

ANGELS

The Mysterious Messengers



"The Archangel Michael and the Dragon" by Martin Schöngauer - 1471



1. The Hebrew word for angel is “*malak*.” It occurs more than 100 times in the Old Testament. The term means “to dispatch as a deputy or messenger, particularly a messenger of God.” The Greek word for angel is “*angelos*.” It occurs 165 times in the New Testament and also refers to a messenger. The following specific Scriptural applications of the term may be observed:

- A. a human messenger or ambassador; cf. II Samuel 2:5; Luke 7:24.
- B. a human messenger speaking or writing by divine inspiration; cf. Haggai 1:13; Malachi 3:1; Galatians 4:14.
- C. impersonal acts of supernatural intervention in human affairs; cf. II Corinthians 12:7.
- D. fallen spirits who serve Satan; cf. Matthew 12:24; 25:41.
- E. bishops or pastors; cf. Revelation 2:1; 3:14.

F. heavenly beings who serve God by ministering to His people; cf. Genesis 32:1,2

G. one pre-eminent spirit with the distinctive title “*the Angel of the Lord;*” cf. Exodus 3:2.



2. The New Testament letter to the Hebrews provides a succinct definition of the angels: “*Are not all angels ministering spirits sent to serve those who will inherit salvation?*” (Hebrew 1:14). Angels are “*spirits,*” that is, “personal beings without physical substance” (Cf. Luke 24:39). “*Scriptures clearly reveal that angels possess faculties that indicate personality. They are conscious and rational; they possess the ability of intelligent speech. They can experience emotions; they have the faculty of cognition.*” (Hoenecke) The personality of angels is further indicated by the fact that in some instances the bear personal names and are arranged in a variety of ranks. The Bible makes it clear that angels may take on physical appearance or form when it suits their purposes (cf. Genesis 18:1-8; 19:1-5; Hebrews 13:2). Having no physical substance, angels do not occupy space. Although angels, like God (John 4:24), are

spirits, they do not possess the divine characteristic of “*omnipresence*.” They can only be in one place at any given time (cf. Daniel 10:4-14). Angels are finite, unlike the Creator God who is infinite. Some of our theologians thus describe the angels as having an “*illocal presence*.” (“*illocal*” = having no location in space)

3. The Bible ascribes to angels a rich variety of names and titles. Each of these titles provides helpful insight into the nature and activities of the angels. Angels are called:

A. “***Holy Ones***” - The angels of God are “*set apart*,” pure and without sin; cf. Deuteronomy 33:2; Job 5:1; 15:15; Psalm 89:5-7; Zechariah 14:5.



B. “***Sons of God***” - This title indicates that God is the source of the angels and emphasizes their close relationship with him; cf. Genesis 6:2; Job 1:6; 2:1; 38:7; Psalm 29:3.

C. “***Morning Stars***” - This graphic designation expresses the purity and brilliance of the angels; cf. Job 38:7.

D. “***Servants of the Lord***” - The role of the angels is to minister to God through the service of His people; cf. Psalm 103: 21; Hebrews 1:7, 14.

E. “***Mighty Ones***” - The angels of the Lord are beings of great power and strength; cf. Psalm 103:20.

F. “***Warriors of the Lord***” - Our God is the “***Lord of Hosts***” (“*Yahweh Sabaoth*”). The soldiers in that mighty army of God are His angels. (cf. Psalm 103:21; see also Revelation 12: 7-9).

G. **“Watchers”** - The text of Daniel identifies the angel as a vigilant guardian; one who observes and protects; cf. Daniel 4:13. From such language the popular concept of *“Guardian Angels”* has been derived.

“An angel is a spiritual creature without a body created by God for the service of Christendom and the Church.” Martin Luther



“Michael and the Hosts of Heaven at War” by Albrecht Dürer

“The name ‘angel’ does not describe the nature of the being, but its office, and signifies one sent, a legate, a messenger. Hence Augustine: ‘Do you ask for the name of their nature? It is spirit. Do you inquire concerning the name of their office? It is angel.’ The word angel etymologically signifies messenger. But by the universally received usage and style of Scripture language it designates a nature and a specific creature. Yet, because the word is originally nothing more than a designation of office it is used in Scripture also in reference to the Son of God and to men.”
Quenstedt



“‘Angel’” is an official title (nomen officii); it does not describe the essence of the angels. That is described by the term ‘spirit.’ That the term ‘angel’ is an official title, designating an ambassador or messenger, is clear from the fact that Scripture also calls men, in particular the preachers of God’s Word, angels...The angels are spirits (pneumata), that is, immaterial beings...The difference between God and ‘pneuma’ and the angels as ‘pneumata’ is the difference between God as the Creator, and the angels as finite spirits, finite creatures. As distinct from the immaterial human soul, the angels are complete beings while the human soul is a ‘spiritus incompletus,’ since the body belongs as an integral part to man; soul and body make a complete man...The angels are illocal, that is to say that while they may be at a definite place

they are, as immaterial beings, independent of space; they occupy no space - they can be in the space occupied by another body.” Franz Pieper



“The Guardian Angel” - 19th Century Engraving

4. It is of great importance to carefully distinguish between what art, tradition, and folklore say about the angels and Scriptural doctrine. The Bible assigns the following angelic attributes:

A. **MIGHTY**: As noted above, the angels of the Lord are designated as ***“the Mighty Ones”*** (Psalm 103:20). They are beings of great power and strength. Peter tells us that the angels are ***“stronger and more powerful”*** than men (2 Peter 2:11). Paul warns of the day when the Lord Jesus will be ***“revealed from heaven in blazing fire with His powerful angels.”*** (2 Thessalonians 1:7) The mighty deeds of the angels reveal their great power (i.e. 2 Kings 19:35; Matthew 28:2; Acts 5:17-20). The angels are not omnipotent. Unlike God, their power is limited.

B. **IMMORTAL**: Jesus promises that those who are considered worthy of taking part in the age to come will be like the angels in that they ***“can no longer die.”*** (Luke 20:36). Angels are not subject to the ***“bondage of decay”*** which afflicts the material world (Romans 8:21).

C. **INNUMERABLE**: Scripture testifies that the angels of God exist in numbers beyond the power of human imagination. In the majestic vision of St. John the hosts of angles that surround the heavenly throne of God number ***“thousands upon thousands and ten thousand times ten thousand.”*** (Revelation 5:11; cf. Daniel 7:10; Hebrews 12:22) When God gave Moses the law upon Sinai, ***“He came with myriads of His holy ones from the south, from His mountain slopes.”*** (Deuteronomy 33:2; cf. Psalm 68:17). Our Lord asserted that he could instantly summon “twelve legions of angels” (Matthew 26:53) if he so desired. A Roman legion included 6,000 soldiers!

D. INTELLIGENT: When the Wise Woman of Tekoah sought to flatter David for his great wisdom he remarked, **“My lord the king is like an angel of God in discerning good and evil.”** (2 Samuel 14:17). They learn to understand the **“manifold wisdom of God”** as His plan is made known to them through the Church (Ephesians 3:10). They demonstrate a lively interest in the unfolding of God’s plan of salvation (1 Peter 1:10-12). Angels are not, however, omniscient. Only the Lord knows all things (Mark 13:32).

E. EMOTION: Angels are capable of experiencing feelings. They rejoiced at the world’s creation (Job 38:7). They experience a sense of humble reverence and awe in the majestic presence of the Almighty God (Isaiah 6:3). The repentance of a single sinner brings great happiness to the angelic hosts of heaven (Luke 15:10).

F. SWIFT: The Bible describes angels as being able to move very quickly from one place to another. Gabriel came to Daniel “in swift flight” (Daniel 9:21). The imagery of the Old Testament depicts the angels of God racing through the heavens on the storm clouds with the speed of lightning (Ezekiel 1:4-6,11). The prophet Ezekiel represents the incredible swiftness of the cherubim with chariot wheels spinning within wheels in every direction. (Ezekiel 1)

Sometimes angels have four wings (Ezekiel 1) and other times they have six (Isaiah 6). Revelation tells of angels flying across the face of the earth (Revelation 14:6).



**“When the Morning Stars Sang Together”
by William Blake**



“The Vision of Ezekiel” by William Blake

5. God is the source of all existence. He alone is eternal, without beginning and without end. Angels are created beings. They do not exist independently, nor have they always been. They owe their origin to a creative act of God. This is the clear teaching of Scripture:

“You alone are the Lord. You made the heavens, even the highest heavens, and all their starry host, the earth and all that is on it, the seas and all that is in them. You give life to everything, and the multitudes of heaven worship you.” Nehemiah 9:6

“Praise the Lord, O my soul. O Lord my God, You are very great; you are clothed with splendor and majesty. He wraps Himself in light as with a garment; He stretches out the heavens like a tent and lays the beams of His upper chambers on their waters. He makes the clouds

His chariot and rides on the wings of the wind. He makes His angels winds, His servants flames of fire.” Psalm 104: 1-4

“Praise the Lord from the heavens, praise Him in the heights above. Praise Him all his angels, praise Him all His heavenly hosts. Praise Him sun and moon, praise Him, all you shining stars. Praise Him you highest heavens and you waters above the skies. Let them praise the name of the Lord, for He commanded and they were created.” Psalm 148:1-5

“He (Christ) is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. For by Him all things were created; things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things were created by Him and for Him. He is before all things, and in Him all things hold together.” Colossians 1: 15-17

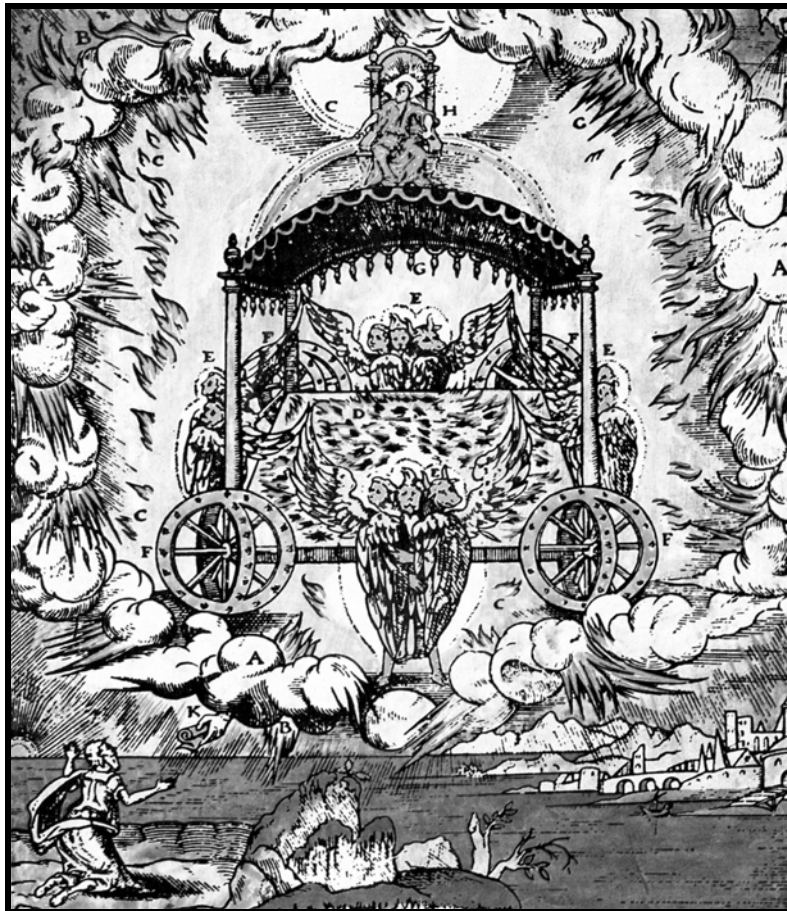


“The Angels at the Creation of Behemoth and Leviathan” by William Blake

Thus, the angels, as a part of the created universe, came into being within the six days of God's creative activity. The precise moment or day of their creation is not defined in Scripture. References in the Book of Job would seem to suggest that God made the angels early in the creation week as the foundations of the earth were laid.

“Where were you when I laid the earth's foundation? Tell me, if you understand. Who marked off its dimensions? Surely you know! Who stretched a measuring line across it? On what were its footings set, or who laid its cornerstone - while the morning stars sang together and all the angels shouted for joy?” Job 38:4-7

In the absence of more specific information, Christians would do well to exercise prudent caution in offering definitive answers to this question.



“Ezekiel Saw the Wheel” - 19th Century Engraving

“Here Moses seems to be forgetting himself because he does not deal at all with two very important matters, namely, the creation and fall of the angels, and relates only the state of affairs of physical things, although of this there is no doubt that the angels were created. But concerning their creation, their battle, and their fall there is nothing at all in Scripture except that Christ says (John 8:44) ‘He did not abide in the truth,’ and Moses - below in chapter three - mentions the sad account of the serpent. It is surprising that Moses should remain silent about such weighty matters...So it happens that where there are no clear statements on the subject, rash people usually consider themselves free to come up with imaginary ideas.”
Martin Luther



***“The Virgin With Angels”
by William Bouguereau***

“Since Moses did not describe the creation of angels, many curious inquiries have arisen as, for example, when were they created? But as the Scriptures do not describe the precise time and day of the creation of the angels, we gladly remain in ignorance of that which we neither can nor ought to know. It is enough, therefore, for us to know (1) that the angels did not come into existence of their own accord, nor were begotten of the substance of God, but were created; (2) that the angels did not exist from eternity, nor indeed before the beginning when all things which are in heaven and earth, visible and invisible, began to be. For to have been in the beginning can be said of Him alone through whom all things were made, and who is eternal.” Martin Chemnitz

“They were not created before the heavens and the earth, for these were created in the beginning, and so were the first among all created things (cf. Genesis 1:1). And besides it is well known that the eternity of God is described by His existing before the

foundation of the world (cf. Psalm 90:2; Isaiah 48:13). Moreover, they were created not after but within the six days, for after that interval God rested from the ordinary work of creation. That the angels were created before man is usually proved from Job 38:7. And some believe that we are to understand also from this passage that the angels were created upon the first day; namely, because when God founded the earth, then the angels are said to have praised God. But these matters are not altogether clear.” Johann Baier



“Angels at Creation” - 19th Century Engraving

6. Scripture refers to a number of different categories or ranks of angels. However, the Bible does not provide further detail as to the differences between them and their relationship with one another.

