

Angels and Demons - Part 1
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Thirty-four books of the Bible teach the existence of angels. The word *angel* occurs approximately 275 times throughout Scripture, translates the Hebrew word מַלְאָכִים *malak* and the Greek word ἄγγελος *aggelos*, and both words mean *messenger*. The Bible reveals angels are created beings.

Praise Him, all His angels; Praise Him, all His hosts! Praise Him, sun and moon; Praise Him, all stars of light! Praise Him, highest heavens, and the waters that are above the heavens! Let them praise the name of the LORD, for He commanded and they were created. (Psa 148:2-5)¹

For by Him [Jesus] all things were created, both in the heavens and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities--all things have been created through Him and for Him. (Col 1:16)

Angels are basically classified as either *righteous* or *evil*. The former retain their holy state and service to God and are called *elect angels* (1 Tim 5:21), whereas the latter have defected from their original state and continue in constant rebellion against God. Satan is the leader of all fallen angels (Matt 25:41; cf. Rev 12:7, 9), which Scripture designates as *evil spirits* (1 Sam 16:14; Luke 7:21), *demons* (Matt 8:31), and *unclean spirits* (Mark 5:1-4).

God sovereignly rules over all angels—both elect and fallen—just as He rules over everything. According to Scripture, “The LORD is King forever and ever” (Psa 10:16a), and “The LORD has established His throne in the heavens, and His sovereignty rules over all” (Psa 103:19). For “Whatever the LORD pleases, He does, in heaven and in earth, in the seas and in all deeps” (Psa 135:6), and “He does according to His will in the host of heaven and among the inhabitants of earth” (Dan 4:35). God gives freedom to his creatures, both angelic and human, and this to varying degrees. God never creates evil; however, He can and does control those who do. Satan, and those who follow him (both fallen angels and people), are ultimately under God’s sovereign control, and even their evil plans and actions cannot thwart His good purposes.

¹ Unless otherwise stated, all Scripture quotes are taken from the *New American Standard Bible*, 1995 Update (La Habra, CA: The Lockman Foundation, 1995).

“Of the history of the angels we can know but little. It is clear that Satan and the fallen angels (demons) were created sinless and later fell (Isa 14:12–15; Rev 12:3–4). Some of their number ‘did not keep their own domain’ but fell under divine displeasure and are reserved ‘for the judgment of the great day’ (Jude 6).”² It would seem God created the angels before He created the universe itself, and that they were present to witness His work. God tells Job:

Where were you when I laid the foundation of the earth? Tell *Me*, if you have understanding, who set its measurements? Since you know. Or who stretched the line on it? On what were its bases sunk? Or who laid its cornerstone, when the morning stars sang together and all the sons of God shouted for joy? (Job 38:4-7)

The Hebrew phrase בְּנֵי אֱלֹהִים *bene Elohim*—translated *sons of God*—appears twice before in the book of Job and refers to angels in both passages (Job 1:6; 2:1). The NIV gives the sense of the Hebrew phrase by translating it as “the angels”.

Angels—both elect and fallen—have volition, emotion, and intelligence. The Gospel of Matthew records an account where Jesus encountered two men who were possessed by demons. The interaction between the fallen angels and Jesus is informative.

When He came to the other side into the country of the Gadarenes, two men who were demon-possessed met Him as they were coming out of the tombs. *They were* so extremely violent that no one could pass by that way. And they [the demons] cried out [expressing emotion], saying [expressing intellect], “What business do we have with each other, Son of God? Have You come here to torment us before the time?” Now there was a herd of many swine feeding at a distance from them. The demons *began* to entreat Him, saying, “If You *are going to* cast us out, send us into the herd of swine.” And He said to them, “Go!” And they came out and went into the swine [expressing volition], and the whole herd rushed down the steep bank into the sea and perished in the waters. (Matt 8:28-32)

Angels are spirit beings that are distinct from humans (Luke 8:27), are “Mighty in strength” (Psa 103:20; cf. 2 Pet 2:11), “innumerable” to count (Heb 12:22; cf. Rev

² Merrill Frederick Unger et al., “Angel” *The New Unger’s Bible Dictionary* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1988).

5:11), cannot die (Luke 20:36), and do not marry (Mark 12:25), which means there are no baby angels. The writer to the Hebrews informs us that angels help advance the gospel, as they are “ministering spirits, sent out to render service for the sake of those who will inherit salvation” (Heb 1:14). As creatures, angels are not to be worshipped (Col 2:18). When the apostle John encountered an angel, twice he “fell at his feet to worship him” (Rev 19:10a; cf. Rev 22:8), and was twice rebuked by the angel who told him, “Do not do that; I am a fellow servant of yours and your brethren who hold the testimony of Jesus; worship God” (Rev 19:10b; cf. Rev 22:9). Seraphim and cherubim are special classes of angels. Seraphim are described as having six wings and are devoted to the worship of God (Isa 6:1-3), whereas Cherubim are described as having four wings and are devoted to protecting the Lord’s holiness (Ezek 28:14).

Angels and Demons - Part 2

As spirit beings, angels function in an invisible realm and were only observable to people when God chose to reveal them (in theology, this is called an angelophany). For example, Elisha's servant saw the angelic chariots of fire only when God opened his eyes (2 Ki 6:15-17), and John was permitted to see myriads of angels around God's throne (Rev 5:11). The vast majority of us are never given the opportunity of direct observation, but rather, we learn about angels through Scripture. Some angels are known by the ministry they hold or the place where they serve. "Angels known by their ministries—angel of the waters (Rev 16:5), angel of the abyss (Rev 9:1), angel with power over fire (Rev 14:18), seven angels with trumpets (Rev 8:2), [and] "the watchers" (Dan 4:13, 17, 23)."³

Throughout history, God has used holy angels to minister to His people. For example, angels were instrumental in protecting Lot and his family before God destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah (Gen 19:1-25). When Israel was in Egyptian captivity, God judged Egypt by means of "a band of destroying angels" (Psa 78:49), who were apparently involved in administering the plagues (Psa 78:43-49). When Israel was fleeing Egypt and being pursued by Pharaoh and his army, God sent His angel to protect them (Exo 14:19-20; Num 20:16). When Elijah was fearful, depressed, and running for his life, God sent an angel to provide for him and encourage him until he came to the end of his journey (1 Ki 19:1-8). When a powerful Assyrian army came against Jerusalem to destroy it, (2 Chron 32:1-19), King Hezekiah and Isaiah the prophet "prayed about this and cried out to heaven" (2 Chron 32:20), and the Lord rescued them by sending "an angel who destroyed every mighty warrior, commander and officer in the camp of the king of Assyria" (2 Chron 32:21). When three of God's servants refused to submit to the tyranny of the king of Babylon and were thrown alive into a furnace of fire, God honored their faith and "sent His angel and delivered His servants who put their trust in Him" (Dan 3:28). Later, when Daniel was persecuted and thrown into a den of lions for not following a foolish edict, God protected His servant and "sent His angel and shut the lions' mouths" (Dan 6:22). God also used an angel named Gabriel, who told Daniel, "In the first year of Darius the Mede, I [Gabriel] arose to be an encouragement and a protection for him" (Dan 11:1). It was Gabriel who announced the birth of Jesus, the Messiah, telling Mary, she had "found favor with God" and informing her, "you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall name Him Jesus. He will

³ Lewis Sperry Chafer, *Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications, 1993), 14.

be great and will be called the Son of the Most-High; and the Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David; and He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and His kingdom will have no end” (Luke 1:30-33). Later, when the baby Jesus was facing danger, “an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream” and instructed him, “Get up! Take the Child and His mother and flee to Egypt, and remain there until I tell you; for Herod is going to search for the Child to destroy Him” (Matt 2:13). And afterward, “when Herod died, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared in a dream to Joseph in Egypt, and said, ‘Get up, take the Child and His mother, and go into the land of Israel; for those who sought the Child's life are dead’” (Matt 2:19-20). After Jesus experienced fatiguing temptations from Satan, it is written that “angels came and ministered to Him” (Matt 4:11). After Jesus’ resurrection, “an angel of the Lord descended from heaven and came and rolled away the stone and sat upon it” (Matt 28:2). And angels were present at Jesus’ ascension in heaven (Acts 1:10), and will assist Him at His Second Coming (Matt 25:31). When some of the apostles had been arrested and thrown into prison, we are informed that “during the night an angel of the Lord opened the gates of the prison and released them to continue preaching” (Acts 5:19). And when Peter had been arrested by King Herod, the church prayed for him, and God “sent forth His angel and rescued” Peter from certain death (Acts 12:11).

The book of Revelation reveals angels will be instrumental in executing God’s judgments upon the earth (Rev 7:1-2; 8:1-3; 5, 8, 10, 12; 9:1, 13-14; 10:1, 5, 7-9; 15:1, 6-8; 16:1; 21:9). About half way through the Tribulation, there will be “war in heaven, [with] Michael and his angels waging war with the dragon...and his angels” (Rev 12:7), and Satan and his angels will be thrown out of heaven by force (Rev 12:9). And after the Tribulation “the Son of Man is going to come in the glory of His Father with His angels, and will repay every man according to his deeds” (Matt 16:27). Furthermore, God’s “angels will come forth and take out the wicked from among the righteous, and will throw them [the wicked] into the furnace of fire; in that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth” (Matt 13:49-50).

According to Scripture, God made people a little lower than the angels, but only for a time. David wrote, “what is mankind that you are mindful of them, human beings that you care for them? You have made them a little lower than the angels and crowned them with glory and honor” (Psa 8:4-5 NIV). However, it appears there will be some future occasion in which we will judge the world as well as angels. Paul wrote to the church at Corinth, stating, “Do you not know that the saints will judge the world...[and] that we will judge angels?” (1 Cor 6:2-3).

And, it is possible we have angels assigned to us. Jacob spoke of an “angel” who protected him “from all evil” (Gen 48:16), and Jesus spoke of little children and “their angels in heaven” (Matt 18:10). Though we don’t see angels, by faith in God’s Word we know they are present and active in our lives to help protect, provide, and strengthen us as we walk with the Lord. We also know they are active in the affairs of everyday life, helping to advance God’s purposes in a fallen world.

Angels and Demons - Part 3

All angels, whether good or bad, are organized for service and effectiveness. Michael is called an *archangel* (Jude 1:9), a *chief prince* (Dan 10:13), and is assigned the task of guarding Israel (Dan 12:1). Gabriel is a messenger angel who was sent to deliver important messages to God's people (Dan 8:16; 9:21-22; Luke 1:19; 26-38). Both Michael and Gabriel are recorded in Scripture as battling fallen angels who appear as commanders of regions of the world (Dan 10:12-13, 21). One fallen angel is called "the prince of Persia" and the other "the prince of Greece" (Dan 10:20). These no doubt function as Satan's emissaries to promote his purposes, and are part of a larger group that Paul called *the forces of darkness* (Eph 6:12).

