

# The Fall of Satan & How it Matters

- <sup>10:1</sup> After this the Lord appointed seventy-two others and sent them on ahead of him, two by two, into every town and place where he himself was about to go.
- <sup>2</sup> And he said to them, “The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few. Therefore pray earnestly to the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest.
- <sup>3</sup> Go your way; behold, I am sending you out as lambs in the midst of wolves.
- <sup>4</sup> Carry no moneybag, no knapsack, no sandals, and greet no one on the road.
- <sup>5</sup> Whatever **house** you enter, first say, ‘Peace be to this house!’
- <sup>6</sup> And if a son of peace is there, your peace will rest upon him. But if not, it will return to you.
- <sup>7</sup> And remain in the same **house**, eating and drinking what they provide, for the laborer deserves his wages. Do not go from **house** to **house**.
- <sup>8</sup> Whenever you enter a town and they receive you, eat what is set before you.
- <sup>9</sup> Heal the sick in it and say to them, ‘The kingdom of God has come near to you.’
- <sup>10</sup> But whenever you enter a town and they do not receive you, go into its streets and say,
- <sup>11</sup> ‘Even the dust of your town that clings to our feet we wipe off against you. Nevertheless know this, that the kingdom of God has come near.’
- <sup>12</sup> I tell you, it will be more bearable on that day for Sodom than for that town.
- <sup>13</sup> “Woe to you, **Chorazin**! Woe to you, **Bethsaida**! For if the mighty works done in you had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago, sitting in sackcloth and ashes.
- <sup>14</sup> But it will be more bearable in the judgment for Tyre and Sidon than for you.

<sup>15</sup> And you, **Capernaum**, will you be exalted to heaven? You shall be brought down to Hades.

<sup>16</sup> “The one who hears you hears me, and the one who rejects you rejects me, and the one who rejects me rejects him who sent me.”

<sup>17</sup> The seventy-two returned with joy, saying, “Lord, even the demons are subject to us in your name!”

<sup>18</sup> And he said to them, “I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven.

<sup>19</sup> Behold, I have given you authority to tread on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy, and nothing shall hurt you.

<sup>20</sup> Nevertheless, do not rejoice in this, that the spirits are subject to you, but rejoice that your names are written in heaven.”

(Luke 10:1-20)

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## The Fall of Satan

**When did Satan fall?** This is a fascinating question that has elicited many speculations. It seems that the creature in the Garden, which John identifies as Satan, was **already fallen when he tempted our parents**. Why else would he want to see us fall into sin? Based on **Psalm 8:5** (“**You have made him a little lower than the *elohim* and crowned him with glory and honor**”), some have speculated that this fall came as a result of God creating Adam and giving him dominion over this jewel of a planet. Satan essentially got jealous. Others, however, realizing that **Job 38:7** says that the

“sons of God” were there rejoicing when God laid the foundations of the earth, and knowing that Satan is one of those “sons of God,” say that there was probably some kind of **primordial revolt in heaven** that happened before God made man at all. After all, **Isaiah 14:13** seems to suggest that the original fall came as a result of him seeking to ascend to heaven above the stars of God, where he would set his throne on high.

**Luke 10:18** presents one of the most intriguing if not also debated verses in the Bible. Jesus says, “**I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven.**” He *appears* to be talking about Satan’s fall. But that begs a question. **What does it mean to “fall like lightning from heaven?”** Does it mean **to sin for the first time?** Does it mean **to be cast out**, having presupposed he was already sinful? If so, why wasn’t he cast out before this? Does it mean **something else?** Could any of these overlap?

How we answer this question must be rooted in **the context** in which it is spoken. And yet, unfortunately, we all come to this (like any other) passage with biases that we are often not even aware that we have. Biases that when unspotted, can end up muddying our interpretation without even recognizing it.

For example, if you believe that we can only speak of one fall of Satan, or speak of his “fall” in only one sense, then you must conclude that Jesus is talking about something that happened long ago. This interpretation of this passage has been around since the early church.<sup>1</sup> However, if you believe that the fall of Satan means that he can have no more influence at all in the world, then you will probably have to assume that Jesus is talking here in a prophetic voice, about something that even we 2,000 years later have not yet seen.<sup>2</sup>

What’s happening in this second one is that people seem to be bringing a particular reading of Revelation 20 to Luke, whether they know it or not. The passage says that the angel “seized the dragon, that ancient serpent, who is the devil and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years, and threw him into the pit, and shut it and sealed it over him...” (Rev 20:2-3a). Larkin represents the popular view when he interprets it as teaching that, “Satan can and will be bound and confined in a place where he cannot get out for a 1000 years, and while nothing is said of the binding and confining of his angels and other evil agents, as demons and the ‘evil powers of

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<sup>1</sup> E.g. Tertullian, Origen, and Jerome. See Simon Gathercole, “Jesus’ Eschatological Vision of the Fall of Satan: Luke 10,18 Reconsidered,” *ZNW* 94 (Walter de Gruyter, 2003): 145-47.

