

The Empath and the Narcissist

Christ and Satan in a Struggle Over Our Souls

Narcissism, the trait of extreme selfishness and vanity, is on the rise.¹ Jesus prophesied it when He said, “Because lawlessness will abound, the love of many will grow cold” (Matthew 24:12). Narcissism renders people too selfish to love anyone but themselves.

Recent focus on escaping from abusive relationships has brought something called narcissistic personality disorder (NPD) into sharp focus. The narcissist, relationship experts say, has empathy deficits that lead them into compensatory relationships with extra-empathic people.² Empaths tune deeply into others, giving them their full attention, which gratifies the attention-hungry narcissist. Empaths, who place others’ needs before their own, fit lock-and-key with narcissists, who place their own “needs” before others’. Ultimately empaths must break away from narcissists or be sucked dry.

If this occurs in a marriage, and the narcissist and the empath have children, a battle for their little hearts will ensue. The narcissist will charm the children, turning them against the empathic parent in an oft-seen pattern called parental alienation syndrome. In the battle for custody, the “narc” will attribute their own evil traits to the empathic parent, deceiving the innocent children and often the courts.

This dynamic roughly describes the “divorce” between God and Satan. God spent many eons of time trying to reach the rebelling Lucifer, but malignant narcissism won his heart in the end. Now the messy custody battle ensues as the narcissist attempts to charm the children and vilify their true Parent, God. We, my friends, are the children. Who will we choose? Let us study the character of both entities so that we can make an informed choice.

One biblical term for malignant narcissism is evil. The King James Version of the Bible mentions evil nearly 600 times. Jesus called Satan “the evil one” because evil personifies him. He has come to be synonymous with it. He is the original narcissist. Let’s look at his past, present, and future by asking three questions: What was the origin of evil? What will evil do? and How will evil end?

The Origin of Evil

“And God saw that it was good,” appears seven times in the creation story. The seventh time He says it was “*very good.*” There can’t be much doubt about the fact that the world was once a *good*, even *very good* place.

This can hardly be said of the world today.

¹ <https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s12144-018-9881-z>

² <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/15298868.2019.1645730>

In Matthew 13:24-30, Jesus told a parable about evil, symbolizing it as weeds. It could be paraphrased like this:

A farmer sows his field with wheat, only to have an enemy slink in by night to sow weeds. When the wheat sprouts, the weeds also spring up to choke it. The farmer says, “An enemy has done this!”

The workers ask, “Should we pull up the weeds?”

“No!” the farmer replies, knowing that in the early stages, the wheat and the weeds look alike. “If you pull up weeds now,” he says, “you might destroy some of the wheat. Let them both grow until they’re fully developed. Then I will give instructions to cut down the weeds and burn them, while gathering the crops to be stored.”

Here are Jesus’ main points:

- An enemy is responsible for evil.
- We want evil to end *now*,
- But we must let evil develop.
- In the end, evil will be seen for what it is.
- God can then destroy evil without collateral damage.

There is an enemy who stands behind the evil in the world. We are impatient to see it end, but God has a higher purpose—the complete vanquishing of evil and the rescuing of our universe from its power. This requires that the enemy’s true character be revealed.

In Luke 13:10-17 we find very touching story of a woman who had a “spirit of infirmity” and was bent over, unable to straighten herself, for eighteen years. When Jesus healed her, the ruler of the synagogue became incensed and said (paraphrased), “We have all week to work! You should seek healing on the weekdays instead of the Sabbath!”

Not one to sit quietly through a scene of spiritual oppression, Jesus tore into the ruler, saying, “You phony! Don’t you water your farm animals on the Sabbath? So shouldn’t this poor Jewish woman who has been bound by Satan—get this—for eighteen years, be freed from suffering on the Sabbath?”

In His retort to the synagogue ruler, Jesus succinctly identified the source of suffering as Satan. “Satan,” a transliteration of the Hebrew word pronounced *Sah-Tawn*, means “adversary” or “accuser.” Jesus taught that ultimately, all good comes from God, and all bad from Satan. The bent-over woman symbolizes the human race. Her experience contrasts the characters of Satan and God: It’s just like Satan to bend us over, and it’s just like Jesus to straighten us out.

Some might fault God for creating such an evil being in the first place. But God didn’t create Satan, He created Lucifer. Lucifer created Satan.

In Ezekiel 28:11-17, the King of Tyre symbolizes the spiritual “tyre”ant, Satan. God through His prophet pours his heart out in lament for one who was once a beautiful being, saying (paraphrased),

You were perfect, wise and beautiful, with gorgeous jewels all over you. You were a fabulous musician, called by God to a unique and holy purpose. You had a special place on God's mountain, in His direct presence. Everything was perfect. . . until you sinned. You became self aggrandizing and hostile. I had to throw you out!

Jesus said that He saw Satan "fall" out of heaven (See Luke 10:18). Falling indicates a loss of balance on the part of the person who falls. Lucifer began as a privileged, high-ranking angel, beloved among the heavenly beings. He lost his balanced and toppled from his position in the heavenly courts. Let's examine the nature of his sin.

According to Isaiah 14:12-15, Lucifer developed an "I" problem. Notice his words:

- *I will ascend into heaven.*
- *I will exalt my throne above the stars of God.*
- *I will also sit on the mount of the congregation.*
- *I will ascend,*
- *I will be like the Most High.*

He certainly had big plans for himself! He aspired to get higher, to acquire. He was upwardly mobile. Notice all the words that indicate an "up" direction:

- Ascend (vs. 13)
- Heaven (vs. 13)
- Exalt (vs. 13)
- Above (vs. 13)
- Stars (vs. 13)
- Mount (vs. 13)
- Ascend (vs. 13)
- Above (vs. 14)
- Heights (vs. 14)
- Clouds (vs. 14)
- High (vs. 14)

So this Lucifer who wanted to go up, wound up falling down from heaven. Lucifer's goals for himself were pride-driven rather than God-driven. There is an "I" in the middle of pride, and an "I" in the middle of sin!

