Do Modern Versions Substitute Jesus For Satan? (Part 2)

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Like 10

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In a previous post we raised the accusation that sometimes comes against modern versions in some circles, where it is claimed that modern versions have replaced Jesus and Satan, by removing reference to "Lucifer" in Isaiah 14:12. One need only google "Lucifer and modern versions" to find such claims being made. We explained in our last post, using standard biblical study tools, that this is not what is going on here. But now we dig into the details a little more, and note that even if one only had a 1611 KJV Bible, or a Strong's Concordance or Webster's 1828 as their only study sources, that would be enough for them to realize that such accusations are false accusations.

The Latin Word Lucifer

In translating the text in Isaiah 14:12, understand that the KJV translators are not translating the Hebrew word into English here. As noted in our previous post, the Hebrew word means, "morning star." Rather, they are *transliterating* the Latin word from the Latin Vulgate. Transliteration is what one does when, instead of translating, the translator simply spells the word from the source language in the letters of the target language. A perusal of several Latin dictionaries show that Lucifer is simply the Latin word for "Morning Star," usually as a reference to Venus. Lewis and Short is a representative example;

> *lūcĭfer, fēra, fērum*, adj. [lux-fero], light-bringing: itaque ut apud Graecos Dianam, eamque Luciferam, sic apud nostros Junonem Lucinam in pariendo invocant, Cic. N. D. 2, 27, 68: pars Lunae, Lucr. 5, 726: equi, the horses of Luna, Ov. H. 11, 46: manus, i.e. of Lucina, id. ib. 20, 192.—Poet., bringing safety, Prud. Psych. 625.—Hence, II. Subst. Lūcĭfer, fēri, m.
>
> A. *The morning-star, the planet Venus*: stella Lucifer interdiu, noctu Hesperus ita circumeunt, Varr. R.

R. 3, 5, 17: stella Veneris, quae Φωσφόρος Graece, Latine dicitur Lucifer, cum antegreditur solem, cum subsequitur autem Hesperos, Cic. N. D. 2, 20, 53: si dormire incipis ortu Luciferi, Juv. 8, 12; 13, 158; cf. Plin. 2, 8, 6, § 36; Tib. 1, 10 (9), 62; Ov. Tr. 1, 3, 71.

B. *The fabled son of Aurora and Cephalus, and father of Ceyx*, Hyg. Astr. 2, 42; Ov. M. 11, 271; 346; acc. to others, a son of Jupiter, Serv. Verg. A. 4, 130.

C. Poet. transf., *day*: memento Venturum pąucis me tibi Luciferis, Prop. 2, 15 (3, 12), 28: omnis, Ov. F. 1, 46: tres, id. ib. 3, 877.
Lewis, C. T., & Short, C. (1891). Harpers' Latin Dictionary (p. 1080). New York; Oxford: Harper & Brothers; Clarendon Press.

Note that they do not include any definition of the word as meaning "Satan." That is simply not what the Latin word means. The word means, "morning star," usually as a reference to the Planet Venus. It came to be seen as a reference to Satan only because of the Patristic interpretation of Is. 14:12. One Bible Encyclopedia explains;

Lucifer. Appellation from a Latin word meaning "light-bearer." The Latin term refers to the planet Venus appearing in the evening and the morning, which is the brightest object in the sky except for the sun and moon. Others have identified it with the crescent moon. It is also said by some to be the planet Jupiter. The Hebrew term, from which the Latin lucifer is derived, is found in Isaiah 14:12: "How you have fallen from heaven, O morning star, son of the dawn! You have been cast down to the earth, you who once laid low the nations!" (niv). The word means the "shining one." It has cognates in Akkadian, Ugaritic, and Arabic. The Septuagint, Targum, and the Vulgate translate it as "morning star," quite fitting in view of the appositional "son of the dawn."

The Hebrew expression was probably never meant to be a name, but has come to be used thus because the verse in which it occurs is applied to Satan. This apparently was done first by two of the church fathers, Tertullian and Origen. However, the popularity of Lucifer as a name for Satan may be attributed to its use in John Milton's Paradise Lost.