<sup>2</sup> Gathercole seems to have this assumption, “The problem with all these views is that, as we noted in connection with the temptation theory, Satan later reappears, still with some considerable force. His ongoing activity in his instrumental role in the betrayal and death of Jesus (Lk 22,3) would imply that his defeat has not yet been accomplished.” (p. 153).

the air,' the inference is that they too will be powerless during that period."<sup>3</sup> The problem is, it is anything but certain given the context that this verse means that Satan is absolutely bound from doing anything during the millennium. Thus, importing this to Luke is dubious.

What we are going to look at today is this “fall of Satan,” its meaning, its timing, and its implications for us. Any time you must talk about the Prince of the Air and Darkness it is serious business. But if we understand the Bible properly, it can make a world of difference in both our ability to go forth as Christians with confidence in the power of the kingdom of God while also having a realistic understanding of Satan’s activity in the world in the midst of this kingdom.

## The Kingdom of God

The way I want to begin our investigation into the question of this fall of Satan is by looking at how Luke presents to us the doctrine of “the kingdom of God” in his Gospel. This is important, because he says something in our passage about the kingdom, not once, but twice (Luke 10:9, 11), and what he says is clearly new.

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<sup>3</sup> Clarence Larkin, *The Book of Revelation: A Study of the Last Prophetic Book of Holy Scripture* (Philadelphia, PA: Rev. Clarence Larkin Estate, 1919), 176.

In **Luke 1:33**, in the Infancy Narrative of Jesus, the prophecy stated, “... and of *his kingdom* there will be no end.” So, Jesus is clearly coming with a kingdom. The next time “kingdom” is mentioned is in **4:43**, “I must preach the good news of the *kingdom of God* to the other towns as well; for I was sent for this purpose.”<sup>4</sup> Next, Jesus makes a cryptic reference about **the poor** that “*yours is the kingdom of God*” (**Luke 6:20**). Similarly, he will tell the people that **the one who is least in the *kingdom* of God is greater than [John the Baptist]** (**7:28**). He returns to “proclaiming and bringing *the good news of the kingdom of God*” in **8:1**.

Then we come to a very important reference to the kingdom. It occurs in **9:2** as Jesus is **sending the twelve Apostles** “to proclaim *the kingdom of God* and to heal.” This story is important because it is **the parallel prelude** to ours today. In this story, Jesus sent out the Twelve. In our story, he sends out the seventy-two. This sending of the Twelve begins with Jesus calling them together where he “**gave them power and authority over all demons and to cure diseases**” (**9:1**).

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<sup>4</sup> This is interesting because Luke has chosen to **skip a couple** of important sayings about the kingdom that took place at his baptism and just after his temptation where it was stated that “*the kingdom of heaven is at hand*” (**Matt 3:2; 4:17**). You will see why this is important as we read Luke in a moment.

Then it says, “They departed and went through the villages, preaching the gospel and healing everywhere” (6). What’s so curious about this language to me is that it mentions that **they healed, but not** that they **cast out demons**. One could certainly argue that casting out demons was a kind of healing, and that they therefore did this. But the beginning of the passage separates the two, so we might expect Luke to mention that they were also casting out demons here. Yet, he doesn’t.

Whether they did or did not isn’t my point. Rather, this lack of an explicit comment becomes an interesting backdrop to the story that takes place **immediately after Jesus is transfigured**. He comes down the mountain and returns to the town where the other nine Apostles are waiting, **helpless**. There is a man in the city who has a child with a demon that **they can’t cast out** (40)! It explicitly says this, so we are meant to notice it. Jesus even laments that this is a “**faithless and twisted generation**” (41), and he certainly includes the Apostles in this lamentation. He has given them the power and authority, but they lack the faith to execute it.

We must also remember that as he is coming off the mountain, he tells them for a second time that he is going to die, and they are **utterly clueless** (44-45; cf. 21-22). Then

they **start arguing** about who is the greatest in the kingdom, they (46). Then they **get mad** (or **jealous?**) because someone else is casting out demons (49). Then, in their religious zeal rooted in their slumbering stupor to what Jesus is doing, they decide they want to treat the people like Sodom and **call down fire from heaven** on the people of Samaria (54). And, for good measure, we learn that many disciples want to follow Jesus, but can't because like Lot's wife, they keep wanting to "**look back**" (62).

