

## Doctrine of Angels

### I. Introduction

#### A. Why Study the Nature and Activities of Angels and Demons?

##### 1. Holy Angels

- a. It builds our hope that God is for us, and as such, he will send help in our weakness and distress. E.g., Matt. 4:11; Luke 22:43 — angels sent to minister to Christ
- b. It builds our confidence the God has the victory! E.g., 2 Kings 6:15-17; 19:35; Matt 26:53 — all instances of how God uses or may use angels to assure his victory.
- c. It Provides a beautiful example of utter obedience and devotion to God. E.g., Ps 103:19-21

##### 2. Fallen Angels / Demons

- a. It gives us an awareness of the deceitful schemes of the devil, in order to fight against him in the fight of faith. E.g., 2 Cor 2:11; Eph 6:11. See also C.S. Lewis, *Screwtape Letters*, and Thomas Brooks, *Precious Remedies against Satan's Devices*
- b. It gives us a clearer picture of the nature and effects of sin. To see the character and actions of Satan and his demons is to see what sin really is like, when not disguised to look appealing.
- c. It gives us an appreciation for our own salvation. There is no salvation plan for fallen angels, and so we marvel at God's mercy and grace to bring salvation to us, undeserving and helpless sinners. E.g., Heb 2:16; 2 Pet 2:4, 9; Jude 6

#### B. The Meaning of the Terms 'Angel' and 'Demon'

The word 'angel' refers to created spirit beings, some of whom are holy and some evil. The OT term for angel is *mal'ak* and the NT term is *angelos*, both of which refer to one sent with a message, or one acting as a messenger. The biblical terms for angel are used of human messengers in some instances (1 Sam. 23:27; 1 Kings 19:2; Luke 7:24; 9:52), often in the OT particularly of the angel of the LORD (Gen. 16:7-14; Judg. 6:11-14; 2 Sam. 24:16; Zech. 1:12-13; Matt. 1:20), but most often for these created spiritual beings called angels or messengers (Exod. 23:20; Matt. 4:11; 25:31, 41).

Although the term 'angel' is sometimes used of evil spiritual beings (Matt. 25:41; Rev. 12:9), the more common designation for these evil powers is that of 'demon'. The Hebrew term *shed* (שֵׁד) occurs twice in the OT (Deut. 32:17 and Ps. 106:37), rearing to evil spiritual forces who stand in opposition to God yet receive sacrifice as false gods. The attention given to demons greatly increases in the gospels, where the Greek term *daimonion* appears 60 times, all but 8 of these in the gospels, and *daimon* 5 times, 3 of these in the gospels.

## C. Their Origin

Because all that God creates and does is wholly good (Gen. 1:31; James 1:17), it is impossible to account for the existence of demons or evil angels by the immediate and original creation of God. Rather, we must understand angels, in their entire class, as created by God as good. Psalm 148:1-6 expresses praise to Yahweh for His creation of all things, and among those things specified are "all His angels" and "all His hosts" (v. 2). Furthermore, Col. 1:16 makes abundantly clear that by Christ *all* things were created, including things "in the heavens and on earth, visible and invisible." (Cf. Rom. 8:38-39 specifying angels as created by God.) Also relevant here is Yahweh's statement to Job (Job 38:4-7) which indicates that the angels ("sons of God") were present and shouted for joy at the creation of the heavens and earth. Angels, then, derive their existence from God, and their creation precedes the subsequent creation of the universe.

The difficult question beyond these matters concerns how some of the good angels God created have become evil. We will look later at the origin and depravity of Satan and the demons, but suffice it here to say that we must understand all fallen angels, in their *originally-created* form, to have been wholly good, a goodness they forfeited, presumably, because of their rebellion against God. A couple of passages lead us to think this is the case with the demon world. Jude 6 and particularly 2 Pet. 2:4 both speak of angels who departed from God's purposes and hence received God's judgment and condemnation. The text in 2 Peter is clear that the reason for this judgment was their sin against God. And when you add to this the clear implication from Matt. 25:41 and Rev. 12:9 that demons are the followers of Satan, their leader, it seems clear that these evil spirits, though created wholly good, became evil as they followed their leader's enticement to sin against their Creator.

