

# Whose Name Is Lucifer?

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All Scriptures are from the New King James translation unless otherwise noted.

What was Satan's name before he sinned? Was it Lucifer? The majority of Bible readers take it for granted that this is true, but to some the name Lucifer means something far different. To them it is a name that should be applied to Christ.

This controversy has been around for many years, and is underscored by allegations that using Lucifer as a name for the archangel who became Satan is to likened to taking God's name in vain. According to some, it is tantamount to honoring Satan. These are serious charges and we do not want to be guilty of dishonoring God, so it is important that we understand the truth on this matter.

## ***Origin of the Word Lucifer***

The word *Lucifer* appears only one time in the King James translation of the Bible. It is found in the book of Isaiah where a prophecy about the King of Babylon is directed toward a wicked, spiritual ruler:

How you are fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning! *How* you are cut down to the ground, you who weakened the nations! (Isaiah 14:12)

The term "Lucifer" is a Latin word which became a part of the biblical text via the Latin Vulgate translation of the Bible—a volume completed by Jerome in the early 5<sup>th</sup> century. However, Jerome's work was not a complete re-translation. He used older renderings of the Old Testament which were most likely translated from the Septuagint (a translation of the Old Testament from Hebrew into Greek). Jerome was fluent in all three languages. Therefore, he referred to both the Greek and Hebrew texts when creating the Latin Vulgate translation of the Bible.

In the Hebrew, or Masoretic text, the word translated as Lucifer is *heylel*. Like the Latin counterpart, this term is used in the sense of brightness and literally means "shining one" (*Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon*, H1966). It is the Hebrew term for "morning star" (*Strong's Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible*, H1966). Because of this definition, other translations of Isaiah 14:12 render this verse as:

How hast thou fallen from the heavens, O shining one, son of the dawn! Thou hast been cut down to earth, O weakener of nations (*Young's Literal Translation*).

How art thou fallen from heaven, O day-star, son of the morning! How art thou cut down to the ground, that didst cast lots over the nations! (*The Jewish Publication Society Bible*).

How did you come to fall from the heavens, morning star, son of the dawn? How did you come to be cut to the ground, conqueror of nations? (*The Complete Jewish Bible*)

The Jewish translators of the Septuagint understood the meaning of *heylel*. Therefore, they translated it as *phosphorus*, the Greek word for morning star, in Isaiah 14:12. This likely led Jerome to use the Latin *lucifer* when translating the Vulgate version of the Bible.

The question then arises, why the morning star? Exactly what is this star and what significance does it have when referring to the spirit being now known as Satan?

Astronomers believe that the morning star (or day star) is the planet we call Venus. This planet distinctly appears as an extremely bright star at dawn and dusk at certain times of the year. But the ancients didn't know this star was actually Venus until around 530 B.C. when Pythagorus discovered that they were one and the same. Until that discovery, the Greeks called evening star *hesperus* and the morning star *phosphorus* which literally means "light bearing" (*Strong's*, G5459).

Some contend that Jerome coined the term *lucifer*, but Roman astronomy had already given the name to the morning star long before Jerome made his translation of the Bible. In classical mythology the morning star was personified as a male figure bearing a torch. When translating both the Old and New Testament books, Jerome understood that the Greek *phosphorus* and the Latin *lucifer* were almost identical in their meaning and used this term in both Isaiah 14:12 and .

### ***Understanding the Context***

Those who reject the Church's usage of Lucifer also find themselves in opposition to the Hebrew understanding of the word *heylel*. According to dissidents, the only way to understand the meaning of *heylel* is to delve into the meaning of the word *halal*; which is the root word from which *heylel* is derived.

*Heylel* is found only once in the Bible and its primary definition is "shining one," but some reject this definition. They believe that the context of a fallen angel is the only way to determine which meaning of the root word *halal* should apply to Isaiah 14:12. *Halal* is found 165 times in the Old Testament, and is translated as thirteen different words. The positive renderings are praise, glory, shine, commended, celebrate, give, marriage, and renown. The negative translations are: boast, mad, foolish, fools, and rage. The negative terms account for only 25 of the 165 uses. Those who condemn the usage of *Lucifer* claim that, because the context is about Satan, and Satan is boastful, mad, foolish, and seething with hatred, the word *heylel* must be disparaging.

