

GRACE BIBLE TRAINING CENTRE (GBTC)
SCHOOL OF MINISTRY
ARUSHA - TANZANIA

SUBJECT: BASIC CHRISTIAN DOCTRINE

LESSON 4: THE SUBJECTS OF GOD - ANGELS

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4.1 - Angels:- Armies of Darkness and Armies of Light

Spiritual conflict is what forms the background for the study of angels.

In the Spiritual realm, Satan's diabolical spiritual forces seek to undermine our defences and to kill us spiritually.

We are secure as long as our trust is in God who provides assistance through His greater spiritual forces in resisting our enemy.

4.1.1 - The Nature of angels

(a) Their origin

Angels are a finite order or group of created beings who are God's messengers or ministers. They are greater in intelligence and power than man.

Some angels serve God's purpose through their holiness and voluntary execution of God's will. Other angels who rebelled against God are forever separated from Him.

Angels means messengers.

Angels were created by God though we don't know exactly when (Psalms 148:2-5; Colossians 1:16), but it must have been before the creation of man.

Angels are immortal, that is, they will never cease to exist (Luke 20:36)

(b) Their characteristics

Angels are spirit beings (Hebrews 1:7, 13-14), which means they have no physical bodies (Ephesians 6:12).

Man is not a spirit but has a two-fold nature - material (flesh) and immaterial (spirit).

Angels often reveal themselves in human form (Judges 6:11-24; John 20:12) but it does not mean they have material bodies as part of their necessary existence. They assume material bodies on occasion as a means for them to communicate with human beings.

Angels are personal beings. They exhibit the basic aspects of personality which are intellect, emotions, and will (2Samuel 14:20; Luke 4:34; Revelations 12:12; Luke 15:10; 2 Timothy 2:26; etc.).

Angels are sexless (Matthew 22:30). They are not classified according to sex although some are given masculine names (e.g. Michael, Gabriel).

They are sometimes referred to as sons of God (Job 1:6; 2:1; 38:7).

Angels possess superhuman intelligence and power (2Peter 2:11; Psalms 103:20; 2Thessalonians 1:7).

The evil angels are also very powerful (John 12:31; Luke 11:21, 22:53; 10:19; Ephesians 6:12). Even though evil angels are powerful, their power is limited as can be seen in the fact that it will take only one angel to bind Satan and cast him into the bottomless pit at the end of this age (Revelations 20:1-3).

Angels are not omnipresent (Job 1:7, 1Peter 5:8; Zechariah 1:11; Daniel 10:5, 12-14).

Angels are not glorified men. There is a clear distinction between angels and men (Hebrews 12:22-23; 2:16)

Man, is for a while a little lower than the angels (Psalms 8:4-5) but in future shall be higher (Hebrews 2:7; 1Corinthians 6:3). We shall judge angels, which shows that those who are inferior, or of lesser importance, do not judge those who are superior.

4.1.2 - The Moral Characteristics of angels

Angels were created holy

All angels were created holy, but some fell from their holy state. They had the ability either to sin or not to sin

The angels that fell chose to leave their positions of authority and their own home by an act of their own will (Jude 6). Satan led one-third of the angels into rebellion against God out of self-interest and pride (1Timothy 3:6; Revelations 12:4). The result of their action was the judgement of God (2 Peter 2:4; Matthew 25:41).

The others did not sin but remained with the Father as the holy angels (Mark 8:38; Matthew 6:10; 18:10).

The devil sometimes tries to impersonate the holy angels who are regarded as angels of light (2Corinthians 11:14).

Several portions of the Scripture which refer primarily to earthly kings seem to symbolize Satan (Ezekiel 28:12-19; Isaiah 14:12-15).

4.1.3 - The Number of angels

The Bible does not give a precise number of angels but it does imply a great multitude of angels.

Some examples are found in the following references: 2Kings 6:14-17; Psalms 68:17; Deuteronomy 33:2; Daniel 7:10; Hebrews 12:22; Revelations 5:11.

Satan's legion of evil angels also exist and they are quite large (Revelations 12:7-12)

4.1.4 - The organization and activity of angels

There is an effective organization of spiritual forces to carry out specific tasks assigned to them, e.g.

1Kings 22:19 - God is enthroned with all the host of angels around Him;

Matthew 26:53 - The angels are organized in the form of an army (e.g. 12 legions) and are always on alert.

Luke 2:8-14 - A great company of them formed a choir.

Revelations 19:10-14 - There is precision, order, organization, authority and purpose in the triumphant array of angels.

The angels stand in the Presence of God to worship and praise Him (Psalms 103:20, 148:2; Isaiah 6:1-7; Revelations 5:9-12; Matthew 18:10)

They rejoice in the mighty creative acts of God (Job 38:7; Luke 15:10)

They are ministering spirits to carry out God's will (Psalms 103:20; Hebrews 1:14).

Examples of their activities as ministering spirits (Acts 27:23-24; Act 8:26; 10:3-7, 12:7-10; Matthew 4:11; Luke 22:43; 2 Kings 6:8-23; Psalms 34:7).

Angels are agents of judgement (2Kings 19:35; Acts 12:23)

Angels appear to have influence in the affairs of nations.