## II. Unfallen Angels

### A. The Character of Unfallen Angels

Less is said in the Bible about the character of unfallen angels than about their activities, but still some aspects of their character are evident

1. They are personal beings, with intelligence, emotions and will.
  - intelligence — 1 Pet. 1:12 (they long to know more of God's plan of salvation); Rev. 17:1-18 (they know and communicate God's plans); Matt. 24:36 (they know much, evidently, but not everything, e.g., not the time of the second coming)
  - emotions — Job 38:7 (they rejoice over God's creation); Isa. 6:1-4 (with awe and wonder they cry out "Holy, Holy, Holy" is the LORD); Luke 15:10 (they rejoice when sinners repent); Rev. 5:11-14 (they marvel at the Lamb that was slain and give Him their worship)
  - will — Heb. 1:6 (God appeals to their will to worship the Son); 2 Pet. 2:4 (the implication of some angels sinning is their choice to rebel against God)
2. They are spirit beings — Heb. 1:14 ("ministering spirits"); Luke 8:2; 11:24 (demons are sometimes referred to as evil spirits or unclean spirits, and so presumably they are

spirits by virtue of their being angels). But, they can, for specific purposes, take on human form — Gen. 19:1 (the angels visiting Sodom); Heb. 13:2 (one might unknowingly entertain angels)

3. They apparently are not sexual beings, or at least they do not marry and hence, it would seem, do not procreate — Matt. 22:30 (we will someday not marry or be given in marriage, and as such be like angels)
4. They exist forever — Luke 20:36 (angels cannot die)
5. They have great power — 2 Thess. 1:7 ("mighty angels"); 2 Kings 19:35 (an angel sent by God and destroyed 185,000 Assyrian soldiers); Dan. 6:22 (an angel shut the lions' mouths).
6. They are holy — Job 5:1 and Ps. 89:7 ("holy ones"); Mark 8:38 ("holy angels")
7. They are elected by God — 1 Tim. 5:21 ("His chosen angels")
8. Although wondrous beings, they are not to be worshipped — Col. 2:18 ("worship of angels"); Rev. 19:10 and 22:8-9 (John fell down to worship the angel, but the angel said to worship God)

#### B. The Functions and Ministry of Unfallen Angels

It may be said generally of the ministry of angels that they are servants of God who surround His presence (Dan. 7:9-10; Rev. 5:11-14) and carry out His will in various ways on earth (Gen. 32:1; 2 Sam. 24:16-17; Heb. 1:14 — "ministering spirits"). But beyond this general description, some specific functions of angels are spoken of throughout the Scriptures.

1. They worship and offer praise to God — Isa. 6:1-3; Luke 2:13-14; Rev. 5:11-14
2. They ministered in relation to Jesus' earthly life and ministry — Luke 1:11-20 (angel appeared to Zacharias predicting John's birth); Luke 2:26-38 (Gabriel appeared to Mary); Matt. 1:20 (angel appeared to Joseph saying to take Mary as his wife); Luke 2:8-15 (angel appeared to the shepherds); Matt. 2:13, 19 (angel told Joseph to go to Egypt and then back to Israel); Matt. 4:11 (angels ministered to Jesus at His temptation); Luke 22:43 (an angel strengthened Jesus in the garden of Gethsemane); Matt. 28:2-8 (angel rolled away the stone and told the women of Jesus' resurrection); Acts 1:10-11 (two angels told the disciples of Jesus' return)
3. They proclaim God's Word and ordain the law — proclaim (Luke 1:26-38; Acts 27:23-24); ordain (Acts 7:53; Gal. 3:19; Heb. 2:2)
4. They protect and deliver God's people as He directs — Exod. 23:20-23 (angel sent to protect Israel on entering the land); 2 Kings 19:35 (angel struck 185,000 Assyrians dead); Dan. 3:28 (three Hebrew men in the furnace); Dan. 6:22 (angel closed the lions' mouths); Ps. 34:7 (angel of the LORD encamps around those who fear Him); Acts 5:19; 12:7 (angel delivered apostles from prison)

