

THE WORLD OF ANGELS AND DEMONS

By
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Angels: Servants of Fire

Powerful beings invisible to our eyes inhabit our universe and have played an important role in the history of human civilization. The Bible identifies these beings as angels. Paul writes in Ephesians 6:12, “For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.” Paul reminds us that we need to be well aware of the forces seen and unseen that war against us each day.

Angels are fascinating creatures who have peaked our curiosity for ages. Unfortunately, there are many myths surrounding these servants of God that have been further perpetuated in several Hollywood movies. This article will present the Biblical teaching on angels and dispel truth from myth.

Creation of Angels

Angels are part of God’s creation. Some cult groups teach that Jesus is an angel but Hebrews 1 states that He is clearly a superior being to the angels. Colossians 1:16-17 asserts that Jesus created all things including the angels. Furthermore, according to Genesis 1:31 God declared His creation to be good. All the angels were once holy and good. Before Satan’s rebellion, they enjoyed being in the presence of God and were free from the effects of sin (Matthew 18:10).

The Nature of Angels

Angels are personal beings because they have intellect, emotion, and will. Passages such as 1 Peter 1:12 describe angels as seeking to learn the mysteries of our salvation. As such we can conclude they have the ability to learn. Angels also have the ability to communicate with humans (Matthew 28:5). In addition, they are capable of carrying out God’s commands. Although they possess greater intelligence than mortal human beings, their acumen, however, is still limited. An example is seen in Matthew 24:36 in which Jesus affirms they do not know the date of His second coming.

The capacities to feel emotion is another aspect of personhood angels possess. They expressed joy at creation (Job 38:7) and at the salvation of those who repent and turn to Christ (Luke 15:10). In Isaiah 6:3 they convey awe and humility as they worship the Lord on His throne.

The third aspect of personhood shared by angels is the will. God appeals to their wills when he commands them to worship His Son (Hebrews 1:6). Moreover, we know that angels can choose to disobey the will of God as seen in the activities of Satan and the fallen angels (Matthew 25:41, 1 Timothy 4:1, Eph 2:1-2.). Since angels possess intellect,

emotion, and a will, they are personal beings and like humans, can engage in a relationship with God.

Angels are spirit beings. They are immaterial and invisible. In Hebrews 1:14 they are called ministering spirits and in Luke 8:2, demons are called unclean spirits. They are not limited by the physical laws that constrain humans. However, they have spatial limitations and are not omnipresent. Scripture appears to indicate they have a body structure of some sort that is unknown to man. When they are visible they appear in many different and sometimes strange forms.

The evidence from scripture indicates that there are no sex differences among angels and they therefore do not procreate (Matthew 22:28-30). From the beginning a designated number were created and that number does not increase. However, scripture uses masculine pronouns for angels and when they appear, they appear as men (Luke 24:4, Genesis 18 and 19). From the evidence we may conclude that angels are masculine in nature. We can also assume that like humans, each angel is unique and no two look alike.

Spiritual Condition

Angels are classified as either elect (Mark 8:38, 1 Timothy 5:21) or evil and unclean (Luke 8:2). One third belong to Satan's camp (Revelation 12). The angels had the opportunity to choose whether to remain loyal to the Lord or follow in Satan's rebellion. Once they were put to the test, their decision was marked as permanent. According to the Bible, Jesus' death only atones for the sins of mankind. To pay the price of man's sin, Jesus took on the nature of man and saved his brethren as a kinsman redeemer (Hebrews 2:14-17). The Bible does not mention Jesus taking on the nature of the angels and offering any kind of redemption for fallen angels.

Power of Angels

Angels display awesome power yet God limits the exercise of this power of both good and evil angels (Job 1-2). Angels are used to judge evil as demonstrated in Genesis 18-19, where they destroy an entire city. In 2 Kings 19 the angel of death wiped out 185,000 soldiers. They also display power over nature. In Revelation 16:8-9 they sent blazing fire to scorch the earth. In Revelation 8-9 they destroy one third of the earth's vegetation and water. Several movies portray angels as elderly gentlemen or humorous comedians. This is far from the picture the Bible gives us where the power they possess is shown as frightful and devastating.

