

EZEKIEL

Hard to Heart

"Tyre Rant"

28:1-19

Imagine, for a moment, you are the apostle Peter. You've been following the Lord for some time. You love Him with all your heart. Jesus asks you and the rest of the boys, "Who do you say that I am?" You step-up to the challenge and declare, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God!"

Jesus commends you in front of everyone. He says,

Matthew 16:17 Jesus answered and said to him, "Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah, for flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but My Father who is in heaven.

Matthew 16:18 And I also say to you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it.

That has to be a most-memorable moment, a high point in your ministry.

While you're riding that high, this happens:

Matthew 16:21 From that time Jesus began to show to His disciples that He must go to Jerusalem, and suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised the third day.

Matthew 16:22 Then Peter took Him aside and began to rebuke Him, saying, "Far be it from You, Lord; this shall not happen to You!"

Matthew 16:23 But He turned and said to Peter, "Get behind Me, Satan! You are an offense to Me, for you are not mindful of the things of God, but the things of men."

That's gotta be an all-time low! Not only do you totally miss the point, and get totally rebuked by Jesus in front of everyone. No, worse still, Jesus talks to you as if you were the devil!

We don't for a moment think that Peter was the devil. We don't even think he was possessed by the devil. We understand the encounter to teach that Peter was being influenced by the devil. He was saying something that would be devil-like.

Something just like that is going to happen in our text in Ezekiel.

- In verses one through ten God announces His judgment upon the ruler of Tyre.
- In verses eleven through nineteen God seems to be talking to Satan even though He's still addressing the ruler of Tyre.

God was addressing a man, the ruler of Tyre, the whole time. But in the later verses He was revealing the motivation behind the man. It was Satan.

This simple comparison with Jesus' remarks to Peter help us avoid a whole bunch of weird interpretations of this passage. Trust me - there are a lot of them. It's the ruler of Tyre, behind whom was the devil.

Remember, too, in the Book of Daniel we learn that there can be satanic powers behind the rulers of the nations of the earth. We read there about a demon who was "the prince of the kingdom of Persia" who withstood Gabriel until Michael the Archangel came to fight with him.

Ezekiel 28:1 The word of the Lord came to me again, saying,

This phrase will repeat in verse eleven when God begins to address the one behind the ruler of Tyre.

Ezekiel 28:2 "Son of man, say to the prince of Tyre, 'Thus says the Lord God: "Because your heart is lifted up, And you say, 'I am a god, I sit in the seat of gods, In the midst of the seas,' Yet you are a man, and not a god, Though you set your heart as the heart of a god

The "prince," or ruler, of Tyre at this time in history was a guy named Ithobul II. Did he really think he was "a god?"

Probably it was similar to what Nebuchadnezzar, ruler of Babylon, thought. In chapter four of Daniel we read about his assessment of himself as a world ruler.

Daniel 4:30 The king spoke, saying, "Is not this great Babylon, that I have built for a royal dwelling by my mighty power and for the honor of my majesty?"

Right then God smote him and he was driven out into the fields to live as a beast for seven years!

Ithobul II thought like that about the empire of Tyre. He was on top of the world, untouchable it seemed. In a figurative sense, he was a god among men. But still with a little 'g' and about to be humbled.

Ezekiel 28:3 (Behold, you are wiser than Daniel! There is no secret that can be hidden from you!

First of all, note the fame of Daniel. He had been in Nebuchadnezzar's court for about twenty-five years at this point in history. His wisdom was legendary. He interpreted dreams before even being told their content!

Do you understand that your wisdom exceeds that of Daniel? You and I have the completed Bible and are permanently indwelt by God the Holy Spirit. Daniel would have loved those advantages!

Verse three may be sarcasm. I rather see it as a saying that the Tyrians applied to Ithobul II, to puff him up all the more.

Here's a thought. Daniel chapter four, the episode where Nebuchadnezzar goes mad, is really a tract he wrote that gives his testimony of coming to Christ in which Daniel and his wisdom played a prominent role. It's something he published throughout the known world. Now I don't know all the timing of his conversion and his invasion of Tyre, but it might be possible that Ithobul II had read it and rejected it. Thus this phrase, "wiser than Daniel," might be his slam against Nebuchadnezzar and his so-called conversion to the God of Daniel.

Just a thought requiring more research.

Ezekiel 28:4 With your wisdom and your understanding You have gained riches for yourself, And gathered gold and silver into your treasuries;

Ezekiel 28:5 By your great wisdom in trade you have increased your riches, And your heart is lifted up because of your riches),"

It's clear that Ithobul was quite wise in the ways of the world. He was a commercial genius. He was Bill Gates and Steve Jobs rolled into one as far as his understanding of commerce.

But what would it do him to gain the whole world only to lose his soul? If you want to respect someone, make sure they are a believer who is building for God - a life, a family, a church.

Ezekiel 28:6 'Therefore thus says the Lord God: "Because you have set your heart as the heart of a god,

Ezekiel 28:7 Behold, therefore, I will bring strangers against you, The most terrible of the nations; And they shall draw their swords against the beauty of your wisdom, And defile your splendor.

Ezekiel 28:8 They shall throw you down into the Pit, And you shall die the death of the slain In the midst of the seas.

Ezekiel 28:9 "Will you still say before him who slays you, 'I am a god'? But you shall be a man, and not a god, In the hand of him who slays you.

George Reeves was the actor who portrayed Superman in the 1950's TV series I used to watch as a kid. He died at age 45 of a gunshot wound. Some say it was accidental. Some say it was murder. Some say it was suicide.

For years I believed the crazy story my brothers told me. They said he started to believe he really was Superman and jumped out of a high-rise window only to find he really couldn't fly!