What Evil Will Do

Will all this celestial drama affect the human race? Actually, yes, and quite significantly. To see how, let's look at a man and a beast.

The Man of Sin appears in 2 Thessalonians 2:1-4, where he is also called the "son of perdition." This dark figure will emerge just before the coming of Jesus. He:

- Exalts himself above God
- Sits as God
- In the temple of God
- Showing himself that he is God

Doesn't the man of sin sound like a narcissist? Consider the diagnostic criterion for narcissistic personality disorder:

- A grandiose sense of self-importance
- A preoccupation with fantasies of unlimited success, power, brilliance, beauty, or ideal love
- A belief that he or she is "special" and unique
- Requiring excessive admiration
- A sense of entitlement
- Interpersonally exploitative
- Lacking empathy
- Often envious of others or believes others are envious of him or her
- Showing arrogant, haughty behaviors or attitudes³

To qualify for a diagnosis, a person only has to have five of these criteria. The “man of sin” has all nine! And he takes narcissism to a whole new level of evil. Notice that he exalts himself “above all. . .that is *worshipped*” (vs. 4). He wants to acquire the worship that belongs to God alone. The “anti” of “antichrist” means “instead of.” The antichrist doesn't openly oppose God, he simply attempts to replace Him—which is even worse!

The Beast of Revelation with seven heads and ten horns appears in Revelation 13:1-4 as a coercive world power. He acquires worship (vs. 3b), just like the man of sin, the antichrist. Notice that “the dragon gave him his power, his throne, and great authority” (vs. 2). The prophecy reveals the behind-the-scenes mastermind as “the dragon,” another term for “the Devil and Satan” (Revelation 12:9).

Through this alliance between the beast and the dragon, the dragon acquires worship for himself. Revelation 13:4 says “they worshipped the *dragon* who gave authority to the beast.” In fact, throughout chapters 13 and 14 of Revelation we see the word “worship” repeated six times!

The antichrist is a conduit through which Satan can receive *worship*. The two maintain a symbiotic relationship: The dragon props up the antichrist, and the antichrist gives props to the

³ Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Health Disorders, Vol. IV, 2000

dragon. Both get the ride of their lives, soaking in the adulation of the masses. It's a narcissistic marriage made in hell.

But the antichrist masks the true character of Satan. Think about it—if he walked into a room with a sign that said “worship me,” how many would comply? Not many. But “Satan himself transforms himself into an angel of light” (2 Cor. 11:14) concealing his identity while carrying out his purpose of usurping God's throne.

But just as Satan didn't demand worship from Jesus until the third of his three temptations (See Matt. 4:1-9), Satan will not reveal his true character until the end of his process of tempting the human race. Then, once he fully reveals himself, God will be able to bring. . .

The End of Evil

The first two chapters of the Bible feature a creation story in which everything was good, good, good—in fact perfect! The last two chapters of the Bible again focus on the perfection of the world to come. The first and last chapters of the Word are like bookends—Eden to Eden, perfect to perfect, giving us hope that if God did it once, He can do it again!

Working toward the center of the Bible, the third chapter of Genesis chronicles the first conflict between humanity and Satan, and the 20th chapter of Revelation predicts the last conflict between humanity and Satan. The Bible story takes us from Eden lost to Eden restored, from perfection to perfection—but all the 1185 chapters in between painstakingly report the fallout of sin. And it's not pretty.

God's response to sin can be boiled down to one thing: Jesus. While this great controversy between Satan and God began in heaven, it will finish on earth, where Jesus came to save His people from their sins by showing us what God looks like. This revelation of His character comes in sharp contrast to the character of Satan.

While Satan tried to ascend in eleven ways, Jesus *descended* in seven ways.

- Made himself of no reputation
- Taking the form of a bondservant (slave)
- Coming in the likeness of men
- Being found in appearance as a man
- Humbled Himself
- Became obedient to the point of death
- Even the death of the Cross (See Phil. 2:5-8)

Talk about empathy! The holy, illimitable, eternal, omniscient, omnipresent, all-powerful, only-wise God couldn't abandon humanity. He showed up on our planet, in our flesh, ultimately dying our death, in a grand, sweeping act of compassion.

The Takeaway

Satan took eleven steps to rob God of His glory, and Jesus took seven steps to glorify God. It's the 7-11 contrast between good and evil, open 24 hours for our every need.

The Empath and the narcissist are currently struggling through the custody battle. We, the children, get to decide who we want to spend the rest of our lives with. Which will it be for you?



Quiz

1. Narcissism is on the _____.
2. The narcissist, relationship experts say, has _____ deficits that lead them into compensatory relationships with extra-empathic people.
3. Before evil can be truly destroyed, it must be allowed to _____ its true character.
4. Lucifer as God made him was _____.
5. Fully-developed evil or malignant narcissism, manifests in the “man of sin” and the beast of which chapter in the Bible? _____.
6. The third chapter of Genesis records the first conflict between humanity and Satan, and the 20th chapter of _____ records the last conflict between humanity and Satan.
7. While Satan tried to ascend in eleven ways, Jesus *descended* in _____ ways.
8. That Jesus was willing to come to us where we are is a great example of _____.

Answer Key

1. Rise
2. Empathy
3. Reveal
4. Perfect
5. Revelation 13
6. Revelation
7. Seven
8. Empathy