Position to Man

In Psalm 8:5, man is said to be a "little lower than the angels." This means that presently, man is a lower order of life than the angels. Angels in comparison to man, do not experience death, retain more knowledge, and are greater in power. Instead of using their position to subdue creation, angels are designed to minister to the saints (Hebrews 1:14). Paul states in 1 Corinthians 6:3 that one day man in his glorified state will rule the angels. Man's status as lower than the angels is thus a temporary one.

Classification

Several classes of angels are mentioned in the Bible. The first are the cherubim. These are the highest class of angels who are indescribable in power and beauty. They are initially mentioned in Genesis 3:24 where they were assigned by God to guard the Garden of Eden. In Exodus 25:17-22, they appear before the Ark of the Covenant. In Ezekiel 10:4 and 18-22, they emerge with four faces and four wings. Their duties consist of protecting and designating the abode of God's glorious presence.

Seraphim are the next class mentioned. In Hebrew, the word means, "burning ones." In Isaiah 6:3 they circle the throne of God crying "holy, holy, holy." Their duty is to proclaim God's holiness and man's need for holiness (Isaiah 6:6-7).

Next we have the living creatures (Revelation 4:6-9). These creatures are different from the cherubim referenced in Ezekiel because they have only one face and six wings. They are appointed to direct and proclaim judgment during the tribulation.

There are some individual angels who play a prominent role in scripture. One of them is Michael whose name means "who is like God?" In Daniel 10:13 he is called a chief angel and guardian of Israel. In Jude 9 he is called an archangel. In Revelation 12:7 he is the leader of the Lord's army against Satan. He is likely a cherub angel.

Gabriel whose name means "mighty one" is another specific angel that is mentioned. He is the messenger angel sent to deliver God's special message (Daniel 9 and Luke 1:11-12, 19-29). Though many believe he is also an archangel, this title is not given to him anywhere in the Bible.

Finally, the Angel of the Lord is yet another unique angel noted in scripture. This is an extraordinary angel that is even worshipped. Moreover, in passages like Judges 6:12-14 and 1 Chronicles 21:14-15 the title of angel and Yahweh are used interchangeably. This angel then is the preincarnate Jesus Christ.

Number of Angels

The number of angels is not known. However, their number is compared to the number of stars in the sky thereby indicating that they are numerous (Job 38:7 and Psalm 148:1-3). In 2 Kings 6:17, Elisha's servant's eyes are opened to see that he is surrounded by thousands of angels. In Revelation 5:11, John describes seeing thousands of angels in heaven.

Ministry of Angels

The angels were created to worship God and carry out His commands. They serve as messengers of God (Luke 2). They are also agents of God's judgments as seen in Genesis 19, 1 Chronicles 21:15-18, and Revelation 7:1. In addition, they play a role in controlling nations (Daniel 10:13, 21, and 12:1). They are servants who protect God's people (Psalm 35:4-5, 34:7, Isaiah 63:9) and God uses them in answer to prayer (Acts 12). They aid in evangelism (Acts 8) and encourage believers (Acts 27:23-24). Finally, they appear to have a role in escorting the righteous dead to their eternal home (Luke 16:22).

In the life of Jesus they predicted and announced His birth (Luke 1:26-28 and 2:8-15). During His childhood they protected Jesus (Matthew 2). They were sent at certain times to strengthen Jesus (Matthew 4:11, Luke 22:43). Furthermore, they were messengers who announced the Resurrection (Matthew 28:1-2). They also predicted the manner of His Second Coming (Acts 1:11) when they will accompany His return (Matthew 25:31) and gather elect from the earth (Matthew 24:31).

Our Relationship

According to Psalm 8, we are now lower than the angels. They are of a higher order than us but upon glorification we will rule over the angels (1 Corinthians 6:3). We should respect the angels as the prophets and apostles did (Daniel 8:16-17). We can appreciate their service and admire their worship. However, we should restrain from worshipping them. The Ten Commandments clearly state that only God is to be worshipped. In Colossians 2:18, Paul forbids the worship of angels. In Revelation 22:9 the angel prohibits John to worship him. Therefore, we are to respect angels but worshipping angels is forbidden.