It is into this that we start our passage. It says, "**After this the Lord appointed seventy-two others and sent them on ahead of him, two by two, into every town and place where he himself was about to go**" (10:1). There are three brief comments I'll make about this here. First, **seventy-two is a textual variant** that is of about equal weight to the other variant which reads, "**seventy.**" While this is a fascinating study, I'll simply say here that I think that seventy is the original number. Why? Because this is the number that is always **associated with the nations**, and as all the Church Fathers said, Jesus is sending the seventy to the nations (see the Appendix). From the number of **nations** that came out of the Tower of Babel (**Gen 10**), to the number of heavenly **sons of God** set over them (**Deut 32:8** targum), to the **seventy-palms** of Elim



at the place of temptation (**Ex 15:27**), to the **seventy-bulls** Israel was to offer on the Feast of Booths for the nations (**Num 29**),<sup>5</sup> to the **seventy elders** of Israel that went up the mountain with Moses (**Ex 24**), to the traditional number of members of **the Sanhedrin** ruling council. Each of these are completely related to one another through the idea of the divine council. Furthermore, given what I think is going on with the fall of Satan in this passage, I also think **the seventy sons of El** in Canaanite tradition, especially in the Baal Cycle, is also as important as it is related. So yes, Jesus sent out the seventy.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Heiser has a good discussion of this along with some links that explains it. See **Michael S. Heiser**, Naked Bible 206: The 70 Bulls of the Feast of Tabernacles,” *The Naked Bible Podcast* (Mar 13, 2018), <https://nakedbiblepodcast.com/podcast/naked-bible-206-the-70-bulls-of-the-feast-of-tabernacles/>.

<sup>6</sup> **Going Deeper. Seventy-Two.** While **seventy-two** does not appear nearly as often in the Bible, it is also a sacred number. In fact, **it might be even more important** than seventy. It is found throughout the world in the myths of the nations, redundant in their sacred architecture, and in their sacred calendars (**T. Scott**, 119-40; **Hancock**, *Fingerprints* esp. Ch. 31, p. 250-60; **J. Scott**, 53-54; **Major**, 12-13). This is because God has seen fit to encode the number seventy-two as a main facet of almost all mathematical formulations of **space and time**. So, for example, with space, the number of degrees in a circle (360) and all five Platonic Solids: four-sided tetrahedron (720), six-side cube (2160), eight-sided octahedron (1440), twelve-sided dodecahedron (6480), twenty-sided icosahedron (3600) are divisible by 72. As for time, the number of hours, minutes, and seconds in a day are all divisible by or factors of 72 (24 hours; 1,440 minutes; 86,000 seconds). Also, the symbolic yearly calendar and the great year are related to 72. 72 is 1/5 of a symbolic year (360 days). And it takes 72 years for the earth to travel once degree through its circular course in the Great Year (25,920 years).

While only one of the two numbers was originally in the Table of Nations, and while most scholars recognize that seventy-two was not the original number (the LXX duplicates names; **Major**, 8-14), I agree with Scott when he says, “**The interchange between 70 and 72 should not be seen as a matter of ‘error.’ Rather, this shift can be attributed to distinct but complementary meanings**” (**Scott**, 127). Perhaps the scribes of the LXX (interestingly, meaning “seventy” although there were said to be seventy-two of them employed for the translation

Second, he sends them out **two-by-two**, not just so they won't be alone, but so that **on the testimony of two or three witnesses** a thing might be established (**Deut 17:6**). The importance of this is understood when you read Jesus' commands to them about leaving peace on a house or removing it, an **act of judgment** that they are commanded to make for some reason, which can only happen if there is a minimum of witnesses about that town's reception of the Gospel. By the way, such acts of judgment are what rulers do, members of the divine council.

Third, they are going *before the Lord*. That is, Jesus is coming after them to those places on his way to Jerusalem where he will be put to death. This then relates directly to the important language of the kingdom that we find in this passage. You see, for the first time in Luke's Gospel, the kingdom is going to "**come near**" people, and do it through someone other than Jesus. He tells them, "**Heal the sick in it and say to them, 'The kingdom of God has come near to you'**" (9). And its opposite, they were to tell the people if they reject the Gospel, "**Even the dust of your town that clings to our feet we wipe off against you. Nevertheless know this,**

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according to **Josephus**; *Antiquities* 12.2),<sup>6</sup> cognizant of the meaning of seventy-two, thought a change had occurred and wanted to correct it to the more favorable seventy-two?

that the *kingdom of God has come near*" (11). Whatever the previous references to the kingdom meant in terms of someone being in it, it only came via the direct intercession of Jesus. Now, it is encroaching *through his disciples*, with a difference not only of "come near" language that isn't used with the twelve, but with something else that we will now look at.

## The Seventy Return

When Jesus says he saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven, it comes as *a response to the seventy returning with joy* (Luke 10:17). And Luke tells us that they said this to Jesus, "*Lord, even the demons are subject to us in your name!*" This is very interesting given that we've just seen the Twelve were sent out previously to cast out demons, but nothing specific is said about them doing that, save the one incident where they *couldn't* do it! Suddenly, seventy are sent out and they are now able. In fact, they are *filled with joy* and apparently *surprise* that this is now happening. We've just seen that the kingdom of God coming near is new language in Luke's Gospel. This is now a second completely new idea. Something has happened.

It is at this moment that we read, “And he said to them, ‘I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven’” (18). I do not often comment **conjunctions** in the NT, but in this case, I think it is important. The words are, “*eipen de autois...*” literally, “he said and to them ...” “Said” is moved to the front for emphasis. The conjunction *de* can be translated as “and” or “but” or “now.” I don’t care how you interpret it, the point is made through the emphasis of the word and the presence of the conjunction, that **Jesus is not changing subjects**. He is responding directly to them. This means that the fall of Satan **must have something to do** with the demons being subject to them in his name at the present moment.