Some have understood the word in the Hebrew text as being a verb rather than a noun. An example of the term would then be found in Ezekiel 21:12. The word there is parallel to the word "cry," and is translated "wail." In fact the Syriac version renders Isaiah 14:12 with that understanding: "How are you fallen from heaven! Howl in the morning." This meaning is unlikely.

The event recorded in Isaiah 14:12 may be an example of a story quite commonly known in the time of Isaiah. This old Canaanite story concerned the morning star, who had attempted to rise high above the clouds and establish himself on the mountain where the gods assembled, in the uttermost part of the north. He had desired to take the place of the highest god, becoming ruler of the world. His attempts were thwarted, and he was cast into the underworld. This story of the minor star deity aspiring to ascend above the throne of the most high god served, in the purposes of Isaiah, as an excellent analogy to the pride and aspirations of the king of Babylon, the person with whom chapters 13 and 14 are concerned. Isaiah states (14:3, 4) that Yahweh, the God of Israel, would give the people relief from the tyranny of their oppressors, and they would take up a taunt song against the king. Although he had sought to be great, he would be brought low; he who sought to be a god would, with his descendants, cease to exist on the earth. Though the Hebrews had no myths, illustrations from familiar gentile mythology often were used to express spiritual truth.

There are many who believe the expression (and surrounding context) refers to Satan. They believe the similarities between Isaiah 14:12; Luke 10:18, and Revelation 12:7–10 warrant this conclusion.

> However, although the NT passages do speak of Satan's fall, the context of the Isaiah passage describes the defeated king of Babylon. The Babylonian king had desired to be above God, and so fell from heaven. His doom is pictured as already accomplished. Though defeat is certain for Satan, he yet continues his evil acts against God's people. Not until the final judgment (Rv 12–20) will his fate be sealed and his activity stopped. Isaiah, then, is not speaking of Satan in 14:12 but of the proud, and soon to be humiliated, king of Babylon.
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> Elwell, W. A., & Beitzel, B. J. (1988). Lucifer. In Baker encyclopedia of the Bible (Vol. 2, p. 1360). Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House.

We noted before that either interpretation of Is. 14:12 is possible with either translation. We note again Jerome's explanation of his translation of the Hebrew word into the Latin, "Lucifer," which is where "Lucifer" first came into the Bible;

> "For greater ease of understanding we translated this phrase as follows: "How you have fallen from heaven, Lucifer, who arose in the morning." But if we were to render a literal translation from the Hebrew, it would read, "How you have fallen from heaven, howling son of the dawn."
> - Jerome - Commentary on Isaiah 5.14.12–14. As quoted in McKinion, S. A. (Ed.). (2004). Isaiah 1-39 (p. 121). Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press.

The English Word Lucifer

But what about the English word Lucifer as used in the KJV? The OED, the standard English dictionary, lists its first two definitions for the word Lucifer as follows;

> As proper name, and allusively,
>
> 1. a. *The morning star*; the planet Venus when she appears in the sky before sunrise.
>
> 1. b. fig. (Cf. *day star* n.) Obsolete.
>
> 2. a. *The rebel archangel* whose fall from heaven was supposed to be referred to in Isa. xiv. 12; *Satan, the Devil*. Now rare in serious use; current chiefly in the phrase as proud as Lucifer.
>
> The Scripture passage (Vulgate 'Quomodo cecidisti de cælo, Lucifer, qui mane oriebaris?' King James Bible 'How art thou fallen from heauen, O Lucifer, sonne of the morning?') is part of a 'parable against the king of Babylon' (Isa. xiv. 4); but the mention of a fall from heaven led Christian interpreters to suppose that 'king of Babylon' was to be interpreted spiritually, as a designation of the chief of 'the angels who kept not their first estate'. Hence the general patristic view that Lucifer was the name of Satan before his fall. The Latin word was adopted in all the English versions down to 1611; the Revised version has daystar.