“That power is like the working of His mighty strength, which He exerted in Christ when He raised Him from the dead and seated Him

at His right hand in the heavenly realms, far above all rule and authority, power and dominion, and every title that can be given not only in the present age, but also in the one to come. And God placed all things under His feet and appointed Him to be head over everything for the church, which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills everything in every way.” Ephesians 1:19-23

“His intent was that now, through the church, the manifold wisdom of God should be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly realms, according to His eternal purpose which He accomplished in Christ Jesus our Lord.” Ephesians 3:10,11

“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.”
Ephesians 6:12



“St. Thomas Aquinas”

“For by Him all things were created, things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things were created by Him and for Him.” Colossians 1:16

“For in Christ all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form, and you have been given fullness in Christ, who is the head over every power and authority.... And having disarmed the powers and authorities He made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them by the cross.” Colossians 2:9-10,15

Scripture provides little more than the titles themselves for these various kinds of angels. Based upon, and extrapolating



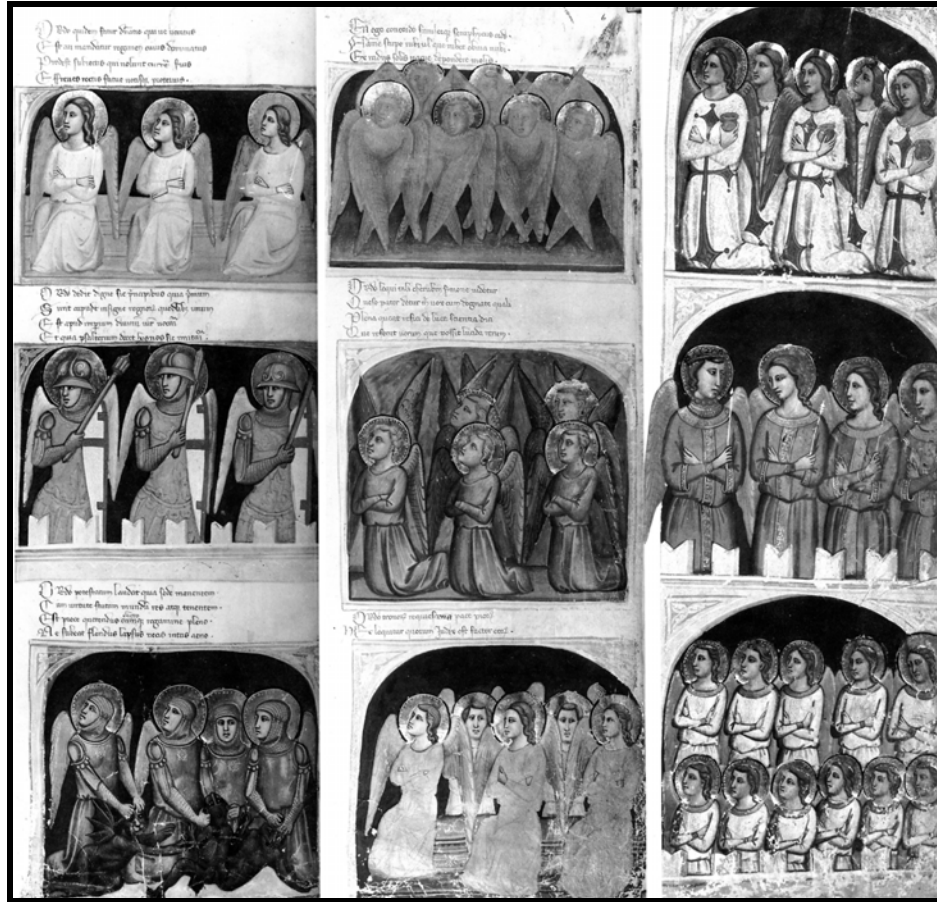
“The Ranks of Angels” by Gustav Dore

from, these Biblical texts the great theologians of the Middle Ages, most notably Pseudo-Dionysius and Thomas Aquinas, created an order of “*celestial hierarchy*” which categorized the angels in nine different ranks or choirs. Much of the information upon which this system is based was derived from Jewish apocryphal literature written during the inter-testamental period, a time of intense interest in the subject of angels. The nine choirs of angels were clustered into three groups of three (triads) which surrounded God’s throne of Glory. In descending order, from highest to lowest, the rankings are:

1. Seraphim
2. Cherubim
3. Thrones

4. Dominions
5. Virtues
6. Powers

7. Principalities
8. Archangels
9. Angels



“The Nine Ranks of Angels” 14th Century Italian Illuminations

As you proceed through the ranking from the highest to the lowest you move further from God and closer to man. Thus human beings have had the greatest amount of contact with the two lowest celestial ranks, the arch angels and the angels; while the highest ranks are revealed only in the great heavenly visions of the prophets and apostles.

“In order to make some sense of what first appears to be an unholy mess, we will adopt the most standard and orthodox hierarchy of the angels. According to both the two foundational texts, The Celestial Hierarchies of Dionysius and the Summa Theologica by Thomas Aquinas, there are nine celestial orders orbiting the throne of glory, rather like that of our own planetary system... The entire hierarchy of angels can best be described as an endlessly vast sphere of beings, who surround an unknowable center point which is called God.” (Godwin)

We will review each of the nine ranks in turn.

1. The First Choir - The Seraphim

The Hebrew word “*seraph*” (Hebrew plural - “*seraphim*”) occurs twice in Scripture in both instances as part of the great throne room vision of the prophet Isaiah (Isaiah 6:1-8). The term is a combination of two Hebrew words: “*ser*” (“*to burn*”) and “*rapha*” (“*healer*”). In Numbers 21:6-8 a form of the same word is used to refer to the venomous snakes (KJV - “*fiery serpent*”) which invaded the camp of Israel. Thus the English word serpent comes from the same Hebrew root. In Jewish tradition the seraphs are designated as “*the fiery flying serpents of lightning*” who “*roar like mighty lions*” when aroused. Isaiah tells us that these majestic creatures surround the throne of God and eternally sing his praises:



14th Century Anglo Saxon Seraph

“In the year the King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord seated on a throne, high and exalted, and the train of His robe filled the temple. Above Him were seraphs, each with six wings; with two wings they covered their faces; with two they covered their feet, and with two they were flying. And they were calling to one another: ‘Holy, holy, holy is the Lord Almighty; the whole earth is full of His glory.’ At the sound of their voices, the doorposts and the thresholds shook and the temple was filled with smoke. ‘Woe to me,’ I cried, ‘I am ruined! For I am a man of unclean lips and I live among a people of unclean lips, and mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord Almighty.’ Then one of the seraphs flew to me with a live coal in his hand, which he had taken with tongs from the altar. With it he touched my mouth and said, ‘See, this has touched your lips, your guilt is taken away and your sin atoned for.’ Then I heard the voice of the Lord saying, ‘Whom shall I send and who will go for Us?’ And I said, ‘Here am I, send me!’” (Isaiah 6:1-8)

The Order of Divine Service utilizes this awe-inspiring song in the form of the “*Sanctus*” to prepare the congregation for the coming of the Lord in the celebration of Holy Communion. Luther’s splendid “*German Sanctus*,” “*Isaiah Mighty Seer In Days of Old*” superbly captures the essence of the ancient chant.



“Isaiah Mighty Seer in Days of Old” by Rudolf Schäfer

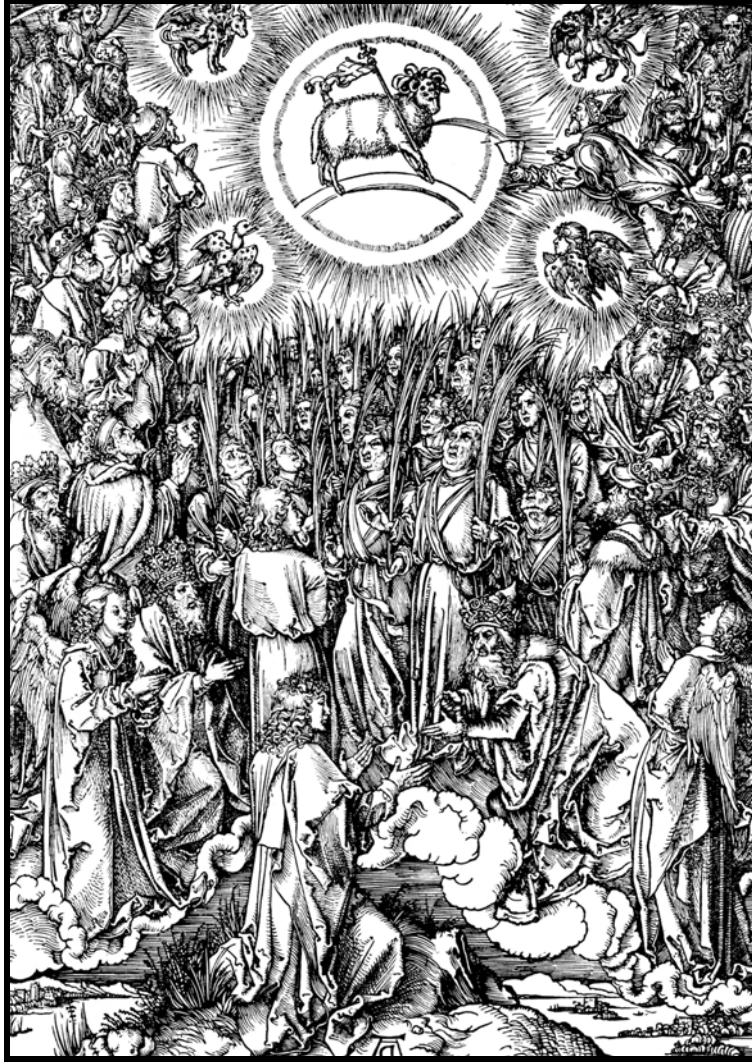
Isaiah Mighty Seer In Days of Old
by Martin Luther

*“Isaiah, mighty seer in days of old
The Lord of all in spirit did behold
High on a lofty throne in vesture bright,
With flowing train that filled the temple quite.
Above the throne were stately seraphim;
Six wings had they, these messengers of Him.*

*With twain they veiled their faces, as was meet,
With twain in rev'rent awe they hid their feet,
And with the other twain aloft they soared,
One to the other called and praised the Lord:
Holy is God, the Lord of Sabaoth!
Holy is God, the Lord of Sabaoth!
Holy is God the Lord of Sabaoth!
Behold, His glory filleth all the earth!
The beams and lintels trembled at the cry,
And clouds of smoke enwrapped the throne on high.”*



“8th Century Spanish Seraph”



*“John’s Vision of the Four Living Creatures” by
Albrecht Dürer*

Many commentators believe that the “four living creatures” who surround the throne of God in St John’s vision of heavenly glory are also seraphs, although the title does not appear in the text of Revelation. Like Isaiah’s seraphs, John’s “*living creatures*” have six wings and proclaim an eternal “*trisagion.*”

“In the center, around the throne, were four living creatures, and they were covered with eyes, in front and in back. The first living creature was like a lion, the second was like an ox, the third had a face like a man, and the fourth was like a flying eagle. Each of the four living creatures had six wings, and was covered with eyes all around, even under its wings. Day and night they never stop saying: ‘Holy, holy, holy is the Lord Almighty, who was, and is and is to come.’ Whenever the

living creatures give glory, honor, and thanks to Him who sits on the throne, and who lives forever and ever, the twenty-four elders fall down before Him who sits on the throne, and worship Him who lives forever and ever. They lay their crowns before the throne and say: ‘You are worthy, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honor and power, for You created all things, and by Your will they were created and have their being.’” Revelation 4:6-11

In Revelation’s imagery, the seraph’s six wings are augmented with all-seeing eyes and the four faces representing the basic divisions of animal life on earth. In the hierarchy of heaven, the seraphim are in direct communion with God and as such are beings of pure light and thought who resonate with the fire of love.



“The Four Living Creatures Around the Throne of God” - Luther Bible Woodcut

2. The Second Choir - The Cherubim

The “*Cherub*” (Hebrew Plural - “*Cherubim*”) is the first angel to be mentioned in the Bible. “*After He drove the man out, He placed on the east side of the Garden of Eden cherubim and a flaming sword flashing back and forth to guard the way to the tree of life.*” (Genesis 3:24) The word “*cherub*” means “*one who prays or*



“Assyrian Cherub from the Royal Palace at Nineveh”

intercedes.” In ancient Assyrian art the cherubim are depicted with the bodies of bulls and faces of men or lions. They were placed at the entrances of palaces or temples as guardian spirits. Carved golden cherubs extended their wings over the Ark of the Covenant within the Holy of Holies (cf. Exodus 25:18,19; Hebrews 9:5). In the Temple of Solomon two massive golden cherubs, 15 feet tall, stood behind the Ark in the Most Holy Place, and figures of cherubim, palm trees, and flowers were carved into the walls and the doors (cf. I Kings 6:23-35). The word occurs 89 times in the Bible, most frequently in the Book of Ezekiel. The prophet’s vivid imagery tells of many eyed creatures with four great wings and fantastic forms:

“I looked and I saw a windstorm coming out of the north - an immense cloud with flashing lightning and surrounded by brilliant light. The center of the fire look like glowing metal and in the fire was what looked like four living creatures. In appearance their form was that of a man, but each of them had four faces and four wings. Their legs were straight; their feet were like those of a calf and gleamed like burnished bronze. Under their wings on their four sides they had the hands of a man. All four of them had faces and wings and their wings touched one another. Each one went straight ahead; they did not turn as they moved. Their faces looked like this: each of the four had the face of a man, and on the right side each had the face of a lion, and on the left side the face of an ox; each also had the face of an eagle. Such were their faces. Their wings were spread out upward; each had two wings, on touching the wing of another creature on either side, and two wings covering its body. Each one went straight ahead. Wherever

the spirit would go, they would go without turning as they went. The appearance of the living creatures was like burning coals of fire or like torches. Fire moved back and forth among the creatures; it was bright and lightning flashed out of it. The creatures sped back and forth like flashes of lightning.” (Ezekiel 1:4-14)

A few chapters later, the prophet repeats and amplifies his inspired description of these amazing creatures and labels them as the “***Cherubim.***” (Ezekiel 10:1-22) In dealing with the apocalyptic visions of Scripture it is always important not to confuse



*“The Glorious Cherub Lucifer Before His Fall”
by William Blake*

the reality of the vision with the actual reality. All of these visual images are symbols, intended to convey profound spiritual truth. The eyes of the cherubim, for example, are indicative of knowledge and wisdom. They are angels of light and glory; the keepers of the celestial records.



“The Vision of Ezekiel” by Raphael

The transformation of the mighty cherubim of Scripture into the tubby little winged babies, or “putti” as they are commonly called (from the Latin “putus” - little boy) that fill the corners of baroque ceilings must remain a mystery. These are figures from Greek and Roman mythology where the chubby infants with tiny wings are mischievous Cupids who play the games of the pagan gods using the power of love to bring both happiness and sorrow to human lives. The artists of the Renaissance simply combined this endearing pagan image with the Biblical title and the result is



“6th Century Bronze Syrian Cherub”

millions naked little fat boys fluttering around churches across Europe on diminutive wings. One of the most striking examples of this unlikely combination is Raphael’s masterpiece, *“The Vision of Ezekiel,”* in which the artist ignores the prophet’s description of the majestic cherubim and presents them as two cute little putti, holding up the arms of God.

Only one Cherub is named in Scripture. He is a figure of majesty and power, the supreme angel of the choir of the cherubim. His name is *“Lucifer,”* the Son of the Morning (Isaiah 14:12). In the aftermath of his fall he becomes Satan, the Adversary. In a dirge over the King of Tyre, the prophet Ezekiel addresses the spiritual power behind the throne of this heathen monarch. As

Ezekiel laments the downfall of the highest of the cherubim, he provides an intriguing description of the lofty position that Satan enjoyed before his rebellion against God.

