

What We Learn From Lucifer About The Bible

The Question

- A. I want to start tonight with a question: Who is Lucifer?
1. I posed this question to the teenagers in my Monday night Bible study and got several different answers. One guy said, "I think I remember talking about this, but I don't remember what we said." Someone else spoke up and said, "I think Lucifer is some kind of demon, isn't he?" Another later commented that he thought Lucifer was an angel. Still another confidently announced to the group, "Lucifer is El Diablo." I think his point was that he believed Lucifer is a name for the Devil or Satan.
 2. If we look to the only place in the Bible where Lucifer is mentioned, we might be tempted to agree (**Isaiah 14:12**). You may not find the name "Lucifer" in this passage. Some translations use this name (KJV, NKJV). Others use the phrase "star of the morning" in place of Lucifer. This may be what Isaiah has in mind – the morning star shining brightly in the sky just before the dawn. Isaiah says it will fall from heaven. This takes some people to Luke 10:18 where Jesus said, "I was watching Satan fall from heaven like lightning." Some see references to Satan in the verses that follow (**Isaiah 14:12b-15**). So who is this Lucifer? How would we figure out his identity?
 3. The answer is this: we need to dig into this passage. We need to examine the context – the chapters and verses that surround this verse and this name and see what we can learn. We have to do some study, just as we do with other Bible questions. Let's do that together tonight.
- B. Let me give you five quick facts about the context.
1. First, this book – Isaiah – bears the name and records the teaching of one of the great Old Testament prophets. He was sent to the people of Judah to rebuke them for their sins and call them to repent (**Isaiah 1:16-17**).
 2. Second, in chapter 13 Isaiah begins a long section of teaching that has one basic theme. In this section God explains how He punishes all nations for their sin. Nation after nation is specifically called out by God and rebuked and warned (15-Moab, 17-Damascus, 19-Egypt). This continues all the way through chapter 23.
 3. Third, in chapter 13 Isaiah begins his list by calling out the nation of Babylon (**13:1**). God will bring an enemy against them – the Medes (**3:17**) and they will be destroyed (**3:19-20a**).
 4. Fourth, when this happens, God's people get a blessing. The Babylonians were going to take the people of Judah captive and keep them in Babylon for seventy years. But when the Medes conquer Babylon, God's people will be allowed to go home (**14:1-2**).
 5. Fifth, when this time comes, God's people will celebrate the defeat of the terrible Babylonians and their king (**14:3-4**). This is what is going on in chapter 14; this is the context. God's people are celebrating the fall of Babylon (**14:5-7**).
- C. But if this is Isaiah's subject, then we are forced to reconsider who Lucifer is.
1. It's not Satan that is falling in this passage; it's the king of Babylon. Lucifer is a symbol for the wicked king of Babylon (**v. 4**).
 2. Though this powerful empire and its king was like a shining star in the heavens, it would fall. It would be cut down.
 3. The verses that follow support this conclusion.
 - a. Verses 13-14 accurately describe the arrogance of Babylonian kings (**Daniel 4:28-32; 5:22-23a**).
 - b. Verse 16 says that Lucifer is a man who made the earth tremble.
 - c. Verse 17 says he overthrew cities and did not release captives.
 - d. Verse 18 mentions his dishonor in death, not buried like other kings.
 - e. Verse 22 makes clear that he is talking about Babylon and her evil kings.
 4. Lucifer is not another name for Satan or some demon. The name means star of the morning. In this context, this fallen star is a symbol for the king of Babylon.
- D. Now you know something that a lot of people don't know. You know this because you took some time tonight to open your Bible, dig into the text and find the right answer. I wanted to do this little exercise because I think there are some really important lessons to be learned from all of this. Let me mention four.

The Applications

- A. **Lesson One:** The number of people who believe something has nothing to do with whether or not it's true.
1. You might have some fun and conduct your own little informal survey and find out how many of your friends believe that Lucifer is Satan. I suspect you will find that it is the great majority. But here's the point, no matter how high that percentage is, it does not change the fact that it just isn't so. Isaiah was still using Lucifer as a symbol for Babylon and her wicked kings. Now you know the truth. But you may be for the rest of your life one of the few people who knows the truth.
 2. I wanted to make this point because it's not the only issue of truth on which you will find yourself in the minority.
 - a. Not many people believe that baptism is necessary for salvation. But it's the truth (**Mark 16:16**).
 - b. Not many people know that the New Testament says nothing about using instruments of music when we worship God in song – that we are only suppose to sing. But it's the truth (**Colossians 3:16**).
 - c. Not many people believe that you can divorce your spouse only if they are unfaithful to you. But it's the truth (**Matthew 19:9**).