Ithobul would find out he was no god when a man would kill him!

Ezekiel 28:10 You shall die the death of the uncircumcised By the hand of aliens; For I have spoken," says the Lord God.' "

It means he would die unconverted, die in his sins, die eternally separated from God. He'd wait in the "pit," in Hades, where he's still waiting, for the resurrection of the damned, the second death, to be thrown alive into the Lake of Fire.

There is no Superman. Nor is there going to be a super-man, the so-called Übermanche of German philosopher Nietzsche. His thought was that we could become more than we are, more than merely human.

There is the God-man, Jesus Christ, by whom mere men can be saved. In Him we become fully human. We will eventually have the glorified bodies of the resurrection.

God begins to address Ithobul as if he were Satan.

Ezekiel 28:11 Moreover the word of the Lord came to me, saying,
Ezekiel 28:12 "Son of man, take up a lamentation for the king of Tyre...

It's no big deal that he called him "prince" earlier but now addresses him as "king." It can be shown in the Bible, especially in the book of First Samuel, that the two terms were used interchangeably of the ruler.

Ezekiel 28:12 "Son of man, take up a lamentation for the king of Tyre, and say to him, 'Thus says the Lord God: "You were the seal of perfection, Full of wisdom and perfect in beauty.

Ezekiel 28:13 You were in Eden, the garden of God; Every precious stone was your covering: The sardius, topaz, and diamond, Beryl, onyx, and jasper, Sapphire, turquoise, and emerald with gold. The workmanship of your timbrels and pipes Was prepared for you on the day you were created.

Ezekiel 28:14 "You were the anointed cherub who covers; I established you; You were on the holy mountain of God; You walked back and forth in the midst of fiery stones.

Ezekiel 28:15 You were perfect in your ways from the day you were created, Till iniquity was found in you.

This is easy-peasey, I think.

- The person being addressed is a "cherub." That's a class of angelic beings.

- This particular cherub was “in Eden.” Who is the only angel we read about in Eden? It’s Lucifer, Satan, the serpent, the devil.

We learn a few things about the devil:

- He was, and still is, “full of... beauty.” I don’t think he looks like the guy on the fireworks stands!
- He was “created.” He is in no way an equal with God, with the Creator. It’s not like the Force, or the yin & yang, good versus evil.
- “Timbrels and pipes” describe some sort of musical ability. Lucifer is thus said by many to have been a worship leader, maybe THE worship leader.
- He was in the very presence of God. According to Job he still has access to God’s throne.
- It’s possible to identify the “fiery stones” with a fiery wall around the Throne of God in Heaven. If that’s the case, Lucifer was an inner-circle angel.

But “iniquity was found” in him. The sin that corrupted Satan was self-generated. Created blameless, his sin was pride (according to First Timothy 3:6).

Satan was a created angel who fell. The angels were created before the earth (Job 38). Satan fell before he tempted Adam and Eve in the Garden. Satan’s fall, therefore, must have occurred somewhere after the time the angels were created and before he tempted Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden. More than that we cannot say.

Did one third of the angels rebel with him? It seems so.

- We are told in Hebrews 12:22 that one third of an “innumerable company of angels chose to rebel with him.
- The apostle John saw this great wonder in heaven, “...an enormous red dragon... His tail swept a third of the stars out of the sky and flung them to the earth...the great dragon was hurled down - that ancient serpent called the devil, or Satan, who leads the whole world astray. He was hurled to the earth, and his angels with him” (Revelation 12:3-9).

We talk about the fall of Satan but it is more accurate to describe him as falling. Though Ezekiel presented the fall of Satan as a single act, it actually occurred in stages. Satan's initial judgment was his expulsion from the position of God's anointed cherub before His throne. God expelled him from the "mount of God" (meaning Heaven). As I already said, he is still allowed access to God. In the Tribulation Satan will be cast from Heaven and restricted to the earth. At the Second Coming Satan will be confined in the Millennium to the bottomless pit. After his brief release at the end of the Millennium he will be cast into the lake of fire forever.

Ezekiel 28:16 "By the abundance of your trading You became filled with violence within, And you sinned; Therefore I cast you as a profane thing Out of the mountain of God; And I destroyed you, O covering cherub, From the midst of the fiery stones.

Ezekiel 28:17 "Your heart was lifted up because of your beauty; You corrupted your wisdom for the sake of your splendor; I cast you to the ground, I laid you before kings, That they might gaze at you.

Sounds like God is addressing two people at once. Sort of. He's addressing Ithabul and the person who gives him his power, Satan.

It's interesting to note that when we think 'satanic' we usually associate it with death, blood, horror and the like. Here we see that the "abundance of... trading" was satanic. It's not so much the act or activity as it is the motivation behind it. You might say that Satan carries a PDA as much as he does a pitchfork.

Ezekiel 28:18 "You defiled your sanctuaries By the multitude of your iniquities, By the iniquity of your trading; Therefore I brought fire from your midst; It devoured you, And I turned you to ashes upon the earth In the sight of all who saw you.

Ezekiel 28:19 All who knew you among the peoples are astonished at you; You have become a horror, And shall be no more forever." ' ' "

Ezekiel was describing Ithabul and Satan. The purpose of the lament was to speak of Tyre's destruction. So he began to blend the characteristics of the satanic king with the human ruler.

- Satan would be cast to the earth and the king of Tyre would also be cast down before other kings, his enemies.

- Satan's ultimate destiny will be the Lake of Fire and the defeat and death of the human ruler of Tyre was pictured as being consumed by fire.
- Both Satan's and Tyre's defeats would shock those nations who had followed them.

God went on a Tyre-rant against the tyrant ruler. Along the way we learn some things about worldliness, the devil, and our own ultimate future.

Satan is falling. We will rise!