“You were the model of perfection, full of wisdom and perfect in beauty. You were in Eden, the Garden of God; every precious stone adorned you; ruby, topaz, emerald, chrysolite, onyx and jasper, sapphire, turquoise and beryl. Your settings and mountings were made of gold; on the day that you were created they were prepared. You were anointed as a guardian cherub, for so I ordained you. You were on the holy mount of God; you walked among the fiery stones. You were blameless in your ways from the day you were created till wickedness was found in you. Through your widespread trade you were filled with violence and you sinned. So I drove you in disgrace from the mount of God, and I expelled you, O guardian cherub, from among the fiery stones. Your heart became proud on account of your beauty and you corrupted your wisdom because of your splendor. So I threw you to the earth; I made a spectacle of you before kings.”
(Ezekiel 28:12-17)



"Cherubs" by Sir Joshua Reynolds - 1792

3. The Third Choir - The Thrones

The designation of the third choir of angels as "*Thrones*" is based upon Colossians 1:16 - "***For by Him all things were created; things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities.***" The Hebrew title for these angels is "*Galgallin*" from the Hebrew noun "*galgal*" which has the double meaning of "*wheel*" and the "*pupil of the eye.*" Given the prophet Ezekiel's depiction of these creatures spinning wheels covered with eyes, that dual significance would seem to be most appropriate. In the prophet's vision, the *Galgallin* are the chariot of God.

"As I looked at the living creatures I saw a wheel on the ground beside each creature with it four faces. This was the appearance and the structure of the wheels: they sparkled like chrysolite, and all four looked alike. Each appeared to be made like a wheel intersecting a wheel. As they moved, they would go in any one of the four directions the creatures faced; the wheels did not turn about as the creatures went. Their rims were high and awesome, and all four rims were full of eyes all around. When the living creatures moved, the wheels beside

them moved; and when the living creatures rose from the ground, the wheels also rose.” (Ezekiel 1:15-19)



“Elijah’s Fiery Chariot” by J. James Tissot

Ezekiel’s dramatic vision recalls the “*fiery chariot*” which carried the prophet Elijah up into heaven in the whirlwind (2 Kings 2:11-12) In Jewish lore these beings are described as “*the great wheels*” or “*the many eyed ones..*” Dionysius indicates that the dominant virtue of these beings is steadfastness.

4. The Fourth Choir - The Dominions

With the Dominions, we enter the second angelic triad. St. Paul uses this title twice,

in Ephesians 1:21 and Colossians 1:16.

“That power is like the working of His mighty strength, which He exerted in Christ when He raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly realms, far above all rule and authority, power and dominion, and every title that can be given, not only in the present age but also in the one to come.” (Eph. 1:19-21)

The Greek term is “*kuriotes*” which literally means “*lordship*.” In the Dionysian scheme of things, “*they regulate angels’ duties and are perpetually aspiring to true lordship; through them the majesty of God is manifested.*”

5. The Fifth Choir - The Virtues

The principle duty of the virtues is to work miracles on earth. They are said to be the chief bestowers of grace and valor. Second Enoch calls them “*the brilliant or shining ones.*” In the legends and lore of the Hebrews and the early church fathers they are most often associated with heroes, martyrs, and those who struggle for good. It is said that they instill courage at the moment of greatest need. The ancient traditions hold that the two angels who appeared at Christ's ascension were Virtues, sent to escort the triumphant Savior home to heaven. The classic Ascension hymn “*Look, the Sight Is Glorious,*” by Thomas Kelly, captures the scene as Jesus passes up through endless ranks of angels. The hymn enables us to imagine the Virtues’ victorious song of praise.

*1. Look, oh look, the sight is glorious, see the Man of Sorrows now;
From the fight returned victorious, every knee to Him shall bow.*



*“The Fall of Satan and the Rebel Angels”
by Jean Limbourg - 1415*

*Crown Him! Crown Him! Crown Him! Crown Him!
Crown Him! Crown Him!
Crowns become the Victor's brow. Crowns become the Victor's brow.*

*2. Crown the Savior! Angels crown Him! Rich the trophies Jesus brings;
On the seat of pow'r enthrone Him while the vault of heaven rings.
Crown Him! Crown Him! Crown Him! Crown Him!
Crown Him! Crown Him!
Crown the Savior, King of Kings! Crown the Savior King of Kings!*

*3. Sinners in derision crowned Him, mocking thus the Savior's claim;
Saints and angels crowd around Him, own His title, praise His name.
Crown Him! Crown Him! Crown Him! Crown Him!
Crown Him! Crown Him!
Spread abroad the Victor's fame! Spread abroad the Victor's fame!*



“Christ Enthroned in Heaven Amid the Angels” by Giotto

*4. Hark! Those bursts of acclamation! Hark those loud triumphant chords!
Jesus takes the highest station; Oh, what joy the sight affords!
Crown Him! Crown Him! Crown Him! Crown Him!
Crown Him! Crown Him!
King of Kings and Lord of Lords! King of Kings and Lord of Lords!*



“The Glorious Ascension of Jesus” by Melozzo da Forlì

6. The Sixth Choir - The Powers

The angels of the Sixth Choir are also called “*Dynamis*,” “*Potentates*,” and “*Authorities*.” (cf. Ephesians 1:21; 3:10; 6:12; Colossians 1:16; 2:10; 2:15) In Hebrew tradition they were the first angels to be created by God.



“A Power” - Illustration from Heyward’s “Hierarchy of the Blessed Angels”

“The powers inhabit the perilous border region between the first and the second heavens. Dionysius accredits them with resisting the efforts of demons to take over the world. They appear to act as a kind of border guard who patrol the heavenly pathways on the lookout for devilish infiltration. These patrols are obviously risky business and St. Paul sternly warned his various flocks that powers can be both good and evil.” (Godwin)

“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 in the heavenly realms.” (Ephesians 6:12)

The writings of the Inter-Testamental period indicate that at the time of Satan's fall the greatest defection came from the ranks of the powers. Heyward's

17th Century classic *The Hierarchy of the Blessed Angels* reports the following summary of both Christian and occult speculation:

“Of the fallen angels, the greatest defection seems to have come from the ranks of the powers. Of their once powerful princes, Beleth is now a Duke of Hell commanding 85 legions of devils. Carniveau is a greater demon invoked in many witches Sabbaths...Crocell is now a Duke of Hell with 48 legions at his command. Even the angel companion of Michel, Sensiner rebelled as did Uvall who became a Duke of Hell and appears

to be the demon pimp as his specialty is to procure the love of women for his supplicants.” (Godwin)

7. The Seventh Choir - The Principalities

We now enter the final triad of the nine ranks of angels. With each level we draw closer to the temporal and material world. The principalities are also called “Princedom.” They are the guardians of nations and the great cities. Dionysius asserts that the members of the Seventh Choir “watch over the leaders of people.” They also serve as the protectors of religion. In the angelic lore of the Jews the leader of the Principalities is “Anael.” He is described as the governor of the second heaven, who controls all the kingdoms and leaders of the earth.

8. The Eighth Choir - The Archangels

In the New Testament, the term “archangel” is used only twice. The prefix “arch” means “chief” or “principal.” ***“For the Lord Himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command,***

with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first.” (1 Thessalonians 4:16) ***“In the very same way, these dreamers pollute their own bodies, reject authority, and slander celestial beings. But even the archangel Michael, when he was disputing with the devil about the body of Moses did not dare to bring a slanderous accusation against him, but said, ‘The Lord rebuke you.’”*** (Jude 8,9) Most commentators agree that St. John’s mention of the



“A Guardian Angel” - 19th Century Engraving



“St. Michael the Archangel” by Giambono

“the seven angels who stand before God” in Revelation 8:2 refers to the seven archangels. The Apocryphal I Enoch provides their name identifying the seven archangels as Uriel, Raguel, Michael, Sariel, Gabriel, Remiel, and Raphael. However, these names lack Scriptural affirmation. Michael is the only angel whom Scripture specifically designates as an *“archangel.”* (cf. Jude 9) Gabriel is named, but never identified as an *“archangel.”* In Luke 1:19, Gabriel says to Joseph: *“I am Gabriel. I stand in the presence of God, and I have been sent to speak to you and to tell you the good news.”* As one of the angels of the presence Gabriel has traditionally been identified as an archangel. The archangels are messengers bearing divine decrees. *“They are considered the most important intercessionaries between God and humans and it is they who command the legions of heaven in their constant battle with the sons of darkness. The traditional Hebrew names of the seven archangels emphasize their close relationship with God.*

Michael - “He Who Is Like God”

Gabriel - “God Is My Strength”

Raphael - “God Has Healed”

Sariel - “God’s Command”

Uriel - “*Fire of God*”

Raguel - “*Friend of God*”

Remiel - “*Mercy of God*”

Michael is certainly the most prominent of the archangels. He is “*one of the chief princes*” (Daniel 10:13) and Michael is the prince who leads the hosts of heaven in battle against the hordes of Satan (Revelation 12:7). The Old Testament presents Michael as the guardian angel of the nation of Israel. The prophet Daniel had been told of the coming day of “*Michael the great prince who protects your people.*” (Daniel 12:1; cf. also 10:21)



Michael the Weigher of Souls” by Hans Memling



*“The Archangel Michael Defeating the Devil”
Hubert Gerhard, 1588*

The rabbis believed that it was Michael who ravaged the Assyrian army of Sennacherib (2 Kings 19:35-36), and who disputed with Satan over the body of Moses (Jude 9). The fathers of the early Christian church held that it was Michael who descended from heaven with *“the key of the abyss and a great chain in his hand”* (Revelation 20:1) to bind the ancient dragon. In Christian tradition it is St. Michael who carries the souls of the faithful departed home to the eternal light of heaven. Michael is also known as the *“Angel of the Last Judgement.”* The popular imagination of the Middle Ages often borrowed from pagan imagery to depict Michael as the *“Weigher of Souls”* who determined the eternal fate of the dead. Michael is usually shown as a magnificent figure with outstretched wings and an unsheathed sword which signifies his role as the great champion of God and slayer of the dragon. In the *War of the Sons of Light Against the Sons of Darkness* discovered among the Dead Sea Scrolls, Michael is called the *“Prince of Light”* who leads the armies of God against the

against the legions of Hell under the command of the demon prince *“Belial.”* The *Koran* suggests that the cherubim were formed from the tears Michael shed over the sins of the faithful. There are some Lutheran commentators who argue that Michael (*“He Who Is Like God”*) is not an angel at all but is, in fact, our Lord Jesus Christ.

If this were the case, then the designation “*archangel*” (which never occurs in the plural in Scripture) would not mean “*ruling angel*,” as it is usually understood, but “*ruler of the angels*.” This could then lead to the conclusion that the “*ruler of the angels*” is the Son of God. In fact, when “*the Angel of the Lord*,” generally considered by Lutherans to be the preincarnate Christ, appears to Joshua, He calls Himself “*the Captain of the Host of the Lord*.” (Joshua 5:13-6:2) The most compelling argument against this intriguing view is Daniel’s identification of Michael as “*one of the chief princes*.” (Daniel 10:13)



“Satan Cast out of Heaven by Michael” by Peter Paul Reubens

Gabriel is the only other angel named in Scripture. In Judeo-Christian tradition he is the angel of the annunciation, resurrection, mercy, revelation, and death. It is Gabriel who is sent to the prophet Daniel to explain the visions of the ram and he-goat and the seventy weeks (cf. Daniel 8:16-17; 9:20-23). It is Gabriel who comes to Zacharias to announce the birth of John the Baptist, and to Mary to announce the birth of Jesus (cf. Luke 1:19,26). In the rabbinical legends, Gabriel is the chief of the angelic guards placed over Paradise and the ruler of the cherubim. As the ruling prince of the first heaven he is said to sit at the left hand of God. According to legend, it was Gabriel who rained death and destruction upon the wicked cities of Sodom and Gomorrah. The angel is typically presented in art as a graceful figure bearing a pure white lily in his hands. *“Gabriel, the angel who stands in the presence of God”* (Luke 1:19),



“Gabriel Announcing the Birth of Christ” by David Gerard - 1506

appears to be God's special messenger. Whenever he appears, it is to communicate God's revelation and interpretation concerning God's kingdom development. His name means "*mighty one of God.*" In Scripture he appeared in the form of a man, spoke with a man's voice, and had the power of touch as humans do. He has great strength and is the angel described in Daniel as flying swiftly. Nowhere is he called an "**archangel**" ("*which means it may not be Gabe who blows the trumpet on that great gettn' up morning*" - Law)

9. The Ninth Choir - The Angels

The lowest rank in the celestial hierarchy is also the order closest to humanity. The angels are God's messengers, "**ministering spirits**" who glorify their divine Creator by serving His people (Hebrew 1:14). These are the spirits most familiar to mankind and most intimately involved in the affairs of the material world. They are capable of assuming whatever physical form necessary for the accomplishment of the mission upon which they have been dispatched by God. They are variously described in Scripture as "**Watchers**" and "**Guardians.**" A 19th century children's bedtime prayer expresses this guardian function with great beauty. "*Four angels to my bed. Four angels round my head. One to watch and one to pray, and two to bear my soul away. Amen.*" The scholastics of the Middle Ages, a period obsessed with angels, calculated that there were precisely 301,655,722 of these creatures hovering at the borders of our temporal universe.



"The Archangel Raphael" - 16th Century Italian Woodcarving



"The Guardian Angel" -19th Century Engraving



*“The Angel of the Lord Leading Israel Safely Through the Wilderness”
by William West - 1831*

7. The “Angel of the Lord”

The Bible includes hundreds of references to the angels and their various ranks and activities. There is, however, in the midst of this abundance of amazing angelic information one being that stands out as truly unique. Scripture calls Him, **“the angel of the Lord”** (Hebrew “*Malakh Jahweh*”) or **“the angel of God”** (“*Malakh Elohim*”).

“In addition to these references to God’s angels, which all will admit involve created spiritual beings, there are a large number of appearances and references to a Malakh or angel whose actions can often be called elemental, they are so tremendous. His actions and appearances are always associated with the formation, the protection, the judging, the delivering of God’s people. His role is consistently Messianic and consistently a role that shapes history, judge nations, and wields almighty powers. Whatever the Malakh does seems to affect a people, a nation or the world. These references quite evidently do not refer to created beings but to the uncreated Messenger of God, Christ Jesus, carrying out his Savior role in the Old Testament...The Old Testament presents a wide variety of pictures of this special, divine

Malakh, for he appears often. He is recognized as God; he is called God by Scripture; He accepts sacrifices, is worshiped, forgives sin, carries out God's judgements, is obeyed by angels, rebukes Satan, is obeyed by, loved, by and known by the Old Testament saints simply as "the Malakh," "the Malakh Jahweh," or "the Malakh Elohim." (Kauffeld)



"Daniel in the Lion's Den" by Briton Rivere

The major Old Testament texts that present the activities of the "*Malakh Jahweh*" include the following:

- Genesis 16:7-14 - The Promise of a Nation to Hagar
- Genesis 21:14-21 - The Deliverance of Hagar and Ishmael
- Genesis 22:9-18 - The Sacrifice of Isaac
- Genesis 28:12-22 - Jacob's Ladder (cf. 31:11-13)
- Genesis 32:24-30 - Jacob Wrestles With God (cf. Hosea 12:3-5)
- Genesis 48:15-16 - The Blessing of Joseph's Sons
- Exodus 3:2-6 - Moses at the Burning Bush

Exodus 14:19 - The Pillar of Cloud and Fire
(cf.13:21,22; 23:20-23)

Numbers 22:22-35 - Balaam and the
Donkey

Joshua 5:13-6:5 - The Call of Joshua

Judges 2:1-5 - The Rebuke of Israel

Judges 6:11-24 - The Call of Gideon

Judges 13:2-23 - The Announcement of
Samuel's Birth

2 Samuel 24:15-17 - King David's Census

2 Kings 1:13-17 - The Lord's Judgement on
Ahaziah

2 Kings 19:35-36 - The Destruction of
Sennacherib

1 Chronicles 21:11-30 - King David's
Census (cf. 2 Chronicles 3:1)

Psalms 34:7 - The Angel of the Lord
Encamps

Psalms 35:5,6 - The Angel of the Lord
Pursuing His Enemies

Isaiah 63:8-9 - The Angel and Israel

Daniel 3:19-28 - The Three Men in Fiery
Furnace

Daniel 6:16-24 - Daniel in the Lions' Den

Zechariah 1:7-13 - A Prayer for Mercy

Zechariah 3:1-7 - The Deliverance of
Joshua

Malachi 3:1-3 - The Angel of the Covenant

Acts 7:30-39 - The Testimony of Stephen



*"I Pray the Lord My Soul to Keep"
by Emile Munier*

Thus, in the Old Testament ***"The Angel of the Lord"*** is the pre-incarnate Son of God, our Lord Jesus Christ. He is active and involved in the unfolding plan of salvation. As the divine messenger of God, He appears in divine majesty, acts with divine power and authority, and conveys a saving message of divine love. The ***"Malakh Jahweh"*** is a figure who was well-known to the children of Israel; a beloved demonstration of their God's concern and care for them. At the same time, the ***"Malakh,"*** was a scourge of heavenly judgement upon the enemies of God's people.