In the third year of Cyrus king of Persia [536 BC] a message was revealed to Daniel, who was named Belteshazzar; and the message was true and *one of great conflict [both in the spiritual and natural realm]*, but he understood the message and had an understanding of the vision.² In those days, I, Daniel, had been mourning for three entire weeks.³ I did not eat any tasty food, nor did meat or wine enter my mouth [*Daniel was engaging in a limited fast*], nor did I use any ointment at all until the entire three weeks were completed.⁴ On the twenty-fourth day of the first month, while I was by the bank of the great river, that is, the Tigris,⁵ I lifted my eyes and looked, and behold, there was a certain man [i.e., *an angel in human form*] dressed in linen, whose waist was girded with *a belt of pure gold of Uphaz*.⁶ His body also *was like beryl*, his face had the appearance of lightning, his eyes were like flaming torches, his arms and feet like the gleam of polished bronze, and the sound of his words like the sound of a tumult.⁷ Now I, Daniel, alone saw the vision, while the men who were with me did not see the vision; nevertheless, a great dread fell on them, and they ran away to hide themselves.⁸ So I was left alone and saw this great vision; yet no strength was left in me, for my natural color turned to a deathly pallor, and I retained no strength.⁹ But I heard the sound of his words [*as the angel spoke with him*]; and as soon as I heard the sound of his words, I fell into a deep sleep on my face, with my face to the ground [*it appears Daniel was overwhelmed and fainted*].¹⁰ Then behold, a hand touched me and set me trembling on my hands and knees.¹¹ He said to me, "O Daniel, man of high esteem, understand the words that I am about to tell you and stand upright, for I have now been sent to you." And when he had spoken this word to me, I stood up trembling.¹² Then he said to me, "Do not be afraid, Daniel, for from the first day that you set your heart on understanding *this* and on humbling yourself before your God, your words were heard, and I have come in response to your words [*in answer to Daniel's prayer*]."¹³ "But the prince of

the kingdom of Persia [apparently a fallen angel who rules over the region of Persia] was withstanding me for twenty-one days [preventing Gabriel from delivering his message]; then behold, Michael, one of the chief princes [a holy angel who guards Israel; cf. Dan 12:1], came to help me, for I had been left there with the kings of Persia [multiple forces of angelic opposition].¹⁴ “Now I have come to give you an understanding of what will happen to your people in the latter days, for the vision pertains to the days yet *future*.”¹⁵ When he had spoken to me according to these words, I turned my face toward the ground and became speechless.¹⁶ And behold, one who resembled a human being was touching my lips; then I opened my mouth and spoke and said to him who was standing before me, “O my lord, as a result of the vision anguish has come upon me, and I have retained no strength.”¹⁷ “For how can such a servant of my lord talk with such as my lord? [Daniel feels humbled by this experience] As for me, there remains just now no strength in me, nor has any breath been left in me.”¹⁸ Then *this* one with human appearance touched me again and strengthened me.¹⁹ He said, “O man of high esteem, do not be afraid. Peace be with you; take courage and be courageous!” Now as soon as he spoke to me, I received strength and said, “May my lord speak, for you have strengthened me.”²⁰ Then he said, “Do you understand why I came to you? But I shall now return to fight against the prince of Persia [i.e., return to the angelic battle]; so I am going forth, and behold, the prince of Greece is about to come [another fallen angel who rules over the region of Greece].²¹ “However, I will tell you what is inscribed in the writing of truth. Yet there is no one who stands firmly with me against these *forces* except Michael your prince. (Dan 10:1-21)

The above section of Scripture gives a glimpse into the spiritual realm, exposing the conflict that occurs among angels and demons. It’s noteworthy that the angelic battle took place, in part, to prevent Daniel from receiving God’s Word. What Gabriel revealed to Daniel contained a blueprint of eschatological events pertaining to Persia and Greece (Dan 11:1-35), and the eventual arrival and activity of the Antichrist, who will rise to power and be active throughout the seven-year Tribulation (Dan 11:36-45). Gabriel revealed that Michael, “the great prince who stands guard” over Israel will arise during the time of the Tribulation and protect Jewish believers, and “everyone who is found written in the book, will be rescued” (Dan 12:1). After the return of Messiah, Jews will be resurrected—both saved and unsaved—either to everlasting life or disgrace and shame (Dan 12:2-3). Daniel heard additional revelation (Dan 12:4-7), but did not understand its meaning (Dan 12:8). Gabriel told Daniel that the revelation was concealed until the end times (Dan 12:9), specifically the last three and a half years of the Tribulation, plus an additional seventy-five days

(Dan 12:10-12). After these events, the millennial kingdom will be established and Daniel will be resurrected to receive his reward for being faithful to God. Gabriel told Daniel, “But as for you, go your way to the end; then you will enter into rest and rise again for your allotted portion at the end of the age” (Dan 12:13).

Angels and Demons - Part 4

According to Scripture, demons are classified as either free or in prison. In his first letter, Peter mentions fallen angels who are “now in prison” (1 Pet 3:19). In his second letter he wrote, “God did not spare angels when they sinned, but cast them into Tartarus and committed them to pits of darkness, reserved for judgment” (2 Pet 2:4). And Jude wrote about fallen angels that God has kept in “bonds under darkness for the judgment of the great day” (Jude 1:6). It appears many of these fallen angels that are currently incarcerated will be released at a future time (Rev 9:1-11), four of which are exceptionally bad (Rev 9:13-15). Apparently, demons have some freedom and are permitted to defy God, albeit in a limited way. Clearly Satan operates by the boundaries God establishes (Job 1:6-21).

God sometimes used evil spirits to accomplish His sovereign purposes. In the book of Judges, we learn about a man named Abimelech who killed his seventy brothers in order to remove competition to his being a leader (Judg 9:1-6). Three years afterward God judged Abimelech and used an evil spirit to accomplish His purposes.

God sent an evil spirit between Abimelech and the men of Shechem; and the men of Shechem dealt treacherously with Abimelech,²⁴ so that the violence done to the seventy sons of Jerubbaal might come, and their blood might be laid on Abimelech their brother, who killed them, and on the men of Shechem, who strengthened his hands to kill his brothers. (Judg 9:23-24)

On another occasion, when King Saul turned away from walking with God, the Lord sent an evil spirit to cause him trouble.

Now the Spirit of the LORD departed from Saul, and an evil spirit from the LORD terrorized him.¹⁵ Saul’s servants then said to him, “Behold now, an evil spirit from God is terrorizing you.” (1 Sam 16:14-15)

Sometimes this evil spirit caused psychosis which led to murderous behavior. Twice King Saul tried to kill David.

Now it came about on the next day that an evil spirit from God came mightily upon Saul, and he raved in the midst of the house, while David was playing the harp with his hand, as usual; and a spear was in Saul’s hand.¹¹ Saul hurled the spear for he thought, “I will pin David to the wall.” But David escaped from his presence twice.¹² Now Saul was afraid of David, for the LORD was with him but had departed from Saul. (1 Sam 18:10-12; cf., 1 Sam 19:9-10)

King Ahab refused to obey the Lord, and God used a deceiving spirit through the mouth of Ahab's false prophets to bring about his fall.

Micaiah said, "Therefore, hear the word of the LORD. I saw the LORD sitting on His throne, and all the host of heaven standing on His right and on His left. ¹⁹ "The LORD said, 'Who will entice Ahab king of Israel to go up and fall at Ramoth-gilead?' And one said this while another said that. ²⁰ "Then a spirit came forward and stood before the LORD and said, 'I will entice him.' And the LORD said to him, 'How?' ²¹ "He said, 'I will go and be a deceiving spirit in the mouth of all his prophets.' Then He said, 'You are to entice him and prevail also. Go and do so.' ²² "Now therefore, behold, the LORD has put a deceiving spirit in the mouth of these your prophets, for the LORD has proclaimed disaster against you." (2 Ch 18:18-22)

King Ahab ignored the words spoken by Micaiah, God's prophet, and believed his false prophets and went into battle against Ramoth-gilead (2 Ch 18:28). God controlled the details of the battle and used an unnamed soldier to kill Ahab. The biblical text states:

A certain man drew his bow at random and struck the king of Israel in a joint of the armor. So he said to the driver of the chariot, "Turn around and take me out of the fight, for I am severely wounded." ³⁴ The battle raged that day, and the king of Israel propped himself up in his chariot in front of the Arameans until the evening; and at sunset he died. (2 Ch 18:33-34)

Here we observe how a deceiving spirit was used to affect the life of a national ruler, which resulted in his defeat and death. Later, in the book of Revelation, we learn about demons that will influence world rulers to gather them together for battle against Christ as His Second Coming. John wrote:

And I saw coming out of the mouth of the dragon and out of the mouth of the beast and out of the mouth of the false prophet, three unclean spirits like frogs; ¹⁴ for they are spirits of demons, performing signs, which go out to the kings of the whole world, to gather them together for the war of the great day of God, the Almighty. (Rev 16:13-14)

In these examples we witness God's sovereign control over evil spirits. In some instances, God permits demons to act (Matt 8:28-32; Rev 16:13-14), limits their actions (Job 2:6-21), or uses them as tools of His judgment (Judg 9:23; 1 Sam 16:14-

16; 2 Ch 18:18-22).

Angels and Demons - Part 5 Genesis 6 and the Sons of God

Now it came about, when men began to multiply on the face of the earth, and daughters were born to them, ² that the sons of God saw that the daughters of men were beautiful; and they took wives for themselves, whomever they chose. ³ Then the LORD said, “My Spirit shall not strive with man forever, because he also is flesh; nevertheless, his days shall be one hundred and twenty years.” ⁴ The Nephilim were on the earth in those days, and also afterward, when the sons of God came in to the daughters of men, and they bore children to them. Those were the mighty men who were of old, men of renown. (Gen 6:1-4)

Genesis 6:1-4 records an event that has puzzled scholars for millennia. Scholarly views vary concerning the meaning of the phrase “sons of God” in verses 2 and 4. There are three major views concerning this passage. In the first view, the “sons of God” are understood to refer to the godly line of Seth which intermarried with the ungodly line of Cain. Warren Wiersbe states, “What was Satan’s plan for defeating God’s people in Noah’s day? To entice the godly line of Seth (“the sons of God”) to mix with the ungodly line of Cain (“the daughters of men”) and thus abandon their devotion to the Lord.”⁴ Thomas Constable agrees with Wiersbe. A second view is that demon possessed men married women. Concerning this view, Allen P. Ross states, “They [the sons of God] were probably powerful rulers who were controlled (indwelt) by fallen angels. It may be that fallen angels left their habitation and inhabited bodies of human despots and warriors, the mighty ones of the earth.”⁵ Henry Morris agrees, saying, “these fallen angelic ‘sons of God’ accomplished their purposes by something equivalent to demon possession, indwelling the bodies of human men, and then also taking (or “possessing”) the bodies of the women as well.”⁶ A third view is that the “sons of God” refers to fallen angels who took human form and cohabited with women to produce a genetically mixed race of beings. This view finds linguistic support, for the Hebrew phrase, בְּנֵי־הָאֱלֹהִים *bene ha-Elohim* is used only a few times in Scripture, and in each occurrence, it clearly refers to angels (Job 1:6; 2:1; 38:7). The argument for why these fallen angels would do this was to

⁴ Warren W. Wiersbe, *Be Basic*, “Be” Commentary Series (Colorado Springs, CO: Chariot Victor Pub., 1998), 88.

