

Q. Is Lucifer another name for Satan, the devil?

A. The Bible clearly equates the devil with Satan, the serpent, and the dragon (Revelation 12:9 and 20:2). We also frequently hear people refer to the devil as Lucifer. This name comes from only one Scripture: "How art thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning! how art thou cut down to the ground, which didst weaken the nations!" (Isaiah 14:12, King James Version). But is this verse really calling the devil "Lucifer"? Is it speaking of anyone as Lucifer? Let's look at the context of the verse.

The Context of Isaiah 14:12

The beginning of Isaiah 14 speaks of the Lord having mercy on Jacob, or Israel. This is a reference to God releasing Israel from the captivity that Babylon took them into and their return to the land of Israel. It also speaks of them taking their captors captive and ruling over their oppressors (verse 2). Although Israel did return to the promised land from their captivity, they did not take their captors captive. Many would say that this is yet to happen. But, in Matthew 5:17, Jesus said He came to fulfill both the law and the prophets (see "In what way did Jesus fulfill the law?") (<http://www.wordofhisgrace.org/jesusfulfilllawqa1.htm>). As I explain in "What is the relationship between Israel and the church?" (<http://www.wordofhisgrace.org/israelassemblyqa.htm>), the assembly of believers is the true Israel of God. We must look to Jesus Christ and His assembly for the ultimate fulfillment of Isaiah 14:2. For example, in Ephesians 4:8, we read that Christ "led captivity captive." That is, all that has kept us captive—from the nations, the principalities and powers, to sin, death, and the grave—has been taken captive by the triumphant Christ. And through Christ, we share in that victory over our enemies.

Verse 3 says that the Lord "will give you rest from your sorrow, from your trouble, and from the hard service in which you were made to serve." Again, this had a physical fulfillment in national Israel and also has a spiritual fulfillment in believers: "Come to me, all you who labor and are heavily burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart; and you

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will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light" (Matthew 11:28-30).

Verse 4 begins a proverb or parable that Israel was to take up against the king of Babylon. If you continue reading, you will see that this proverb proceeds for several more verses, including verse 12. In these verses, we read that Babylon and the king of Babylon will be humbled and the rest of the earth will rejoice. Verses 8 and 9 tell of the trees rejoicing and Sheol (the place of the dead) moving to meet the king of Babylon. Isaiah 14:12, like the verses that precede it, is a reference to the king of Babylon. The *World English Bible* renders verses 11 and 12, "Your pomp is brought down to Sheol, with the sound of your stringed instruments. Maggots are spread out under you, and worms cover you. How you have fallen from heaven, morning star, son of the dawn! How you are cut down to the ground, who laid the nations low!" (Isaiah 14:11-12). Clearly, the references to Sheol, maggots, and worms tell us this refers to the death of the once great but mortal king of Babylon.

Who is Lucifer?

Isaiah 14:12, in the King James Version and closely related translations, such as the New King James Version, is the only place in the Bible where "Lucifer" is mentioned. The Hebrew word translated as "Lucifer" is *hêylêl*. It is simply a reference to the morning star that we know as the planet Venus. The king of Babylon is likened to Venus because of his boasting: "You said in your heart, 'I will ascend into heaven! I will exalt my throne above the stars of God! I will sit on the mountain of assembly, in the far north! I will ascend above the heights of the clouds! I will make myself like the Most High!'" (Isaiah 14:13-14).

When Venus is in the right position, as the dawn approaches, it seems to outshine the stars and rise into the heavens, appearing even to bring the Sun with it. God apparently saw this as an appropriate metaphor for the boastful king of Babylon. But notice verses 15-17: "Yet you shall be brought down to Sheol, to the depths of the pit. Those who see you will stare at you. They will ponder you, saying, 'Is this the man who made the earth to tremble, who shook kingdoms; who made the world like a wilderness, and overthrew its cities; who didn't release his prisoners to their home?' Again, it is clear that this is talking about a man, not Satan the devil.

Who is Lucifer? Lucifer is no one. Isaiah 14:12 likens the king of Babylon to the planet Venus, the morning star. God's intention was not to give the king a name, Lucifer, but only to liken him to the heavenly object. The Hebrew word for morning star was translated by the Catholic theologian, Jerome, in the Latin Vulgate Bible as "Lucifer"—a word that had various astronomical/astrological and mythological meanings (some of them referring to mythological persons)—and "Lucifer" was then picked up by early English Bibles, including the King James Version. In reality, however, Lucifer is only a Latin translation of the Hebrew word for the morning star. It is not a name for the devil or for anyone.