3. You will find yourself in the minority on these issues and many like them. Sometimes people will ridicule you because what you believe is different from what is popularly taught. Sometimes that may even make us feel uncomfortable. When those moments come, think about this lesson we learned from Lucifer. How many people believe something or how popular a doctrine is has nothing to do with whether or not it's true. Only the Bible determines truth.

B. Lesson Two: We need to study the Bible for ourselves.

1. I wonder why people believe Lucifer is another name for Satan. It may be that this is what their mom and dad taught them growing up. Maybe their preacher said this. Maybe they've just heard other people talk about this. Maybe they heard Satan referred to in a movie as Lucifer.
2. After looking at the Bible, one thing we know for certain is that they did not reach this conclusion by examining the text.
3. This gets people into trouble all the time. The problem is that they just aren't serious enough about their faith to investigate God's word for themselves. They just believe what the preacher tells them or what their parents always said. They never bother to check it out for themselves. If we want to know what's truth, we need to have the same spirit we see in the Bereans (**Acts 17:10-12**). We need to study the Bible for ourselves.

C. Lesson Three: As we study, it is really important to study Bible passages in their context.

1. What does that mean? It means that, when I study the Bible, I need to get in the practice of doing the kinds of things we have done tonight. Before I reach a conclusion about what a passage is teaching, I need to look around.
2. I need to read the whole verse.
3. I need to step back and look at the verses that go before and that follow. For example, some read **Acts 16:30-31** and conclude that all a person has to do to be saved is believe in Jesus. If you just read those two verses, it might sound that way. But they need to read the whole story. The jailer was later told to be baptized (**v. 33**).
4. I may need to consider the entire chapter in which the verse is found. In examining Isaiah's reference to Lucifer, it helped us to know something about several chapters surrounding this verse. Reading several chapters in Acts will quickly reveal that there was more to being saved than simply believing in Jesus (**Acts 2:38; 22:16**).
5. I also have to think about the entire Bible. I should never interpret a passage in a way that creates a conflict with what the Bible says somewhere else. For example, some people take passages from the book of Revelation and suggest that we can know exactly when Jesus is coming back. However, the Bible plainly teaches that we cannot know the time (**Luke 12:40, I Thessalonians 5:1-3**). Taking into account all that the Bible says on the subject would have cleared up this confusion.

Here's the point: I can't just take one verse or phrase and make of it whatever I want. My goal is to figure out what God was trying to say. To determine this I must look around a little and consider the context.

D. Lesson Four: When I discover that something I believe does not agree with the Bible, then I need to change what I believe.

1. What would we conclude about a person who carefully studied Isaiah and realized that this passage is not talking about Satan, but still refused to change his mind? This is what I've always believed, so it just cannot be wrong. This is what my parents taught me, so I'm sticking with that. Everyone else believes this is Satan and hate going against the crowd.
2. It sounds kind of silly, doesn't it? But people do this all the time. I know what the Bible says about divorce, but I have the right to be happy. I know what the Bible says about baptism, but that's not what I was always taught growing up. I know that the New Testament says nothing about instrumental music in worship, but everyone else uses it.
3. It's easy to see how these are bad decisions, but could we be making the same bad choices? How do we respond when something we believe doesn't agree with the Bible? I may believe that who I choose as my friends doesn't really matter. This is not what God says (**I Corinthians 15:33**). I may believe that what I watch on TV or the music I listen to really doesn't influence me. This is not what God says (**Proverbs 4:23**).

Here's my point: If I am to become the person God wants me to be, I must carefully study His word. As I do that and I discover things that are different from what I believe, then I have to change what I believe. God's word is always right.

Conclusion: What God says about salvation is right.

God says: We are all sinners and we need to be saved (**Romans 3:23**). We must believe and be baptized to be saved from sin (**Mark 16:16**). This is what God said. This is what we must believe. Now, is that what you have done?

- David A. Banning