⁵ Allen P. Ross, “Genesis,” in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures*, ed. J. F. Walvoord and R. B. Zuck, vol. 1 (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1985), 36.

⁶ Henry M. Morris, *The Genesis Record: A Scientific and Devotional Commentary on the Book of Beginnings* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1976), 169.

prevent God from fulfilling His word to Eve, that a “seed” would come from her body that would crush the head of the serpent (Gen 3:15). In favor of the fallen angel view, Arnold Fruchtenbaum writes:

Genesis 6:2 records the actual intermarriage that occurred. The first statement, *that the sons of God saw the daughters of men that they were fair*, presents the crisis. The *sons of God* in Hebrew is *bnei ha-Elohim*. This term, in the Hebrew Bible, is always a reference to angels, both good and bad ones. Examples occur in Job 1:6 and 2:1, where Satan was among *the sons of God*, and in Job 38:7 where *the sons of God* were present at creation. The *Septuagint* uses the same term in Deuteronomy 32:8, where it refers to angels. A variation of this term is *bnei elim*, which is usually translated as “the sons of the Mighty,” a term also used of angels. Examples include: Psalm 29:1, *the sons of the mighty* or the *sons of God*; Psalm 89:6, *the son of the mighty* or the *sons of God*; and Psalm 82:6 uses a different variation, the *sons of the Most High*. Another form is the Aramaic *bar Elohim*, which means *a son of God*. So everywhere else this word is used, it is always in reference to angels, a point on which all expositors concur. Nevertheless, some wish to make Genesis 6 the one exception. However, it is not wise to make exceptions unless there are very good exegetical reasons to do so, and there is no good reason to make this one passage the exception to the rule.⁷

The NT would seem to support this understanding as well. The apostle Peter wrote about angels who are “now in prison” (1 Pet 3:19). Peter states these demons “were disobedient” during “the days of Noah” (1 Pet 3:20). In his second epistle, Peter wrote, “God did not spare angels when they sinned, but cast them into hell [Τάρταρος *Tartaros* – an abode of the damned] and committed them to pits of darkness, reserved for judgment” (2 Pet 2:4). Their angelic sin is connected with the days of Noah, in which God “did not spare the ancient world, but preserved Noah, a preacher of righteousness, with seven others, when He brought a flood upon the world of the ungodly” (2 Pet 2:5). Jude—the Lord’s half-brother—wrote about these fallen angels, saying, “And angels who did not keep their own domain, but abandoned their proper abode, He has kept in eternal bonds under darkness for the judgment of the great day” (Jude 1:6). Jude tells us something about their sin being connected with immoral sexual behavior, comparing it to “Sodom and Gomorrah and the cities around them, since they [the Sodomites] in the same way as these

⁷ Arnold G. Fruchtenbaum, *Ariel’s Bible Commentary: The Book of Genesis*, 1st ed. (San Antonio, TX: Ariel Ministries, 2008), 145.

[fallen angels] indulged in gross immorality and went after strange flesh, are exhibited as an example in undergoing the punishment of eternal fire” (Jude 1:7). Concerning this statement by Jude, William MacDonald writes:

We believe that Jude is referring to what is recorded in Genesis 6:1–7. The sons of God left their proper estate as angelic beings, came down to the earth in human form, and married the daughters of men. This marital union was contrary to God’s order and an abomination to Him. There may be a suggestion in verse 4 that these unnatural marriages produced offspring of tremendous strength and wickedness.⁸

One objection to the fallen angel view is that Jesus said of resurrected believers, that they will not marry, “but are like angels in heaven” (Mat 22:30). This is true of believers in resurrected bodies who are obedient to the Lord in the eternal state. In this regard, they are obedient, “like angels in heaven” are obedient. However, fallen angels are not obedient, and so the argument from Matthew does not seem to apply.

It is noteworthy that the fallen angel view was held by Jewish scholars for centuries before the birth of Christ, and the same view was held by the early church for the first three centuries after the birth of Jesus. It was not until the fourth century AD that Christians began viewing the “sons of God” as referring to the godly line of Seth.

Lastly, it is possible these imprisoned angels are the ones currently kept in the Abyss—a temporary spiritual prison—and will be released during the Tribulation to inflict God’s judgment upon the world. This demonic hoard will be led by a powerful angel whose name in Hebrew is Abaddon and in Greek Apollyon (Rev 9:1-12). Four unnamed, but very dangerous angels, are said to be bound under the River Euphrates (Rev 9:13-16). These four angels will kill one third of mankind during the Great Tribulation.

⁸ William MacDonald, *Believer’s Bible Commentary: Old and New Testaments*, ed. Arthur Farstad (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1995), 2341.

Angels and Demons - Part 6 Satanology

Many people think of Satan as the counterpart of God; but this is wrong. God is the Creator, whereas Satan is merely a creature. God is infinitely and eternally good, whereas Satan was created good, but then turned away in rebellion, leading others to follow, both angels and people. Satan is not the counterpart of God; rather, he is the counterpart of those angels who maintained their allegiance to God. To understand this is to contrast Satan with good angels where, as a creature, he properly belongs.

The Bible reveals Satan was originally created a holy angel of the class of cherubim; however, because of pride (Ezek 28:11-18), he rebelled against God (Isa 14:12-14), and convinced many angels to follow him (Rev 12:4, 7). The name Satan is derived from the Hebrew שָׂטָן *Satan* which means “adversary, opponent...accuser, opposing party...[or] the one who hinders a purpose”⁹ The Greek Σατανᾶς *Satanas* carries the same meaning and is used “in a very special sense of the enemy of God and all of those who belong to God.”¹⁰ Other names for Satan include the *shining one*, or *Lucifer* (Isa 14:12), the *evil one* (1 John 5:19), the *tempter* (1 Thess 3:5), the *devil* (Matt 4:1), the *god of this world* (2 Cor 4:4), the *accuser of the brethren* (Rev 12:10), the *prince of the power of the air* (Eph 2:2), the *serpent* (Rev 12:9), and the *great red dragon* (Rev 12:3). Further, Satan is a *murderer* and *liar* (John 8:44), is compared to a *lion* that prowls about, looking for someone to devour (1 Pet 5:8), and one who disguises himself as an *angel of light* (2 Cor 11:14).

Lucifer became Satan at the time of his rebellion when he declared, “I will ascend to heaven; I will raise my throne above the stars of God, and I will sit on the mount of assembly in the recesses of the north. I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will make myself like the Most High.” (Isa 14:13-14). Dwight Pentecost states, “The desire of Satan was to move in and occupy the throne of God, exercise absolute independent authority over the angelic creation, bring the earth and all the universe under his authority, cover himself with the glory that belongs to God alone, and then

⁹ Ludwig Koehler et al., *The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1994–2000), 1317.

¹⁰ William Arndt, Frederick W. Danker, and Walter Bauer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 916.

be responsible to no one but himself.”¹¹ Satan seeks to operate independently of God’s plan for him, and he leads others, both saved and unsaved, to do the same. Lucifer introduced sin and death to the first humans when he convinced them to turn from God and eat the forbidden fruit (Gen 2:16-17; 3:1-7). At the time of the fall, Adam handed his kingdom over to Satan, who has been ruling this world since (Luke 4:5-6).

Satan is permitted, for a time, to rule over the majority in this world. At the time when Jesus began His public ministry, He faced a series of tests from Satan, one of which was an offer to receive the kingdoms of the world without going to the cross. Satan told Jesus, “I will give You all this domain and its glory; for it has been handed over to me, and I give it to whomever I wish” (Luke 4:6). Satan took possession of “this domain and its glory” by God’s permission and man’s sin, presumably, when Adam and Eve chose to disobey God and follow Satan (Gen 3:1-8). Satan said to Jesus, “Therefore if You worship before me, it shall all be Yours” (Luke 4:7). Satan’s offer had to be true in order for the temptation to be real. At some time in the future, Satan will share his authority with the Antichrist, because he advances his agenda (Rev 13:1-2). Three times Jesus referred to Satan as “the ruler of this world” (John 12:31; 14:30; 16:11). Other passages of Scripture call Satan “the god of this world” (2 Cor 4:4), and “the prince of the power of the air” (Eph 2:2), informing us “that the whole world lies in the power of the evil one” (1 John 5:19). Satan rules as a tyrant who has “weakened the nations” (Isa 14:12), and currently “deceives the whole world” (Rev 12:9). He personally attacked Adam and Eve (Gen 3:1-7), Job (Job 1:6-12; 2:1-13), David, (1 Chr 21:1), Joshua the high priest (Zec 3:1-2), Jesus (Matt 4:1-11), Judas (John 13:27), and Peter (Luke 22:31-32). He continues to attack God’s people today (1 Pet 5:8), practices deception (2 Cor 11:13-15), and has well developed strategies of warfare (Eph 6:10-12). Furthermore, humanity is living in an “evil age” (Gal 1:4), under “the dominion of Satan” (Acts 26:18), whose sphere of influence is called “the domain of darkness” (Col 1:13).

As Christians, we have victory in Christ. At the moment we trusted Christ as Savior, God “rescued us from the domain of darkness, and transferred us to the kingdom of His beloved Son, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins” (Col 1:13-14). As Christians, we have been gifted with God’s own righteousness (Rom 5:17; 2 Cor 5:21; Phil 3:9), and will never face condemnation (Rom 8:1). Furthermore, God “has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ”

¹¹ J. Dwight Pentecost, *Your Adversary the Devil* (Grand Rapids, Mich., Zondervan Publishing, 1969), 25-26.

(Eph 1:3), and called us to serve as “ambassadors for Christ” (2 Cor 5:20), sharing the gospel message with others.