5. They bear witness to and long to know more of God's salvific purposes — 1 Cor. 4:9; Eph. 3:10; 1 Pet. 1:12 (possibly also 1 Cor. 11:10)
6. They will bear witness to Christ's confession of those who are and are not His — Luke 12:8-9 (Christ will confess/deny people "before the angels of God")
7. They play a role in God's reward of the righteous and punishment of the wicked before the final judgment — Luke 16:22 (angels take the poor man to Abraham's bosom); Acts 12:23 (angel struck Herod dead for not giving glory to 'God')
8. They come with Christ in His return — Matt. 16:27 (Son of Man comes in glory with His angels); Matt 24:30-31 (Son of Man will appear with His angels who carry out His will); Matt 25:31 (Son of Man appears with all the angels with Him); 2 Thess. 1:7 (Jesus will be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels)
9. They gather the elect when Christ returns — Matt. 24:30-31
10. They dispense God's judgment on the wicked when Christ returns -Matt. 13:39-42, 49-50 (angels will take the wicked from among the righteous and cast them into hell)
11. They are used by God to defeat evil powers and nations — Dan. 10 (the message to Daniel of Michael's intervention to defeat ungodly forces); Dan. 12:1 (Michael will rescue God's people from great distress); Rev. 12:7-9 (Michael and his angels defeat the dragon and his angels)
12. An angel binds Satan during the millennium — Rev. 20:1-3
13. They are stationed at the 12 gates of the new Jerusalem — Rev. 21:12

### C. The Destiny of Unfallen Angels

In light of their continuous biblical role of ascribing praise to God, it stands to reason that they will be among the great heavenly choir singing its praise and worshipping Him forevermore. Beyond this, a few things are known for sure.

1. They shall live forever — Luke 20:36 (they cannot die)
2. They are present in the new Jerusalem, still ministering on God's behalf — Rev. 21:12 (stationed at the 12 gates)

## III. Fallen Angels

### A. The Origin of Satan and Demons

1. Question of Isaiah 14:12-23 (King of Babylon) and Ezekiel 28:12-19 (King of Tyre)

Tertullian (c. 160-215), Origen (c. 185-254) and others have held this to be a description of the fall of Satan. Is 14:12 describes the king here as the shining one (Heb. *helel*) whose pride is manifest in wanting to be like the Most High (14:14). The King of Tyre in

Ezekiel is said to have “the seal of perfection” and be “full of wisdom and perfect in beauty” (28:12), and to “dwell on the mountain of God” (28:14, 16). So, can this refer to a mere human king? Don’t these descriptions call for the one spoken of being a glorious and sinless angelic creature? Wouldn’t this fit best Satan before his fall? So many have argued and thought

What stands against this interpretation, as appealing as it is, are the following considerations:

- a. The context of both passages clearly indicates human kings (see Isa 13:1, 19; 14:4; and Ezek 28:1, 12). And the larger contexts suggest the nations over which they reign as kings.
- b. Ezekiel 27-28 seem to be one literary unit, ch 27 about judgment of the city; ch 28, judgment of the king of the city
- c. Isa 40:20 sees the king of Babylon not united with his people. This is not true of Satan who is thrown into the lake of fire (Rev 20:10).
- d. The judgment in both passages comes in the form of death (and Satan did not die in his judgment (see Isa 14:18-20; Ezek 28:18)
- e. Ancient Near Eastern documents show it common to speak of kings (i.e., human kings) in a deified manner, since they are seen as possessing the image of the god(s). So, the language of Isa 14 and Ezek 28 is appropriate to kings in the Ancient Near East, and would indicate that even though they are viewed as so exalted, nonetheless, God will bring them to judgment.

## 2. Satan and the Origin of Evil

Surely, we must affirm that in his originally created form, Satan was altogether good. Gen 1:31 says that God looked at *all* that he made, and it was *very good*. James 1:17 indicates that every good and perfect gift is from God, so God cannot make or give what is intrinsically evil.