Questions Regarding Angels

Does Each Christian Have a Guardian Angel Assigned to Him or Her?

The Bible does not support the idea that each believer has an individual angel assigned to his or her care. Matthew 18:10 is often cited as a proof text for individual guardian angels. The verse reads, “See that you do not look down on one of these little ones. For I tell you that their angels in heaven always see the face of my Father in heaven.” However, this passage does not present a strong case for the guardian angel concept.

The text teaches the value Jesus places on children who were not given a high social status in the Jewish culture at that time. Some New Testament scholars interpret the text to teach that God may have a special group of angels assigned to protect children.¹

Other scholars interpret the phrase “their angels in heaven” to refer to the spirits of children which ascend to heaven after death. The reason for this interpretation is that Jesus teaches that at the resurrection, believers will be like the “angels in heaven” (Matthew 22:30). Also, Jesus says these angels are in the presence of God. Since these angels are in the presence of God, they could not be on earth guarding children. For this reason, many scholars conclude Jesus to be speaking of the spirit of the children who at death enter the presence of God.² With either interpretation, we cannot build a case that there exists one guardian angel for every individual.

¹ John Walvoord and Roy Zuck, *The Bible Knowledge Commentary*, (Wheaton, IL.: Victor Books, 1986), p. 62.

² Gaebelien, Frank, *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, (Grand Rapids, MI.: Zondervan Publishing, 1984), p. 400-401.

Throughout the scriptures angels will appear to people individually, in pairs, or often in large numbers. For example, Gabriel appeared alone to Mary to announce the birth of Christ. A pair of angels appeared to the women at the tomb (Luke 24). In 2 Kings 6:17, thousands surrounded Elisha and his servant. The evidence from the Bible reveals that angels serve the body of Christ but may appear in a variety of forms and numbers.

Do All Angels Have Wings?

There are two categories of angels who are specifically mentioned to have wings. These are the cherubim and seraphim. When angels are described in scripture, they are seen as men in shining white. Many assume they have wings because they travel through the skies and heavens at very high speeds. However, wings are not necessary to travel at high speeds as demonstrated by Christ in His glorified state.

What Do You Think of the Novels on Angelic Warfare by Frank Peretti?

I welcomed Frank Peretti's novels and believe he heightened our awareness to the spiritual warfare believers are engaged in. He also broke the stereotypes we have had about angels portraying them to be fierce warriors and distinctive individuals. Although there is no scriptural support, his depiction of them resembling the different races of mankind was an appreciated creative addition.

Nevertheless, a few theological differences remain. I do not think that the demonic hosts are the ugly lizard-like creatures he describes. The demons are fallen angels but the Bible does not teach that they changed their form when they fell in the rebellion. Satan was the most beautiful of God's creation and it is not recorded that he transformed into the grotesque bat-like creature that Peretti describes. 2 Corinthians 11:14 states that he masquerades as an angel of light. Apparently, Satan still resembles the angels of the Lord to some degree and we can assume this likeness in the demonic hosts as well.

Finally there is the danger that a number of people may be influenced to believe that all events in our lives are shaped by the actions of angels and demons. Some may consider all trials, conflicts, and bad behavior to be the work of angels and demons. However, the Bible teaches that God is ultimately in control all things. It is true that spirit beings are involved in the course of events. However, we must not place too strong an emphasis on their activity. Some trials come from the Lord to teach us lessons we would otherwise never learn. Difficulties also arise as the result of our sin and the choices that result from its effect (James 1:13-15). In fact God holds us responsible for the choices we make. If angels and demons control us, God would be unjust to hold us accountable. Satan and the demons can often be an easy scapegoat that keeps us from dealing with the sin in our lives. I do not believe this is what Peretti implies in his narratives and am simply giving a word of caution.

Despite the disagreements I may have with some of the theology behind Peretti's novels, I believe the good aspects outweigh the bad and even deem these novels as a great enrichment to the life of every Christian. However, I do not consider his novels as

ranking near the quality of work from men such as C.S. Lewis, J.R. Tolkien, John Bunyan, and Fyodor Dostoevsky, timeless authors that should be widely read.