This argument, however, ignores the actual context of the verse itself. As Venus, the morning star, precedes the rising of the sun approximately six months of the year, there is an obvious relationship between the morning star and the morning. The phrase "son of the morning," or "son of dawn," that follows the word *heylel*, would make no sense if the meaning of *heylel* was meant to be boastful, mad, foolish, or raging. It only makes sense if the meaning of is morning star.

One author who condemns the use of Lucifer tried to make the context of the verse fit by claiming that "son of the morning" means "son of Jesus Christ." In other words, since this archangel was created by Christ, there is a connection between "son of the morning" and Revelation 22:16, where Christ is called "the bright and morning star." But Isaiah 14:12 doesn't say "son of the morning star." It simply reads "son of the morning," or in some translations "son of the dawn."

This same author takes an aggressive stance in defense of the accuracy of the Masoretic text over the Septuagint text. His primary reason for this stance is not without merit. It is based on the following verse.

What advantage then has the Jew, or what *is* the profit of circumcision? Much in every way! Chiefly because to them were committed the oracles of God (Romans 3:1-2).

This author's reasoning becomes inconsistent when he applies this argument to the discussion of Lucifer. He accepts (up to a point) that the Jews faithfully preserved the Old Testament manuscripts, but rejects their definitions of the words found in the manuscripts.

If in fact we can rely upon the Jews for a faithful preservation of the Old Testament Scriptures, then we can also rely upon them for an accurate understanding of the Hebrew language. The two cannot be separated. The Jews truly would not have preserved the oracles of God if they faithfully copied the words in the Hebrew manuscripts, but didn't preserve the knowledge of what those words mean.

### ***The Bright and Morning Star***

It may be confusing to some that Jesus Christ is called "the bright and morning star" when the archangel who later became Satan is also called the "morning star," but it need not be. Consider that the being called *heylel* in Isaiah 14:12 was at one time a righteous angel. We know this because, regarding the devil, Ezekiel stated:

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

There was a time when this great archangel was righteous. God did not inspire the angels that sinned, and He does not create evil (1Cor. 14:33; Jam. 1:13). In addition, 2 Corinthians 11:14 tells us that Satan's helpers are viewed by many as angels of light. The implication of this verse is that righteous angels are true angels of light, but detractors would have us believe that Satan was never an angel of light. The truth is that Lucifer shone brilliantly when he was righteous. In every biblical example where a man sees an angel in full angelic glory, he falls on his face out of fear. That is how brilliantly righteous angels shine. The righteous angels shine so brightly that God refers to stars as physical symbols of them (Job 38: 7; Rev. 1:20; 12:4).

Lucifer was no ordinary angel. He was the anointed cherub that covered at the throne of God (Eze. 28:14). He was the one chosen to administer God's government on the earth (Mat. 4:8-9). Ezekiel 28 tells of his great beauty and 1 Corinthians 15:40-41 implies that different spirit beings shine with varying degrees of brilliance. This great archangel likely shone brighter than any of the other angels. It is fitting that God would give this archangel the title of "morning star" the brightest object—after the sun and the moon—that can be seen in our sky.

God does not name people or beings the same way that we do. Most of us were given a name because our parents liked the sound of it, or perhaps because the name was honorable in the family. But God names people and beings for what they are and what they do. Quite possibly the name "morning star" was like a title, or rank, to display his authority on the earth. If that is the case, it make sense that God would strip Satan of the title "morning star" and give it to Christ; as Jesus has qualified to replace Satan on the throne of the earth (John 12:31).

The fact that Satan now sits on the throne of the earth is made clear in 2 Corinthians 4:4, where he is called "the god of this world." As such, Satan holds a temporary position and title

that belongs to Christ. At this time Satan is ruler over the earth, but Christ is coming back to claim the throne (Rev. 11:15). In God's true Church, there is not a single person that that would dispute this fact. And yet, there are some who balk at the idea that pre-fall Satan, when he was a righteous, great archangel, was given the title of morning star, a title that Christ now holds.

### ***Lucifer in 2 Peter 1:19***

Those who disagree with the use of Lucifer often refer to 2 Peter as supposed proof. The verse in question reads:

And so we have the prophetic word confirmed, which you do well to heed as a light that shines in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts (2 Peter 1:19).