God the Father has promised to give Jesus the kingdoms of this world, saying, “I will surely give the nations as Your inheritance, and the *very* ends of the earth as Your possession” (Psa 2:8; cf. Isa 2:1-5; Dan 2:44; 7:14). This will occur after the seven-year Tribulation; at which time it will be said, “The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ; and He will reign forever and ever” (Rev 11:15; cf. 20:1-3). Satan was judged at the cross (John 12:31; 16:11; Col 2:14-15), and awaits future punishment. His judgment is very near when he is cast out of heaven during the Tribulation (Rev 12:7-12); at which time his wrath is greatest against Israel. After the return of Christ (Rev 19:11-16) and the establishment of His kingdom (Rev 20:1-6), Satan will be confined to the abyss for a thousand years (Rev 20:1-3). Afterwards, he is released for a brief time and will again deceive the nations and lead a rebellion against God (Rev 20:7-8), but will be quickly defeated (Rev 20:9), and cast into the Lake of Fire, where he will remain, with his demons and all unbelievers forever (Matt 25:41; Rev 20:10-15).

The final destiny of Satan and demons will be the Lake of Fire, which God created as a special place of punishment for them (Matt 25:41). Those who reject Christ as Savior will join Satan in the Lake of Fire (Rev 20:11-15). Those who accept Jesus as Savior are forgiven all their sins (Eph 1:7; Heb 10:10-14), given eternal life (John 3:16; 10:28), and will spend forever in heaven (John 14:1-3).

Angels and Demons - Part 7
Satan's World System - Part 1

As we discussed previously, Satan is permitted, for a time, to rule over the majority in this world. Three times Jesus referred to Satan as “the ruler of this world” (John 12:31; 14:30; 16:11). Other passages of Scripture call Satan “the god of this world” (2 Cor 4:4), and “the prince of the power of the air” (Eph 2:2), informing us “that the whole world lies in the power of the evil one” (1 John 5:19). Satan rules as a tyrant who has “weakened the nations” (Isa 14:12), and currently “deceives the whole world” (Rev 12:9). He personally attacked Adam and Eve (Gen 3:1-7), Job (Job 1:6-12; 2:1-13), David, (1 Chr 21:1), Joshua the high priest (Zec 3:1-2), Jesus (Matt 4:1-11), Judas (John 13:27), and Peter (Luke 22:31-32). He continues to attack God's people today (1 Pet 5:8), practices deception (2 Cor 11:13-15), and has well developed strategies of warfare (Eph 6:10-12). Furthermore, humanity is living in an “evil age” (Gal 1:4), under “the dominion of Satan” (Acts 26:18), whose sphere of influence is called “the domain of darkness” (Col 1:13). Though Satan has attacked some people directly, he mainly operates as commander of an unseen realm of demons, through a worldwide system of philosophies and values he's created, through unbelievers whom he energizes to do his will, and through the sinful inclinations of our fallen nature. These all help advance his agenda in which he attacks God and His people. Paul, when writing to Christians in Ephesus, discusses the reality of these things. Paul said:

And you [Gentile Christians, before salvation; see Eph 2:4-9] were dead [νεκρός *nekros* – *dead, corpse* – meaning they were separated from God] in your trespasses and sins [i.e. acts of disobedience against God],² in which you formerly walked [περιπατέω *peripateo* – *to walk, conduct oneself, behave*] according to the course of this world [κόσμος *kosmos* - *world, system*], according to the prince of the power of the air [Satan – the commander of an unseen realm], of the spirit that is now working [ἐνεργέω *energeo* – *to work, energize, empower*] in the sons of disobedience [i.e., sons characterized by their disobedience].³ Among them we too all formerly lived in the lusts of our flesh [σάρξ *sarx* – *flesh, body, i.e., sin nature*], indulging the desires of the flesh and of the mind [even their reasoning processes were corrupt], and were by nature children of wrath, even as the rest. (Eph 2:1-3)

The Bible recognizes Satan's world-system and warns us not to love it. John writes and tells the Christian, “Do not love the world nor the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the boastful pride of life, is not from the

Father, but is from the world” (1 John 2:15-16). We live in a fallen world, and John’s command is intended to warn us of real danger. First, John opens with the negative particle *Mὴ Me*, which is followed by the Geek verb ἀγαπάω *agapao*, which is in the imperative mood—the mood of command. The word ἀγαπάω *agapao* denotes *desire* or *commitment* to something or someone. Dr. David L. Allen comments on love:

In its essence love is two things: a desire for something and a commitment to something...Whatever it is you desire and whatever you’re committed to, that’s where your time and resources will go. If you love football, that’s where your time and resources will go. If you love hunting or fishing, that’s where your time and resources will go. If you love your spouse, you desire to spend time with her and you are committed to her. Love is more than an emotional feeling. Love requires a commitment of time and resources.¹²

John then gives the object we are not to desire or be committed to, namely, *the world* (τὸν κόσμον). The Greek word κόσμος *kosmos* is used in Scripture to refer to: 1) the physical planet (Matt 13:35; Acts 17:24), 2) people who live in the world (John 3:16), and 3) the hostile system created and controlled by Satan that he uses to lure people away from God (1 John 2:15-16). It is this third meaning that John has in mind. Hence, the word κόσμος *kosmos* refers to “that which is hostile to God...lost in sin, wholly at odds with anything divine, ruined and depraved.”¹³ Concerning, the word κόσμος *kosmos*, Dr. David L. Allen writes:

Sometimes the word “world” is used to refer to the organized evil system with its principles and its practices, all under the authority of Satan, which includes all teachings, ideas, culture, attitudes, activities, etc., that are opposed to God. A fixation on the material over the spiritual, promotion of self over others, pleasure over principle—these are just a few descriptors of the world system John is talking about. The word “world” here means everything that opposes Christ and his work on earth. Jesus called Satan “the ruler of this world” (John 14:30; 16:11), and Paul called him “the god of this world” (2 Corinthians 4:4). In Luke 16:8 Jesus referred to all unsaved people as “the sons of this world.”¹⁴

Satan’s world-system consists of those philosophies and values that perpetually

¹² David L. Allen, *1–3 John: Fellowship in God’s Family*, ed. R. Kent Hughes, Preaching the Word (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2013), 96–97.

¹³ Walter Bauer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, p. 562.

¹⁴ David L. Allen, *1–3 John: Fellowship in God’s Family*, 96.

influence humanity to think and behave contrary to God and His Word. This operating apart from God is first and foremost a way of thinking that is antithetical to God, a way of thinking motivated by a desire to be free from God and the authority of Scripture, a freedom most will accept, even though it is accompanied by all sorts of inconsistencies and absurdities. Dr. Lewis S. Chafer writes:

The *kosmos* is a vast order or system that Satan has promoted which conforms to his ideals, aims, and methods. It is civilization now functioning apart from God—a civilization in which none of its promoters really expect God to share; who assign to God no consideration in respect to their projects, nor do they ascribe any causality to Him. This system embraces its godless governments, conflicts, armaments, jealousies; its education, culture, religions of morality, and pride. It is that sphere in which man lives. It is what he sees, what he employs. To the uncounted multitude it is all they ever know so long as they live on this earth. It is properly styled “*The Satanic System*” which phrase is in many instances a justified interpretation of the so-meaningful word, *kosmos*.¹⁵

Many people who live in Satan’s world-system exclude God and Scripture from their daily conversations. This is true in news, politics, academic communities, work and home life. God is nowhere in their thoughts, and therefore, nowhere in their discussions (Psa 10:4; 14:1). These are the agnostics and atheists. But there are others in Satan’s world-system who are very religious, and these are the worst kind of people, because they claim to represent God, when in fact they don’t. In the Bible, there were many religious people who spoke in the name of the Lord (Jer 14:14; 23:16-32; Matt 7:15; Acts 13:6; Rev 2:20), claiming to represent Him, even performing miracles (Deut 13:1-4; Matt 24:24; 2 Th 2:8-9; Rev 13:13). The Pharisees, Sadducees and Scribes were this way, and they said of themselves, “we have one Father: God” (John 8:41b). But Jesus saw them for what they really were and said, “You are of your father the devil, and you want to do the desires of your father” (John 8:44a). The religious—like Satan—are blinded by their pride. Humility must come before they will accept God’s gospel of grace, and it does no good to argue with them (2 Tim 2:24-26). These false representatives loved to talk about God, read their Bibles, pray, fast, give of their resources, and spent much of their time in fellowship with other religious persons. Theirs is a works-system of salvation, which feeds their pride; giving them a sense of control over their

¹⁵ Lewis S. Chafer, “Angelology Part 4” *Bibliotheca Sacra* 99 (1942): 282-283.

circumstances and others.¹⁶ These false organizations and their teachers appear as godly and righteous, but Paul described them as “false apostles, deceitful workers, disguising themselves as apostles of Christ” (2 Cor 11:13). Though very religious, these are in line with Satan, who operates on corrupt reasoning and is a deceiver. Paul goes on to say, “No wonder, for even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light. Therefore, it is not surprising if his servants also disguise themselves as servants of righteousness, whose end will be according to their deeds” (2 Cor 11:14-15).

The contrast between the growing Christian and the worldly person is stark, as their thoughts and words take them in completely different directions. The growing believer thinks about God and His Word all the time, as “his delight is in the law of the LORD, and in His law he meditates day and night” (Psa 1:2). The word *law* translates the Hebrew word תּוֹרָה *torah*, which means *law, direction, or instruction*. Navigating the highways of this world can be tricky, and the believer needs the direction or instruction God’s Word provides. It is our divine roadmap for staying on God’s path and getting to the destination He intends.

At the core of Satan’s world-system is a directive for mankind to function apart from God, and when obeyed, people produce all forms of evil, both moral and immoral. We should understand that Satan’s system is a buffet that offers something for everyone who rejects God, whether that person is moral or immoral, religious or irreligious, educated or simple, rich or poor. Satan is careful to make sure there’s even something for the Christian in his world-system, which is why the Bible repeatedly warns the believer not to love the world or the things in the world. We are to be set apart (Col 2:8; Jam 1:27; 4:4; 1 John 2:15-16). “The world is the Christian’s enemy because it represents an anti-God system, a philosophy that is diametrically opposed to the will and plan of God. It is a system headed by the devil and therefore at odds with God (2 Cor 4:4)...It is in this wicked world we must rear our families and earn our livelihoods. We are in it, yet are not to be a part of it.”¹⁷ It is important to understand that we cannot change Satan or his evil program; however, we must be on guard, for it can and will change us if we’re not careful to learn and live God’s Word.

¹⁶ There are many church denominations today that call themselves “Christian”, but who come with a false gospel in which human works are added as a requirement for salvation (i.e., Catholics, Methodists, Church of Christ, Mormons, Jehovah’s Witnesses, etc.).