Spiritual battles go on at all times in the heavenly realms because evil powers exist over nations (Daniel 10:13, 20) and these are opposed by holy angels (Daniel 10:13, 21). The conflict can be so intense such that the leader of the holy angels, Archangel Michael is engaged in it (Daniel 10:13; Jude 9).

The orders of holy angels can be described as:-

(i) Cherubim who are the guardians of the throne of God. They also guarded the entrance to the Garden of Eden (Genesis 3:24; 2Kings 19:15; Ezekiel 10:1-22; 28:14-16).

(ii) Seraphim are leaders in the worship of God (Isaiah 6:2, 6)

(iii) Watchers are apparently assigned to observe specific activities. They are seen in the context of bringing God's message to man. (Daniel 4:13, 17)

(iv) Living creatures which are different from ordinary angels, seraphim and cherubim. They appear to worship God, and to be active about His throne (Revelations 4:6-9; 6:1-7; 15:7)

All in all, this body of holy angels serve God effectively and are ever ready to carry out His purposes for His people.

(a) Scope of Holy angelic activity

The scope or extents of the activities of holy angels are as follows:

(i) The intervention or involvements of angels in the normal course of human affairs are occasional and exceptional. Angels do not intervene by their own decision but only as commanded by God. God uses them at times for special displays of power (Deuteronomy 33:2; Hebrews 1:7; Psalms 104:4; Acts 7:53; Galatians 3:19; Hebrews 2:2)

(ii) The power of angels is dependent upon and comes from God. They cannot influence the human mind directly, for this is the work of the Holy Spirit. They operate within limits.

(iii) Angelic appearances generally precede and accompany important new turning points in the unfolding of God's plan, for example,

- At creation (Job 38:7);
- When the Law was given (Galatians 3:19);
- Just before and at the birth of Christ (Luke 1:11,26; 2:13);
- During Jesus' temptation in the wilderness and in Gethsemane (Matthew 4:11; Luke 22:43); at the resurrection (Matthew 28:2);
- At the ascension (Acts 1:10-11);
- During the end-time activities before the coming of Christ (Matthew 25:31)

(b) Organized activity of unholy angels

In the realm of spiritual darkness the devil has his organization.

Satan is referred to as the 'prince of this world' (John 14:30; 16:11) and as the ruler of the kingdom of the air (Ephesians 2:2)

Satan has a throne (Revelations 2:13) and is the head of an evil organization (Colossians 1:16; Ephesians 6:12; Colossians 2:15).

He has angels (Matthew 25:41) who oppose God and His people and try to defeat His will (Revelations 12:7-9).

The evil organization are set in ranks based on levels of authority (Ephesians 6:12)
A lot can be learnt about unholy angels by examining their leader.

(i) Their Leader

- He is called Satan, which means adversary or opponent. He is primarily the adversary of God and also of man (Zechariah 3:1; Matthew 13:39; 1Peter. 5:8).
- He is called the devil, which means slanderer (one who makes false charges against someone. He accuses God to man (Genesis 3:1-4) and man to God (Job 1:9, 16; Revelations 12:10).

- He is called the tempter, because he entices (tempts) man to sin (Matthew 4:3; 1Thessalonians 3:5).

Since he is limited and is not all-powerful, all-knowing, or everywhere present, the devil uses different means to oppose God. Since he can't attack God directly, he therefore attacks man who is the crown of God's creation in various ways:-

(1) he lies (John 8:44; 2Corinthians 11:3); (2) he tempts (Matthew 4:1); (3) he steals (Matthew 13:19); (4) he torments (2Corinthians 12:7) ; (5) he hinders (1Thessalonians 2:18) ; (6) he impersonates in order to deceive (2Corinthians 11:14); (7) he accuses (Revelations 12:10); (8) he possesses (John 13:27); (9) he kills and devours (John 8:44; 1Peter 5:8); (10) he sifts (separates or screens) - Luke 22:31.

Satan appears to have been permitted to keep the authority he was given at his creation. He thus controls many evil angels who give him full devotion as their leader and they willingly lend their services to help him achieve his wicked purposes.

(ii) Their activity

Unholy angels oppose God, His people, and His program as a militant (fighting) part of Satan's kingdom of darkness (Matthew 25:41; Ephesians 6:12; Revelations 12:7-12).

There is no difference between the unholy angelic spirits and demons; they are one and the same thing.

The demons try to separate the people of God from God (Romans 8:38)
They oppose holy angels (Daniel 10:12-11:1`).

They afflict people with physical and mental illness (Matthew 9:33; 12:22; Mark 5:1-16; Luke 9:37-42)

They spread false doctrine (2Thessalonians 2:1-12; 1Timothy 4:1)

They possess people and even animals (Matthew 4:24; Mark 5:8-14; Luke 8:2; Acts 8:7; 16:16)

Occasionally, God uses the demons, in spite of themselves, to accomplish His purposes of punishing the ungodly (Psalms 78:49; 1Kings 22:23) and of chastening or disciplining the good (Job 1-2; 1Corinthians 5:5)

(iii) Their fate

Demons serve to illustrate what will happen to those who are morally evil.

The following passage describes their fate (Matthew 8:29; 25:41; 2Thessalonians 2:8; Revelations 12:12; 20:10; 2 Peter 2:4; Jude 6)