But, couldn't Isaiah 14:12-14, although directly describing the king of Babylon, be speaking of the king as a type of Satan? Could not the king of Babylon be a type and Satan the antitype? This explanation is tempting because it would give us an origin and history of Satan we would otherwise not have.

There is, however, a serious problem that those who think of Isaiah 14:12-14 as typifying Satan are forgetting or ignoring. Like prophecy, a type always precedes its antitype. Adam was a type of the second Adam, Christ; the Passover was a type of Jesus Christ's atoning death for our sins; the Sabbath was a type of our rest in Christ; Old Testament Israel was a type of the New Testament assembly, and so forth. The type is a shadow or picture of what is to come. The type never pictures something before it. Yet, those who think of Isaiah 14:12 as picturing Satan usually say that it shows his fall shortly after the creation of the world. Answers in Genesis, for example, says the events in this verse likely took place "soon after day 7" (<https://answersingenesis.org/angels-and-demons/satan/what-about-satan-and-the-origin-of-evil/>). Some place it even earlier than that. Herbert W. Armstrong put the fall of Satan, which he said is described in Isaiah 14:12, before God's creation of Adam (Herbert W. Armstrong, *The Incredible Human Potential*, softcover edition, [Pasadena, CA: Worldwide Church of God, 1978] 52-7; and, Herbert W. Armstrong, *Mystery of the Ages*, softcover edition, [Pasadena, CA: Worldwide Church of God, 1985] October 1985 printing, 60-2). Thus, if the king of Babylon in Isaiah 14:12-14 is a type of Satan, the events pictured about the fall of Satan (the antitype) would precede the type (the king of Babylon). But this never happens anywhere else in Scripture. The type always comes before the antitype as a shadow of the reality to come. In this way, types act as a sort of prophecy. So, the fall of the king of Babylon cannot be a type of the fall of Satan, which had taken place centuries earlier.

Jesus' Reference

Some will say that Jesus referred to Lucifer as falling from heaven. But He did not. Jesus said, "I saw Satan having fallen like lightning from heaven" (Luke 10:18). Jesus did not call Satan "Lucifer." His statement here likely has nothing at all to do with Isaiah 14:12, although, perhaps, He was likening the fall of Satan to the fall of the king of Babylon. But He was not saying that Isaiah 14:12 is an actual reference to or type of the fall of Satan.

Revelation 12 includes a vision of Satan, depicted as a dragon, warring against Michael and his angels and being cast down from heaven. Again, there is no necessary connection between this and Isaiah 14:12.

The Morning Star

Remember, "Lucifer" is simply a Latin word that means "morning star." It has no inherent, evil connotation. In Revelation 22:16, Jesus calls Himself the Morning Star: "I, Jesus, have sent my angel to testify these things to you for the assemblies. I am the root and the offspring of David; the Bright and Morning Star" (see also the prophecy in Numbers 24:17). Peter writes, "We have the more sure word of prophecy; and you do well that you heed it, as to a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawns, and the morning star arises in your hearts" (2 Peter 1:19; "morning star" in the Latin Vulgate Bible is "lucifer"). The idea is that, as the Messiah, Jesus brings light to the world.

It was wrong for the king of Babylon to boast, and Isaiah 14:12 uses "morning star" of him sarcastically. He was not a light bringer, and his boasting made him a false Messiah. Jesus says, "He who overcomes, and he who keeps my works to the end, to him I will give authority over the nations. He will rule them with a rod of iron, shattering them like clay pots; as I also have received of my Father: and I will give him the morning star" (Revelation 2:26-28). The word "rule" here is *poimainō*. It means to "shepherd" or "pastor." Through Jesus, we share His authority to shepherd the nations with the Gospel. When they hear it, people are either broken in contrition or they will be broken in condemnation in the judgment. In doing this, we are bringing light to the world, sharing in Christ's role as the Morning Star.

Is Lucifer another name for Satan? No, but, figuratively speaking, Jesus is the Morning Star.

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