

## 4 WAR IN HEAVEN

### DISCOVER

Our world is at the center of a cosmic conflict between good and evil with a history that reaches back to an angelic rebellion. The issue under dispute is the character of God.

#### THE ORIGIN OF EVIL

The Bible teaches that we humans are not alone in the universe as the only rational, sentient, freewill creatures. From Genesis to Revelation we encounter an order of beings called angels. We know from Scripture that the angels predate the existence of humans (Job 38:4-7; Revelation 1:20), that they are numerous (Hebrews 12:22), powerful and intelligent (Psalm 103:20; Daniel 4:17), that they function within an orderly system of governance under appointed leaders (Ephesians 3:10; Daniel 7:9-10), that they actively operate within our world, mostly unseen, but sometimes in visible form (Hebrews 1:14; 13:2), and that the reality of evil that afflicts our world originated with them (Revelation 12:7, 12).

One of the angels was "Lucifer"—*bearer of light*—a name bestowed upon Him by his Creator to signify his character and mission. This exalted being was to occupy a position of intimacy with God and thus to be a preeminent revealer, a teacher of God's character to his fellow angels. Lucifer was "perfect in all" his "ways" (his patterns of thought, feeling and behavior), "until iniquity was found in" him. At this point he began to bear the name "Satan," which means *adversary*. While the image of Satan has been trivialized and fictionalized into a cartoonish red man with horns and a pitchfork, the biblical picture is of a super powerful, highly intelligent, magnificently beautiful, and totally non-fictional fallen angel who is the originator of the very real evil that haunts and hurts our world.

Read and discuss Isaiah 14:12-14 and Ezekiel 28:12-19. On a separate sheet of paper compose a character profile of Lucifer.

Self-exaltation was the worm at the core of the evil that Lucifer chose to actualize in himself leading to the heady aspiration to displace God from the hearts of his fellow angels and usurp their loyalty. As Lucifer nurtured self-centeredness in himself, he ceased to reflect the light of God's character and began to attribute to God his own self-serving motives. The aspiration, "I will exalt" myself, followed by, "I will be like the Most High," indicates that Lucifer began attributing self-exaltation to the character of God as justification for his own. By denying the essential goodness of God's character, Satan's course of action was calculated to erode trust toward God and incite rebellion against Him.

Thus the Bible informs us that, "\_\_\_\_\_ broke out in \_\_\_\_\_ ..." (Revelation 12:7).

The word here translated "war" is *polemos* in the Greek, which is related to words like *polemic* and *politics*. This clues us in on the precise nature of the "war" Satan launched against God. It was not primarily a war of physical engagement or force of arms. It was a political war, a propaganda campaign, a character assassination scheme. Satan waged his war by disseminating lies regarding who God is at heart. Thus he is described as the one who "deceives the whole world" and as "a liar and the father of it" (Revelation 12:9 and John 8:44).

Put these pieces together and you will discover additional insight into the core issue involved in Lucifer's rebellion:

Ezekiel says that Lucifer was cast out of heaven because he "sinned" (Ezekiel 28:16).

John defines sin as "lawlessness" (1 John 3:4).

And Paul defines God's law as "love" (Romans 13:10).

Clearly, then, Lucifer rebelled against God's law and, therefore, against God's love. He raised charges against God and against the law of love by which God governs the universe. Whereas the Bible claims that "God is love" and that His law is, therefore, a law that governs by the principles inherent in love (1 John 4:8; Matthew 22:37-40), Satan has set out to live without love and portray God's law as a list of arbitrary rules imposed for purposes of control, but unnecessary as a way of life.