

2. From Exalted to Cast Down (2Q 2011—Garments of Grace: Clothing Imagery in the Bible)

Biblical material: John 1:1–3; Col. 1:16, 17; Ezek. 28:12–19; Deut. 8:1–18; Isa. 14:12–14; 2 Cor. 11:14.

Quotes

- The first sin in our universe was Lucifer’s self conceit. *Thomas Carlyle*
- God’s truth judges created things out of love, and Satan’s truth judges them out of envy and hatred. *Dietrich Bonhoeffer*
- There is no neutral ground in the universe; every square inch, every split second, is claimed by God and counter-claimed by Satan. *C.S. Lewis*
- There are references in the Bible to the devil’s wiles and his shrewdness. But when he gambled on his ability to unseat the Almighty he was guilty of an act so bad as to be imbecilic. *A. W. Tozer*
- The devil’s image complete is a complication of malice and falsehood. *Matthew Henry*
- Christianity has a built-in defense system: anything that questions a belief, no matter how logical the argument is, is the work of Satan by the very fact that it makes you question a belief. It’s a very interesting defense mechanism and the only way to get by it—and believe me, I was raised Southern Baptist—is to take massive amounts of mushrooms, sit in a field, and just go, “Show me.” *Bill Hicks*

Questions

Why would a study of Lucifer’s clothing be useful? What does Lucifer’s experience tell us about the consequences of sin and what it really is? In this imagery what do we see operating at the heart of the great controversy? How does understanding the origin of evil help us understand how God resolves the problems?

Bible summary

John 1:1–3 and Col. 1:16, 17 recount the word as God and as Creator—that everything was made by him, the Almighty. This of course included Lucifer, so how bizarre for a created being to attempt to take the place of his Creator! Ez. 28 tells the story of the fall of Lucifer under the rubric of the king of Tyre. He is described in all his brilliant glory, adorned with all kinds of precious stone, glowing in the reflected light that emanated from God himself. Additional details are given in Isa. 14 under the symbol of the king of Babylon: “You said in your heart, ‘I will ascend to heaven; I will raise my throne above the stars of God; I will sit enthroned on the mount of assembly, on the utmost heights of the sacred mountain. I will ascend above the tops of the clouds; I will make myself like the Most High.’” (13, 14 NIV). In Deut. 8 God reminds his people to follow his instructions, and how he looked after them as they wandered in the wilderness. 2 Cor. 11:14 reminds us that the devil masquerades as an angel of light.

Comment

This study examines the changed appearance of Lucifer from brilliant angel to demon. Using the imagery of Scripture, what does this tell us about the true nature of sin,

what it really is, and what its results are? The fundamental issues of the great controversy are not over power or ability, but over truth and right.

The Devil's highest ambition is to be like God, and his greatest tool in his rebellion against God is defamation. He even had the gall to demand worship of God himself, when God came as Christ to this world: "The devil took him [Jesus] to a high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their splendour.' All this I will give you,' he said, 'if you will bow down and worship me.'" Matthew 4:8, 9 NIV.

As Goethe wrote, "The devil is an egotist." He is completely wrapped up in himself and his selfish ambitions to such an extent he will falsify every truth in order to gain his objective. He is the Father of Lies, the Murderer of Truth from the beginning:

"From the very beginning he [the Devil] was a murderer and has never been on the side of truth, because there is no truth in him. When he tells a lie, he is only doing what is natural to him, for he is a liar and the father of all lies." John 8:44 TEV.

Lucifer had ended up not only deceiving others, but deluding himself into exchanging falsehood for truth. The tragedy is that Lucifer ended up believing his own propaganda. He came to believe the misrepresentations of God he'd invented, and was reluctant to accept any inhibitions to his freedom to act. Lucifer's sin began not in the breaking of rules but "in his heart." As we look at the issues at the heart of this great controversy, as we see the choices Lucifer made, they lead us to confront the same need for making decisions ourselves, all over again.

Right from the beginning, Satan has been lying to humankind about the kind of person God is. First to Eve and then Adam (Genesis 3). Then to Cain, convincing him to rebel against the "arbitrary" requirements of God, leading him to murder his brother (Genesis 4). Then to all the inhabitants of the earth, when "the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and every imagination of the thoughts of his heart only evil continually." (Genesis 6:5). And so on...

God chose to deal with Lucifer's rebellion as He always does—with love and compassion, working to win the war not by force of arms ("not by might nor power," Zechariah 4:6), but by spiritual "right." But restoring trust and demonstrating truth and right takes time. The ongoing battle shows that lies, deceptions, innuendoes, gossip, misrepresentations all require much time to refute. And to refute the charges against His character, God could not simply say, "They're not true!" To prove the charges false, God has to show His true nature in practice over time, to reveal to everyone that the Devil is wrong in his accusations.

Ellen White Comments

Sin originated in self-seeking. Lucifer, the covering cherub, desired to be first in heaven. He sought to gain control of heavenly beings, to draw them away from their Creator, and to win their homage to himself. Therefore he misrepresented God, attributing to Him the desire for self-exaltation. With his own evil characteristics he sought to invest the loving Creator. Thus he deceived angels. Thus he deceived men. He led them to doubt the word of God, and to distrust His goodness. {DA 22}

The controversy in heaven began with selfish strife for position, a desire on the part of Lucifer to be equal with God. {RH May 30, 1899}

Lucifer's heart was lifted up because of his beauty, his wisdom was corrupted by reason of his brightness. Self-exaltation is the key to his rebellion... {ST April 28, 1890}

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