¹⁷ Robert P. Lightner, *Handbook of Evangelical Theology*, p. 206.

Angels and Demons - Part 8
Satan's World System - Part 2

At the moment of salvation, God the Father “rescued us from the domain of darkness, and transferred us to the kingdom of His beloved Son” (Col 1:13), and “our citizenship is in heaven” (Phil 3:20). This transference is permanent and cannot be undone. Once this happens, we are hated by those who remain in Satan’s kingdom of darkness. For this reason, Jesus said to His disciples, “If the world hates you, you know that it has hated Me before it hated you. If you were of the world, the world would love its own; but because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, because of this the world hates you” (John 15:18-19; cf. John 16:33; 1 John 3:13). *Love* and *hate* in this context should be understood as *accept* or *reject*, which can be mild or severe in expression. When praying to the Father, Jesus said, “they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world” (John 17:14b), and went on to say, “I do not ask You to take them out of the world, but to keep them from the evil one” (John 17:15). It is not God’s will that we be immediately removed from this world at the moment of salvation, but left here to serve as His representatives to the lost, that we “may proclaim the excellencies of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light” (1 Pet 2:9). We are not to participate in worldly affairs that exclude God, but are to “walk as children of Light” (Eph 5:8), manifesting the fruit of the Light “in all goodness and righteousness and truth, trying to learn what is pleasing to the Lord” (Eph 5:9-10), and we are told, “do not participate in the unfruitful deeds of darkness, but instead even expose them” (Eph 5:11).

The growing Christian faces real struggles as Satan’s world system seeks to press him into its mold, demanding conformity, and persecuting him when he does not bend to its values. The world-system not only has human support, but is backed by demonic forces that operate in collaboration with Satan. Scripture tells us “our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual *forces* of wickedness in the heavenly *places*” (Eph 6:12). The battlefield is more than what is seen with the human eye and is driven by unseen spiritual forces. As Christians living in the world, we are to be careful not to be taken “captive through philosophy and empty deception, according to the tradition of men, according to the elementary principles of the world, rather than according to Christ” (Col 2:8). Realizing the battleground is the mind, we are to think biblically in everything, which is our only safeguard against the enemy (2 Cor 10:3-5).

Christians face situations every day in which we are pressured to compromise God's Word. We face difficulties at work, school, home, or other places, in which we are confronted by worldly-minded persons, both saved and unsaved, who demand and pressure us to abandon our biblical values. There is room for personal compromise where Scripture is silent on a matter; however, where Scripture speaks with absolute authority, there we must never compromise! "The world, or world-system, puts pressure on each person to try to get him to conform (Rom 12:2). Jesus Christ was not 'of this world' and neither are His people (John 8:23; 17:14). But the unsaved person, either consciously or unconsciously, is controlled by the values and attitudes of this world."¹⁸

By promoting the gospel and biblical teaching, the church disrupts Satan's domain of darkness by calling out of it a people for God. By learning God's Word, Christians can identify worldly conversations and activities and either avoid them or seek to redirect them by interjecting biblical truth, which should never be done in hostility. When sharing God's Word with others it's proper to know that not everyone wants to hear God's truth, and even though we may not agree with them, their personal choices should be respected (Matt 10:14; Acts 13:50-51). We should never try to force the gospel or Bible teaching on anyone, but be willing to share when opportunity presents itself. At times this will bring peace, and other times cause disruption and may even offend. In this interaction, the growing Christian must be careful not to fall into the *exclusion trap*, in which the worldly person (whether saved or lost) controls the content of every conversation, demanding the Christian only talk about worldly issues, as Scripture threatens his pagan presuppositions. Having the biblical worldview, the Christian should insert himself into daily conversations with others, and in so doing, be a light in a dark place. He should always be respectful, conversational, and never have a fist-in-your-face attitude, as arrogance never helps advance biblical truth (2 Tim 2:24-26). The worldly-minded person may not want to hear what the Christian has to say, but he should never be under the false impression that he has the right to quiet the Christian and thereby exclude him from the conversation.

As we grow spiritually and walk with God, learning and living His Word (2 Tim 2:15; 3:16-17), we stand in opposition to Satan's world-system and sow the seeds of spiritual insurrection in the lives of those who live and walk in his kingdom of darkness. We disrupt Satan's kingdom when we share the gospel, "that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He was

¹⁸ Warren Wiersbe, *The Bible Exposition Commentary, New Testament*, Vol. 2, p. 18.

raised on the third day according to the Scriptures” (1 Cor 15:3-4). When anyone places their faith in Christ, trusting solely in Him as Savior, they are forgiven all their sins (Eph 1:7), gifted with eternal life (John 3:16; 10:28), and the righteousness of God (Rom 4:1-5; 5:17; 2 Cor 5:21; Phil 3:9). They are rescued from Satan’s enslaving power, as God rescues them from the “domain of darkness” and transfers them into “the kingdom of His beloved Son” (Col 1:13). The gospel is the only way a person can be delivered from spiritual slavery; “for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes” (Rom 1:16). Once saved, we seek to influence the thoughts and lives of other Christians through fellowship (Heb 10:23-25), prayer (Jam 5:16), edification (Eph 4:29), encouragement (1 Thess 5:11), love (1 Thess 4:9; cf. Eph 4:14-15), and words of grace (Col 4:6).

Angels and Demons - Part 9
The Sin Nature - Satan's Inside Agent

In our previous lesson, we considered Satan's world-system (*kosmos*) which continually places philosophies, values, pleasures and pressures on everyone, all of which are intended to keep people—both non-Christian and Christian—trapped in sin. Satan's world-system refers to what is outside of us; however, he has an inside agent at work in each of us, and this is called *the sin nature*. The sin nature, sometimes called “the flesh” (Gal 5:17, 19) or “old self” (Rom 6:6; Col 3:9), has a natural affinity for Satan's values and his world-system. More so, the sin nature is not eradicated from the believer during his/her time on earth, nor is it ever reformed, as though it can be made to love God. Paul wrote:

For those who are according to the flesh [Grk. *σάρξ sarx*] set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who are according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit. For the mind set on the flesh is death, but the mind set on the Spirit is life and peace, because the mind set on the flesh is hostile toward God; for it does not subject itself to the law of God, for it is not even able *to do so*, and those who are in the flesh cannot please God. (Rom 8:5-8)

Everyone knows what it's like to walk in the flesh, according to the sin nature, but only the Christian knows what it's like to walk in the Spirit, assuming he's growing in his walk with the Lord. Paul wrote, “For the flesh [sin nature] sets its desire against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; for these are in opposition to one another, so that you [the Christian] may not do the things that you please” (Gal 5:17). William MacDonald writes:

The Spirit and the flesh are in constant conflict. God could have removed the fleshly nature from believers at the time of their conversion, but He did not choose to do so. Why? He wanted to keep them continually reminded of their own weakness; to keep them continually dependent on Christ, their Priest and Advocate; and to cause them to praise unceasingly the One who saved such worms. Instead of removing the old nature, God gave us His own Holy Spirit to indwell us. God's Spirit and our flesh are perpetually at war, and will continue to be at war until we are taken home to heaven. The believer's part in the conflict is to yield to the Spirit.¹⁹

¹⁹ William MacDonald, *Believer's Bible Commentary: Old and New Testaments*, ed. Arthur Farstad (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1995), 1893.

The sin nature is resident in every person; both saved and unsaved, and is the source of internal temptation. “*The flesh* refers to that fallen nature that we were born with, that wants to control the body and the mind and make us disobey God.”²⁰ Since the fall of Adam, every person is born with a sin nature, and it is this nature that internally motivates men to rebel against all legitimate forms of authority, both human and divine. At the moment of salvation, God the Holy Spirit indwells us and gives us a new nature that, for the first time in our lives, has the capacity and desire to obey God. Because the sin nature is not removed from the believer after salvation, the believer begins to experience conflict within. “The presence of two opposing natures (not two personalities) in one individual results in conflict.”²¹

The old nature (which has its origin in our physical birth) fights against the new nature which we receive when we are born again (Gal 5:16–26). No amount of self-discipline, no set of man-made rules and regulations, can control this old nature. Only the Holy Spirit of God can enable us to “put to death” the old nature (Rom 8:12–13) and produce the Spirit’s fruit (Gal 5:22–23) in us through the new nature.²²

Only the Christian has two opposing natures, and his spiritual growth guarantees internal conflict. The sin nature, though crippled at the moment of regeneration, does not give up control without a fight, and only the spiritually advancing Christian can overcome the power and habits of the flesh, as he devotes himself to learning and living Scripture by means of the filling of the Spirit. The Christian is to “lay aside the old self...and put on the new self which in *the likeness of God* has been created in righteousness and holiness of the truth” (Eph 4:22, 24). Such language speaks to the reality that the believer has two natures, one that is corrupt and wants to please self and one that is new and wants to please God.

For the good that I want, I do not do, but I practice the very evil that I do not want. But if I am doing the very thing I do not want, I am no longer the one doing it, but sin [the nature] which dwells in me. I find then the principle that evil is present in me [the Christian], the one who wants to do good. For I joyfully concur with the law of God in the inner man [according to the new

²⁰ Warren Wiersbe, *The Bible Exposition Commentary: New Testament*, Vol. 2 (Colorado Springs, Col., Victor Publishing, 2001), 18.

²¹ Lewis S. Chafer, *He that is Spiritual* (Grand Rapids, Mich. Zondervan Publishing, 1967), 112.

²² Warren Wiersbe, *The Bible Exposition Commentary, New Testament*, Vol. 2, 480.

nature], but I see a different law [of sin] in the members of my body, waging war [causing conflict] against the law of my mind and making me a prisoner of the law of sin which is in my members. (Rom 7:19-23)

I have pondered Paul's struggle between his two natures on many occasions. Every Christian who has grown spiritually and lived for any time in this world knows exactly what Paul is saying. He writes that he wants to do good, but then finds himself doing the very opposite. On the one hand Paul states that he "joyfully concur[s] with the law of God in the inner man" (Rom. 7:22), but that he experiences a war within because of "the law of sin" which is in his flesh (Rom. 7:23). This is the Christian experience.

Torn inside with desires to do that which we know is evil and new desires to please God, we experience the rage of the battle. The internal conflict manifests itself in everyday life as the believer is tempted to sin. The source of this conflict is the old sin nature, which is the root cause of the deeds of sin. In the conflict the believer is not passive. He has a vital role in determining to whom he will give allegiance—the old nature or the new nature. From the moment a sinner trusts Christ, there is a conflict in his very being between the powers of darkness and those of light. The one who has become a member of the family of God now faces conflicts and problems that he did not have before.²³

Though the Christian will struggle all his life with his two natures, he also knows the victory is already won. The sin nature has been defeated and its strength diminished because of the believer's union with Christ (Rom 6:6, 11). At his resurrection, the Christian is guaranteed a new body in heaven that is free from the sin nature as it will be just the like body of our Lord Jesus (Phil 3:20-21).