Satan

The adversary of God and all believers is Satan. Throughout the Bible, Satan has several titles that help to describe his character. Below is a list of titles and names given to Satan.

- **Anointed Cherub** (Ezekiel 28) - Satan was the highest of the highest class of angels.
- **Prince of this World** (John 12:31, 16:11), **Prince of the Air** (Ephesians 2:2), and **God of this Age** (2 Corinthians 4:4) - These titles emphasize his control over the system of philosophy or spirit of the age that governs the earth and opposes the Lord.
- **Prince of Demons** (Matthew 12:24) - The name Beelzebub or Lord of the flies is a title given to one of the Philistine gods and brought over into Judaism as a title for Satan (2 Kings 1:3, 6, 16).
- **Lucifer** (Isaiah 14:12)- The shining one.
- **Satan** (Zechariah 3:1) - The adversary.
- **The Devil** (Luke 4:2) – Slanderer or one who utters false reports to destroy one’s reputation.
- **The Old Serpent** (Revelation 12:9)
- **The Great Dragon** (Revelation 12:3)
- **Evil One** (John 17:15, 1 John 5:18) – Identifies one who is intrinsically wicked and seeks also to corrupt others.
- **Destroyer** (Revelation 9:11) – One who destroys physical and spiritual life.
- **The Tempter** (Matthew 4:3) – One who entices men to evil. This title is a present participle indicating continuous activity.
- **The Accuser** (Revelation 12:10)
- **Deceiver** (Revelation 12:9) – Also in the present participle representing continuous activity.

Original State and Fall

The original state and fall of Satan is recorded in Ezekiel 28. Verses 1-10 speak of the King of Tyre. However, verses 11-19 addresses another being who is not human. The prophet is addressing Satan, the one who is empowering the king of Tyre. The passage calls Satan the guardian cherub. He was in the presence of God's throne, the holiest place of all. In earthly palaces, the guards before the throne were the bravest and the best of all the king's soldiers. Satan was the guardian cherub of God which illustrates his great stature among the angels.

Verse 13 says, "You were in Eden, the garden of God..." Eden here represents God's presence or paradise. Verse 14 states, "...you walked among the fiery stones." In other words, he walked in the very presence of God. The passage indicates that Satan held a very privileged position in God's presence.

As for appearance, he was the most beautiful of the angels. Verse 12 states, "You were the model of perfection, full of wisdom and perfect in beauty." The following verse states, "...every precious stone adorned you..." The precious stones symbolize the greatness of his indescribable beauty.

It is hard to believe that such a gifted being would choose to rebel against God. The fall was the result of pride. Here is where the destructive nature of this sin is most clearly demonstrated. In our daily experience, we readily see how pride distorts an individual's thinking and perception of life. Great men have been destroyed because they were blinded by pride and acted foolishly. This is one reason God detests the sin of pride, a vice Christians must strongly guard against.

Verse 16 states, "Through your widespread trade..." indicating that Satan coerced other angels to follow him in his rebellion. As a result, he was cast out of his privileged position near God's throne. Besides banishment from heaven, his character became corrupted and all his power was henceforth channeled for destructive purposes.

When did the Rebellion Occur?

There are several theories regarding the time of Satan's rebellion. The conclusions depend on your view regarding the days of creation in Genesis chapters 1 and 2. Many Biblical scholars view the first two chapters of Genesis as a poetic narrative. They regard the writer as speaking in symbolic language and presenting a general overview of creation instead of a precise historical narrative. Therefore, the days refer to an extensive period of time. If this is the case, then Satan's rebellion occurred during the early ages of creation. Since we are talking about a vast amount of time, the period marked by Satan's rebellion is really not a problem.

Other Biblical scholars view the seven days as twenty-four hour days. Following this interpretation, it is more difficult to determine when Satan's rebellion occurred. It is unlikely that Satan would rebel within such a brief period from his creation. Dr. Allen Ross proposes that Genesis 1 describes a re-creation or God's first act of redemption where He restores a world that was judged. Verse 1:2 opens with the phrase, "Now the earth was formless and empty, darkness was over the surface of the deep." The phrase, "formless and empty" is often used in scripture to indicate that God's judgment has been

executed (Jeremiah 4:23, Isaiah 34:11). Darkness throughout the Bible is frequently used to represent evil and death. So, it is possible to conclude that there previously existed a created order that was inhabited by the angels in which God judged and destroyed as the result of Satan's rebellion. This would account for the ominous beginning in Genesis.³

These represent two prominent views held by several respected scholars. Old Testament scholars continue to discuss the creation account in Genesis. Although we may not know the precise time of Satan's rebellion we can be certain it occurred early in creation.