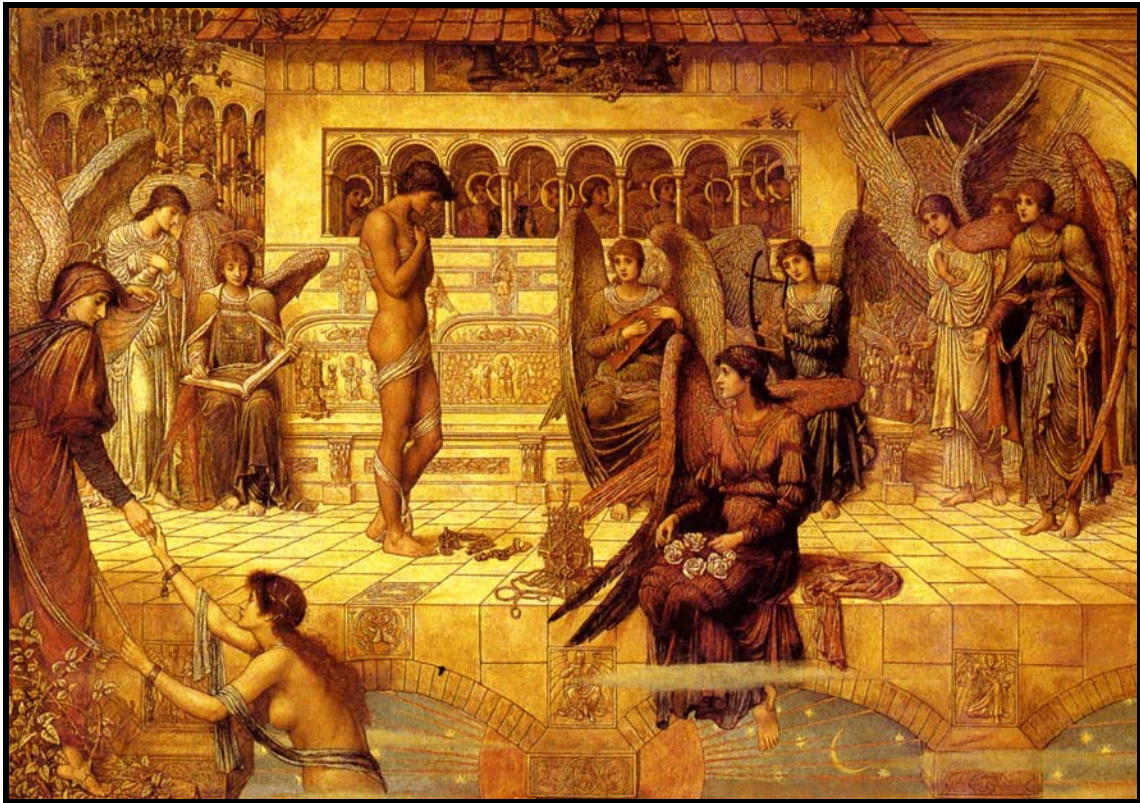
“Jacob Wrestling With the Angel” by Jacques Patisson

To the theologians of classic Lutheranism, the Old Testament texts from Genesis to Malachi which speak of the Angel of the Lord are a clear indication of the doctrine of the Trinity. The ease with which the passages ascribe divine names and attributes to the Angel of the Lord, while at the same time distinguishing Him from God the Father are completely consistent with a Trinitarian understanding of the one God in three separate and distinct persons.

“The Angel of the Lord is different from Jehovah in regard to His Person, and yet one with Him in essence...In their native sense these passages teach that the Angel of the Lord is the uncreated angel, identical with Jehovah, to whom divine attributes, works, names, and worship are ascribed. If we found in these passages only oriental hyperbolism, then we would sacrifice the solid basis for Scripture interpretation, and, following such a course consistently, would with the rationalist dissolve and cancel even the firmest and most indestructible revelation.” (Philippi)

8. *The Ministry of the Angels*

Scripture identifies the angels as “*ministering spirits.*” (Hebrews 1:14) According to the Bible, the ministries that they perform are many and varied, both in heaven and on earth. The ministry of the angels is carried out all around us constantly, unseen and largely unrecognized. One recent author has aptly described the angels as “*God’s Secret Agents.*” Angelic activity may be summarized under the following categories:



“The Ramparts of God’s House” by John Strudwick

A. The angels continually worship, adore, and praise the Triune God, before His heavenly throne. The perpetual trisagion of the seraphim (“***Holy, Holy Holy is the Lord of Hosts, the whole earth is full of His glory!***”) is an eternal song of celebration as these beings of pure light and thought, closest to the heavenly throne, resonate with the fire of divine love. (Psalm 103:20-21; Isaiah 6:1-3; Revelation 5:6-14; 7:9-12; 8:1-4; 11:15-19) The angels are avid observers of events on earth. They rejoice in celebration as the mighty deeds of God unfold and the plan of salvation is accomplished. Each sinner’s repentance is the cause of great happiness among the

hosts of angels. (Job 38:7; Luke 15:7,10; Hebrews 12:22) The earthly worship of men anticipates and echoes the heavenly adoration of saints and angels. Our acts of worship take on a much more profound significance when we remember their celestial dimension. The German Lutheran theologian Peter Brunner writes:



“Glory to God in the Highest” by Hans Memling

“Angels are creatures. But they are creatures that are immediately face to face with the Triune God. They are not subject to the space and time conditions of our world. From the very beginning they are part of God’s heavenly world. Therefore the angels are those creatures upon whom God’s glory lights immediately and who reflect this glory of God immediately. Because the angels are part of God’s heavenly world, they are the first and immediate witnesses of the divine plan of salvation; for God’s plan of salvation has its origin in heaven and descends from His heaven to the earth. God’s history, which runs its course on earth, has its origin in heaven and is directly known to the angels before it is

indirectly known to us men. In its execution God's history on earth has a side that is turned to the heavenly world, which the angels perceive but which is disclosed to us only through their ministry. (Luke 2:10ff.; Mark 16:6) From the beginning (Job 38:7) the angels are the immediate and truest witnesses of God's deeds, as they are from the beginning the immediate and truest mirrors of the divine might and glory. As such living mirrors and witnesses of God, the angels are, above all other creatures, the agents for God's glorification. They are the exemplary bearers of the praise of God. The offering of God's praise by the angels constitutes the heavenly worship...In his perfected praise of God the angel is himself perfected. The praise of God has become the inviolable nature of the angel. He finds his being exclusively and definitively in the praise of God... Therefore the praise of the heavenly beings suffers no interruption (Rev. 4:8). Since this act of praising is the



“Gloria in Excelsis Deo”

*angel's nature and existence in one, his praise of God is nothing other than the reality of his being...a song rendered in uninterrupted, perfect spontaneity. The praise of the angel is the hymn in which the creature melts away in praise before God...The worship of the angels revolves around the same center as that of the church on earth, even though the real presence of Jesus and of his blood in heaven is of a different type and form than His real presence in the worship of the church on earth. But He who is present is the same: Jesus with His shed blood. Therefore, inasmuch as the worship of the angels is entirely oriented to God, it is simultaneously oriented to the worship of the church on earth. To be sure, the worship of the earthly church is, with regard to intensity, purity and fullness, only a dim and fragmentary reflection of what is done in heaven. To be sure, the worship of the angels excels the worship of the church on earth in every respect. But the worship of the angels and the worship of the church are not separated by an iron curtain. Because they have the same center, the Lamb that was slain, they stand in real communication to one another. The church on earth may already join the praises of the angels and pray God to grant that its voice on earth may unite with the 'Sanctus' of the angels in heaven...One day these two will merge. The church's worship on earth will blend into the worship of the angelic hosts. Those who were privileged to make their way through the contending and suffering church on earth to the Church Triumphant, already participating in the administration of the heavenly worship. Despite all differences in the type and form of being, the worship of the church on earth and that of the angels in heaven is an inseparable activity. The worship of the church on earth is in immediate touch with the worship in the heavenly Jerusalem and takes place in real association with it (Revelation 7:9-12; Hebrew 12:22-24).” (Peter Brunner, **Worship in the Name of Jesus**)*

B. God uses His angels to guard, protect and guide His people (Genesis 24:7,40; Exodus 33:2; 2 Kings 6:8-23; Psalm 34:7; 91:11; Daniel 3:28; 6:22; 12:1; Acts 12:11) The conviction that everyone has a personal “Guardian Angel” is a time honored and widespread conviction among Christians. Biblical support for this idea is found in



*“The Guardian Angel”
17th Century Bavarian Wood Carving*

Matthew 18:10 where Jesus says: *“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.”* Some have suggested on the basis of Acts 12:15 that a guardian angel takes on the appearance of the mortal to whom he is assigned. A belief in the ministry of guardian angels was also widespread in Judaism. In the Book of Jubilees, Rebecca seeks to comfort Isaac with the assurance that his younger son’s life is safe because: *“the protector of Jacob is greater and mightier, and more honored and praised than the protector of Esau.”* (35:17) The Apocryphal Book of Tobit details the story of Tobias and his guardian angel Raphael. The early church father John Chrysostom writes:

“Hence it is evident, that the saints have angels, or even all men. For the apostle too says of the woman, ‘That she ought to have a power on her head because of

the angels.’ (1 Corinthians 11:10) And Moses, ‘He set the bounds of the nations according to the number of the angels of God.’ (Deuteronomy 32:8)”

A 19th Century author described the role of these celestial watchers this eloquent manner:

“It would require the tongues of angels themselves to recite all that we owe to these benign and vigilant guardians. They watch by the cradle of the new-born babe, and spread these celestial wings around the tottering steps of infancy...Wonderful the fervor of their love who endure from day to day the spectacle of the unveiled human heart with all of its miserable weaknesses and vanities.”

With the 9th century Church Father Rhabanus Maurus we can sing:

*“Jesus Brightness of the Father, Life and Strength of all who live,
For creating guardian angels glory to Thy name we give
And Thy wondrous praise rehearse, singing in harmonious verse.
Blessed Lord by their protection shelter us from harm this day,
Keep us pure in flesh and spirit; save us from the Foe we pray,
And vouchsafe us by Thy grace in Thy Paradise a place.”*

The Roman Catholic Church celebrates the Feast of the Holy Guardian Angels each year on October 2.



“The Three Men in the Fiery Furnace with the Angel of the Lord” by Simeon Solomon

Scripture also alludes to angels with specific assignment to individual nations who seek to influence the direction of that nation either for good or for evil:

“When the Most High gave the nations their inheritance, when He divided up all mankind, He set up boundaries for the peoples according to the number of the sons of God. For the Lord’s portion is His people, Jacob, His allotted inheritance.” (Deuteronomy 32:8)

“Then he continued, ‘Do not be afraid Daniel. Since the first day that you set your mind to gain understanding and to humble yourself before your God, your words were heard, and I have come in response to them. But the Prince of the Persian Kingdom resisted me twenty-one days. Then Michael, one of the chief princes, came to help me because I was detained there with the King of Persia...Do you not know why I have come to you? Soon I will return to fight against the Prince of Persia, and when I go the Prince of Greece will come; but first I will tell you what is written in the Book of Truth. (No one supports me against them except Michael, your prince.’” (Daniel 10:12-13,20-21)

“At that time, Michael, the great prince who protects your people, will arise. There will be a time of distress such as has not happened since the beginning of nations until then. But at that time your people - everyone whose name is found written in the Book - will be delivered.” (Daniel 12:1)

Thus, reality in the material world is constantly being influenced and affected by the parallel reality of the spiritual world in which both good and evil angels contend on



“Guardian Angels” by W.H. Margetson

behalf of their respective masters. Any world-view which fails to take this spiritual into account is woefully incomplete and inadequate. This is particularly true in regard to the cause of the Gospel and the Christian's struggle to remain faithful to God and His Word. As St. Paul reminds us:

“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.” (Ephesians 6:12)



“The Call for Reinforcements” by Peter de Seve



“Holy Guardian Angels” - 19th Century Engraving

As is so often the case in the realm of angelology, Rabbinical provides a great deal more information (much of it imaginary!) than Scripture itself on the subject of national guardian angels:

“These are the angels which are in charge of nations, states, and cities. It turns out that this is really high risk country. Angels have little resistance to corruption when they over-identify with their charges. This is evident even in the early Scriptures. The rabbis actually only mention four nations with their guardian angels by name. But from those we are left in no doubt as to where the Jewish writers stood and where those angels fell. Michael, in charge of Israel, remains unimpeachable, but his fellow tutors seem to have been very much changed by their very charges, who, of course, are all arch-enemies of Israel anyway. Dubbiel (the bear deity) was the guardian angel of Persia. Rahab (The Violent Prince of the Primordial Sea) was angel for Egypt, and Samael (the Adversary, the Prince of Darkness) was the guardian of Rome. They were all corrupted by their wards and fell. The Egyptian guardian, Rahab, even had the distinction of having been slaughtered by the Lord for refusing to separate the upper and lower waters at the time of

creation. He was then somehow resurrected, only to be destroyed a second time for attempting to stop the Hebrews from escaping across the Red Sea. So of all of the seventy tutelary angels, only Michael managed to stay uncorrupted. It is perhaps uncharitable to ascribe this to the fact that his charges were God's chosen people.” (Godwin)

Many commentators believe that the “*angels*” of the seven churches in the opening vision of the Book of Revelation are guardian spirits assigned to watch over those congregations and that every congregation enjoys the protection of such guardian angels (cf., Revelation 2:1,8,12,18; 3:1,7,14)



“John’s Vision of the Heavenly Court of God” by Jan Sadeler



“The Annunciation” by John William Waterhouse

C. Angels serve as the Messengers of God. Their very title emphasizes the central importance of this role. The Angel Gabriel was the divine messenger par excellence. Gabriel was sent as God’s messenger to Daniel on two occasions to provide explanations for the vision which the prophet had received (Daniel 8:1-27; 9:20-27). Gabriel also brought God’s Word to Zacharias to announce the birth of John the Baptist (Luke 1:11-20). Gabriel received the greatest assignment ever entrusted to an angelic messenger when he was dispatched to carry God’s Word to the Virgin Mary informing her that she would conceive by the power of the Holy Spirit and give birth to the Son of God (Luke 1:26-38) The Annunciation, as this event has come to be known, has been depicted in Christian art more frequently than any other angelic event in Scripture.