The phrase "morning star" in this verse is translated from the Greek word *phosphorus*, which is the Greek word for the morning (or day) star. This same word was rendered by Jerome in the Latin Vulgate as *lucifer*. The detractors claim that the King James translators knew better than to translate *phosphorus* as day star. They contend that the King James translators knew that Lucifer was a name for Christ, but were either lazy or knowingly part of an evil plot inspired by Satan to steal one of Christ's names.

These people claim that this diabolical plot started with Jerome and that the King James translators followed his lead. But it should be self evident that the translators did not follow his lead. Where Jerome had "lucifer" in 2 Peter 1:19, the King James translators put "morning star." And where Jerome had "lucifer" in Isaiah 14:12, the King James translators capitalized "Lucifer," making it a proper noun.

The translators of the King James Version of the Bible no doubt recognized that *heylel* in Isaiah 14:12 was an appellation for the archangel that became Satan, and they chose to use the Latin word *lucifer* for morning star to represent this title. They also chose to capitalize Lucifer; making it a proper noun or name. Perhaps they did this because we are not given any other clue in the Bible as to what Satan's name was before he fell. Does this mean that the translators thought that Lucifer was the actual name that God had originally given this anointed cherub? Unless they believed that Latin was the language spoken in heaven, the answer has to be "no."

They also recognized that the Greek *phosphorus* rendered by Jerome as *lucifer* in 2 Peter 1:19 was a reference to Christ. Rather than confuse the reader by using the same Latin word in Isaiah to denote pre-fall Satan, they chose the English translation of, "morning star." They chose to use a description rather than a proper noun.

Consider the possibility that the translators were neither lazy nor dupes of Satan. God says that "the powers that be" are ordained by Him and are His ministers (Rom. 13:1-6). Therefore, it is possible that those appointed by King James to translate the Bible were used by God to accomplish His purpose presenting an accurate rendering of the original text. Is God powerful enough to have orchestrated the creation of what most experts agree is the most accurate English language translation of the Bible? A book titled *God's Secretaries: The Making of the King James Bible* makes a good case in answering this question.

### ***Is Lucifer One of Jesus Christ's Names?***

Lucifer is a Latin word. So unless the language spoken in heaven is Latin, it is unlikely that God the Father has ever addressed Christ by the name Lucifer. By the same token, neither is

it likely that He addresses Him as Christ, Logos, Yeshua, Morning Star, or any other language spoken by the tongues of men.

God and Christ likely have a language that is unlike any human one. Nevertheless, we know from His example that it is appropriate to communicate with God using a known dialect. For instance, Matthew preserves for us the actual words the Savior prayed to His Father in the final moments of His human life:

And about the ninth hour Jesus cried out with a loud voice, saying, “Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani?” that is, “My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?” (Matthew 27:46).

These words of Christ are recorded in the Aramaic language indicating that they are actual words spoken by Christ at that time. Many continue to use this form of communication. Thus, we can pray to God using the titles and names for Him that are recorded in the Scriptures and are translated into a language that we understand.

It is true that with the passage of time some words have changed meanings. Some words we have borrowed from other languages; and too often our words are inadequate because others can easily misunderstand our intended meaning. The Bible foretells that one day God will give mankind a pure language (Zep. 3:9), but until that time we must communicate with God and with one another in the languages we know.

### ***Conclusion***

Given the limitations of human language, it is appropriate to use the name Lucifer to designate the archangel that later became Satan. We can be relatively sure that the actual name that God gave him was not Latin, Hebrew, Greek, nor any other language that we know. But we are sure Lucifer is no longer an appropriate name for the devil. It conveys the meaning of what this being was before his downfall. God inspired the Hebrew word for “shining one” or “morning star.” When anyone uses the term Lucifer, they should be talking about the righteous archangel who later sinned and became the adversary.

Of course, if an individual in God’s Church chooses for conscience sake not to use the name Lucifer, we should not judge them. Their conscience has led to this conclusion and that conscience should not be seared. Just as Paul directed the Church in his time not to offend others with regard to eating meat, we should avoid offending a brother who disagrees with the use of the name Lucifer.

On the other hand, those who accuse others of taking God’s name in vain when using the term *lucifer* would do well to examine their own behavior. The irony of their accusations is that they may be the ones who are unwittingly under the sway of Satan. After all, Satan is the accuser of the brethren, and his judgment is sure:

Then I heard a loud voice saying in heaven, “Now salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of His Christ have come, for the accuser of our brethren, who accused them before our God day and night, has been cast down” (Revelation 12:10).