

Know Your Enemy
Ezekiel 28, Isaiah 14

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We're in a war in which we enlisted the moment we accepted Christ as our Savior. But it's not a war involving bombs or guns or terrorism - although these tactics have been used by opponents of the Gospel.

I'm talking about a spiritual war and our adversary is that age-old enemy of mankind, Satan and his forces of evil. Therefore, the weapons and armor we must use to fight this war are spiritual!

Ephesians 6:11 tells us to: *"Put on the full armor of God, so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes."*

What are we supposed to do? We're to put on the full armor of God and stand against the devil's schemes.

Notice, it's the devil's schemes that we need to oppose. The Greek word translated *schemes* in this verse means *cunning, deceit, craft, or trickery*.

In certain parts of the world, Satan is openly and brutally active. That's why Christians, especially in the western world, must be constantly on guard against his deceit and trickery.

But to do so, we need to be aware, not only of what he's up to, but why.

In 2 Corinthians 2:11 Paul writes, *"For we are not unaware of his schemes,"* but in this verse, the Greek word for *schemes* means *thoughts or purposes*. In other words - how he thinks!

If we can get a glimpse into how our arch-enemy thinks, we'll be better prepared to deal with his tactics. Why? Because he varies his tactics depending on the circumstances.

Sometimes he attacks with the savagery of a lion. 1 Peter 5:8, *“Be alert and of sober mind. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour.”*

2 Corinthians 11:23-27 gives us a brief account of what Paul went through, for the sake of the gospel, but through it all, he says, in 2 Timothy 4:17, that he was delivered from the lion’s mouth.

On the other hand, Satan can be, and often is, more subtle! In 2 Corinthians 11:14 Paul makes the point that *“Satan himself masquerades as an angel of light.”*

And, what should really concern us is what Paul says in the next verse: *“It is not surprising, then, if his servants also masquerade as servants of righteousness.”*

So, what do we really know of our enemy? Where does he come from? What's he trying to do?

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The first thing we learn is that he was originally an angel in heaven - a cherub by the name of Lucifer.

Exactly what form the fallen Lucifer takes today is quite unknown. But from our reading of the Scriptures, we learn that in their unfallen state, cherubim were remarkable beings.

The main references we have to their appearance are found in Exodus 25 and 37, and Ezekiel 1 and 10.

And from what's said of them in the Bible, it appears that cherubim had a role in ensuring that the presence of God was not violated by anything unworthy.

For example, cherubim with flashing swords were placed at the entrance of the Garden in Eden to keep out fallen man.

In the Tabernacle, figures of cherubim were woven into the veil that separated man from the holiness of the shekinah, the presence of God Himself.

In fact, the High Priest could only enter that sacred place once a year on the Day of Atonement, when the blood of the sacrifice was sprinkled on the mercy seat.

In the Holy of Holies, two golden cherubim were placed on the ark, with their wings stretched over the mercy seat, symbolically guarding the presence of God, who, as Psalm 99:1 says, "*sits enthroned between the cherubim.*"

Their position on the ark suggests that they were looking down at the blood of the sacrifice made on the Day of Atonement, which signified that penance had been made.

The throne of God was borne by cherubim as Ezekiel 10 describes in some detail. And in 2 Samuel 22:11 we read that God: "*Mounted the cherubim and flew; he soared on the wings of the wind.*"

Now, all cherubim were the same except for one. One stood out from the rest. His name—Lucifer, which means '*light bearer.*'

Apparently, he had been the most glorious. Ezekiel 28:14 suggests that his particular role was to guard God's glory. It says that he was "*anointed as a guardian cherub.*"

He was a very powerful angel, if not the most powerful of them all! Jude 1:9 tells us that even in Satan's fallen state, the archangel Michael didn't dare condemn him when they were disputing about the body of Moses.

It's difficult for us to imagine the splendor of this perfect creation! Ezekiel 28:12 describes him as *"the seal of perfection, full of wisdom and perfect in beauty."*

Yet, in spite of these advantages, this perfect, amazing creation sinned by instigating a rebellion against God Himself.