“Other angels, besides Gabriel, are used by God to carry messages of significance to men and women. In the Old Testament, angels told Hagar to return to Sarah (Genesis 16:7-14; 21:17-18), informed

Abraham and Sarah that they would have a son (Genesis 18:10), warned Lot to flee from Sodom (Genesis 19:12-13), told Abraham not to slay his son Isaac (Genesis 22:11-12), spoke to Moses from the burning bush (Exodus 3:2-4), gave counsel and warning to the Israelites on their exodus from Egypt (Exodus 23:21), promised Manoah and his wife that they would have a son (Judges 13:3-20), gave instruction to Elijah before meeting a king (2 Kings 1:3,15), told the prophet Gad to give a message to King David (1 Chronicles 21:18), and gave numerous messages to the prophet Zechariah (Zechariah 1:1-18). In the New Testament, angels continue their work by giving messages to key people. Joseph, the husband of Mary, was favored with a number of visits from the angels of God (Matthew 1:19-24; 2:13, 19-20). An angelic host announced the birth of Jesus to humble shepherds (Luke 2:9-15). Angels told the women at the empty tomb that Christ had risen (Matthew 28:5-7;



“The Annunciation to the Shepherds” by Nicholaes Bercham

John 20:12). An angel told Phillip to leave his successful work in Samaria and go into the desert (Acts 8:36). Angels instructed Cornelius to send for Peter (Acts 10:3-7) and assured Paul that he would not be harmed in a storm at sea (Acts 27:23-25). It was an angel that gave John the revelation of Jesus Christ (Revelation 1:1). (Knowles)

Scripture also informs us that the Law was given to Moses on Mt. Sinai through the ministry of God’s angelic messengers (cf. Deuteronomy 33:2; Acts 7:53; Galatians 3:19; Hebrews 2: 2-3).

D. Angels minister to the physical needs of the saints in times of crisis. Angels are often much more than mere messengers as they serve to express God’s love and concern for His people in their various needs. John Milton says it exceedingly well in *Paradise Lost*:

“Millions of spiritual creatures walk the earth unseen, both when we wake and when we sleep...For God will deign to visit oft the dwellings of just men, delighted and with frequent intercourse thither will send His winged messengers on missions of supernal grace.”

In the aftermath of his climactic confrontation with the 400 prophets of Baal and desperate flight from a wrathful Jezebel, the Prophet Elijah was ready to give up and die. He laid down under a bush in the wilderness and asked God to take his life. Instead the Lord sent an angel to minister to his needs:

“At once an angel touched him and said, ‘Get up and eat.’ He looked around, and there by his head was cake of bread baked over hot coals and a jar of water. He ate and drank and then lay down again. The Angel of the Lord came back a second time and touched him and said,



“The Revelation to St. John” by Jean Duvet

‘Get up and eat for the journey is too much for you.’ And so he got up and ate and drank. Strengthened by that food, he traveled forty days and forty nights until he reached Horeb, the Mountain of God.” (1 Kings 19:5-8)



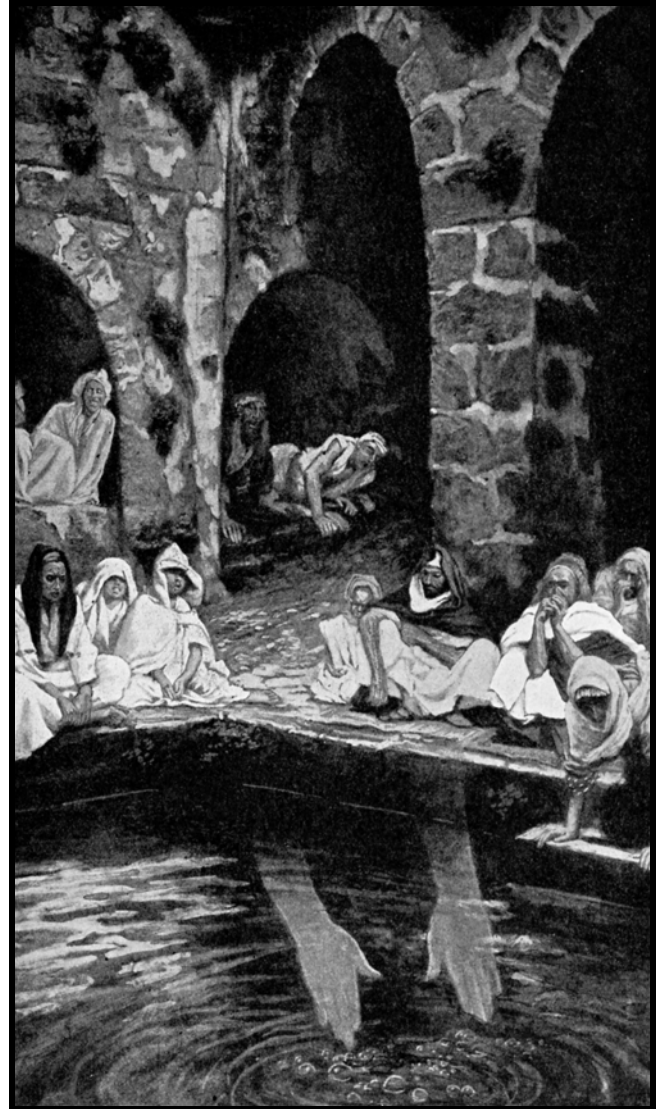
“Elijah and the Angel of the Lord” by Lord Leighton

The Psalmist describes the manna which the Children of Israel ate in the wilderness as ***“the bread of angels:”*** ***“Yet He gave command to the skies above and opened the doors of the heavens; He rained down manna for the people to eat, he gave them the grain of heaven. Men ate the bread of angels; He sent them all the food they could eat.”*** (Psalm 78:23-25) The caring ministry of the angels is also well illustrated by the angel who came to stir the water of the Jerusalem’s Pool of Bethesda for the healing of the sick and crippled who had gathered there. (John 5:3-4)

Matthew and Mark both report that after His ordeal and temptation in the wilderness Jesus Himself received the ministry of the angels (Matthew 4:11; Mark 1:13) Later, in the Garden of Gethsemane, an angel of mercy was dispatched to soothe and strengthen the Savior as He agonized in fervent prayer on the eve of His Passion: ***“An angel from heaven appeared to Him and strengthened Him. And, being in anguish, He prayed more earnestly, and His sweat was like drops of blood falling on the ground.”*** (Luke 22:43)

E. Angels also serves as the mighty agents of God’s judgement, bringing death and destruction upon those who oppose His kingdom and defy His divine will. Our holy and righteous God cannot allow sin to go unpunished. Those who disobey and refuse Him will incur His righteous wrath. Scripture tells us that angels are often called upon to be the messengers of His wrath, using the awesome power which He has given them to execute His judgement. The first reference to an angel in the Bible tells

of the mighty cherubim with fiery swords who stood watch at the gates of the Garden of Eden to prevent sinful man’s access to the Tree of Life which stood in the midst of the Garden (Genesis 3:24). The Psalmist affirms that those who fight against God and His people will be pursued by an avenging angel: ***“May they be like chaff before the wind, with the angel of the Lord driving them away; may their path be dark and slippery, with the angel of the Lord pursuing them.”*** (Psalm 35:5-6) When the plagues of God humbled mighty Pharaoh and devastated the land of Egypt, it was ***“a band of mighty angels”*** (Psalm 78:49) who unleashed God’s judgement upon that



“The angel Stirring the Water of the Pool at Bethesda” by J. James Tissot

stubborn king: ***“He unleashed against them His hot anger, His wrath, indignation and hostility - a band of destroying angels.”*** On the eve of the Exodus the angel of the Lord swept across the land striking down the firstborn of every household whose doorposts were not marked with the blood of the Passover lamb. (Exodus 11) Scripture designates the judgement messenger of God in this instance with the ominous title ***“the Destroyer.”***

“When the Lord goes through the land to strike down the Egyptians, He will see the blood on the top and the sides of the doorframe and will pass over that doorway, and He will not permit the destroyer to enter your houses and strike you down.” (Exodus 12:23)

“See, it is I who created the blacksmith who fans the coals into flame and forges a weapon fit for its work. And it is I who have created the destroyer to work havoc; no weapon forged against you will prevail, and you will refute every tongue that accuses you.” (Isaiah 54:16-17)



“The Temptation of Jesus” by V. Lerduc



“The Angel of Death” by Arthur Hacker

“By faith he kept the Passover and the sprinkling of blood, so that the destroyer of the firstborn would not touch the firstborn of Israel.”
(Hebrews 11:28)

In an evident reference to the same grim agent of God’s righteous judgement, the New Testament tells us that when the Children of Israel murmured and complained against God in the wilderness, they **“were killed by the destroying angel.”** (1 Corinthians 10:10) The angels who were sent into the wicked city of Sodom to rescue Lot and his family before the city’s destruction struck the men of Sodom with blindness when they attempted to molest and rape them. (Genesis 19:11) The same fate befell the army of the King of Aram when the Arameans besieged the village of Dothan in pursuit of the prophet Elisha. The prophet’s servant was paralyzed with fear when he saw the size of the great army which had surrounded the village. Then Elisha prayed and the servant’s eyes were opened so that he might also see the great host of angels with their horses and chariots of fire which God had placed around the home of His spokesman. As Elisha confidently asserted, **“Those who are with us are more than those who are with them!”** (2 Kings 6:16) When the Aramean army advanced, they



“The Destruction of the Army of Sennacherib Before Jerusalem” by J. James Tissot

were all struck with blindness. The mighty Angel of the Lord cut down 185,000 soldiers in one night to deliver Jerusalem from the siege of Sennacherib, the King of Assyria:

“Therefore, this is what the Lord says concerning the King of Assyria: ‘He will not enter this city or shoot an arrow here. He will not come before it with shield or build a siege ramp against it. By the way that he came he will return; he will not enter this city, declares the Lord. I will defend this city and save it for My sake and for the sake of David My servant.’ That night the angel of the Lord went out and put to death a hundred and eighty-five thousand men in the Assyrian camp.”
(2 Kings 19:35).

When David defied the Lord, His angel destroyed 70,000 Israelites and was about to wipe out the entire city of Jerusalem when the Lord stayed his hand:

“So the Lord sent a plague upon Israel that morning until the end of the time designated, and seventy thousand of the people from Dan to Beersheba died. And when the Angel stretched out his hand to destroy Jerusalem, the Lord was grieved because of the calamity and said to the angel who was afflicting the people, ‘Enough! Withdraw your hand.’ The angel of the Lord was then at the threshing floor of Araunah the Jebusite.” (2 Samuel 24:15-17)

Jerusalem was saved because David repented of his sin when his eyes were opened and he saw ***“the angel of the Lord standing between heaven and earth with a drawn sword in his hand extending over Jerusalem.”*** (1 Chronicles 21:16) David cried out to God for mercy and the Lord heard his repentant prayer. When vain King Herod blasphemously allowed the sycophant mob to hail him as a god ***“the angel of the Lord struck him down and he was eaten by worms and died.”*** (Acts 12:23)

Throughout the visions of the Book of Revelation, vivid imagery depicts the angels of God as fearsome agents of his judgement. For example, in Revelation 16, the seven bowls of God’s wrath are poured out upon the earth by angelic messengers bringing death and devastation upon rebellious mankind. Angels not only surround the throne of God in heaven and lead the worship of the saints but they are warriors locked in fierce combat with the forces of evil, defeating the enemies of God.



“The Outpouring of the Seven Bowls of God’s Wrath”



*“Poor Lazarus Carried to Heaven on Angels’ Wings”
by Rudolf Schäfer*

F. The angels minister to the people of God in the hour of their death and carry the souls of the redeemed home *“to the bosom of Abraham.”* In the intriguing story of the Rich Man and Poor Lazarus, Jesus teaches us that *“The time came when the beggar died and the angels carried him to Abraham’s side.”* (Luke 16:22) St. John Chrysostom, the great preacher of the Eastern Church affirms: *“If we need a guide in passing from one city to another, how much more will the soul need someone to point out the way when it breaks the bonds of flesh and passes on to the future life.”* The *“Subvenite,”* a medieval anthem from the Liturgy of Christian burial echoes the same theme as it prays on behalf of the departed: *“Come, ye saints of God. Hasten, ye angels of the Lord, take his soul, bear it before the Most High, may the angels guide it to the bosom of Abraham.”* In the symbolism of classical Christian art, this scene is represented by the image of an old man, sitting and tenderly holding on his lap a number of little children. The old man is father Abraham and the little children are

the souls of the saints, safe at home. The traditional American Gospel Song, “*O Come Angel Band*” by Jefferson Hascall expresses the same joyful confidence:

*“I’ve almost gained my heavenly home, my spirit loudly sings;
The holy ones, behold they come! I hear the noise of wings!
O come angel band. Come and around me stand.
O bear me away on your snowy wings to my immortal home!
O bear me away on your snowy wings to my immortal home!”*



“O Come Angel Band!” by Rudolf Schäfer



“Going Home” by Rudolf Schäfer

G. Angels will serve as the heralds of Christ’s second coming on the great and terrible day of the Lord.

“For the Son of Man is going to come in His Father’s glory with His angels and then He will reward each person according to what he has done.” (Matthew 16:27)

The arrival of our Lord and His resplendent host of angels will be announced by the mighty blast of a judgement trumpet:

“And He will send His angels with a loud trumpet call and they will gather His elect from the four winds, from one end of the heavens to the other.” (Matthew 24:31)

“For the Lord Himself will come down from heaven with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trumpet call of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first.” (1 Thessalonians 4:16)

The apostle Jude, in one of the closing letters of the New Testament, describes the majestic scene of Christ’s return surrounded by His hosts of angels in this way:

“See, the Lord is coming, with thousands upon thousands of His holy ones to judge everyone, and to convict all of the ungodly of all of the ungodly acts they have done in an ungodly way, and of all the harsh words the ungodly sinners have spoken against Him.” (Jude 14,15)

In His Parable of the Tares and the Wheat, our Lord identifies the angels as His ***“heavenly harvesters”*** who will separate the wicked from the righteous and cast the wicked into the fiery furnace where there will be eternal weeping and gnashing of teeth: ***“The weeds are the sons of the evil one, and the enemy who sows them is the devil. The harvest is the end of the age, and the harvesters are the angels. As the weeds are pulled up and burned in the fire, so it will be at the end of the age. The Son of Man will send out His angels, and they will weed out everything that causes sin and all who do evil. They will throw them into the fiery furnace, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.”*** (Matthew 13:40-43)



