

Hope Channel presents

# DISCOVERIES '08

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By Mark Finley

## **Good God! Bad World! Why? A Message from an Ancient Manuscript Reveals the Meaning of Human Suffering**

Angels! Angels have become phenomenally prominent the last few years. Angels have made it to prime time. They star in a CBS hit called “Touched by an Angel.” They appear in feature films and are the subject of best-selling books. All through the book of Revelation angels are prominent, appearing in almost every chapter. But right now I want to focus on an angelic conflict outlined in Revelation that overshadows anything we human beings can imagine, an epic battle that’s been going on for centuries. This battle is supremely important because it’s really *a battle about who God is*. It’s a battle about human destiny—and we’re all involved, whether we realize it or not.

**War in Heaven:** It seems impossible to believe, but **Revelation 12:7-9** tells us, “War broke out in heaven: Michael and his angels fought against the dragon; and the dragon and his angels fought, but they did not prevail, nor was a place found for them in heaven any longer. So the great dragon was cast out, that serpent of old, called the Devil and Satan, who deceives the whole world; he was cast to the earth, and his angels were cast out with him.”

War in heaven! It seems like a contradiction in terms. This brings up other perplexing questions, like “Why was there war in heaven? What was the *dragon* doing in heaven in the first place? What was Satan doing there? Where did he come from?”

**A Pre-history of Satan:** Fortunately there are some good clues. Scripture gives us hints of how that conflict developed. In fact, we can learn what Satan was like before the world was created and where he came from. Ezekiel once communicated a message from God about the king of Tyre. But in the prophecy we see that God is also talking about someone else. The exalted king represents a different, angelic creature. “Thus says the Lord God: You were the seal of *perfection*, full of *wisdom* and perfect in *beauty*. . . . 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. You were *perfect* in your ways from the day you were created, till *iniquity* was found in you.” **Ezekiel 28:12-15**.

Here is described “the anointed cherub who covers.” This was an angel anointed for a special task. In the Jewish temple, the covering cherubs stood over the mercy seat, the throne of God. This angel had a special place near God’s throne. He was “the seal of perfection, full of wisdom, perfect in beauty.”

But something happened to this angel. “Iniquity was found” in him. He allowed sin to enter his life. How? **Ezekiel 28:17** explains: “Your heart was lifted up because of your beauty; you corrupted your wisdom for the sake of your splendor.” This angel got wrapped up in his own splendor and beauty. There’s nothing wrong with appreciating your own talents and abilities and feeling good about yourself. So how did this angel move from healthy self-esteem to “iniquity?” How was his wisdom corrupted?

**Isaiah 14:12-14** tells us—and also tells us the angel’s name: “How you are fallen from heaven, O *Lucifer*, son of the morning! . . . For you have said in your heart: ‘I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God; I will sit on the mount of the congregation on the farthest sides of the north; I will ascend above the heights of the clouds, I will be like the Most High.’”

Lucifer became an angel with an attitude. Being near God’s throne wasn’t enough. He wanted a higher position. He wanted “the kingdom and the power and the glory” of God Himself!

**Love Is the Answer:** John tells us that “God is *love*.” **1 John 4:8**. Love was all around Lucifer. But Lucifer turned away from that and finally saw God as a rival! His twisted mind pictured God as the enemy. This rebellious angel wondered: Why should God have all the power and authority? Lucifer thought he could do just as good a job at running things.

Now heaven was a place where jealousy and slander and malice had never existed. Angels had never heard a lie (which was invented by Lucifer, **John 8:44**) and couldn’t cope with falsehood. It never occurred to them to question God’s wisdom and love. And suddenly this brilliant Lucifer, this cherub so near the throne of God, starts making remarks. He wonders why God has to have all the glory, why every created being has to obey Him. Maybe there’s an alternative, a *better way* to run the universe.

Lucifer, who seemed so reasonable, so wise, questioned God’s authority and persuaded many other angels to join his rebellion—enough to go to battle over who should run the universe. A great battle ensued—a cosmic conflict. There was *war in heaven*, and Lucifer (now called Satan) was cast out of heaven with all his followers. Why didn’t God just nip evil in the bud—destroy it before it had a chance to spread and cause so much suffering? If God had executed Lucifer, just *zapped* him in an instant, all the other angels would reason: “Poor Lucifer! He *tried to tell us* God is a tyrant—and look what’s happened to him! It seems Lucifer was right. It seems that his charges are true.” God chose a wiser course: He’d allow sin to exist for a period of time, and when it had been fully demonstrated that God’s way brings joy and Lucifer’s way brings death, then and only then would God destroy all evil.

Love doesn’t force. Love lets people see for themselves, decide for themselves. God wants us to love Him back for who He is. No one back then, except God, knew what a disaster Lucifer’s alternative would be. No one knew how much suffering and misery it would create. We had to see that for ourselves. That’s the only way God could ensure that evil would never plague the universe again.

**Planet Earth Joins the Conflict:** In the Garden of Eden, when Eve told the serpent God had said she would die if she ate of a certain tree, Satan contradicted God and said: “You will *not* surely die. . . . For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.” **Genesis 3:4-5, NIV**. Satan was saying, “You’ll have greater happiness if you follow me. God is restricting your freedom.” Tragically, Eve and her husband Adam accepted that lie. Today we live on a *planet in rebellion*, a planet full of decay and death.