Now, whatever one thinks about the initial fall of Satan, I think it is safe to say that **no one believes** he first fell *into sin* at this exact moment in time (or even in the very near past). Even if you somehow think that he was just “**doing his job**” in Genesis 3 or Job 1, and I know few who think that, did he not tempt Jesus to worship him in the **wilderness**? Did he not inspire Herod to kill him when he was a **baby**? So, Satan had sinned a long time ago. This begs the question, what purpose would telling these disciples that Satan fell into sin a long time ago possibly serve in the present context? Nothing. If Satan’s fall into sin ages ago means that the seventy

could now cast out demons, then it would certainly have meant that anyone in Jesus' name could have done this, going all the way back to the OT when the Name was the LORD.

But I said **something has very clearly changed**. It has changed in the language Luke is using about the kingdom. It has changed in the way these disciples are reacting to the casting out of demons. Something has changed, and it has changed *recently*, perhaps as recently as the sending out of the Twelve, for we get the impression that they couldn't do it, or at least that they had troubles. But the seventy have no hint of this at all.

Now, before I explain to you **what I think it going on**, we should keep reading. Jesus continues talking to them. He hasn't stopped or changed subjects, *"I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven. Behold, I have given you authority to tread on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy, and nothing shall hurt you. Nevertheless, do not rejoice in this, that the spirits are subject to you, but rejoice that your names are written in heaven"* (18-20). It is only here that he finishes speaking about this matter.

Let's notice something about each verse. In **vs. 17**, *demons* appear. In vs. **18**, it is *Satan*. In vs. **19**, it is *serpents and*

*scorpions*, and “*the enemy*.” In vs. 20, it is “*the spirits*.” Each of the four verses brings up some kind of supernatural creature(s). Someone might object that vs. 19 is talking about nasty reptiles and arthropods, but this is not the case. “The enemy” here is very clearly Satan from the previous verse, and so these creatures must be related to him. It is into this that you must understand that serpents and scorpions are talking about *demonic creatures*.<sup>7</sup> Think about it. What is that supernatural entity Satan called in the Garden of Eden? The *serpent*. The Jews believed that there were many *satans* (accusers) of his species, and therefore, there are many serpents. Revelation 9 is a great place to think about the scorpions. Out of the abyss of hell comes hybrid scorpion creatures that are given power to torment men (cf. **Rev 9:10**). These are not Huey Helicopters are Hal Lindsey thought. They are demons, the hounds of hell. What we are seeing here is **Jesus reinforcing** the fact that this fall of Satan like lightning from heaven has something to do with **this new power** the seventy have been given over supernatural evil.

But there’s that last bit that they are **not to rejoice in this power**, but that their names are written in heaven. It is into

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<sup>7</sup> Here, I’m using “demonic” as an adjective. Technically, serpents would be more fallen angelic, while scorpions would be more their offspring—demons. But they are both *demonic*, that is supernaturally evil.

this that we should understand that some scholars want to take Satan's fall here, not as a past event, but as a **prophetic future**. Think of someone like **Daniel** who says, "**And I saw...**" the same language as Jesus uses, and then talks about some kind of night vision where he beholds the future. In fact, in at least one of those visions, he beholds the *future* of the sea-monster, which is likened to Satan (cf. **Dan 7:2-6, 7-8; Rev 12**). That vision is clearly future. So, it is certainly not unheard of for a prophet to speak about the future with "I saw."

Most who take this kind of approach will say that Jesus is seeing something of **the future binding of Satan** here, just prior to a future millennium. They are **equating** Satan's fall here to **his binding** in the millennium (to see Satan fall is to see Satan bound), *and* they believe that the binding in the millennium is absolute. Thus, for them, it can't possibly be that Satan could fall here in the days of Jesus, because as will be made clear with **Peter** being sifted by Satan, **Judas** being entered by Satan, **Paul** being hindered by Satan, and Satan prowling around like a roaring lion in **Peter's** letter, Satan isn't bound from wreaking havoc on the church or the world. But like I said earlier, this view of the binding is a presupposition.

But let's assume for the moment that they are right? What sense would Jesus seeing the future fall of Satan into the abyss make to the disciples right now? One answer is that they see the seventy coming back with a kind of **arrogant pride** (their "**triumphalism**") and Jesus is warning them that until Satan is bound in the future, they had better watch themselves. This would then be the meaning of "**do not rejoice in this.**" They were being prideful. I think that might be reading too much in, but who knows.

One scholar<sup>8</sup> who makes this point goes to the next few verses, which talk about **the elect**. It is certainly right to see these verses as connected, because they begin, "*In that same hour he rejoiced in the Holy Spirit...*" So, Jesus is quite happy about something. Jesus seems to be happy about exactly what he just told them ... their names *are* written in heaven. Thus, these verses speak of **the Father hiding these things** from the wise and understanding, but revealing them to little *children*, i.e. who are, at this point, the seventy (**Luke 10:21**). Jesus then in prayer talks about how the Son has **elected** them, by **choosing** them to know the Father (**22**). All this is certainly fine theology. Election is clearly in this passage and Jesus is rejoicing because of it.