Thus, using the standard tools we have noted in this and the last blog post, one can see that no malicious change has taken place. If one looked at the OED only, they would realize either meaning was possible in the word. The Morning Star, (as Venus) or Satan could both be referred to in the language of the KJV. Modern translators are simply rendering the exact same Hebrew text that stands behind the KJV. They are just rendering it literally, while the KJV translators instead chose to ignore the Hebrew word, and instead transliterate the Latin Vulgate rendering of it created by Jerome. But does this mean that the KJV translators would have opposed translating it as "morning star" or "day star"? To answer this question, we must examine the marginal notes of the 1611 KJV.

The Types Of Marginal Notes In The 1611 KJV

F.H.A. Scrivener counted 8,422 marginal notes in the original 1611 KJV, (6,637 OT, 1,018 Apocrypha, 767 NT), and 494 additional ones that were added by the various editors who produced later editions (in 1629, 1638, 1762, and 1769). The kind of notes printed in the margin could be divided several different ways. There are three different symbols used to express marginal notes that serve five basic functions. Thus, one could speak of three categories of notes (classifying by symbol or form), or five categories of notes (classifying by basic function). But one should note that they often employ the symbols in a rather inconsistent way, and so categorizing by function seems the best track.

More Literal Translations

These are prefixed by the sign "+" and then, "*Heb.*," "*Cal.*" or "*Gr.*" noting a more literal translation of the original languages than was deemed suitable for the text. Scrivener counts 4,111 of these in the Old Testament, (77 of which relate to the Aramaic portions), and 112 in the NT. For example, in Gen. 3:1, the text reads, "Yea, hath God said, Ye shall not eat of euery tree of the garden?" But the marginal note indicates that the translators were being less literal in how they transited the text. They thought a more literal rendering of the Hebrew text would be, "Yea, because God said, Ye shall not eat of euery tree of the garden." See their marginal note here. Tyndale had translated it, "Ah syr [ah sir] that God hath sayd ye shall not eate of all maner trees in the garden." Wycliffe had translated the Vulgate they were most familiar with as, "Why comaundide God to you, that ye schulden not ete of ech tre of paradis?" The Rheims-Douay did something similar.

Alternate Translations

These are in a sense one part of a larger category of notes dealing with "alternate readings." These are prefixed by double vertical lines II and then, "Or" noting that there is another equally probable way that the text may be translated from that expressed in the text. Scrivener counts 2,156 of these in the OT, and 582 in the NT.

For example, in Is. 32:7, the text reads, "The instruments also of the churle are euill: he deuiseth wicked deuices, to destroy the poore with lying wordes, euen when the needie speaketh right." But the marginal note with the II symbol visible here indicates that this could also be translated, "to destroy the poore with lying wordes, when he speaketh against the poor in judgment."

Or, for example, in Is. 30:27, the text is translated as "Beholde, the Name of the Lord commeth from farre, burning with his anger, and the burden thereof is heauy: his lips are full of indignation, and his tongue as a deuouring fire." But the marginal note with the II symbol visible here indicates that the text could also be translated, "Beholde, the Name of the Lord commeth from farre, burning with his anger, and the grievousness of flame: his lips are full of indignation, and his tongue as a deuouring fire." The relevant phrase is translated either "and the burden thereof is heavy" or, "and the grievousness of flame." The KJV opted for the first possibility, but they weren't certain, so they noted the second possibility in the margin. The ESV and most modern translations have opted for the second possibility (the one relegated to the margins of the KJV).

Or, for example, Isaiah 22:17 the text is translated, "Behold; the Lord will cary thee away with a mightie captiuitie, and will surely couer thee." But the marginal note with the II symbol here indicates that it could also be translated, "Behold, the Lord who covered thee with an excellent covering, and clothed thee gorgeously, shall surely cover thee." The translators weren't sure.

Textual Variants / Alternate Textual Readings

These are also in a sense a smaller subcategory of "alternate readings" like the alternate translations above. They are likewise typically prefixed by double vertical lines II and then, "Or" noting that there is a textual variant in the passage, and an equally probable textual form that may better represent the wording of the original autographs. There are 67 of these in the OT (31 of which express the Masorah textual doubts, see above on the KJV OT), and 37 in the New (15 more were added by the later editors in 1762 and 1769). We will list some examples below.