Not only is the Christian commanded to "put on the Lord Jesus Christ," but he is to "make no provision for the flesh in regard to *its* lusts" (Rom 13:14). He must not only choose to live according to the new nature in conformity to the Spirit's guiding, but must also learn to starve the monster that is his sin nature. To "make no provision for the flesh" means the Christian is to stop exposing himself to the things of the world that excite the flesh and lead to sinful behavior. The positive action is to grow spiritually with biblical teaching, Christian fellowship, worship and prayer so that

²³ Robert P. Lightner, *Handbook of Evangelical Theology* (Grand Rapids, Mich., Kregel Publications, 1995), 206.

the believer grows strong (Acts 2:42; Eph. 4:11-16; 2 Tim. 2:15; 3:16-17; 1 Pet. 2:2; 2 Pet. 3:18). It is only by spiritual growth and drawing closer to God that the Christian glorifies the Lord and learns to live in righteousness.

Angels and Demons - Part 10 Our Christian Armor

In his letter to the church at Ephesus, the apostle Paul set forth the Christian armor which, in many ways, is a picture of the healthy Christian life. It is something we intentionally put on and use to defend ourselves when we come under attack. The assaults ultimately come from Satan who has well developed strategies of warfare and demonic soldiers to command. Satan and his fallen angels knowingly and intentionally attack. They are behind every act of terror the world has ever known, they do not relent of their activities, and they are not reformable. In addition to these fallen angels, Satan also has useful idiots—unbelievers and carnal Christians—who assist him in his efforts. These people help make up Satan’s world-system that seeks to envelop and enslave everyone it can. Satan’s system is philosophical, social, political, economic, religious, and cultural. These are all things external to us, but which are intended to penetrate our thoughts and impact our values, speech and practices. Furthermore, Satan has an inside agent within every person, which is the sinful nature which naturally resonates with all that is sinful and prideful. Warren Wiersbe writes:

As Christians, we face three enemies: the world, the flesh, and the devil (Eph 2:1–3). “The world” refers to the system around us that is opposed to God, that caters to “the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life” (1 John 2:15–17). “Society apart from God” is a simple, but accurate, definition of “the world.” “The flesh” is the old nature that we inherited from Adam, a nature that is opposed to God and can do nothing spiritual to please God. By His death and resurrection, Christ overcame the world (John 16:33; Gal 6:14), and the flesh (Rom 6:1–6; Gal 2:20), and the devil (Eph 1:19–23). In other words, as believers, we do not fight *for* victory—we fight *from* victory! The Spirit of God enables us, by faith, to appropriate Christ’s victory for ourselves.²⁴

The apostle Paul addressed the subject of spiritual forces throughout his letter to the Christians living in Ephesus (Eph 1:21; 2:2; 3:10; 4:27).²⁵ He then mentions the

²⁴ Warren W. Wiersbe, *The Bible Exposition Commentary*, vol. 2 (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1996), 56–57.

²⁵ In the first half of his letter, he wrote about the believer’s union with Christ (Eph 1:12; 2:6–7, 13; 3:6), the spiritual assets available (Eph 1:3), and the unity of Jewish and Gentile believers (Eph 2:11–22). In Ephesians 4:1 through 6:9 Paul provides practical application to his readers, telling them to *walk in a manner worthy of their calling* (Eph 4:1), to *walk in love* (Eph

armor available to them—and us—toward the close of his epistle (Eph 6:10-17). Paul opens his section about our spiritual armor, writing, “Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of His might” (Eph 6:10). The word *Finally* (Τοῦ λοιποῦ) pertains to closing matters about how to live consistently concerning their new life in Christ. There are dangers that will threaten their walk with the Lord, and these believers need a divine perspective of the world and a divine strength to live successfully in it. Harold Hoehner writes:

From Eph 4:1 to 6:9 Paul gives practical applications for the believers concerning how to live out their new position in Christ before both believers and unbelievers. Now, in his final section (6:10-20), he describes the continual warfare of wicked forces against believers and accordingly exhorts them to be strengthened in the Lord in order to be able to stand against the wicked schemes of the devil. The struggle of believers ultimately is not a human conflict but is a battle against wicked spiritual forces.²⁶

The Greek verb ἐνδυναμόω *endunamoo*, translated “be strong”, is a present passive imperative. The present tense relates to ongoing action, the passive voice means the subject receives what is provided, and the imperative mood means we are commanded to accept it. The prepositional phrase ἐν κυρίῳ *en kurio*, translated “in the Lord”, means that Jesus Himself is the sphere within which our strength is found. The strength is not in us. We are weak. It’s Him and His strength we need. We are to be strong “in the strength of His might” (Eph 6:10b). William MacDonald states:

Every true child of God soon learns that the Christian life is a warfare. The hosts of Satan are committed to hinder and obstruct the work of Christ and to knock the individual soldier out of combat. The more effective a believer is for the Lord, the more he will experience the savage attacks of the enemy: the devil does not waste his ammunition on nominal Christians. In our own strength we are no match for the devil. So the first preparatory command is that we should be continually strengthened **in the Lord and in the** boundless resources **of His might**. God’s best soldiers are those who are conscious of their own weakness and ineffectiveness, and who rely solely on Him. “God

5:2), to *walk as children of light* (Eph 5:8), and to *walk as wise men* (Eph 5:15). The subject of love is also important to Paul and he addresses it in Ephesians more than any of his other letters, using both the noun (ἀγάπη) and verb (ἀγαπάω) a total of 19 times (out of a total of 107 times throughout all his letters).

²⁶ Harold W. Hoehner, *Ephesians: An Exegetical Commentary* (Grand Rapids, Mich. Baker Academic, 2002), 820.

has chosen the weak things of the world to put to shame the things which are mighty” (1 Cor. 1:27b). Our weakness commends itself to **the power of His might**.²⁷

Paul continues, saying, “Put on the full armor of God, so that you will be able to stand firm against the schemes of the devil” (Eph 6:11). *Put on* translates the Greek verb ἐνδύω *enduo* which is an aorist middle imperative. The middle voice means we are to dress ourselves, thus acting in our own self-interest. The imperative mood means it’s a command that we can and should obey. The armor Paul described could refer to the armor God Himself wore as a warrior (Isa 11:5; 59:17); however, it was more likely drawn from the Roman guard that supervised his house arrest (Acts 26:29; 28:17; cf., Eph 3:1; 4:1; 6:20; Phil 1:7, 13; 2 Tim 1:8). Roman soldiers were seen most everywhere, so their attire would have been familiar to Paul’s audience. And just as a Roman soldier would not go into battle wearing only part of his armor, so the Christian must put on *the full armor* (πανοπλία *panoplia*) provided to him by God. Our enemy, the devil, is a brilliant commander who has manufactured schemes or strategies (μεθοδεία *methodeia*) he employs against the human race, and God’s people in particular. The same term—μεθοδεία *methodeia*—is used of false teachers who engage “in deceitful scheming” (Eph 4:14), in order to trap immature Christians with false doctrine. “The devil has various stratagems—discouragement, frustration, confusion, moral failure, and doctrinal error. He knows our weakest point and aims for it. If he cannot disable us by one method, he will try for another.”²⁸ Satan has many demons and carnally minded people on his side, and he fights dirty. As Christians, we don’t go hunting for the devil; rather, we stand firm (ἵστημι *histemi*) against his attacks when he comes against us. This is accomplished by following God’s will. Thomas Constable writes:

From other Scripture we know that Satan is behind all of our temptations having received permission to assail us from God (e.g., Job 1–2). He uses the world system and our flesh (sinful nature) as his tools. He also attacks us directly himself and through his angelic emissaries. God has given us specific instruction in Scripture about how to combat these attacks. We are to resist the devil (1 Peter 5:8–9), flee the temptations of the world system (the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life; 1 John 2:15–17; 1 Tim 6:11; 2 Tim 2:22), and deny the flesh (Rom 6:12–13; 7:18–24; 8:13). How do

²⁷ William MacDonald, *Believer’s Bible Commentary: Old and New Testaments*, ed. Arthur Farstad (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1995), 1951.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 1952.

we know the source of a given temptation so we can respond to it appropriately? Satan has consistently aimed his personal attacks at getting people to doubt, to deny, to disregard, and to disobey the revealed will of God (cf. Gen 3; Matt 4). The world system seeks to get people to believe that they do not need God but can get along very well without Him (1 John 2). The flesh tempts us to think that we can find satisfaction, joy, and fulfillment on the physical, material level of life alone (Rom 7).²⁹

Paul continues, saying, “For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places” (Eph 6:12). Though we live in a physical world and interact with other people—both saved and lost—our ultimate struggle is against unseen spiritual forces. In this verse, Paul ransacks the Greek vocabulary for power-words to describe a definite group of demonic forces he calls “rulers...powers...world forces of this darkness...[and] spiritual forces of wickedness.” Warren Wiersbe writes:

This suggests a definite army of demonic creatures that assist Satan in his attacks against believers. The Apostle John hinted that one third of the angels fell with Satan when he rebelled against God (Rev 12:4), and Daniel wrote that Satan’s angels struggle against God’s angels for control of the affairs of nations (Dan 10:13–20). A spiritual battle is going on in this world, and in the sphere of “the heavenlies,” and you and I are a part of this battle. Knowing this makes “walking in victory” a vitally important thing to us—and to God.³⁰

It could be Paul’s classifications refer to ruling demonic forces with various degrees of authority over the world, such as Generals, Colonels, Majors, and so on, right down to frontline troops. The scope of their influence is global, and their general character is wicked. I think it can be said with certainty that these fallen angels are behind all sinful pleasures and pressures that entice or push people into conformity with Satan’s world-system. We are not able to identify these unseen forces except by their activities. When someone lies, hates, steals, murders, or is enticed or pressured to commit any sin, we know the ultimate source is from Satan, his demons, his world-system, and/or the sinful nature within each of us. A person’s words and actions reveal the ultimate source of influence.³¹ To stand in opposition to these

²⁹ Tom Constable, *Tom Constable’s Expository Notes on the Bible* (Galaxie Software, 2003), Eph 6:11.

³⁰ Warren W. Wiersbe, *The Bible Exposition Commentary*, vol. 2, 57.