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<sup>8</sup> Gathercole.



But he then goes far outside of our immediate context to talk about how a very bad future is coming both for the disciples (in the near future) and the world (in the distant future) in Luke 21, which, of course, is true. The idea then is, in seeing the future fall of Satan from heaven, Jesus is warning them, with encouraging words because of election, that they should not be so quick to gloat. Satan is still out there and tough times are coming. You need to persevere and the best way you can do that is not by rejoicing in your power over him, but by taking confidence that God has chosen you to make it through to the end.

While there's a lot of good theology that's going on here, I'm still struck by the fact that it all seems to arise because of the presupposition about the nature of the fall of Satan and the binding in the millennium. This has forced people to go far outside the immediate context to go looking for answers to this perplexing problem.

## Father and Son: The Key

When exactly did Satan fall, what was this fall, and what does it mean for us? I'm going to give you my answer now and to begin, I want to stay in this passage on election, which

is “**ignored by most scholars.**”<sup>9</sup> But not all. Garrett’s book, *The Demise of the Devil*, points out that the great issue that election is concerned with here is **knowing who the Son is.**<sup>10</sup> *No one knows who the Son is except the Father, or who the Father is except the Son and anyone to whom the Son chooses to reveal him.* Of course, also at issue is knowing who the Father is.

This scholar rightly takes the primary proof of Jesus’ Sonship to be **the resurrection (Rom 1:4)**, and then connects John’s comments that are very similar to Luke’s here about Satan to refer to the resurrection. John says at the very center of his Gospel, “**Now is the judgment of this world; now will the ruler of this world be cast out**” (**John 12:31**). **When is now?** “*When I am lifted up from the earth*” (**32**). You can hear how similar “**now the ruler of this world will be cast out**” sounds to “**I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven.**” This becomes an important connector to our verse and we’ll come back to it in a moment. But I wonder if **something else** might not also be going on.

The Father-Son language has **a very near antecedent** that most are overlooking. *The Mount of the Transfiguration*. Recall that when Jesus went up on the mountain with Peter, James,

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<sup>9</sup> Ibid., 158.

<sup>10</sup> **Susan R. Garrett**, *The Demise of the Devil: Magic and the Demonic in Luke’s Writings* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1989), 51, 54.

and John, that “*a cloud* came and overshadowed them, and they were afraid as they entered the cloud” (Luke 9:34). It was obviously *a terrible storm*. They see a vision of Elijah and Moses. Then, out of the cloud, a voice was heard, “*This is my Son, my Chosen One; listen to him*” (35). Jesus is called the Son by the *Father* at the Transfiguration. Wouldn't this mean that the Father-Son language that comes immediately after the seventy return might have something to do with this? So, rather than a warning about Satan based on some future binding, I rather think Jesus is calling our attention in his Father-Son prayer, back to the Father's comments on the mountain. Something happened there that people are not seeing.

It's curious that of all the possibilities for the “fall of Satan” that people have considered, perhaps *the least discussed* is this event. Yet, this is the nearest place where we see the Father-Son language, where we have a storm (think “lightning”), and where we have a vision (“I saw”), and where Satan might very well have been present. . So maybe we should look at it more closely in relation to this “fall of Satan.”

## Brought Low

In what I'm about to propose, you need to *get something out of your mind*. I'm going to suggest that the fall

Jesus saw of Satan was there on Mt. Hermon, in the storm. However, I do **not** believe Jesus is talking about his *fall into sin*. Rather, it is his fall into the abyss/being cast out of heaven (his binding), along with something else.

In light of being cast out of heaven, a lot of commentators notice that this language of falling like lightning from heaven seems to echo the fall of Helel ben Shachar (Day Star son of Dawn) in Isaiah 14. “*How you have fallen from heaven, O Day Star, son of Dawn!*” (Isa 14:12). I do believe this passage is in the background, in a couple of different places.

Isaiah continues, “*You said in your heart, ‘I will ascend to heaven; above the stars of God I will set my throne on high; I will sit on the mount of assembly in the far reaches of the north’*” (13). Here we have reference to **the divine council** (“mount of assembly”) and the setting: he wants to set himself above the stars of God. This most likely **does refer** to the primordial fall long before the NT. But as I’ve said, it is nearly impossible to understand what this original fall into sin could possibly have to do with the seventy at this moment. No, something else is happening here. Remember that Mt. Hermon was in fact El’s mount and he held assembly on it as we continue.

He said, “I will ascend above the heights of the clouds...” We have clouds here, so that is also a kind of match to the Transfiguration. It continues, “I will make myself like the Most High. But you are *brought down to Sheol*” (14-15a). Sheol, in the LXX, is *Hades*. Now notice something we’ve skipped right over.