In Ezekiel 28:15-16b, God says of Lucifer: *"You were blameless in your ways from the day you were created till wickedness was found in you. So I drove you in disgrace from the mount of God, and I expelled you, guardian cherub, from among the fiery stones."*

What a horrible, humiliating fate to befall such a remarkable being! But what brought about this terrible turn of events?

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Ezekiel 28:17a explains: *"Your heart became proud on account of your beauty, and you corrupted your wisdom because of your splendor."*

Lucifer, that glorious, heavenly cherub, became blinded by his own magnificence and succumbed to conceited arrogance.

Isaiah 14:12-13 tells the story: *"How you have fallen from heaven, son of the dawn! You have been cast down to the earth, you who once laid low the nations! You said in your heart, "I will ascend to the heavens; I will raise my throne above the stars of God; I will make myself like the Most High. But you are brought down to the realm of the dead..."*

In his blinding pride, Lucifer lost sight of the fact that no matter how splendid he was, he was still just a created being.

Twice in Ezekiel 28, this crucial point is emphasized. Ezekiel 28:13 says, “...*on the day you were created.*” Ezekiel 28:15 says, “...*from the day you were created.*”

Losing sight of this, Lucifer rebelled! He no longer wanted to obey or worship God; he refused to accept God's authority. He wanted to be equal with God!

He believed that he was created more than just in God's image. He believed that God wasn't supreme and that he, Lucifer, was the one deserving of worship.

We aren't told precisely just what form this rebellion took but it appears that a large number of angels joined him in his revolt. It may have been as many as a third of all the angels, according to Revelation 12:4.

But what we do know is the final outcome of that rebellion. According to both Ezekiel 28 and Isaiah 14, Lucifer was expelled from heaven and driven down to earth in disgrace, where he's now known as Satan - the Opposer - or the Devil.

This incident changed Lucifer forever. His rebellion against God became more than a simple revolt against authority; it developed into rebellion against truth itself!

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Think of it! God is truth. God is the only source of truth and throughout Scripture we find consistent affirmation of this reality.

Titus 1:2, God “*does not lie.*” John 16:13, the Spirit of God is described as “*the Spirit of truth.*” John 1:14, Christ is described as “*full of grace and truth.*” John 14:6, He claimed to be “*the truth and the life.*”

According to John 17:17, God's Word is truth and the message of the gospel is therefore a message of truth. Paul speaks of the truth of the gospel in Galatians 2:5 and makes the point that knowing God is knowing the Truth.

So, what effect did this rebellion against truth have on the fallen cherub? Because Lucifer was expelled from the source of all truth, lies became his reality!

In talking to the Jews on one occasion, Jesus described Satan in John 8:44b, *“He was a murderer from the beginning, not holding to the truth, for there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks his native language, for he is a liar and the father of lies.”*

As God is incapable of lying, so Satan is incapable of telling the truth, at least the whole truth! He’s a master of the half-truth which is the same as a lie. He lies by nature.

In order for Satan to tell the truth, He would have to stop and think and force himself to tell the truth. That is, if he could! In fact, he's the very definition of a compulsive liar!

At the very least he believes his own publicity. Why else war against the God Himself and think you’re going to win?

Banished from Heaven, he’s flung down to this earth and it's here that he has his fateful encounter with mankind. What a rude shock for him!

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He was the proud, glorious cherub who boasted in Isaiah 14:13-14, *“I will ascend to the heavens; I will raise my throne above the stars of God; I will ascend above the tops of the clouds; I will make myself like the Most High.”*

But he was expelled from heaven because he craved the worship and adoration that belonged to God alone. He's forever cast down to this dimension, to the dust of the earth

But when he gets here, he finds from that very dirt God has formed, in the Garden of Eden, a creature - mankind - in His own image! The very thing that Lucifer aspired to!!

And not only this, but man was created for intimate fellowship with His Creator; to walk with Him and to talk with Him.

God predestined this creation to Sonship in Christ; to become a glorious being who would be an heir and co-heir with God's own Son. Did Lucifer know all this beforehand? Could this have triggered his fall?

Certainly, the knowledge that such a lowly creature would be raised higher than him, the glorious cherub, would have been an unbearable blow to his pride and ambition!

At the very least, he would have regarded God's love for mankind as a threat to his own grandiose delusions.

And God's purpose, to make us heirs and co-heirs with God the Son, was everything of which Satan had originally dreamt!

