until this day.”* MAT 11:23 (an allusion back to this passage). This sounds just like vs. 14-15 above.
- Vs. 18 - 20 reads, *“All the kings of the nations, All of them, sleep in glory, Everyone in his own house; But you are cast out of your grave... You will not be joined with them in burial, Because you have destroyed your land And slain your people.”* This indicates that good kings are revered at the end of their lives, but the king of Babylon won't because of the terrible way he ruled.
- “Lucifer” (vs. 12) is not a name; it's just a word. Most translations render it something different like, *“Day Star.”* It's a regal title; Jesus even refers to himself using the same title in REV 22:16.
- When Jesus says, *“I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven,”* in LUK 10, he can't be referring back to this passage. Jesus said this in response to the 70 he sent out on a mission trip. His statement is in reply to theirs, *“Lord, even the demons are subject to us in Your name.”* They saw something happen in the physical realm and Jesus tells them what's really happening in the spiritual realm (he's in the midst of overcoming Satan). If Jesus was referring back to something that happened millennia prior it wouldn't make any sense in that context.
 - We'll see more about this under the Revelation passage below.
- Vs. 15 reads, *“... you shall be brought down to hell, to the sides of the Pit.”* Satan is supposed to have fallen before mankind came into existence, yet this foretells of his future fall.

The next passage is Ezekiel 28:1-16 NKJV.

The word of the Lord came to me again, saying, 2 “Son of man, say to the prince of Tyre, ‘Thus says the Lord God:

“Because your heart is lifted up,

And you say, ‘I am a god,

I sit in the seat of gods,

In the midst of the seas,’

Yet you are a man, and not a god,

Though you set your heart as the heart of a god

3 (Behold, you are wiser than Daniel!

There is no secret that can be hidden from you!

4 With your wisdom and your understanding

You have gained riches for yourself,

And gathered gold and silver into your treasuries;

5 By your great wisdom in trade you have increased your riches,

And your heart is lifted up because of your riches),”

6 ‘Therefore thus says the Lord God:

“Because you have set your heart as the heart of a god,

7 Behold, therefore, I will bring strangers against you,

The most terrible of the nations;

And they shall draw their swords against the beauty of your wisdom,

And defile your splendor.

8 They shall throw you down into the Pit,

And you shall die the death of the slain

In the midst of the seas.

*9 "Will you still say before him who slays you,
'I am a god'?*

*But you shall be a man, and not a god,
In the hand of him who slays you.*

*10 You shall die the death of the uncircumcised
By the hand of aliens;
For I have spoken," says the Lord God.' "*

11 Moreover the word of the Lord came to me, saying, 12 "Son of man, take up a lamentation for the king of Tyre, and say to him, 'Thus says the Lord God:

*"You were 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 sardius, topaz, and diamond,
Beryl, onyx, and jasper,
Sapphire, turquoise, and emerald with gold.
The workmanship of your timbrels and pipes
Was prepared for you on the day you were created.*

*14 "You were the anointed cherub who covers;
I established you;
You were on the holy mountain of God;
You walked back and forth in the midst of fiery stones.
15 You were perfect in your ways from the day you were created,
Till iniquity was found in you.*

*16 "By the abundance of your trading
You became filled with violence within,
And you sinned;
Therefore I cast you as a profane thing
Out of the mountain of God;
And I destroyed you, O covering cherub,
From the midst of the fiery stones.*

- Note the similarity of this passage to the previous (Isaiah) passage. They are both prophecies spoken against kingdoms.
- As with the previous passage, this never mentions Satan. It is, as it says twice, a prophecy against the king of Tyre.
- Vs. 2 calls him a "prince." The word prince is often used interchangeably with "king." It's often used as a demeaning term for king.
- "Perfect in beauty" is what the city said about itself in vs. 3 of the previous chapter. It's a reference to the city of Tyre or how the king thought of himself.
- "Full of wisdom:" God says (sarcastically) that the king is "wiser than Daniel" in vs. 3.
- The king of Tyre is said to have been a cherub in the Garden of Eden, but in the poetic language of the same prophet (EZE 31:3, 9), Egypt is said to have been a tree in the Garden of Eden! Why take one passage more literally than the other? A cherub is a being that guards. Kings are set/planted by God to be guardians of their people. And nobody believes that Satan was a cherub.
 - These "Eden" passages simply mean that in their heyday those kings had it made, as if they were something important in God's paradise (his "garden") as it were.

- “timbrels and pipes” is better translated in modern versions, “sockets and settings.” This is speaking (as was in the previous verses) about the king’s jewels. This is the only place some folks got the idea that Satan was some kind of musician king.
- Vs. 16 mentions “*abundance of trading,*” and vs.4 “*You have gained riches for yourself, And gathered gold and silver into your treasuries.*” Tyre was a trade center. How would this apply to Satan before history? Did he run a retail outlet in heaven?
- Vs. 9 says, “*You shall be a man.*” Satan is not a man.