In **between the sending and returning** of the seventy, we have four verses of cursing **three cities** with three other cities in the background. Jesus curses **Chorazin** (13), a word that means a furnace of smoke. The previous verse (12) mentions **Sodom**, which became a furnace of smoke after its judgment. So Jesus is making a comparison between one city that was judged and one that will be judged through a word-play on the name and the event and he says it will be worse for Chorazin than for Sodom on the day of judgment. That’s pretty astounding, since Sodom is the epitome of evil.

Jesus next curses **Bethsaida**. This is the home of Peter and other disciples, the place of the feeding of the 5,000. Jesus then mentions **Tyre** and **Sidon**, two ancient pagan Gentile cities, one of which actually has the fall of Satan in the backdrop of its own judgment in Ezekiel 28. That makes this comparison just as astounding.

But Jesus saves the best for last. He curses **Capernaum (15)**, one of the first places he began to minister, where he healed Peter's mother-in-law, cast out demons, taught on the law, and healed many diseases. It has for all essentially been **his headquarters** for three years. And what does it say about it? "**Will you be exalted to heaven?**" Sounds a lot like Helel saying, "*I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will make myself like the Most High.*" His rhetorical question is answered. "**You shall be brought down to Hades.**" This is precisely what it says about Helel in **Isaiah 14:15**. In other words, *Capernaum's* fall is being likened to *Helel's* fall. They refused to hear Jesus and they rejected him. In doing so, they rejected the one who sent him, the Father (**Luke 10:16**). So, they will be judged like that Shining One of old. You will see more of why this is important at the end.

## Like Lightning from Heaven

Let's return to our passage. Luke does not say "fall into sin." Rather, it says that he fell *like lightning from heaven*. Lightning literally falls to earth. That's its nature. And, **lightning occurs in storms**. There is a **third option** as to the meaning of these words **and I think it is complementary** to being cast out of heaven, which is also happening.

John Walton has asked a very important question here. Is the fall of Satan “like lightning” “a symbol of defeat<sup>11</sup> or a gesture of aggression?” [emphasis mine].<sup>12</sup> As you will see in a moment, I do not think this is an either/or. He then brings up something very intriguing. “Lightning is a weapon of the gods in Israel, in the ancient Near East, and in Greece...”<sup>13</sup> Very true. Baal and Zeus are the storm gods and their weapon was a lightning bolt.<sup>14</sup>



Zeus and Baal with their lightning bolts

<sup>11</sup> He cites Isaiah 14 right here. However, it should be noticed that lightning does not appear in this chapter at all.

<sup>12</sup> John H. Walton and J. Harvey Walton, *Demons and Spirits in Biblical Theology: Reading the Biblical Text in Its Cultural and Literary Context* (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2019), 224.

<sup>13</sup> He notes that “Although the normal word for Zeus’ thunderbolt (*keranos*) is different than the word used in Luke (*astrapē*), which usually refers to the meteorological phenomenon,” it should be pointed out that God calls himself the *keranos*-thrower in Job 38:35 LXX.

<sup>14</sup> Making the connection even stronger, Satan is likened to Zeus (Rev 2:13) via the “throne of Zeus” that John calls the “throne of Satan.” Zeus is the Greek version of Baal. They are the same entity. See my paper, “Satan, Zeus, Baal, and the Prince of Rome.” *Academia* (May 24, 2019).

What did not dawn on him, however, is that lightning is therefore directly related *to Satan*. For you see, in the next chapter, *Satan is Baal* (Luke 11:18). Satan is the storm god, the cloud-rider. In other words, Satan falling like lightning is a metaphor we should expect of the storm-god if we know who we are looking at. In this way, I believe Walton has *stumbled upon something profound*. The fall of Satan in this particular statement in Luke 10 does not refer to Satan sinning, but to *a gesture of aggression* after having been thrown out of heaven. Satan is furious, a lion seeking to devour as Peter calls him. He is ready to strike, like lightning. But what caused this lightning aggression?

*The Transfiguration*. Again, this event took place on Mt. Hermon, the mountain of the assembly of the gods. In this case, it was where El, the father god of the Canaanites, held council with his *seventy* sons. One of those sons *was Baal*. Therefore, one of them was Satan. It is at this point that I think knowing a little something more about Baal can be helpful. If as of this moment when you think of Baal you only think of a statue, get that out of your head. He is much more than an idol of stone.

About a century ago, at Ras Shamra in Syria by the coast, several deposits of extremely ancient cuneiform *clay*



tablets were found. Among them was the now famous *Baal Cycle*. While the beginning of the story is lost, the *Cycle* picks up with the events of Yam, the sea god, one of the seventy sons of El, whom El wants the craftsman Kothar to quickly build a palace for. El is about to **bestow royal power on Yam** and he will become the Prince of princes, or in the language of the text, the “*beloved [son] of El*” (KTU 1.3 iii.39). Sound familiar?