This was his burning ambition. An ambition for which he forfeited his place in Heaven. And even though man is now a fallen, sinful being, he's still in the image of God. An image that has been eroded, but not erased.

Made in God's image!! What a slap in the face for this glorious cherub!

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Lucifer, lusting for power and leadership in his own right, reasoned that if he couldn't rule in heaven, then surely, he could rule over this earthly dimension to which he had been relegated.

But now he finds that one of the reasons mankind was made in God's image, was so that mankind could rule over the earth.

Genesis 1:26, *"Then God said, Let us make mankind in our image, in our likeness, so that they may rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky, over the livestock and all the wild animals, and over all the creatures that move along the ground."*

How unthinkable. This creature made of mud and clay, given sovereignty as God's representative, over the very planet to which Satan was now banished! But that's not the end of it!

In Genesis 3:14, after Satan had seduced man into rebellion against God, the Lord says to the serpent, which is the effigy of Satan: *"Because you have done this, Cursed are you above all livestock and all wild animals! You will crawl on your belly and you will eat dust all the days of your life."*

Satan is condemned, in effigy, as a serpent, to crawl on his belly in that same dust from which Man was raised in the image of God! Not just lower than man; lower than even the animals!!

This concept of being condemned to crawl in the dust may have been a definitive proclamation that Satan was then and forever banished from dwelling in heaven.

But the bad news doesn't end there! The same species that had so thoroughly usurped him, would produce Someone who would one day destroy him!

After the fall, God issued this dire prediction for the evil seducer in Genesis 3:15, *“And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; he will crush your head, and you will strike his heel.”*

No wonder there was, and is, so much Satanic hate and malignancy directed towards mankind! The Devil must have been beside himself with resentment for that creature who had so thoroughly displaced him!

But his issue was really with God. Seething with fury, he would have had a raging lust for revenge on His Creator. Since he couldn't destroy God, his rage was futile, and his fury was impotent!

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The same perverted reasoning that made him think that he could usurp the Almighty Creator, now spawned a malignant insanity that has ever since prompted him to war against God and take whatever vengeance he can for his banishment.

So, if he couldn't overcome God, he could at least do as much harm as possible by corrupting and seducing the creature made in God's image. This creature who was God's representative on earth.

Perhaps Satan reasoned that he was destroying God in effigy. At the very least, he would have the malicious satisfaction of robbing God of the enjoyment of His handiwork.

He reasoned that, if the human race were to be drawn into sin, this would have far-reaching implications, more than the mere corruption of the species. It would deprive God of His prized communication with His creatures!

In John 8:34, Jesus says that *“everyone who sins is a slave to sin.”*

In Romans 6:16, Paul infers that this sin principle is embodied in a particular being when he says, *“Don’t you know that when you offer yourselves to someone as obedient slaves, you are slaves of the one you obey.”*

The Lord Himself is even more pointed when He says to the Jews in John 8:44, *“You belong to your father, the devil, and you want to carry out your father’s desires.”*

So, the act of sin would enslave the human race under the sway of Satan! Those made in the image of God would be under his control.

But how was he going to manufacture this for maximum effect? Devilishly simple: seduce mankind into sinning by turning from God to Satan as the source of truth.

After all, the human race, while made in God’s image, with all the advantages and benefits of a close relationship with God, would then be making a choice to believe and follow him, Satan, rather than their Creator.

By shifting allegiance to the serpent, mankind would, in effect, be claiming Satan as their true god, thereby dethroning the Almighty.

By procuring the allegiance and worship of those made in the image of God, Satan believes it would make him equal, or even above God!

If he couldn’t rise to God’s level, then maybe he could drag God down to his!

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Conclusion

This war against God was not to be physical. It couldn’t be! It would be a battle for the hearts and minds of human beings.

Satan was well aware of the most effective tactic he could employ. He himself had personal experience of the seductive lure of power and independence.

Succumbing to this temptation had caused his own downfall and his bitter experience would have thoroughly familiarized him with this potential weakness in mankind.

It was a trait that could be exploited because mankind, like the angels or like Lucifer himself, had been endowed with self-determining free-will.

As he himself had turned away from the truth, now Satan sets out to deceive man into doing the same!