³¹ Examples of this are found throughout Scripture. When the Pharisees attacked Jesus, He

forces means we're in for a fight. Thomas Constable writes:

If we want to obey God and resist the devil, we are in for a struggle. It is not easy to become a mature Christian nor is it automatic. It takes diligent, sustained effort. This is part of our human responsibility in progressive sanctification. This struggle does not take place on the physical level primarily, though saying no to certain temptations may involve certain physical behavior. It is essentially warfare on the spiritual level with an enemy that we cannot see. This enemy is Satan and his hosts as well as the philosophies he promotes that people implement.³²

God has not left us defenseless against this unseen enemy. He has provided armor for our protection. Paul writes, "Therefore, take up the full armor of God, so that you will be able to resist in the evil day, and having done everything, to stand firm" (Eph 6:13). As the Son of God, Jesus had the authority to deal with Satan directly (Matt 4:1-11), and we know He interacted with demons and cast them out of men (Matt 8:16). Later, Jesus delegated authority to His disciples so they could cast out demons (Matt 10:1, 8). And, the apostle Paul also cast out demons during his missionary journeys (Acts 16:16-18; 19:11-12). But we are not commanded to engage Satan and/or his demons directly; rather, we appeal to God, who handles them Himself, or

knew the ultimate source of their words and actions, saying, "You are of your father the devil, and you want to do the desires of your father. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth because there is no truth in him. Whenever he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own nature, for he is a liar and the father of lies" (John 8:44). Later, when Jesus revealed to His disciples that He would go to the cross and die (Matt 16:21), this did not set well with Peter. Matthew records, "Peter took Him aside and began to rebuke Him, saying, 'God forbid *it*, Lord! This shall never happen to You'" (Matt 16:22). For a brief moment, Peter—a believer—became an enemy of the cross. Satan was behind Peter, motivating him to defy the Lord. Matthew records Jesus' rebuke, saying "But He turned and said to Peter, 'Get behind Me, Satan! You are a stumbling block to Me; for you are not setting your mind on God's interests, but man's.'" (Matt 16:23). Here, Jesus rebuked Peter for being Satan's mouthpiece. When Paul and Barnabas were on the island of Paphos and sharing the gospel with a proconsul by the name of Sergius Paulus (Acts 13:6-7), there was a Jewish false prophet who opposed them. Luke records, "Elymas the magician (for so his name is translated) was opposing them, seeking to turn the proconsul away from the faith" (Acts 13:8). Paul identified this man by his words and actions and rebuked him, saying, "You who are full of all deceit and fraud, you son of the devil, you enemy of all righteousness, will you not cease to make crooked the straight ways of the Lord?" (Acts 13:10). The apostle John wrote, "By this the children of God and the children of the devil are obvious: anyone who does not practice righteousness is not of God, nor the one who does not love his brother" (1 John 3:10). Again, words and actions reveal the source of influence.

³² Tom Constable, *Tom Constable's Expository Notes on the Bible*, Eph 6:12.

sends His holy angels to do the work. The command given to us as Christians is to be aware that we have an enemy that seeks our harm (1 Pet 5:8), and that he has demonic forces that war against us (Eph 6:12).³³ We stand against Satan and his demonic forces by wearing God’s armor so that when we are attacked, we will be able to resist the assault. The word *resist* translates the Greek word ἀνθίστημι *anthistemi*, which means *to stand against*. We don’t search out the fight; rather, we stand against the enemy when he comes. And, as we seek to live in God’s will, the attacks will come. Paul speaks of *the evil day*, which is the day when evil forces attack us, trying to get us to give up ground we’ve taken for Christ. And having done everything in preparation of that day, we simply stand firm. Grant Osborne writes:

The battle has been joined, and the forces of the enemy are in attack mode, coming at us fast and furiously. Paul changes his imperative from “put on” (clothing imagery) to “take up” (weapon imagery). This is a stronger verb, often used in a military setting, that speaks of an emergency situation in a battle that is already in process. The soldiers are arming themselves one piece at a time, but they are in a hurry lest the encroaching hostile forces catch them unprepared.³⁴

As Christians, we realize dark spiritual forces are at work in the world and against us. Though we live in this reality, our sphere of influence is more directly related to people around us who have been manipulated by Satan and his forces. Ours is a battle of the mind, as we pray for others and speak God’s truth in love, hoping they will turn to God and be rescued from Satan’s kingdom of darkness (Acts 26:18; Col 1:13-14). As we engage in Christian ministry, sharing the gospel and teaching God’s Word, it is our hope that “they may come to their senses and escape from the snare of the devil, having been held captive by him to do his will” (2 Tim 2:26). When people do not turn to God, but choose to follow Satan and embrace his world-system, we then focus our efforts on others, seeking their liberation from the enemy captor.

Paul describes the weapons of our armor, saying, “Stand firm therefore, having girded your loins with truth, and having put on the breastplate of righteousness” (Eph 6:14). *Stand firm* translates the Greek verb ἵστημι *histemi* which is an aorist active imperative. This implies a sense of urgency. The active voice means the subject

³³ To this, we can also add that we live in a world that is systemically hostile to God (1 John 2:15-17), and that we have a sinful nature that influences us to walk independently of the Lord (Rom 7:18, 21; 8:5-7; Gal 5:17).

³⁴ Grant R. Osborne, *Ephesians: Verse by Verse*, Osborne New Testament Commentaries (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2017), 227.

produces the action of the verb. It's our responsibility to stand against Satan and his forces. The imperative mood makes this a command. The armor is put on in order of priority. After putting on a tunic, a Roman soldier would put on a thick leather belt. This belt was used to tuck his tunic in so that his legs would be free to move about. It also helped keep the breastplate in place and held his sword. The belt of truth refers to the truth of God's Word. The palmist wrote, "The sum of Your word is truth, and every one of Your righteous ordinances is everlasting" (Psa 119:160). And Jesus prayed to the Father, saying, "Sanctify them in the truth; Your word is truth (John 17:17). Biblical truth is what should govern our lives. This is the truth of God's Word lived out daily in our thoughts, words, and actions. As we live out God's Word, this produces Christian integrity and a life of faithfulness to the Lord and others. Warren Wiersbe states:

The girdle holds the other parts of the armor together, and truth is the integrating force in the life of the victorious Christian. A man of integrity, with a clear conscience, can face the enemy without fear. The girdle also held the sword. Unless we practice the truth, we cannot use the Word of truth. Once a lie gets into the life of a believer, everything begins to fall apart.³⁵

In addition to the belt of truth, we are told to "put on the breastplate of righteousness." The *breastplate of righteousness* refers to righteous life we live in conformity to God's truth. Objectively, it is true that we are positionally righteous before God because the righteousness of Christ has been imputed to us at the moment of salvation (Rom 3:21-26; 5:17; 2 Cor 5:21; Phil 3:9); however, Paul seems to be referring to our subjective righteousness; that is, our righteous lifestyle. Harold Hoehner writes:

Like the belt of truth, the breastplate of righteousness is likely a subjective genitive. This means it refers to the believer's righteous lifestyle, of which the Christian has a part to play, as we make choices to live by God's Word. As a soldier's breastplate protected his chest from an enemy's attacks, so sanctifying, righteous living (Rom 6:13; 14:17) guards a believer's heart against the assaults of the devil (cf. Isa 59:17; James 4:7).³⁶

And Warren Wiersbe adds:

³⁵ Warren W. Wiersbe, *The Bible Exposition Commentary*, vol. 2, 58.

³⁶ Harold W. Hoehner, "Ephesians," in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures*, ed. J. F. Walvoord and R. B. Zuck, vol. 2 (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1985), 643.

This piece of armor, made of metal plates or chains, covered the body from the neck to the waist, both front and back. It symbolizes the believer's righteousness in Christ (2 Cor. 5:21) as well as his righteous life in Christ (Eph. 4:24). Satan is the accuser, but he cannot accuse the believer who is living a godly life in the power of the Spirit. The life we live either fortifies us against Satan's attacks or makes it easier for him to defeat us (2 Cor. 6:1–10). When Satan accuses the Christian, it is the righteousness of Christ that assures the believer of his salvation. But our positional righteousness in Christ, without practical righteousness in the daily life, only gives Satan opportunity to attack us.³⁷

Moving on to the next piece of armor, Paul states, “and having shod your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace” (Eph 6:15). Roman soldiers had some of the best footwear in the ancient world. Their shoes were comparable to cleats that gripped the terrain. Scripture teaches the gospel that brought us peace with God (Rom 5:1-2) is to be shared with others that they might know peace with Him and peace with other people. Because Paul presents the Christian as standing against an attack (verses 11-16), it's probably best to take his meaning as the surefootedness that comes to us in battle, knowing we have peace with God. However, it's possible Paul also envisions this as the Gospel that we bring to others as we advance in the devil's world. Thomas Constable writes:

The gospel that has brought peace to the Christian enables him or her to stand firmly against temptation. Likewise the gospel is what enables us to move forward against our enemies (cf. Isa. 52:7). The preparation of the gospel of peace probably refers to the gospel the Christian soldier has believed that enables him to stand his ground when attacked. We must be so familiar with the gospel that we can share it with others (cf. 1 Pet. 3:15).³⁸

Paul continues, saying, “in addition to all, taking up the shield of faith with which you will be able to extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one” (Eph 6:16). The Roman shield was large, approximately 2 ½ feet wide and 4 feet long. It was commonly overlaid with leather, and soldiers would wet their shields during times of battle in order to help extinguish the fiery arrows their enemy would shoot at them. And, when in battle, Roman soldiers would stand side by side with their

³⁷ Warren W. Wiersbe, *The Bible Exposition Commentary*, vol. 2, 58.