“The Final Judgement” by Peter Cornelius



“The Resurrection of the Saved” by Luca Signorelli

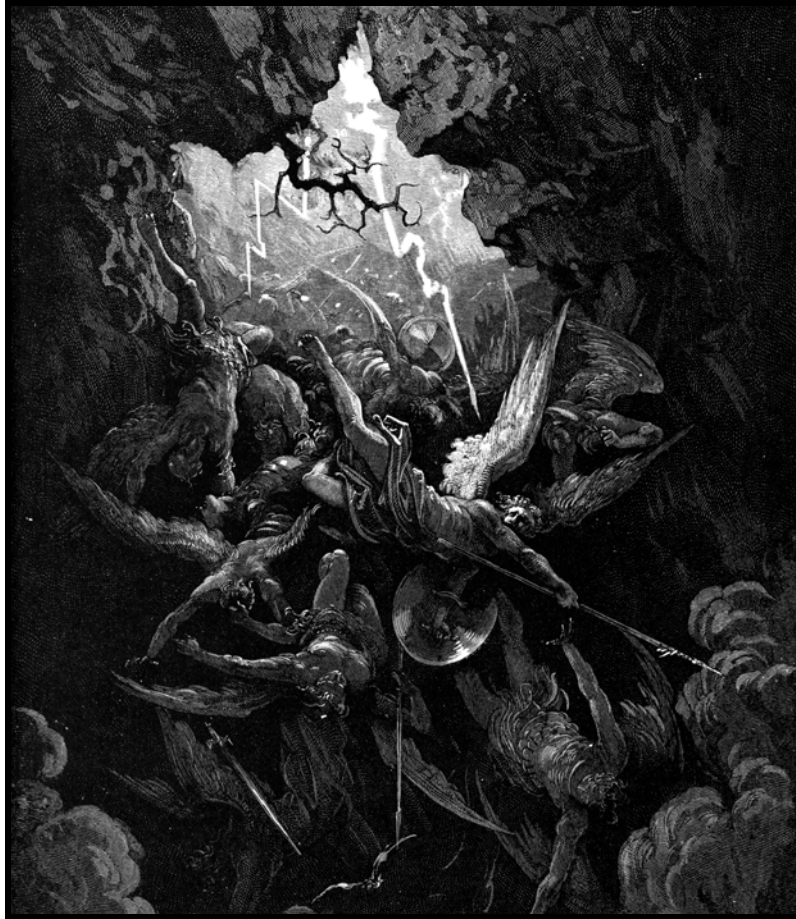


“The Resurrection of the Damned” by Luca Signorelli

The grim vision of Revelation 19 depicts a mighty angel who stands in the sun to call forth the birds of prey that they might gorge themselves on the carrion left in the aftermath of the horrendous Battle of Armageddon. In Chapter 20, it is an angel who holds the key to the bottomless pit and who binds Satan with a great chain for 1,000 years. John's series of visions concludes with the final reference to angels in the Bible: ***“I, Jesus, have sent My angel to give you this testimony for the churches. I am the Root and the Offspring of David and the bright Morning Star.”*** (Revelation 22:16)



“The Last Judgement” by William Blake



*“The Devil and His Angels Cast Out of Heaven”
by Gustav Dore*

The Devil - Mankind’s Ancient Foe

“Be self-controlled and alert. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour.” 1 Peter 5:8

The Bible teaches that the devil and his demons are fallen angels who committed the sin of pride, rebelled against God, were expelled from heaven and consigned to eternal damnation in Hell. In a dirge over the impending downfall of the mighty King of Babylon, the prophet Isaiah looks behind this heathen monarch to the Satanic power which empowers and directs him. As he anticipates the downfall of Babylon’s king, Isaiah recalls the similar downfall of his hellish master:

***“How you have fallen from heaven, O Morning Star, Son of the Dawn!
(Lucifer) You have been cast down to the earth, you who once laid low***

the nations. You said in your heart, 'I will ascend to heaven; I will raise my throne above the stars of God; I will sit enthroned upon the Mount of Assembly, on the utmost heights of the sacred mountain. I will ascend above the tops of the clouds; I will make myself like the Most High.' But you are brought down to the grave, to the depths of the pit." (Isaiah 14:12-15)

In a similar anticipatory funeral song - in this instance over the King of the fabulously wealthy trading city of Tyre - the prophet Ezekiel recalls the lofty grandeur of Lucifer's original state and identifies his sin as presumption and pride:



"Lucifer, the Guardian Cherub, In His Original Glory" by William Blake

“You were the model of perfection, full of wisdom and perfect in beauty. You were in Eden, the Garden of God; every precious stone adorned you; ruby, topaz and emerald, chrysolite, onyx and jasper, sapphire, turquoise and beryl. Your settings and mountings were made of gold; on the day you were created they were prepared. You were anointed as a guardian cherub, for so I ordained you. You were on the Holy Mount of God; you walked among the fiery stones. You were blameless in your ways from the day you were created until wickedness was found in you. Through your widespread trade you were filled with violence and you sinned. So I drove you in disgrace from the Mount of God and I expelled you, O guardian cherub, from among the fiery stones. Your heart became proud on account of your beauty, and you corrupted your wisdom because of your splendor. So I threw you to the earth and made a spectacle of you before kings.” (Ezekiel 28:12-17)



“Michael Casts Down the Evil Angels” by Lucas Vorstermann



*“Michael Defeating the Devil”
by Hieronymus Wierix*

Ezekiel’s identification of pride as the cause of Satan’s downfall is reinforced in a comment made by St. Paul as he advises Timothy about the qualifications for elders in the church: **“He must not be a recent convert, or he may become conceited and fall under the same judgement as the devil.”** (1 Timothy 3:6)

Revelation describes the fall of the devil and his angels as the outcome of a great angelic war waged in heaven between the archangel Michael and the cherub Lucifer and the hosts of good and evil angels which followed them:

“And there was war in heaven. Michael and his angels fought against the dragon, and the dragon and his angels fought back. But he was not strong enough and they lost their place in heaven. The great dragon was hurled down - that ancient serpent called the Devil or

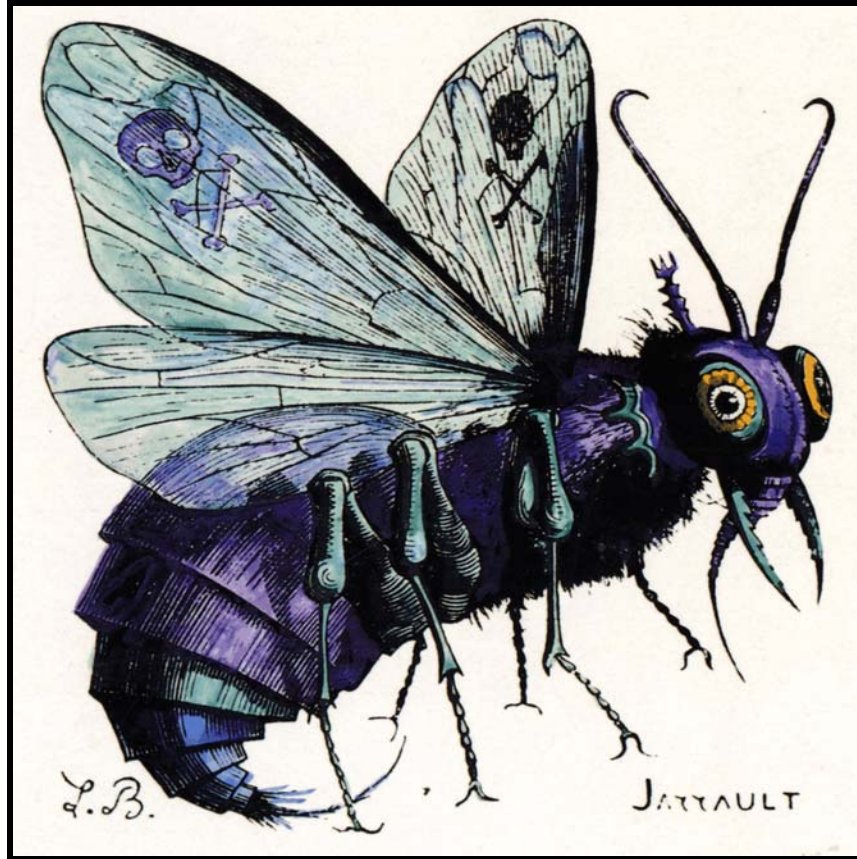
Satan, who leads the whole world astray. He was hurled to the earth and his angels with him.” (Revelation 12:7-9)

The New Testament describes the fate of the rebellious angels as eternal separation from the Creator God in gloomy dungeons, bound in darkness: **“For if God did not spare angels when they sinned, but sent them to Hell, putting them into gloomy dungeons to be held for judgement...”** (2 Peter 2:4): **“And the angels who did not keep their positions of authority but abandoned their own home, these He has kept in darkness, bound with everlasting chains on the great day.”** (Jude 6)

The Prince of the fallen angels is known by many names and titles in Scripture, each of which is descriptive of his corrupt nature and his nefarious work. He is “*Satan*,” that is “*the accuser*” who stands before the bar of divine justice and demands that sinners be condemned to join him in eternal damnation: “***Then he showed me Joshua the High Priest standing before the angel of the Lord, and Satan, standing at his right side to accuse him. The Lord said to Satan, ‘The Lord rebuke you, Satan! The Lord who had chosen Jerusalem, rebuke you! Is not this man a burning stick snatched from the fire?’***” (Zechariah 3:1-2) The New Testament counterpart of this Hebrew noun is the Greek term “*diabolos*” from which the English title “*devil*” is derived (cf. 1 Peter 5:8). The devil’s accusations against us have been robbed of their power since Christ, by His death on the cross in our place, has paid the penalty which we deserved to pay. Thus, through the substitutionary atonement of Christ, the demands of God righteous judgement have been met on our behalf. This crucial dimension of the activity of Satan is also emphasized in the Book of Revelation as St. John describes the final defeat of the devil: “***For the accuser of our brothers, who accuses them before our God day and night, has been hurled down. They overcame him by the blood of the Lamb.***” (Revelation 12:10-11) The devil is also called “*Belial*,” a Hebrew derivative which means “*the Lawless One*.” “***What harmony is there between Christ and Belial? What does a believer have to do with an unbeliever?***” (2 Corinthians 6:15; cf. 1 Samuel 10:27) Accordingly, those who spurn God and reject His Law are called “*the sons of Belial*.”

“If you hear it said about one of the towns the Lord your God is giving you to live in that sons of Belial have arisen among you and have led the people of their town astray, saying, ‘Let us go and worship other gods, gods you have not known’...You must certainly put to the sword all who live in that town.” (Deuteronomy 13:13,15)

Among the most colorful of the Devil’s title is “*Beelzebub*,” a Hebrew title which literally means “*the Lord of the Flies*.” This disdainful designation links the Devil to the filth of the dunghill around which the flies swarm and to the stinking rot of death as the flies deposit their eggs in the decaying flesh of a corpse and the maggots which result thrive by devouring the flesh in which they were hatched. Jesus offered a grimly realistic assessment of the nature of Satan and his servants when the Lord labeled him with this title: “***If the head of the house has been called Beelzebub, how much more the members of his household.***” (Matthew 10:25) Later, Christ was accused of driving out demons by the power of “*Beelzebub*.” The Lord replied:



“Beelzebub - The Lord of the Flies” - 19th Century French

“But when the Pharisees heard this, they said, ‘It is only by Beelzebub, the Prince of Demons, that this fellow drives out demons.’ Jesus knew their thoughts and said to them, ‘Every kingdom divided against itself will be ruined, and every city or household divided against itself will not stand. If Satan drives out Satan, he is divided against himself. How then can his kingdom stand? And if I drive out demons by Beelzebub, by who do your people drive them out?’” (Matthew 12:24-27)

In the visions of the Book of Revelation, the dominant image of the Devil is that of a serpent or a dragon. The clear intent of the Revelator is to link the cataclysmic events of the end times to man’s fall into sin at the beginning of time. The purpose of the Last Day is to put an end to this world which has been devastated by the consequences of sin and restore redeemed mankind to the perfection for which Adam and Eve were created in the beginning.



"The Triumph of St. Michael" - Giovanni Birago



“The Binding of the Ancient Serpent” by William Blake

“The Great Dragon was hurled down - that ancient serpent called the devil or Satan, who leads the whole world astray. He was hurled to the earth and his angels with him...And I saw an angel coming down out of heaven, having the key to the Abyss, and holding in his hand a great chain. He seized the dragon, that ancient serpent, who is the devil or Satan, and bound him for a thousand years...And the devil who deceived them was thrown into the lake of burning sulfur, where the beast and the false prophet had been thrown. They will be tormented day and night forever and ever.” (Revelation 12:9; 20:1-3,10)

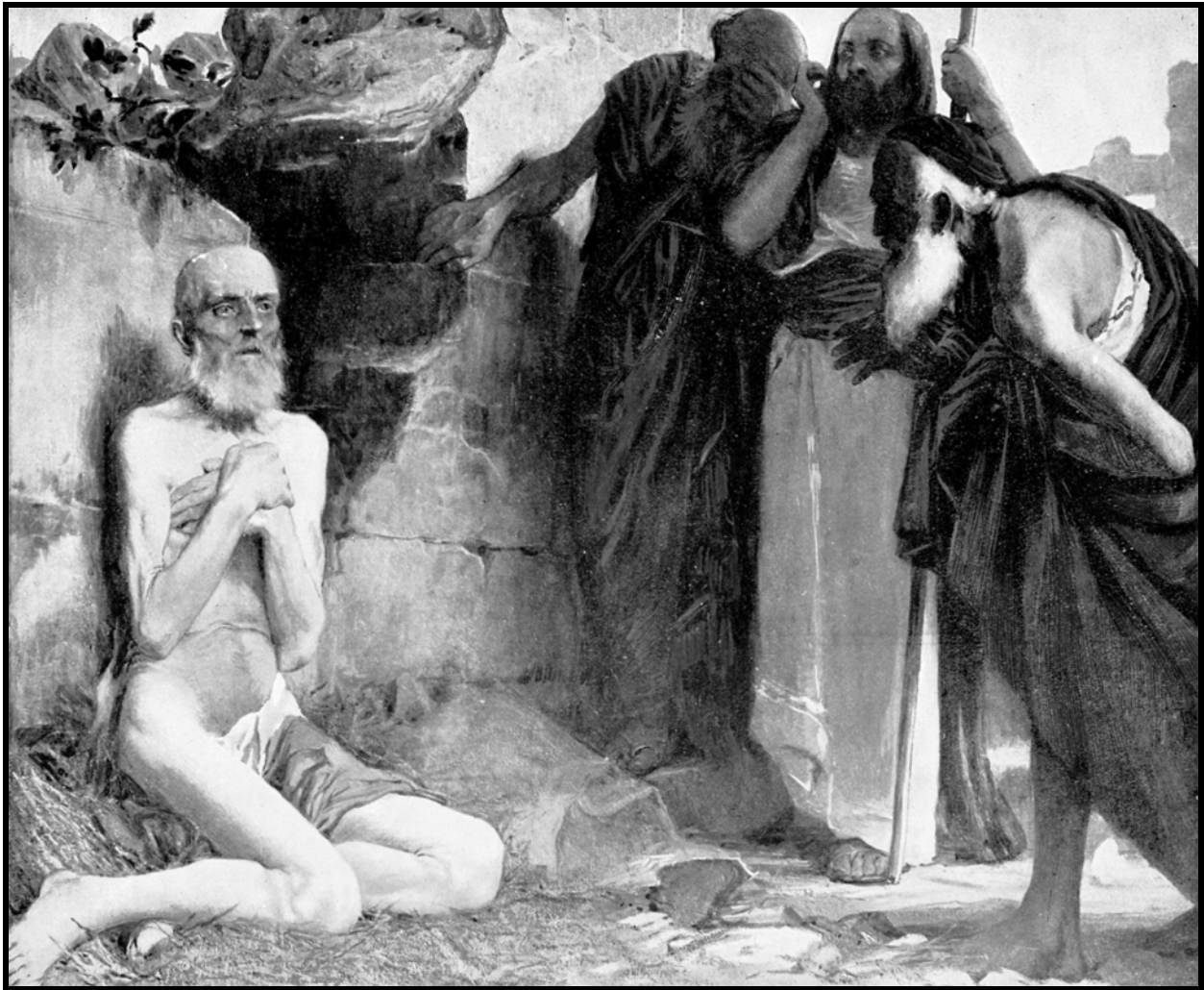


“The Justification of Adam and Eve” - 1556 Woodcut by Jacob Lucius Depicting Mankind Before the Bar of Divine Justice with Satan as the Accuser -“My Lord Judge, I accuse Adam and Eve.”