Is there anything anywhere close to staging a rebellion and taking a third of the angels in either of the above passages?

Passages that Unquestionably refer to Satan

Consider what Jesus and John said about Satan:

- “*He was a murderer from the beginning...*” John 8:44
- “*the Devil has sinned from the beginning.*” 1 John 3:8

Next, consider Satan’s role as tempter/tester:

- *For this reason, when I could bear it no longer, I sent to learn about your faith, for fear that somehow the tempter had tempted you and our labor would be in vain.* 1TH 3:5
- *Do not deprive one another, except perhaps by agreement for a limited time, that you may devote yourselves to prayer; but then come together again, so that Satan may not tempt you because of your lack of self-control.* 1CO 7:5
- *Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. 2 And after fasting forty days and forty nights, he was hungry. And the tempter came and said to him, “If you are the Son of God, command these stones to become loaves of bread.* MAT 4:1-2
- *Do not fear what you are about to suffer. Behold, the devil is about to throw some of you into prison, that you may be tested, and for ten days you will have tribulation. Be faithful unto death, and I will give you the crown of life.* REV 2:10

Finally, consider that God ordains the wicked:

- “*The LORD has made all for Himself, Yes, even the wicked for the day of doom.*” PRO 16:4
- “*If a prophet makes predictions which come true but leads you away from the Lord, don’t follow him; God is testing you.*” DEU 13:1-4.
 - God sends *false prophets*. Where do false prophets come from but from the enemy?
- God allows a deceiving spirit who presents an idea to him to go out against wicked king Ahab (1 Kings 22:19-23)
- God sent a wicked spirit against Saul (1SA 16:14-16).

My conclusion, given the above info, is that Satan never “fell,” but rather, was created the way he is in order to fill a role.

Passages that Seem to Indicate he is Fallen Angel

Having said all this, let’s look at a few key passages:

- “*1 Then the fifth angel sounded: And I saw a star fallen from heaven to the earth. To him was given*

the key to the bottomless pit. 2 And he opened the bottomless pit, and smoke arose out of the pit like the smoke of a great furnace. So the sun and the air were darkened because of the smoke of the pit. 3 Then out of the smoke locusts came upon the earth. And to them was given power, as the scorpions of the earth have power ... And they had as king over them the angel of the bottomless pit, whose name in Hebrew is Abaddon, but in Greek he has the name Apollyon.” REV 9:1-3,11

- Vs. 1: a “star” fell from heaven and had the key to the pit. We don't know what or who this is (or who Abaddon/Apollyon, the angel of the pit, is). This may be some kind of angel of destruction (or demon) such as in these cases:
 - *“So the Lord sent a plague upon Israel, and seventy thousand men of Israel fell. And God sent an angel to Jerusalem to destroy it. As he was destroying, the Lord looked and relented of the disaster, and said to the angel who was destroying, “It is enough; now restrain your hand.” And the angel of the Lord stood by the threshing floor of Ornan the Jebusite.”* 1CH 21:14-15. An angel of destruction.
 - EZE 9 (entire chapter). “Executioners” are sent out by God.
 - *“For the Lord will pass through to strike the Egyptians, and when he sees the blood on the lintel and on the two doorposts, the Lord will pass over the door and will not allow the destroyer to enter your houses to strike you.”* EXO 12:23. What is the destroyer? Likely an angel as in Chronicles above.
- *“... not a novice, lest being puffed up with pride he fall into the [same] condemnation as the devil. Moreover he must have a good testimony among those who are outside, lest he fall into reproach and the snare of the devil.”* 1TI 3:6 NKJV
 - This is apparently a translation influenced by the traditional view of Satan. The word “same” doesn't appear in original. Almost all other translations omit this word rendering the meaning “fall into the condemnation the Devil instigates,” as in the next verse; the “snare” of the Devil. The passage doesn't indicate that the Devil fell, rather it confirms his role as tempter.
- *“Now a great sign appeared in heaven: a woman clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet, and on her head a garland of twelve stars. 2 Then being with child, she cried out in labor and in pain to give birth. 3 And another sign appeared in heaven: behold, a great, fiery red dragon having seven heads and ten horns, and seven diadems on his heads. 4 His tail drew a third of the stars of heaven and threw them to the earth. And the dragon stood before the woman who was ready to give birth, to devour her Child as soon as it was born. 5 She bore a male Child who was to rule all nations with a rod of iron. And her Child was caught up to God and His throne. 6 Then the woman fled into the wilderness, where she has a place prepared by God, that they should feed her there one thousand two hundred and sixty days. 7 And war broke out in heaven: Michael and his angels fought with the dragon; and the dragon and his angels fought, 8 but they did not prevail, nor was a place found for them in heaven any longer. 9 So the great dragon was cast out, that serpent of old, called the Devil and Satan, who deceives the whole world; he was cast to the earth, and his angels were cast out with him. 10 Then I heard a loud voice saying in heaven, “Now salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of His Christ have come, for the accuser of our brethren, who accused them before our God day and night, has been cast down. 11 And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, and they did not love their lives to the death. 12 Therefore rejoice, O heavens, and you who dwell in them! Woe to the inhabitants of the earth and the sea! For the devil has come down to you, having great wrath, because he knows that he has a short time.”* REV 12:1-12
 - This passage has been interpreted to mean that Satan rebelled in the beginning and took a third of the angels with him. The events described in Revelation surround either end times or the times of Christ and his resurrection. This passage is no exception. Everyone agrees that it speaks of the birth of Christ (verses 1-2: out of Israel [the woman] came Christ [the child]). What