Baal, who is presently ruling from his own throne as a prince, is told that Yam is coming for him. The whole thing makes the storm god furious. How could his father do this to him? He enlists Kothar to make him two magic weapons (“Chaser” and “Driver”), ascends the mountain, whereby he attacks Yam first, striking him dead. One of the most relevant lines may be, “*Strike the head of Prince Yamm ... May Yamm sink and fall to the earth*” (KTU I.2 IV.22-23). **Fall to the earth?** Sounds familiar.

Like John 12, *it is familiar*. Let’s assume for sake of argument that the moment Jesus saw Satan fall was there on the Mt. of Transfiguration. What exactly was happening at this moment? It is a truth that **eludes many**, because they do not understand what they are seeing. Jesus went to this mountain for a reason, indeed as we have seen for many reasons.

The main reason was to have his Father make this pronouncement, “This is my *beloved son*.” Beloved [son] of El? Jesus, not Yam, is the beloved Son of God (it is interesting in this regard that Jesus has defeated the Yam when he calmed the storm). But present there, by virtue of what the place is, or was, are the seventy sons of god. We saw this in Psalm 89 as it was all prophesied. And, in fact, sonship was a major part of that Psalms prophecies, as was Mt. Hermon and the divine council. Indeed, it was a prediction of the Transfiguration!

What I believe the true Father, the uncreated Father of all did there at that mountain was essentially inaugurate, in Christ’s transfiguration, his Only Begotten Son to the position that Yam and Baal-Satan both coveted in the *Baal Cycle*. There can only be one king of the thrones. And it isn’t them. But remember, this is happening now because Jesus is the God-*Man*. In fact, in the vision that Daniel sees in ch. 7, this is precisely what he “saw.” One *like a son of man*, riding on the clouds, to be given his authority and dominion and rule (**Dan 7:13-14**).

But what Daniel saw was *not* the transfiguration. Rather, he saw *the ascension* of Jesus the Son of Man as Jesus makes clear to Caiaphas the high priest (**Matt 26:64**). Yet,

the obvious polemic of the entire story there is that the cloud-rider, a title given to Baal in the Baal Cycle, is not Baal, but Jesus. Jesus is taking Baal's authority from him at the ascension. At that moment, Jesus sits down at the right hand of power. But at this moment, at the transfiguration, the Father's oath is finalized, Jesus' glory is recognized, and his dominion is inaugurated. **The baptism** was already a partial installment of this, for Jesus *as man-priest*, for the Father made the same oath there. But the transfiguration was the glorification event of Jesus' as God-King. And in transferring his power to his disciples as he does here, he is beginning the exercising of his reign through his church, even though he has not yet sat down in the ascension.

**Satan saw all this firsthand, for Jesus went to the home of the divine council to do it!** This is what made Satan so angry and bolt down to earth in rage, like a spoiled child throwing a temper tantrum. It's bad enough that the Father doesn't call him the beloved son. But what right does Jesus have to exercise such authority? **We've seen Satan's authority** at the temptation when he offered Jesus all the kingdoms of the world, and he was able to give them to whomever he wanted. At that moment, Satan was cool, calm, and calculating. *“Have it now, Jesus, and you won't have to go do anything*

*crazy or rash, like I think you might have planned here. I'll just give it to you. Just bow your knee to me.*" That standoff reminds me of Elijah and the prophets of Baal on another mountain, where fire was called down out of heaven and Baal was shown to be impotent. **He's a worthless, wicked son of God** and his power is at best an inheritance that can be taken away.

Are you starting to see what's going on in the Transfiguration? That power and authority that Jesus is receiving as the beloved Son who is about to inherit his kingdom is, as soon as he comes off of that mountain, **passed on to the seventy ... disciples, not gods**. This is the significance of the events prior to the Transfiguration and after it. The Twelve try to cast out demons, but can't. The seventy come back with joy because they could. Something in between these events happened. Something earth shattering and world changing. It wasn't just that Jesus was announcing to the powers that he's the Son of God in **the greatest taunt** in world history to come and get him, it is that the Father is glorifying him in front of all the other powers and principalities, including the great power of the earth at that time: **Satan**. And now, Jesus is reconstituting the divine council to be comprised of men! These men become his brothers by adoption, brothers who are suddenly able to understand

something of what it means that God is Father. He isn't just Jesus' Father, but *their Father*. They must be like little “*children*.” Children of who? Children of God. *Sons of God*.

How do you suppose that old serpent would react to that? My guess is the same way he reacted to Yam. He's ticked. He bolts down to earth and becomes a raging lion seeking to destroy Jesus at all costs. He will not share power let alone give it away if he can help it. So he seeks now to kill Jesus. Little does he or anyone else understand, this is precisely what will be his undoing. So then he comes after the church.

