

The King Who Fell – Ezk 28

This next portion of the message to Tyre speaks to the King, where the previous one spoke to the prince or ruler. Interestingly, Ezekiel doesn't use the word "king" for any of the other foreign rulers he mentions throughout the book. It is only for the king of Judah and in this passage. Commentators are somewhat divided on who is being spoken to, but it seems clear from some of the descriptions that God is no longer speaking to a mere man. There are things asserted which, if taken literally, cannot apply to any human being who lived in Ezekiel's day. It is my belief, and that of many others, that the message is to Satan himself, the one behind the scenes who manipulates people in his war against God. Paul writes in 2 Cor 4:4 that "the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelievers..." Jesus said in John 12:31 "now will the ruler of this world be cast out." In Ephesians 6:12 we're told that we wrestle against "the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places." The socio-political troubles we face in this world are actually a part of the greater spiritual battle that is raging, and just as God brings men to judgment for their sins, He will bring Satan to judgment for his. Let's look at what God says in this regard.

"You were the signet of perfection, full of wisdom and perfect in beauty. You were in Eden, the garden of God; every precious stone was your covering, sardius, topaz, and diamond, beryl, onyx, and jasper, sapphire, emerald, and carbuncle; and crafted in gold were your settings and your engravings. On the day that you were created they were prepared. You were an anointed guardian cherub. I placed you; you were on the holy mountain of God; in the midst of the stones of fire you walked." Some commentators explain these statements as poetic illustrations of the king of Tyre, but we don't have "like" or "as" statements. Instead they seem to be concrete ones, describing Satan for us. We'll break out some of these phrases to examine them.

He was created as a beautiful angel. Where Ethbaal III was described as a man in v. 2,9, this king is called the anointed cherub and the covering cherub. When we saw the four living beings back in Ezk 1, they were described as the cherubim, and they seem to be the class of angels whose duty is to serve as guardians of God's holiness. Nowhere in scripture is the word cherubim applied to human beings, unless here. These angels are beautiful and majestic, as we saw from Ezekiel's vision in chapter 1, and that is the thrust of this current description of the king of Tyre. This one is covered with precious stones and gold engravings.

He was in the presence of God. As we already said, the role of the cherubim seems to be to accompany God, serving as guards or attendants. The holy mountain of God and the stones of fire seem to be references to the holy presence of God, who is elsewhere described as high and lifted up, and a consuming fire. Job describes Satan as still having access to the presence of God, though it may be in the course of a required daily briefing as a subordinate.

He was perfect, blameless. The signet of perfection is a difficult phrase in Hebrew, but seems to indicate a perfect standard or example. "Blameless in your ways" talks about the manner of living. Both of these would be out of character for God to describe a fallen human being, especially in the context of a pagan king. Angels, on the other hand, were created in perfection, full of holiness.

He was in the Garden of Eden. Genesis is very clear that Satan is the one who tempted Eve, in the form of a serpent. No other human being ever was in the garden, because God put a cherub there to block the way. If this is a literal statement, it can only apply to Satan.

So what about his judgment? Verse 15 says “unrighteousness was found in you.” Verse 17 says “your heart was proud because of your beauty; you corrupted your wisdom for the sake of your splendor.” In Isaiah 14, written about 200 years before Ezekiel, we read “How have you fallen from heaven, O star of the morning, son of the dawn! ...you said in your heart, ‘I will ascend to heaven; I will raise my throne above the stars of God, and I will sit on the mount of assembly in the recesses of the north. I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will make myself like the Most High.’” The sin which caused Satan’s downfall was pride. It wasn’t enough for him to be the covering cherub, attending the glory of God; he wanted the glory for himself.

God said (back in Ezk 28:17) “I cast you to the ground; I exposed you before kings, to feast their eyes on you. By the multitude of your iniquities, in the unrighteousness of your trade you profaned your sanctuaries; so I brought fire out from your midst; it consumed you, and I turned you to ashes on the earth in the sight of all who saw you. All who know you among the peoples are appalled at you; you have come to a dreadful end and shall be no more forever.” At the time of his sin, Satan was barred from his former position in God’s service, and cast down to this earth. Instead of being Lucifer, star of the morning, he is now Satan the deceiver, the accuser of the saints. He was unable to usurp God’s authority in Heaven, but he has become the god and ruler of this fallen world, until the time when Christ comes to defeat him and establish His own rightful rule over the earth. Where the ESV says “you have come to a dreadful end” the NASB says “you have become terrified”. This makes me think of the time Jesus cast the demons out of the demon-possessed men in Mt 8, and they cried out, “What have you to do with us, O Son of God? Have you come here to torment us before the time?” The devil and all his demons know the judgment has already been declared, and will be carried out. They fear that day.

What does this mean for us? One, it reminds us that even the angels, fallen or righteous, are under God’s authority and judgment. Two, it assures us that as a created being, the devil is not God’s equal, but is subject to Him, even if he is currently challenging that. Three, it gives us confidence that, just as Satan was initially cast out of Heaven for his sin, he will one day be fully defeated and cast down. Four, as a defeated, condemned enemy of God, Satan is not to be feared by those of us who are walking with God. God is able to protect us from all of his attacks. Our responsibility is to be obedient to and trusting in God. That is how we will avoid the judgment of God and find ourselves with calm assurance even when we are living in difficult days.