Satan is also labeled as the **“Adversary”** (1 Peter 5:8) to emphasize his relentless hatred for mankind and the Creator’s loving concern for mankind. Scripture reveals the essence of the devil’s methodology in this struggle when it identifies him as **“the Deceiver of the whole world”** (Revelation 12:9) and **“the Father of Lies.”** (John 8:44) Our Lord’s characterization of the devil and his tactics is profoundly important for all who must confront this most devious and deadly foe:

“You belong to your father, the devil, and you carry out your father’s desire. He was a murderer from the beginning, not holding to the truth, for there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks his native language, for he is a liar and the father of lies.” (John 8:44)

The Christian never dare underestimate the power and malice of our ancient “*Adversary*.” (1 Peter 5:8) Martin Luther’s magnificent battle hymn of the Reformation says it exceedingly well when it warns: “*The old evil foe, now means deadly woe. Deep guile and great might, are his dread arms in fight. On earth is not his equal.*” At the same time, the demons who serve him in his implacable war against God and His people are numerous and powerful. “*Then Jesus asked him, ‘What is your name?’ ‘My name is Legion,’ he replied, ‘for we are many.’*” (Mark 5:9) But while we should not underestimate the power of the devil and his demons we must also recognize the limitations of that power. Satan is not an independent agent. He must operate within the constraints of God’s power. To use Luther’s apt phrase, he will always remain “*Gottes Teufel*” (God’s Devil). All of his nefarious schemes and devious plans must ultimately serve the sovereign plan and purpose of God. This



“*The Torments of Job*” by Lavergne

reality is clearly reflected in the introduction to the story of the patriarch Job:

“One day the angels came to present themselves before the Lord and Satan also came with them. The Lord said to Satan, ‘Where have you come from?’ Satan answered the Lord, ‘From roaming through the earth, and going back and forth in it.’ Then the Lord said to Satan: ‘Have you considered My servant Job? There is no one on earth like him; he is blameless and upright, a man who fears God and shuns evil.’ ‘Does Job fear God for nothing?’ Satan replied. ‘Have you not put a hedge around him and his household and everything he has? You have blessed the work of his hands, so that his flocks and herds are spread throughout the land. But stretch out Your hand and strike everything he has, and he will surely curse You to Your face.’ The



“Satan Afflicting Job” by J.M. Dent

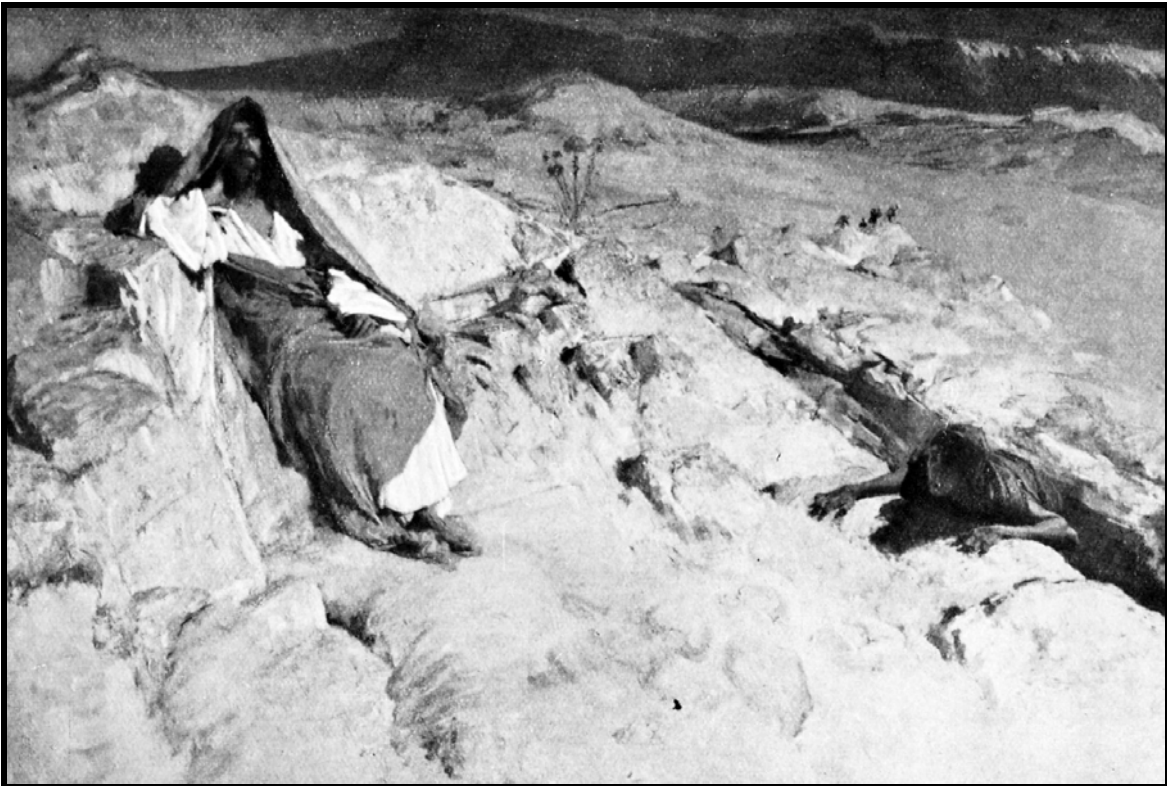


“A Mighty Fortress Is Our God” by Rudolf Schäfer

Lord said to Satan: ‘Very well, then, everything he has is in your hands, but on the man himself do not lay a finger.’ Then Satan went out from the presence of the Lord.” (Job 1:6-12)

The Word of God assures Christians that this fearsome foe has already been defeated. In the death of Jesus his power to damn and condemn has been broken once and for all. Standing firm in the faith every believer has a share in Christ’s victory over sin, death, and the power of the devil. The Apostle James urges: **“Submit yourselves, therefore, to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you.”** (James 4:7) The image of invincible might which Satan presents is nothing more than an illusion. Again, *“A Mighty Fortress Is Our God”* is precisely correct when it asserts:

*“With might of ours can naught be done, soon were our loss effected;
But for us fights the Valiant One, Whom God Himself elected.
Ask ye, Who is this? Jesus Christ it is,
Of Sabaoth Lord, and there’s none other God. He holds the field forever.
Though devils all the world should fill, all eager to devour us.
We tremble not, we fear no ill; they shall not overpower us.
This world’s prince may still, scowl fierce as he will,
He can harm us none, He’s judged the deed is done;
One little word can fell him.”*



“The Temptation of Jesus” by Domenico Morelli

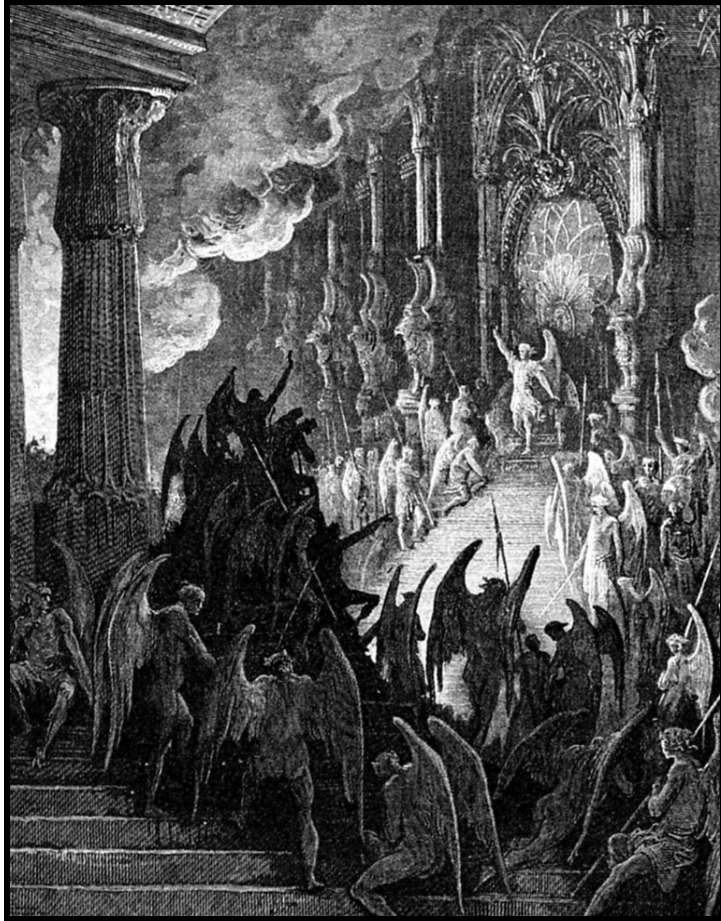
The Gospel accounts of the encounter between our Savior and *“the Tempter”* (cf. Matthew 4:1-12; Mark 1:12-13; Luke 4:1-13) clearly demonstrate the manner in which the trickery and deceit can be defeated. The devil’s unsuccessful temptation of Jesus is deliberately designed to stand in stark contrast to his successful temptation of Eve and Adam in the Garden of Eden. The Lord overcame Satan where our first parents had been overcome by Satan because Jesus: (1) focused on God’s will instead of personal needs and desires; (2) recognized the real issues and refused to be



“Fallen Angels on the Wing” by Gustav Dore

diverted by Satanic lies and distortions; (3) trusted the Word of God and wielded it as His spiritual weapon; (4) did not allow Himself to be confused or deterred by Satan’s Scripture twisting; (5) was prepared for ongoing assault; and (6) used God’s power to defeat His enemy. Thus, at the conclusion of His time of testing, our Lord was able to triumphantly declare **“Get thee behind Me Satan!”** (Matthew 4:10)

The Bible also teaches the existence of a host of evil angels - or demons- who assist Satan in his relentless attacks upon God and His people. These angels joined in the devil’s rebellion against God and were cast out from heaven along with him. They share in his condemnation to an eternity of separation from the Creator in the torments of Hell. Theologians have summarized the limited information which Scripture provides on the background, nature and activities of the evil angels as follows:



“The Court of Satan in Hell” by Gustav Dore

“Evil angels also exist. Their existence dates back, not to creation, but to that time following creation and before the temptation of Eve, when some angels left their first and beatific state. Note that their original status was beatific, no less than that of the angels who did not fall. It is apparent, that the angels’ fall into sin was not God’ fault. He had not created some angels to be evil. He did not deprive some angels of qualities possessed by other angels. All angels were rational beings. In their primeval state, all were endowed with a perfect freedom of will. As was true in the case of human beings, the angels enjoyed a state of probation. They were not compelled to remain good angels. They possessed liberty which allowed for the possibility of remaining sinless or becoming

sinners. God also permitted the angels, of their free will, to serve their wonderful Creator. In that way, their gratitude and appreciation would be pleasing to their God. The fall of the angels is proof of the liberty they once possessed. Of their own volition, some angels elected to sin. As is true in the case of every sin thereafter, the first sin of all time was a voluntary act. It was a misuse of the freedom granted in creation. The fall which occurred was consequential. Immediately, it created a sharp division in the once united heavenly host. It caused two classes of angels henceforth to exist, the good and the evil angels...There can be no question about it, fallen angels and fallen human beings received different treatment from the One whom both had equally offended with their sinning. It is apparent that God showed no pity to the fallen angels. He sentenced them to Hell; the chains which hold them in the place of torture are ‘everlasting chains.’ No chance of being released is possible. The angels’ fate is an uninterrupted and unmitigated suffering from fire which, though burning, does not annihilate. The case



*“Pazuzu - The Deathbringer”
Assyrian Demon of the Southwest Wind*

*As of the fallen angels is hopeless. At their fall, they were confirmed in their damnation (Matthew 25:41; Revelation 12:9).”
(Adolph Hoenecke)*

*“In Satan’s primal rebellion, it seems that he drew with him a great multitude of lesser celestial beings. These fallen angels are divided into two classes; (1) those who are free, and (2) those who are bound. Those who are free are abroad in the heavenlies under their Prince-leader Satan, who alone of the fallen spirits is given particular mention in Scripture... These unconfined wicked spirits under Satan’s Kingdom and dominion, who are his emissaries and subjects (Matthew 12:26) and who are so numerous as to make his power practically ubiquitous, seem to be identical with demons...Satan’s methods of activity and his highly organized empire of roving spirits in the heavenlies are set forth in Ephesians 6:11-12. His methods are suggested by the expression **“wiles of the devil,”** while his organization is gradated as **“principalities, powers, world rulers of this darkness and spiritual hosts of***

*wickedness in the heavenly places.” The serried spirits can be none other than his angels or demons with different stations of rank and responsibility, who are the unseen though real agents behind the visible human actors in the great world drama enacted in his wicked world system. It is thus in the heavenlies that Satan has his abode and base of operation, not, however, in the Third Heaven, or the heaven of heavens (2 Corinthians 12:2) - where the ascended Christ is seated **“far above all rule and authority and power and dominion.”** (Ephesians 1:21) From that all-glorious sanctum he was cast out, evidently not at the time of his primeval fall, but consequent upon Christ’s finished redemptive work and glorious ascension (cf. Job 1:16).” (Merrill Unger)*



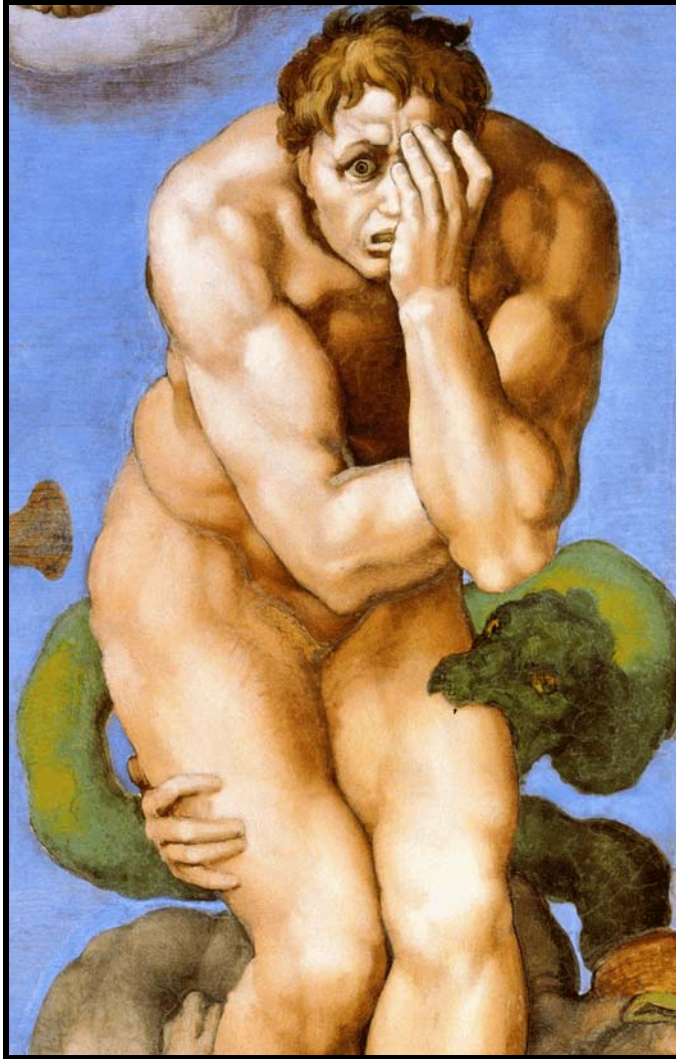
“Demons Tormenting the Damned in Hell”
1572 Mural on the Dome of the Cathedral of Santa Maria del Fiore
in Florence by Giorgio Vasari