So, how does a creature of goodness and purity become evil? Augustine helps on this with two observations (see *City of God*, *On Free Will*, *Enchiridion*, especially): 1) Created goodness is one of finite, mutable, and corruptible goodness (as opposed to God’s infinite, immutable, and incorruptible goodness). And, 2) Evil is not a positive quality in itself, but it is the misuse or misdirection of good. This must be since God is good and eternal, and God made only what is good, so evil must have come through the use of what is good, but a use that was wrong.

Relation to Satan: Since Satan, before his fall, was finite, he lacked much. No matter how glorious he may have been, he had his limitations. Being limited, he could see things (but only good things) that he did not possess and he could want them. In wanting what was not his (similar to the woman in the garden) he could bring about evil by misusing the good that was before him. So, these conceptions of finitude of created things, and evil as misdirected good, help explain how evil could have come from what is entirely good.

## B. The Character of Fallen Angels

As with angels generally, more is said of the activities of demons than of their character, but some aspects are clear.

1. They too are personal beings with intelligence, emotion and will
  - intelligence — Mark 1:24, 34 (demons knew Jesus was the Holy One); Matt. 8:28-29 (they know of their future torment)
  - emotion — Matt. 8:28-29 (they fear the torment Jesus might bring upon them); James 2:19 (demons' belief in God makes them tremble or shudder, presumably with fear)
  - will — 2 Pet. 2:4 (implies they willed to sin); Matt. 8:31 (demons wished to be sent into the herd of swine)
2. They are angels, and hence, spirit beings — Matt. 25:41 (hell is prepared for the devil and his angels); Rev. 12:9 (the dragon is thrown down to earth with his angels); Eph. 6:12 (our battle is against spiritual forces of wickedness)
3. They are morally evil — Matt. 10:1; Mark 1:23 ("unclean spirits"); Luke 7:21 ("evil spirits"); Eph. 6:12 ("spiritual forces of wickedness")
4. They are doctrinally corrupt and deceitful — 1 Tim. 4:1-3 (some who pay attention to "deceitful spirits and doctrines of demons"); James 3:15 (the wisdom leading to jealousy and arrogance is "earthly, natural, demonic"). This fact is especially contemptible since they rightly understand there is one God and that Jesus is the Christ, the Holy One of the Father (James 2:19; Mark 1:24; Luke 8:28)
5. They are cruel and hurtful in their purposes and behavior -Mark 5:1-5 (Gerasene demoniac cried out among the tombs and gashed himself with stones); Matt. 12:22 (demon-possessed man who was blind and dumb); Matt. 17:14-18 (demon-possessed boy who was crazed, falling into the fire and into the water)
6. They have power exceeding human power — Mark 5:1-5 (demoniac tore apart shackles meant to restrain him); Acts 19:14-16 (an evil spirit leaped upon seven men and "subdued all of them and overpowered them, so that they fled . . . naked and wounded")

#### C. The Activities of Fallen Angels

1. First and foremost, demons seek to advance Satan's purposes -Matt. 12:24 (Satan or "Beelzebul" is the ruler of the demons); Matt. 25:41; Rev. 12:7-9 (they are "his angels"); Eph. 6:11-12 (our real struggle is with "spiritual forces of wickedness" which carry out "the schemes of the devil"); Rev. 16:13-14 (demons proceed from the dragon, beast and false prophet to gather the nations for war with God)
2. They promote idolatry and worship of demons — Lev. 17:7; Deut. 32:17 (sacrifices to demons); Ps. 106:34-39 (sacrifice sons and daughters to demons); 1 Cor. 10:20 (Gentiles sacrifice to demons); Rev. 9:20 (worship of demons and idols)
3. They promote false teaching — 1 Tim. 4:1-3; 1 John 4:1-4