Miscellaneous information

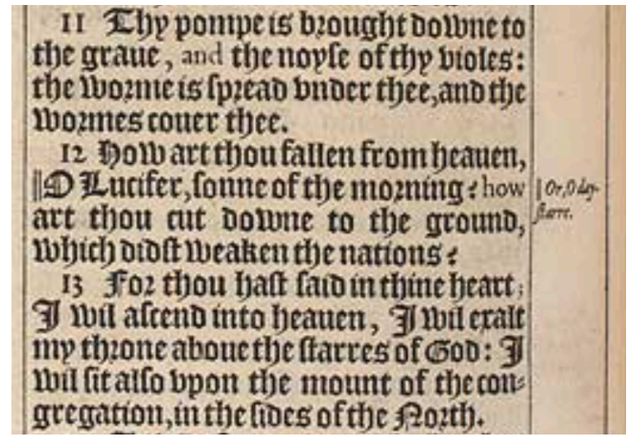
There are three basic kinds of information given in this type of note. In the OT, 63 notes give the meaning of Proper names; 240 provide harmonizing information with a parallel text or explanations. In the NT, 35 marginal notes provide miscellaneous information relating to explanations or brief exposition.

Cross References

These are prefixed with an asterisk (*) and then an abbreviated Scripture reference judged to be relevant to the present context. Scrivener completely redid these for the Cambridge Paragraph Bible, noting that most of those included in the 1611 were essentially worthless for the English reader, as they often refer to the chapter and verse divisions of the Latin Vulgate, which the translators regularly referred to, rather than the chapter and verse divisions of the English Bible they were revising. English chapter and verse divisions are often significantly different than those of the English Bibles. But Latin was the primary language of the translators, and it was in the Latin Vulgate primarily that they read their Bibles.

The 1611 KJV Marginal note at Is. 14:12

The 1611 KJV has a marginal note at Isaiah 14:12 which lists an alternate reading, seen at the right. (View the whole page here.)


11 Thy pompe is brought downe to the graue, and the noyse of thy viols: the worme is spread vnder thee, and the wormes couer thee.
12 How art thou fallen from heauen, ‖O Lucifer, sonne of the morning: how art thou cut downe to the ground, which didst weaken the nations:
13 For thou hast said in thine heart, I will ascend into heauen, I will exalt my throne aboue the starres of God: I will sit also vpon the mount of the congregation, in the sides of the North.
‖Or, O day starre.

The text in the KJV is translated, *"How art thou fallen from heauen, O Lucifer, sonne of the morning?"* but the marginal note with the "II" symbol viewable here shows that the translators knew it could also be translated *"How art thou fallen from heauen, O day star, sonne of the morning?"* Technically, this is not a case of an alternate translation. The translation itself of the phrase would be "day star" or "morning star." But as we have seen, the word in the Latin Vulgate for "morning star" is the word "Lucifer," and the long history of use of that version in the western church had created a tradition that caused the word to take on the character of a name, specifically the proper name of Satan. The translators weren't certain whether to go with "Lucifer," which is just a transliteration of the Latin Vulgate rather than a translation from the Hebrew, or "day star" which is a literal translation of the Hebrew. So they included a note to show that either translation was possible.

Thus, even if one had only a 1611 KJV Bible, they would realize that either reading is a legitimate translation of the Hebrew phrase. Understand what I am and am not arguing here. I am not claiming that the KJV translators must be correct in their marginal note. I realize most who defend the idea that the KJV is perfect see the Holy Spirit as having guided the KJV translators only in producing the *text* of their translation. They do not, usually, believe that the translators were incapable of error in marginal notes and other places. My point is simpler. I know of not a single KJV Bible believer who would accuse the KJV translators of being part of a Satanic plot to replace Jesus with Satan. And they lived long before the rise of the New Age Movement, so they cannot be accused of being in league with that! And no one who defends the KJV would claim that they didn't know Hebrew well. That is, the presence of their note makes it abundantly clear that *a translation that renders the word "morning star" or "day star" is not inherently wrong, is not evil, and is not part of a satanic conspiracy.* It is simply an alternate translation, probably a more accurate one. Accusations like this are disproven, unless one wants to also accuse the KJV translators of satanism, in which case it becomes hard to defend their translation as the preserved Word of God for English speaking people. And you can discover that such accusations are false using nothing but a 1611 KJV.

