

The Conflict Over Different Bible Versions—Part Seven

By Dr. John Ankerberg and Dr. John Weldon

Do Modern Versions Corrupt the Purity of God’s Word? (continued)

The Deity of Christ (con’t)

In her book, *New Age Versions*, Gail Riplinger argues that evidence for the “satanic” nature of the new translations can be seen in how they translate Isaiah 14:12, where supposedly they mistranslate the person of Lucifer or Satan **as the person of Jesus Christ**. Obviously, making the Person of Christ become the person of Satan is a horrible blasphemy. But did this happen? The KJV reads, “How art thou fallen from heaven, **O Lucifer**, son of the morning!” The NASB and NIV read, “How you have fallen from heaven, **O star of the morning**” (or “O morning star”).

Why did the KJV use the term “**Lucifer**” and modern versions the term “**morning star**”? The term *Lucifer* came to us by way of Jerome’s Latin Bible, the *Vulgate*, which the KJV translators sometimes used for their own translation.

Do you know that the Latin word for morning star is “**Lucifer**”? This word was used to refer to Venus, the morning star, “the shining one,” “the light bearer.”

So what did Jerome intend when he translated the Hebrew word *hilel* as *Lucifer*? He only intended the meaning to indicate “the morning star.” As Jerome saw it, Lucifer meant nothing more than a designation of the planet Venus (the morning star) which brightly shines and precedes or accompanies the rising of the sun.

That’s why in Isaiah 14 the prophet likens the glory of the king of Babylon to the brightness and dominance of Venus in the morning sky. This was an apt description of the pride the king perceived and projected. He had become so vain as to think of himself as a God who resides in the heavens (Isaiah 14:13). Yet God Himself now tells the king in his arrogance that far from being a God in heaven, he will instead be violently thrown down to the earth and perish (vv. 12, 15). To indicate the severity and permanence of the king’s ruin, Isaiah depicts the king falling to earth as if the morning star (the Latin word is *Lucifer*) itself were falling from its place in the heavens, quenching its brightness and forever destroying its glory (v. 11).

Now, to associate the morning star with someone other than the king of Babylon is an interpretation which must be brought to this verse from somewhere else. But then, how did *Lucifer* (Latin for the morning star, Venus) become equated with the evil personage of Satan, the devil? This is something that the medieval Church Fathers imported into this text, but without scriptural warrant. Old Testament scholars C. F. Keil and F. Delitzsch point out in their Isaiah commentary, “Lucifer, as a name given to the devil, was derived from this passage, which the Fathers... interpreted, without any warrant whatever, as relating to the apostasy and punishment of the angelic leaders. The appellation is a perfectly appropriate one for the king of Babel, on account of the early date of the Babylonian culture... and also because of its predominant astrological character.”¹

To associate the Latin word “the morning star”—*Lucifer*—with the concept of the devil or Satan can only be suggested in a secondary sense.

Now, with this in mind, examine how modern translations have rendered the Hebrew word *hilel* of Isaiah 14. They give it the same meaning that Jerome **intended** when he used the Latin word “Lucifer.” Thus, we find, “morning star” (NIV) and “shining one” (Rotherham), “star of the morning” (NASB), “day star” (ASV), “shining star” (Moffat), “light bringer and day star” (Amplified), and “bright morning star” (NEB), etc. All these Bibles are giving an accurate translation of the Hebrew word, and Ms. Riplinger is very mistaken.

Further, on page 43 of her book, Riplinger argues that one symbol cannot apply to Jesus and in another passage the same symbol be used to speak of Satan. In other words, if modern translations use “morning star” as a description of Satan in Isaiah 14 (which they do not), then they have done something wrong. Why? Because elsewhere in Scripture the morning star description is also applied to Jesus. But there are several reasons why Riplinger is wrong in making these comments.

First, the Isaiah 14 passage was not intended to speak of Satan in the first place. This is only an **interpretation** of the Church Fathers (**not** a translation). Second, Scripture itself associates similar symbols with Jesus and Satan. Obviously, the context must determine who is meant. For example, the Antichrist is said to ride on a white horse in Revelation 6:2 and Jesus rides on a white horse in Revelation 19:11. The King James Bible itself cross references the white horse in both passages. Further, in the KJV both Jesus and Satan are called a lion; Jesus being the Lion of the tribe of Judah (Rev. 5:25), and the devil is described as one who prowls about like a lion, seeking whom he may devour (1 Peter 5:8).

We know that the bright and morning star is Jesus because in Revelation 22:16 Jesus says, “I am the bright and morning star.” But this does not mean that Isaiah can’t use the Hebrew word for morning star to speak of the king of Babylon. In fact, as Albert Barnes noted in his commentary on Isaiah 14:12, “The comparison of a monarch with the sun, or the other heavenly bodies, is common in the Scriptures.”² Lange in his commentary on Isaiah 14:12 says, “Only that meaning will correspond with the context which takes this word in the sense of **bright star**,...”³

In conclusion, there is nothing at all wrong with the modern translations rendering Isaiah 14 as “the morning star.” It is the proper translation of the Hebrew as is the Latin Bible when it uses the term *Lucifer*. It was only when an outside interpretation was placed on the word Lucifer, making it synonymous with Satan or the devil, that confusion began.

In essence, the KJVO writers may **claim** new translations have produced major doctrinal deviations from the faith, but this charge is entirely false. Anyone who wishes can examine any good English translation or any Greek text, whether the *Textus Receptus* (TR), *Majority Text* (MT), *Nestle-Aland* (27th or 28th edition), NIV, KJV, NASB, RSV, NKJV, NEB, etc. and guess what? They will derive the exact **same** doctrinal beliefs.

Notes:

¹ C. F. Keil, F. Delitzsch, *Commentary on the Old Testament: Isaiah*, Vol. 7 (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1978), 311–12.

² Albert Barnes, *Notes on the Old Testament: Isaiah*: Vol. 1 (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker 1953 rpt), 185.

³ John Peter Lange, *Commentary on the Holy Scriptures: Isaiah–Lamentations*, Vol. 6 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan 1980), 185.