4. They perform false signs and wonders — Rev. 13:12-15; 16:12-14; cf. Matt. 24:24; 2 Thess. 2:8-10
5. They oppose Christian faith and growth — Eph. 6:10-16 (spiritual warfare for the faith); Rev. 18:2, 24 (Babylon, the dwelling place of demons, killed prophets and saints)
6. They possess individuals, involving control over them and affliction of them — mental and physical affliction: Mark 5:1-5 (gashing himself with stones); Matt. 9:32 (dumbness); Matt. 12:22 (blindness); Matt. 17:15 (lunacy); Luke 13:11 (deformity); and control over people: Mark 5:1-5 (gashing with stones); Matt. 17:14-18 (throw himself into the fire and water)

Note on demon possession and believers: since possession involves the control of a persons mind, will, and behavior, it seems impossible that a true believer could be demon “possessed.” A believer is a temple of the Holy Spirit, a child of God, and a citizen of the kingdom of Christ (e.g., Rom 8:14-17; Gal 4:4-6; Col 1:13; 1 Jn 3:7-9). A believer certainly may be oppressed by Satan or a demon; Paul had his thorn in the flesh as a messenger of Satan (2 Cor 12:7). But this is far short of the sort of demon possession we saw in Jesus ministry. The contemporary tendency to talk more vaguely about “demonization” and fail to distinguish between “possession” and “oppression” is unhelpful, in my judgment. Further, the contemporary tendency to attribute just about any evil occurrence to the devil or demons ignores the fact that, for Paul, our chief enemy is our own “flesh.” Yes, the devil is real and opposed to us, but “flesh” gets far more treatment as what leads us to sin and falter.

#### D. Some Particular Characteristics and Activities of Satan

##### 1. Biblical Terms for Satan

###### a. OT Name

The Hebrew term *satan*, "adversary," is used as a noun 27 times in the OT, 10 of these for human adversaries, and 17 of Satan (15 in Job, 2 in Zech. 3:1-2). When used of Satan, the article is used with the term *satan*.

Note: 1 Chron. 21:1 has an anarthrous use of *satan* (i.e., no article included), and so should most likely be translated, as with the other such occurrences, as "an adversary." This helps clear up the apparent conflict between 1 Chron. 21:1 and 2 Sam. 24:1, the latter of which says, "the anger of the Lord burned against Israel," and it incited David to number the people. The adversary of 1 Chron. 21:1 may be understood as the nations over which David wished to be superior, and God's anger, then, coincides with these enemy nations as what incites David. (See John Sailhamer, *1st and 2nd Chronicles*, pp. 52-53.)

###### b. NT Names

The Greek term *diabolos* "slanderer" occurs 37 times in the NT, and the term *satanos* occurs 36 times. It is clear that there is in the NT a heightened awareness of Satan and

his demons, both in the gospel accounts of Jesus' ministry, and in the life of the early church. No doubt the coming of Christ elicited an unprecedented display of Satan's activity in an attempt to thwart Christ's mission and the subsequent witness of His Spirit.

c. Other biblical names ascribed to Satan

- accuser of the brethren (Rev. 12:10)
- our adversary the devil (1 Pet. 5:8)
- the father of lies (John 8:44)
- a murderer (John 8:44)
- dragon (Rev. 12:3)
- the serpent of old (Rev. 12:9)
- the power of darkness (Col. 1:13)
- the prince of this world (John 12:31)
- the prince of the power of the air (Eph. 2:2)
- the evil one (Eph. 6:16; 1 John 5:19)
- the wicked one (Matt. 13:19)
- the god of this world (2 Cor. 4:4)