## Brought Low

But there's even more here. In cursing Capernaum the same way Lucifer is cursed, Jesus is doing something not only to the heavenly council, but to the earthly council—the Sanhedrin. You see, men were always supposed to have rule on earth, but in our sin, we abdicated this to a greater or lesser degree, starting with Adam who was kicked off the mountain. That's how Satan got his dominion over us and made us his slaves. But in Israel, God was reconstituting the human counterpart, first with seventy elders which became the Sanhedrin. Several of those priests spent much time in

Capernaum turning the hearts of the people away from the Messiah, making them twice the sons of hell as they are. Their father, as Jesus puts it in John, is the devil. And so they will share his fate and be brought down to Hades. The seventy members of the Sanhedrin is not the end-all, for it too became full of sin and rebellion.

In sending out the seventy, Jesus is beginning the new and final thing, still in its “already-not yet” form, not yet glorified like he is, and yet true and real and spiritual and eternal. He is making his church to be the sons of God in the divine council which will one day judge angels. Here, they are bringing the kingdom near to anyone who will listen. They are opening the door of salvation itself, life everlasting, fellowship with God and union with Christ. It is not a kingdom that you can find on Google Maps. For the kingdom, as we will learn later, is within you. Nevertheless, it is real and it comes through the church and resides where God’s chosen people are in the power of the Law and Gospel.

## The Binding of Satan

But I want to return now to the binding of Satan. I do in fact think that this also has relevance to our passage. It isn’t just that Satan is furious. Rather, like Yam, when Baal

overthrew him, and became the greatest son of El, so now, Jesus is the beloved Son and Satan falls. A major reason those of us who see this “fall of Satan” as happening sometime **in the present ministry of Jesus** can do this is because the binding of Satan isn’t an issue. For me, it isn’t an issue because **I do not see that binding as absolute**. I do not presuppose that. Rather, I let the text tell me what the binding does.

I do think that **Satan is bound today**. Revelation is clear. Satan is bound so that he can no longer “**deceive the nations**” (**Rev 20:3**). And, we will see this same point made with “binding” language again in Luke 12. In my view, Satan can roam around like a lion, enter into Judas, sift Peter like wheat, be a thorn in Paul’s side, while also being bound. In fact, this was precisely the expectation of the Jews. The Testament of Levi says, “**And Beliar [Satan] will be bound by [Messiah], and he will give authority to his children to trample upon the evil spirits**” (**TLevi 18:12**). Read in light of Luke 10, this clearly shows **Satan is in fact bound now** according to this kind of interpretation of the binding.

Thinking about this difficult topic of when did Satan fall, my answer is therefore **threefold**. **First**, he fell into sin sometime in the ancient past. Jesus isn’t talking about that here, but it still happened. **Second**, some see Satan’s binding

as a future event, I see it as a present event. I think John at the center of his Gospel, the center of Revelation 12 and again in Revelation 20 talks about the binding of Satan as a present reality that takes place during Jesus' first coming. This binding is the same idea as Jesus seeing Satan fall like lightning. **Third**, this binding has made Satan all the more angry in the meantime. And today, he seeks to strike like both lightning and a serpent to harm God's people, if he can. And thus, the warning is real: Do not rejoice in any power you have over him, but rejoice that your names are written in heaven by the Father.

I can appreciate interpretations that try to make sense of this in terms of Satan's binding, even if they are in some sense in the future.<sup>15</sup> But I think in running to other passages to explain when it first began to go into effect, **Occam's Razor has been overlooked**. The simplest answer is usually right. Jesus is talking about the Old Lightning Bolt blasting down to earth (falling<sup>16</sup>) in rage having fallen in multiple senses at the Transfiguration, where Jesus was exalted before the host of heaven and called the Beloved Son of God. This

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<sup>15</sup> For example **Michael S. Heiser**, "When Did Satan Fall like Lightning?" *Logos* (May 22, 2018); **Hendriksen**, Luke, 581.

<sup>16</sup> *Pesonta* is an aorist active participle (often *-ing*). Several translations opt to say "I saw Satan *falling* like lightning." See VUL (cadentem—present active participle) and hence Wycliffe and DRA, but also ERV, AMPC, ICB, ISV, LEB, TLB, OJB)



was our Lord's inauguration for a kingship that will be his, forever, after he goes through with what he was sent to do.

In understanding it this way, **we can make sense of everything at once**, without having to run to far away passages for proof. In understanding it this way, we can make sense of how it is that the fallen angel Satan, the prince of this world, can be **bound and yet** simultaneously prowl around like a roaring lion. Much more immediately, we can see why it is that as Jesus makes his way down to Jerusalem, the spiritual temperature of evil will heat up like Death Valley in August. Satan will do everything in his power now to stop Jesus from whatever it is he is going to do. **He is furious**. But his pride and wrath will be his undoing. And he will step into the trap set for him in eternity past. He will put Jesus to death. And because of it, he will be disinherited and eventually destroyed. As Ephrem said, **like lightning that flashes for a moment and is gone, so also is Satan's power vanquished as he falls beneath the victory of the cross that crushes him as was foretold in Genesis (Ephrem the Syrian, Diatessaron 10.13)**. Through his defeat, you and I may now know God as our Father, his children who rejoice not merely that he is a defeated foe and that Jesus' name has great power over him, but that our names are written in heaven by faith in the Son of God.

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