The LXX and Vulgate

Notice that in Peter, where he refers to Jesus as "the day star," this is exactly the same word that the LXX had used to translate the Hebrew text of Isaiah 14:12. (With the minor exception that Peter uses an adjective form, which still functions like a noun, while the LXX of Isaiah uses the noun form). The LXX, and those who read it, saw no problem with the same word being used in Isaiah to describe Satan, and being used in the NT to describe Jesus.

Using Webster's 1828 and Strong's

Webster's 1828 and Strong's Concordance are two tools used commonly in circles that defend the KJV as perfect. We've made reference to numbers of standard biblical study tools in these two blog posts. But even If one only had an 1828 Webster's and Strong's Concordance, they could see that modern translations are not replacing Jesus with Satan here.

Strong's

Looking up the Hebrew word in a Strong's Concordance, one sees;

> 1966. הֵילֵל hêylêl, hay-lale´; from 1984 (in the sense of brightness); *the morning-star*:—lucifer.

Notice that Strong's is defining the Hebrew word here as, "The morning star." He does not list "Lucifer" or "satan" as an even possible meaning of the word. The "Lucifer" that comes after the :-- symbol, per Strong's explanation in the introduction of his lexicon, simply states how the KJV has translated the word. He is not saying the word should (or even could) be translated as "Lucifer."

Webster's 1828

But that the text could be taken either way is clear, even if one only uses a Webster's 1828 English Dictionary, which is a commonly used and respected tool in the very same circles that condemn modern versions as part of a satanic plot here. If one had access to literally zero Hebrew tools, even a Strong's, and had only an English dictionary, they could discern that these accusations are false. The 1828 explains the word Lucifer as follows;

> LU'CIFER, noun [Latin lux, lucis, light, and fero, to bring.]
> 1. The planet Venus, so called from its brightness.
> 2. Satan.

If all one had was an 1828, they would realize that no satanic plot was at work here, and that either meaning of the passage in Is. 14:12 was possible.

Metaphors and Biblical Interpretation

But a last point needs to be noted as well. Some might ignore all that I've said so far, and claim, "Well, in modern versions it still calls Satan 'the morning star' in Isaiah, and still calls Jesus 'the morning star' in the New Testament. And this still means that modern versions are evil, even if there is no direct Satanic Plot."

But this is to misunderstand how biblical interpretation works. We have been commanded to "rightly divide the word of truth." But such a statement wrongly divides the word. Metaphors are not literal language. The Bible is not saying that Jesus is an impersonal celestial body here. That's heresy. And it is not claiming that Satan is an impersonal celestial body. These are *metaphors*. And metaphors can be used in different ways, in different contexts, sometimes even by the same author. Some one might accept that, but say, "Sure, but the true Word of God could never use the same metaphor for both Jesus and Satan." But in fact, it does! In Rev. 5:5, even in the KJV for example, we see that Jesus is described as the "lion" of the tribe of Judah. But in I Pet. 5:8, Peter says that *Satan* is like a roaring lion. Is Satan the Lion, or is Jesus? The answer of course is, both! Does one assume that this means that the KJV is satanic? Of course not. We simply recognize how biblical metaphor works.

To conclude, if one looks at the standard tools for biblical study, it becomes clear that either the rendering of the KJV, or of modern versions, is possible in Isaiah 14:12. No malice comes with either reading. And if the only study tools one had were the 1828 and Strong's, this would still be clear. In fact, if all one had was a 1611 KJV, this would be clear, and anyone who studies a 1611 KJV would know that such accusations are false accusations. But in fact, if all one did was study the Bible in order to be a good Bible student, they would realize how metaphor worked, and would know instinctively that such an accusation against modern versions is a false accusation. Making unwarranted false accusations is a sin, and it should be repented of. Anyone claiming that modern versions are part of a satanic plot here, or are supporting satan, is in sin, and needs to repent.

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