2. Satan's Activities

- a. Ruler of the present evil world system — John 12:31; 14:30; 16:11 ("ruler of this world"); Matt. 4:8-10 (Jesus' is offered the kingdoms of this world by Satan); Acts 26:18 (turn from darkness to light, from the dominion of Satan to God); 2 Cor. 4:4 (god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelieving); Eph. 2:2 (prince of the power of the air); 2 Tim. 2:26 (escape the snare of the devil, having been held captive by him to do his will); 1 Jn. 5:19 (the whole world lies in the power of the evil one)
- b. Ruler of the demon world — Matt. 12:24 (Beelzebul, the ruler of the demons; cf. v. 26); Matt. 25:41; Rev. 12:7-9 (the devil and his angels)
- c. He thwarts the spread of the gospel — Matt. 13:19 (evil one snatches away seed); Matt. 13:38-39 (devil sows tares among the wheat); 1 Thess. 2:18 (Satan thwarted Paul from going to the church at Thessalonica); 2 Cor. 4:4 (the god of this world blinds the minds of the unbelieving, that they might not see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ)
- d. He tempts God's people to sin — Luke 4:1-13 (the temptation of Christ; note esp. v. 13: the devil departed until another opportune time); 1 Cor. 7:5 (sexual temptation); 2 Cor. 2:11 (Satan schemes against Paul); Eph. 4:26-27 (remaining angry too long gives the devil an opportunity); Eph. 6:10-20 (the evil one and his spiritual forces seek to wage war against believers); 1 Tim. 3:7 ("the snare of the devil")
- e. He can bring about sickness, oppression and death — Luke 13:10-17 (Jesus healed a woman *who* for 18 years had a . sickness "caused by a spirit" and *who was* "bound by Satan" vv. 11, 16); Mark 5:1-20 (Gerasene demoniac; note esp. v. 5); 1 Cor. 5:5 (deliver over to Satan for the destruction of his flesh); 2 Cor. 12:7 (thorn in the flesh is a "messenger of Satan"); Heb. 2:14 (the devil who had the power of death)



- f. He can enter or possess individuals — Luke 22:3-4 (Satan entered Judas; cf. John 13:2, 27); cf. possibly Acts 5:3
- g. Accuser of God's people — Job 1:9 ("Does Job fear God for nothing?" cf. Job 2:1-6); Rev. 12:10 (Satan is the accuser of the brethren)
- h. Murderer and Liar — John 8:44 (Jesus describes the devil as a murderer from the beginning, who has no truth in him and so lies from his own nature, and is the father of lies)
- i. Deceiver — Gen. 3:13; 2 Cor. 11:3; 1 Tim. 2:14 (Eve deceived by the serpent); Matt. 24:24 (Satan's false signs and wonders will endeavor to mislead, if possible, the elect); 2 Thess. 2:10 (deception of wickedness for those who perish); Rev. 12:9; 13:14; 20:3, 8, 10 (Satan is the deceiver of the world)

#### E. The Defeat of Satan and His Angels

- 1. The defeat is already secured by Christ — John 12:31 (the ruler of this world has been judged); Col. 2:15 (by the cross Christ disarmed the rulers and authorities); Heb. 2:14 (through death Christ rendered powerless him who had the power of death, that is, the devil); 1 John 3:8 (the Son of God appeared to destroy the works of the devil)
- 2. The full and final manifestation of this sure defeat is yet future — Rom. 16:20 (the God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet); Rev. 12:7-17 (the dragon will be cast down to the earth); Rev. 20:7-10 (at the end of the millennium, Satan will finally be judged and cast into the lake of fire)

#### F. The Destiny of Satan and the Fallen Angels

- 1. They are not offered salvation — Heb. 2:16 ("He [Christ] does not give help to angels, but He gives help to the descendant of Abraham," the context making clear that the help is deliverance from spiritual slavery and death; cf. 2 Pet. 2:4 and Jude 6)
- 2. They will be judged by redeemed humans — 1 Cor. 6:3 ("Do you not know that we shall judge angels?" referring, in all likelihood, to judgment of evil angels)
- 3. Their destiny during the millennium, presumably, is the abyss -Rev. 20:1-3 (Satan is bound and thrown there, so it stands to reason his demons are bound along with him); cf. Luke 8:31 (demons request Jesus not to cast them into the abyss, presumably where they know they will go)
- 4. Their final destiny is the lake of fire (hell) — Matt. 25:41 ("the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels"); Rev. 20:10 ("And the devil who deceived them was thrown into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are also; and they will be tormented day and night forever and ever")