follows describes what happened subsequent to that whether one believes it is yet to happen or has already happened. (For those who have never been exposed to any other interpretation of REV, many believe much of it describes events during the time of Christ and the generation thereafter). There is no indication that this is speaking of events before human history. What's more, in vs. 4 "stars" are cast down. Are stars angels? I think not, as stars frequently represent godly people in prophetic language (DAN 8:10, 12:3, and others). I believe this verse describes the persecution of the saints by the enemy; the stars being stars in God's economy. That would comport with the following passage in Daniel where the little horn (the persecutor) kills some of God's people (he tramples the stars). Remember that both passages use apocalyptic language.

- *And out of one of them came a little horn which grew exceedingly great toward the south, toward the east, and toward the Glorious Land. And it grew up to the host of heaven; and it cast down some of the host and some of the stars to the ground, and trampled them.* DAN 8:9-10
- We've established that this passage covers the time of Christ and thereafter. What then does it indicate when it says, *"So the great dragon was cast out, that serpent of old, called the Devil and Satan, who deceives the whole world; he was cast to the earth, and his angels were cast out with him... Now salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of His Christ have come, for the accuser of our brethren, who accused them before our God day and night, has been cast down?"* To me, it's obvious that this speaks of what Christ accomplished in his life and death. Jesus provided for our salvation, "bound the strongman," (MAT 12:29) and "disarmed principalities and powers" (COL 2:15). When Jesus said, *"I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven"* in LUK 10, surely this is what he means. Especially, as previously mentioned, given the context: he said this in response to people returning from their short mission trip after they said to him, *"Lord, even the demons are subject to us in Your name."* There was a spiritual battle in the heavenlies and Jesus was winning.

Who or what are His Angels?

We don't even know for sure that angels fell (see below), and we don't even know if those "fallen" angels are demons. The passages that mention fallen angels say they are imprisoned, yet demons roam the earth. Both of the Scriptures below speak of something about angels and it's assumed the reader knows of it. Yet, the OT doesn't mention any of this. But the book of Enoch does. We know that Jude references extra-biblical books (the book of Moses) in order to make an illustration, so perhaps these passages are doing the same with the book of Enoch. The point, in context, would simply be that false teachers will be harshly judged.

- *"For if God did not spare the angels who sinned, but cast them down to hell and delivered them into chains of darkness, to be reserved for judgment..."* 2 Pet 2:4
- *"And the angels who did not keep their proper domain, but left their own abode, He has reserved in everlasting chains under darkness for the judgment of the great day."* Jude 6
 - Many will say that this verse was in fact written about in the OT. They would point to GEN 6:4 and interpret that as meaning that demons impregnated humans. It's beyond the scope of this paper, but I certainly don't hold this view.

We know that Satan has his angels (from REV 12 cited above), but remember that "angel" means "messenger, envoy, one who is sent."

Problems

I see two problems with this "created to test" theory:

- Satan will apparently be judged for a job well done (REV 20:10). If the theory is correct, then one of these is true:
 - The language of Revelation describing his final fate is entirely symbolic (not a particularly unlikely suggestion given the use of apocalyptic language in Revelation). This would mean that Satan will be annihilated despite the phrase "tormented forever."
 - God has some principles of just retribution that are beyond my grasp.
 - It doesn't seem in keeping with the character of God to create a being with no possible moral choice. But then, some would say that there actually are no moral choices being made. Nope, don't want to open that can of worms. 😊
1. <https://taylormarshall.com/2013/11/how-did-lucifer-become-satan-thomas-aquinas-answers.html>. It seems Aquinas (Catholic) and Augustine (who heavily influenced Catholic doctrine) formed this tradition. [back](#)