**The Origin of Suffering:** In **Matthew 13:24-43** Jesus talked about a man who planted good seed in his field, but useless weeds popped up everywhere, leading a servant to ask, “Sir, didn’t you sow good seed in your field? Where then did the *weeds* come from?” That’s the question we all face at some time in life: If God made this world to blossom for His children, why do we see so many tragic weeds? In Jesus’ parable the master answered that question very simply. He said, “An *enemy* did this.” It was an enemy of God and man who sowed his seeds of suffering and sin.

**God Had a Plan:** God didn’t abandon the human race because it rebelled against Him. From the very beginning, He had a plan. If you wonder, “Why doesn’t God *do* something about the sickness and sin and heartache in our world?”—the answer is: He *has* done something. He’s given everything in the gift of His Son. He came into the world and suffered with us—and we can some day triumph with Him!

## THE BIBLE SAYS

Note: There is now going on in the universe a **cosmic conflict** between Good and Evil. Fortunately, your Bible reveals both the *origin* and the *conclusion* of that conflict.

- 1 John 4:8 & 16** God's very essence is *love*—infinite love, undying love.
- Matt. 13:24-30, 36-43** Suffering, sickness, and death came from “an enemy” of God and man. (*especially* verse 28)
- Ezekiel 28:12** God created the angel Lucifer absolutely flawless—beautiful and perfect.
- Ezekiel 28:15** But Lucifer used his God-given freedom of choice and became evil.
- Ezekiel 28:17** Lucifer became puffed up with *pride* and corrupted himself.
- Isaiah 14:12-14** Prideful Lucifer had “**I**” trouble—he wanted to be *God!*
- Revelation 12:7** The Bible reveals that there was *war in heaven!*
- Revelation 12:9** Satan and his evil angels were cast out of heaven to this earth.
- Luke 10:18** Jesus Himself said He beheld Satan “fall like lightning from heaven.”
- John 8:44** Satan is “the father” of all lies and lying.
- Ezekiel 28:13** The Devil was in Eden, the Garden of God, to tempt our first parents.
- Genesis 3:1-6** Satan led Adam and Eve to mistrust God and openly defy His command.
- Isaiah 59:1-2** Sin separates us from God.
- Jeremiah 17:9** The nature of the human race changed—as the result of mankind's disobedience, our *nature* became sinful—sin infected the human heart.
- Romans 3:10, 23** The entire human race plunged into guilt, disobedience, and sin.
- Romans 6:23, 5:12** The ultimate result of disobedience is death.
- Hebrews 2:14, 4:15** Jesus took man's nature, faced man's temptations, and was victorious.
- Romans 5:17-19** Jesus redeemed Adam's failure.
- Ephesians 2:8** Through faith in Jesus, salvation is ours as a gift (Romans 6:23).
- Ezekiel 28:18** God will finally *destroy* Satan and bring him to “ashes,” so that the Devil will “be” no more forever.
- Revelation 21:1-5** Our God will establish a new heavens and a new earth.
- Nahum 1:9** Sin will never rear its ugly head a second time.

## Quick Quiz

Our heavenly Father has *so much* He longs to teach us! Think of each seminar session as one in a series of steps leading upward—a series of “lessons from heaven.” May we learn our lessons well, so we in turn can teach others. God’s Word, the Bible—our Textbook for this seminar—offers **Learning Unlimited!**

### #4 - Good God! Bad World! Why? A Message from an Ancient Manuscript Reveals the Meaning of Human Suffering

1. Some reason that “Since God created all things, He must have made the Devil.” But the Bible says of Lucifer, “Thou hast been in Eden the garden of God. . . . Thou art the anointed cherub. . . . Thou wast \_\_\_\_\_ in all thy ways from the day that thou wast created, till *iniquity* was found in thee.”

**To check your answer, see Ezekiel 28:13-15.**

2.  T When God created angels and mankind, He gave them the wonderful gift of *freedom* of  
 F *choice*, for He didn’t want mere puppets or robots to serve Him mindlessly, without love.

**To check your answer, see Genesis 2:16-17, Ezekiel 28:15, Joshua 24:15.**

3. When Lucifer exercised his God-given freedom and rebelled, the Bible says, “There was \_\_\_\_\_ in \_\_\_\_\_,” and today we’re still in the midst of a *cosmic conflict* bigger than this small world. To check your answer, see Revelation 12:7.

4. The egotistical Devil *fell* because of pride. The Bible says: “How you are *fallen* from heaven, O Lucifer. . . . For you have said in your heart, \_\_\_\_\_ will ascend into heaven, \_\_\_\_\_ will exalt \_\_\_\_\_ throne above the stars of God: \_\_\_\_\_ will also sit on the mount of the congregation. . . . \_\_\_\_\_ will ascend above the heights of the clouds; \_\_\_\_\_ will be like the \_\_\_\_\_.”

**To check your answer, see Isaiah 14:12-14.**

5. When we wonder *why* all the *sorrow, suffering, and death* is in the world, we should recall Jesus’ story of the wheat and the weeds, when He explained: “An \_\_\_\_\_ has done this.”

**To check your answer, see Matthew 13:24-43—especially verse 28.**

6. To *disprove* Satan’s malicious *lies* about God, “Jesus went about all the cities and villages, \_\_\_\_\_ in their synagogues, and \_\_\_\_\_ the gospel of the kingdom, and \_\_\_\_\_ every sickness and every disease among the people. . . . He was moved with \_\_\_\_\_ on them.”

**To check your answer, see Matthew 9:35-36.**

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## A Thought for Today

### Jeremiah 31:3

The LORD has appeared of old to me, saying:

“Yes, I have loved you with an everlasting love; Therefore with loving kindness I have drawn you.”