If Satan Knows His Future Why Does He Continue?

Many ask, "If Satan is so smart and knows the scripture, why does he continue in his rebellion?" Some conclude that either he lacks intelligence or there is an inconsistency in scripture. Satan continues his rebellion because that is the nature of evil. An individual that is consumed by evil will often refuse to turn and repent of his ways even if he knows what the outcome will be. Pride, anger, and jealousy will keep people from acknowledging their wrong and changing their ways.

We see this demonstrated regularly. For instance, Saddam Hussein knew he had no chance of winning in another war against the United States. He had many opportunities to correct his ways. He could have allowed UN inspectors to search his facilities of made reforms in his government, among other peacemaking actions. The best action on his part might very well have been to step down from power and seek asylum in another country which could have spared the lives of thousands of his countrymen. However, his pride kept him from doing the right thing and he made the decision to bring his country into a war he knew they could not win. He chose to see thousands die rather than surrender and turn from his wicked ways. This is the nature of those consumed by pride.

When an individual is under the control of sin, one's thinking and outlook on life become distorted. If sin is not dealt with properly, the perversion becomes even more severe as time goes on. Satan stands as a reminder to us of the danger of pride and its destructive consequences.

Demons

Demons are fallen angels who accompanied Satan in his rebellion against God and assist him in carrying out his plans against God.

Character of Demons

Demons possess supernatural intelligence. They demonstrated insight into the identity of Jesus (Mark 1:14, 34). They know their future (Matthew 8:28-29) and also display some knowledge of forthcoming events (Acts 16:16).

³ Allen Ross, *Creation and Blessing* (Grand Rapids, MI.: Baker Book House, 1988), 106-107.

Demons possess supernatural strength as well. The Gerasene demoniac demonstrated unusual strength. He could not be restrained by chains and ran wild day and night among the graves (Mark 5:3). In Acts 19:16; a demon injured the men who attempted to perform an exorcism in their own power.

Demons can perform counterfeit miracles but these marvels cannot match the miracles of God. In Exodus 8 the Egyptian magicians could not equal God's power. Lastly, like angels, demons can move very quickly and are not restricted by the material world as humans are.

Demonic Possession

Demons have a desire to inhabit the bodies of individuals. When they do enter into a person, they overtake the entire mind and personality of the individual. Signs of demonic possession include the following:

- Unusual physical strength
- Split personality
- Resistance to spiritual things
- Alteration of voice
- Clairvoyance or supernatural knowledge
- Violent and destructive behavior

An alteration in someone's personality is not always a sign of demon possession. Unusual strength, split personalities, alteration of voice and other symptoms can be due to psychological or physical reasons. Therefore, one should diagnose the suspected individual thoroughly before concluding demonic possession.

Christians and Demon Possession

Christians encountering demonic possession should approach the situation with humility, prayer, and caution. Christ has conquered the forces of evil and he has delegated His authority to believers. In cases of suspected possession, one must first complete a careful diagnosis of the person and rule out any psychological or physical causes. Here the analysis of an experienced Christian psychiatrist would be very helpful. Additionally look for symptoms that are consistent with those found in the Bible. Dealing with such an issue must also involve constant prayer. Then follow the examples given to us in the New Testament. The apostles and Jesus uncovered the identity of the demon (Matthew 8:32, Acts 16:18) and then cast it out in the name of Jesus Christ.

Conclusion

The Bible teaches that powerful spirit beings exist in our universe. Angels are servants of God who minister to believers. Demons are fallen angels who assist Satan in his opposition to God's plans. In our sojourn here on this earth, it is reassuring to know the God has sent His angelic host to join us in our spiritual battle against our adversary, Satan and the demonic hosts.