“The evil angels did not lose, through their fall, their natural knowledge, or that which they had by the light of their nature; for they know God and other supernatural beings after a certain manner. But that knowledge of supernatural things is joined (1) with great hatred and murmuring against God; (2) with jealousy, envy and rage against the good angels, godly men and saints in heaven; (3) with ignorance, doubt, error and forgetfulness (Matthew 4:6; John 13:2; 1 Corinthians 2:8). Yet they have all together lost the knowledge derived from the light of grace...The evil angels know God but they dreadfully shudder at this divine knowledge...Their intellect is deprived, not only of the light of grace but also of the light of glory; and, being fixed upon the contemplation of the divine wrath and their own misery, it is, as it were,

blunted and lacks sound judgement concerning the doing of that which is good. Bu the natural knowledge that remains in the wicked angels adds no happiness to them, rejected as they are by God...The doings of the wicked angels are of various kinds, but they are all directed to the injury of the divine glory (Revelation 12:7), and to the temporal as well as eternal ruin of individual men and of the ecclesiastical estates by scattering heresies - (Matthew 13:27-28); by hindering the efforts of godly ministers in the church - (1 Thessalonians 2:18); by averting the minds of hearers from the meditation and practice of the Divine Word - (Luke 8:12); by exciting persecutions against the Kingdom of Christ (Revelation 12:7); in the political estate (1 Kings 12:21; 1 Chronicles



“The Demon of Heresy” - 17th Century Engraving



*“The Face of the Damned” - Detail from
“The Last Judgement” by Michelangelo*

22:1); and the domestic estate - by alienating the minds of married persons, as the devil was a murderer from the beginning who delighted in sowing contentions (John 8:44); by lying in wait for the children and possessions of parents (Job 1:11-19).” (Heinrich Schmid)

Orthodox Lutheran theologians comment on the fall of the devil and his angels in a most cautious manner, given the limited Scriptural information available on the topic.

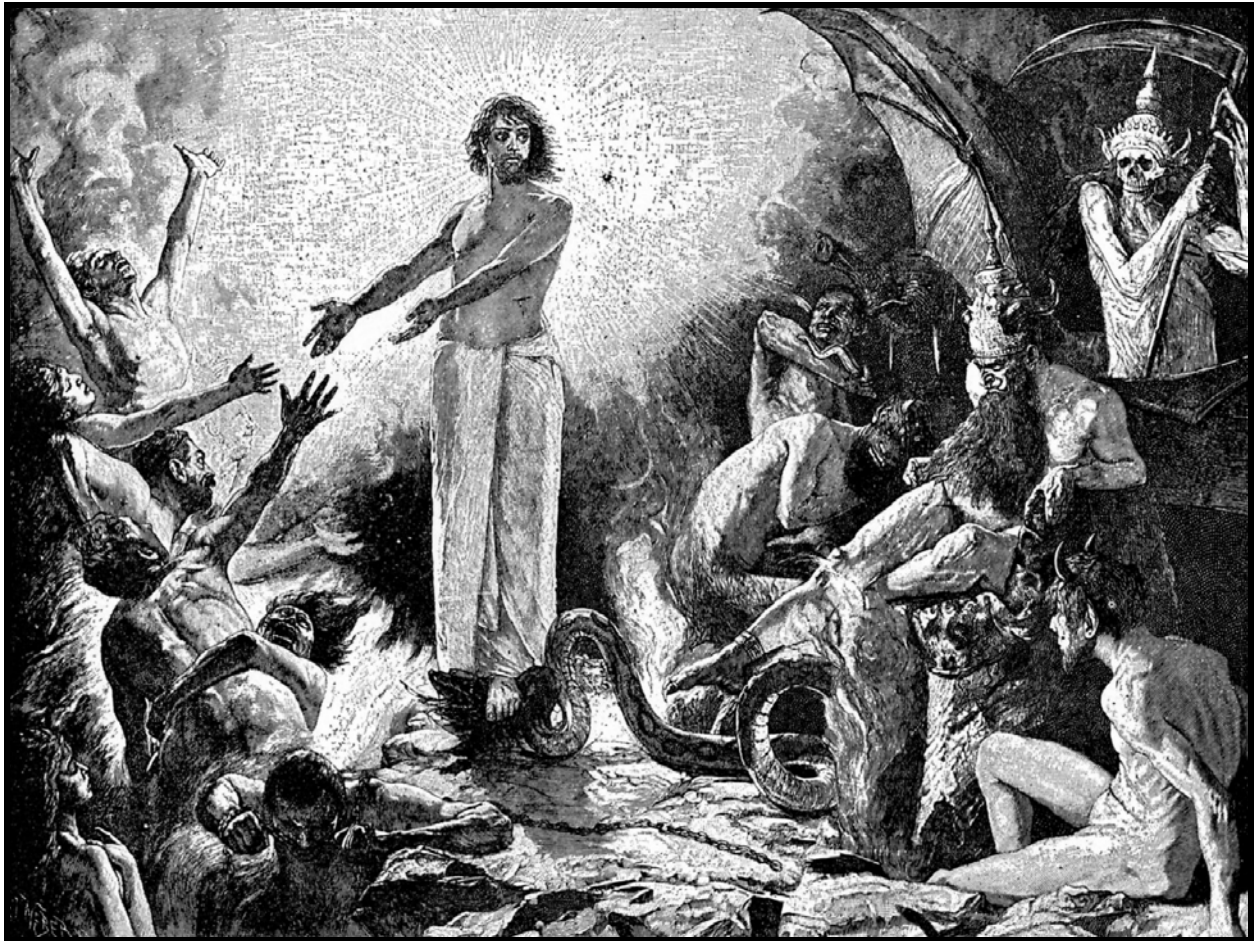
“The generic form of the diabolical fall consisted in the free and spontaneous turning away from God and the rule of right. For they were able to persevere in the truth and concreated holiness and not fall away from it; they were able by the grace of creation to keep the rule of right; of their own accord, therefore, and freely they sinned, by the abuse of the freedom that was bestowed upon them. For they did not sin by any defect or impotence of their

nature, but from pure malice and stubborn disobedience, and by the spontaneous abuse of the free will conferred upon them...The crime having been committed, all those angels lost the grace that had been concreated with them, and so fell into the most horrible misery without hope of restoration...The punishment of the wicked angels is partly the eternal desertion of God, whence they can never be converted; partly rejection to eternal torments to be endured forever.” (Heinrich Schmid)

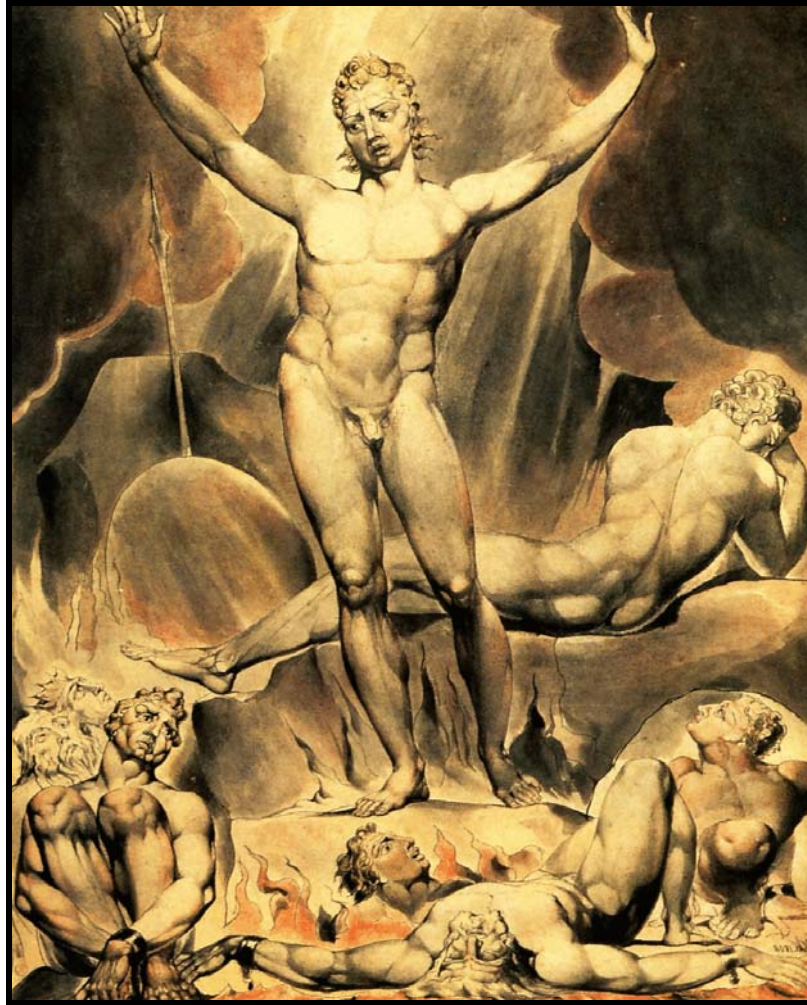
The troubling question of why repentance and restoration is not available to the fallen angels is addressed in a similar manner, reminding the reader of the peril of speculation beyond that which has been revealed in Holy Writ. John Gerhardt writes:

“It is better to proclaim the wonderful philanthropy and mercy of the Son of God towards the fallen race of man, by which for our account and for our salvation He descended from heaven and became man, not taking on Him the nature of angels, but the Seed of Abraham (Hebrews 2:16), than to scrutinize beyond due limits that most just judgement, by which God delivered the angels who had fallen away from Him to be cast in chains of darkness into Hell, to be reserved for judgement.” (Heinrich Schmid)

The counterpart of the eternal damnation of the fallen angels is the eternal salvation of the angels who persevered in their original state of goodness and did not participate in Satan’s rebellion against God. In the language of theology, these angels are said to have been *“confirmed in their bliss,”* that is, like the redeemed in heaven



“Christ’s Descent Into Hell” by Sasha Schneider



“Satan Rousing the Fallen Angels to Continue Their Revolt Against God” by William Blake

they are no longer capable of sin and cannot fall from the heavenly state in which they now exist. The great Reformation era theologian Martin Chemnitz writes:

*“This is the nature of the good angels: (1) They are steadfast in the truth (John 8:44). They see the face of the Father (Matthew 18:10). They enjoy eternal bliss, and thus are called **“the angels of heaven.”** And in this righteousness they are so confirmed that they cannot fall either into sin or into death, as will be the case with us after **“that great gulf has been fixed,”** (Luke 16:26) when we shall be **“like the angels”** (Luke 20:36). Also, St. Paul in 1 Timothy 5:21 speaks of **“the elect angels.”** (Martin Chemnitz)*

Adolph Hoenecke, a leading theologian of Confessional Lutheranism in the 19th Century, asserted that the confirmation of the good angels is the necessary counterpart of the condemnation of the evil angels. Hoenecke wrote:



“St. John’s Revelation of the Angels Around God’s Heavenly Throne” - 18th Century Dutch Engraving

*“The counterpart of the evil angels’ eternal damnation? Eternal salvation for the angels who kept their primeval state. **“They always see the face of My Father in heaven.”** (Matthew 18:10) In their case, too, a confirmation at once occurred. God fixed eternally the bliss of the good angels. Uninterruptedly and unalterably, the good angels have and will have the joy of seeing the Holy One, not one whit deserving of their bliss than the angels sentenced to eternal damnation. To pry*

beyond that which can be known from God's Word is to attempt a search of the unsearchable judgements of God. God's free grace dare never be impugned. As we can see, a twofold confirmation occurred. When? Its time is not especially mentioned. The occasioning circumstance was the moment when sin first entered God's perfect creation. Then God's sentence occurred. Then, it seems likely, the confirmation also took place. To fix exactly the precise moment beyond the point of an assumption would be presumptuous. We must leave the time unresolved. (Cf. Also Genesis 1:31; 3:1; Luke 1:19) (Adolph Hoenecke)



*“The Fall of the Angels” - 15th Century
Illumination*

Our theologians are meticulously careful to distinguish between the divine grace by which salvation was accomplished for mankind and the confirmation in bliss which evidently occurred in reference to the good angels. All that God created, including the angels, were part of the perfect environment for man, that one unique creature who was fashioned in the image and after the likeness of God. While angels - in their original condition - evidently possessed the free will and moral responsibility which are components in the divine image, there is no indication anywhere in Scripture that angels were created in God's image. The forgiveness and forgiveness which Christ accomplished by His incarnation as a human being and His death on the cross cannot apply to angels. Neither good nor evil angels are subject to death, an exclusively human category. Thus, while there are some similarities between angels



*“The Holy Trinity Surrounded by Adoring Angels”
by Lucas Cranach*

and human beings, there are also fundamental differences which cannot be overlooked. Schmid summarized the doctrine of orthodox Lutheranism on the nature of the good angels in this way:

“The good angels who continued in concreated true wisdom and holiness, and are so illumined by God with the light of glory and so confirmed in the Good that, free from the danger of sinning, they clearly behold God and perpetually enjoy His goodness...The formal reason, therefore, why they are designated as ‘good angels’ is because they



“The Heavenly Host” - 15th Century Fresco

persevered in the goodness in which they had been created and are now so confirmed in it that they will never either wish or be able to fall from it...After the good angels had steadfastly exhibited to God their obedience in the state of probation, while other angels had fallen away, it pleased God to fill them with the light of glory, so that they were able, clearly and intuitively to recognize God (for this is to see the face of the Heavenly Father). But this vision of God was followed by a most intense love, by which the will of the angels' cleaves to God in such a manner that it cannot be turned away from Him. And thus was effected their confirmation in the Good, of the determination of their will towards the Good; so that, whatsoever they do with reference to God as the infinitely perfect and perfectly known Good, without any blemish, without any defect, He who clearly beholds God, the chief Good, cannot but burn

*with perpetual love toward Him, for he beholds nothing in Him but what is good and to be loved; but he who perpetually loves God cannot sin. The good angels, then, are confirmed in the Good when the light of glory is infused into them by God, so that their confirmation in the Good is practically nothing else than the infusion of the light of glory in which they intuitively recognize God. That the angels, after having once been admitted into the light of glory, cannot possibly sin, is inferred principally from Luke 20:36 - ‘**And they can no longer die; for they are like the angels. They are God’s children, since they are children of the resurrection.**’ The glory of the angels who are confirmed in the Good is to be attributed not to an absolute divine decree, nor to the merit of Christ, nor to angelic merit, but to the most liberal goodness of God, who remunerates the persevering goodness of the angels far beyond their desert.” (Heinrich Schmid)*



“Jacob Wrestling with the Angel” by Eduard von Gebhardt