³⁸ Tom Constable, *Tom Constable's Expository Notes on the Bible*, Eph 6:15.

shields, like a wall of defense, making them practically impenetrable to attacks. The phrase *of faith* is likely a genitive of content, meaning the shield consists of faith. When we live by faith, we are able to extinguish the fiery darts that Satan throws at us, which would certainly cause damage if they got through. This faith is trust in God, His promises and commands. William MacDonald writes:

In addition, the soldier must take the shield of faith so that when the fiery darts of the wicked one come zooming at him, they will hit the shield and fall harmlessly to the ground. Faith here is firm confidence in the Lord and in His word. When temptations burn, when circumstances are adverse, when doubts assail, when shipwreck threatens, faith looks up and says, “I believe God.”³⁹

Paul adds, saying, “And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God” (Eph 6:17). The helmet obviously protects the head. Here, I believe it is designed to protect our thinking. The *helmet of salvation* is the confidence of present and future salvation we have in the Lord (John 10:28; 1 Th 5:8-9). At salvation, the believer is forgiven all sins (Eph 1:7), given eternal life (John 10:28), has peace with God (Rom 5:1), and will never face condemnation from the Lord (Rom 8:1). We know God is for us (Rom 8:29-36), and that “we overwhelmingly conquer through Him who loved us” (Rom 8:37). Thomas Constable writes:

Since Christians are to put this salvation on, the salvation or deliverance in view seems to refer to the present and future deliverance we need when under attack by Satan (cf. 1 Thess. 5:8). We have already received salvation from condemnation. We receive this present salvation (deliverance) as we receive all salvation, namely by calling on God and requesting it (cf. 1:15–23; Joel 2:32; Acts 2:21; Rom. 10:13). This salvation is evidently similar to a helmet because deliverance involves a mental choice, namely trust in God rather than self, and obedience to Him. Confidence in God becomes our salvation and so protects our thinking when we are under attack.⁴⁰

The *sword* (μάχαρα *machaira*) was the Roman offensive weapon. It was a short double-edged sword. Romans also carried spears, but Paul did not include that in his list of armor. Unlike the other pieces of armor, Paul tells us *the sword of the Spirit* is *the word of God*. The *word* (ῥῆμα *rhema*) refers to “that which is said, word,

³⁹ William MacDonald, *Believer's Bible Commentary*, 1952.

⁴⁰ Tom Constable, *Tom Constable's Expository Notes on the Bible*, Eph 6:17.

saying, expression, or statement of any kind.”⁴¹ The *sword of the Spirit* refers to the revealed word of Scripture we use to fight back when under attack. Jesus, when under assault by Satan, cited specific passages of God’s Word which were appropriate to the specific temptations (see Matt 4:4, 7, 10). William MacDonald writes:

Finally, the soldier takes **the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God**. The classic illustration of this is our Lord’s use of this **sword** in His encounter with Satan. Three times He quoted the word of God—not just random verses but the appropriate verses which the Holy Spirit gave Him for that occasion (Luke 4:1–13). **The word of God** here does not mean the whole Bible, but the particular portion of the Bible which best suits the occasion.⁴²

Paul closes, saying, “With all prayer and petition pray at all times in the Spirit, and with this in view, be on the alert with all perseverance and petition for all the saints” (Eph 6:18). Prayer is important to the Christian life, as it is the communication channel between us and God. It’s important that we know to call out to the Lord, Who is the source of all our logistical support. Praying in the Spirit means praying in the power of the Spirit. We pray for ourselves, and we pray for God’s people, who are also under spiritual attack. Harold Hoehner states:

The manner in which a soldier takes up these last two pieces of armor is suggested by two Greek participles: “praying” and “being alert.” When the enemy attacks—and **on all occasions**—Christians are to **pray continually in the Spirit** (i.e., in the power and sphere of the Spirit; cf. Jude 20). **With all kinds of prayers and requests** suggests the thoroughness and intensity of their praying. And like reliable soldiers, they are to **be keeping alert**, literally, “in all persistence” (*en pasē proskarterēsei*; the noun is used only here in the NT). Their requests are to be **for all the saints** because of Satan’s spiritual warfare against Christ and the church.⁴³

The battles we face are part of an ongoing war that will not end until Christ returns and suppresses all rebellion against Him, both demonic and human. Fighting effectively against Satan and his demonic forces requires a deep knowledge of God and His Word. Jesus had a well-developed knowledge of OT Scripture and this is

⁴¹ William Arndt et al., *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 905.

⁴² William MacDonald, *Believer’s Bible Commentary*, 1953.

⁴³ Harold W. Hoehner, “Ephesians,” in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary*, 644.

what He used to defend Himself when attacked by the devil (Matt 4:1-11).

Angels & Demons - Part 11 Satan's Strategies to Defeat God's People

The Bible reveals that Satan is the enemy of God and he attacks His people. Peter warns us, “Be of sober *spirit*, be on the alert. Your adversary, the devil, prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour” (1 Pet 5:8).⁴⁴ In his efforts, Satan employs strategies to accomplish his purposes. A strategy is a plan of action one creates and employs in order to achieve an objective. Satan's major objective is to make himself like God and rule in His place (Isa 14:12-14). But there is only one sovereign God (Isa 45:5-6), and He keeps advancing His own agenda, which cannot fail, because He cannot fail. However, Satan's desire, like his reasoning, has been corrupted by his pride (Ezek 28:17). We might say he's mad. Because Satan cannot touch God Himself, he goes after His people, seeking to frustrate our efforts as best he can. Sometimes he's permitted to have his way.⁴⁵ We help him when we think and act like him. But we guard ourselves against his attacks when we humbly submit ourselves to the Lord by learning and living His Word on a daily basis.

In this lesson, we will consider six major strategies Satan employs to attack God's people and hinder spiritual growth and ministry. The purpose of this study is to learn how Satan attacks, “so that no advantage would be taken of us by Satan, for we are not ignorant of his schemes” (2 Cor 2:11). Knowing Satan's strategies of war enables us to identify an attack and to defend ourselves by taking up the armor of God. Learning God's Word and living by faith is the key to victory. “Everybody in this world lives by faith. The difference between the Christian and the unconverted person is not the *fact* of faith, but the *object* of faith. The unsaved person trusts

⁴⁴ Unless otherwise stated, all Scripture quotes are taken from the New American Standard Bible (The Lockman Foundation, 1995).

⁴⁵ Christians who are advancing spiritually and engaging in effective ministry pose a threat to Satan's agenda. Naturally, he will oppose our efforts and try to hinder us. Paul wrote, “But we, brethren, having been taken away from you for a short while—in person, not in spirit—were all the more eager with great desire to see your face. For we wanted to come to you—I, Paul, more than once—and *yet* Satan hindered us” (1 Th 2:17-18). We're not sure why Satan was permitted to hinder Paul and his companions. Though frustrated, Paul continued to seek the Lord and to minister where an open door presented itself (Acts 14:27). But an open door of ministry does not mean there will be no opposition. In fact, Christian ministry often means there will be adversaries, as Paul wrote, “I will remain in Ephesus until Pentecost; for a wide door for effective service has opened to me, and there are many adversaries” (1 Cor 16:8-9). Jesus told the church at Philadelphia, “I know your deeds. Behold, I have put before you an open door which no one can shut, because you have a little power, and have kept My word, and have not denied My name” (Rev 3:8).

himself and other humans; the Christian trusts God. It is your faith in God that is the secret of victory and ministry.”⁴⁶

1. **Satan promotes sinful pride.** Sinful pride tempts us to think we don't need God, believing we can operate independently of the Lord, not obeying His Word or seeking Him in prayer. God hates pride. Pride was the sin that brought Lucifer down, as we are told of him, “Your heart was proud because of your beauty; and you corrupted your wisdom on account of your splendor” (Ezek 28:17 NET). The angel, Lucifer, became Satan when he set his will against the will of God (Isa 14:12-14). Satan takes every opportunity he can to promote sinful pride in others. Solomon wrote, “Everyone who is proud in heart is an abomination to the LORD” (Pro 16:5a), and “Pride goes before destruction, and a haughty spirit before stumbling” (Pro 16:18). Uzziah was king of Judah and God had blessed him greatly. But Scripture tells us, “when he became strong, his heart was so proud that he acted corruptly, and he was unfaithful to the LORD his God” (2 Ch 26:16a). When David was king, we are told, “Satan stood up against Israel and moved David to number Israel” (1 Ch 21:1).⁴⁷ From the divine perspective, we know God was angry with Israel because of some unnamed sin (2 Sam 24:1), and He permitted Satan to have his way so that the nation might be judged and humbled. Satan was glad to initiate this attack, and David's pride was the open door for national disaster (1 Ch 21:2-7). Afterwards, David humbled himself before the Lord (1 Ch 21:8-15), demonstrating humility by obedience and sacrifice (1 Ch 21:16-30). Another example of pride is seen in Nebuchadnezzar, who was a great king, but like others, sought to live independently of God. God came to him in a dream (Dan 4:1-18), which Daniel interpreted as a revelation about the king's downfall if he did not humble himself (Dan 4:19-27). The dream was intended to help Nebuchadnezzar realize “that the Most High is ruler over the realm of mankind and bestows it on whomever He wishes” (Dan 4:25). God's revelation was a warning not to steal His glory. But Nebuchadnezzar's pride kept him from accepting God's message, and twelve months later (Dan 4:29), the king said to himself, “Is this not Babylon the great, which I myself have built as a royal residence by the might of my power and for the glory of my majesty?” (Dan 4:30). Afterwards, God judged him with a mental disorder

⁴⁶ Warren W. Wiersbe, *The Strategy of Satan: How to Detect and Defeat Him* (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 1996), 95.

⁴⁷ Taking a census was permitted under the Mosaic Law (Ex 30:12); but God had not instructed David to do this thing, and David's motivation was pride, so that he would have an idea about the military strength of his kingdom (1 Ch 21:9).

that drove him to live like an animal for seven years (Dan 4:31-33). After his period of suffering, Nebuchadnezzar obtained humility and recognized God's sovereignty, and he praised Him as He deserved (Dan 4:34-37). Unfortunately, not everyone responds to God's corrective suffering, and there are many who die in their pride (Rev 9:20-21; 16:9-11). Humility is what God wants in His people. Humility is a lowliness of mind in which we realize our impoverished condition to function apart from God, His provision and power. The humble person seeks God and His will above all else and relies on Him in everything, praising Him for His goodness.

2. **Satan is a liar who twists God's Word.** Jesus said of Satan, "Whenever he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own nature, for he is a liar and the father of lies" (John 8:44b). Satan lied to Eve and deceived her to eat the forbidden fruit, and she gave some to Adam as well (Gen 3:1-7). Falling for Satan's lies had lasting consequences upon the creation and the human race (Gen 3:8-24; Rom 5:12; 8:20-22; 1 Cor 15:21-22). Satan still promotes lies; and his lies are intended to get us to turn from God and His will. Paul was concerned about the Christians at Corinth that they would fall prey to Satan's falsehoods and wrote to them, saying, "I am afraid that, as the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness, your minds will be led astray from the simplicity and purity of devotion to Christ" (2 Cor 11:3). Satan twisted Scripture in his efforts to lead Jesus away from the Father's will, and three times Jesus resisted Satan by the proper use of Scripture (Matt 4:1-11). Knowing God's Word helps us identify Satan's lies. Applying God's Word by faith enables us to resist Satan's attacks. The Christian mind is the battleground, and "We are destroying speculations and every lofty thing raised up against the knowledge of God, and we are taking every thought captive to the obedience of Christ" (2 Cor 10:5). Jesus said, "If you continue in My word, then you are truly disciples of Mine; and you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free" (John 8:31-32).
3. **Satan uses suffering to pressure us to turn from God.** Satan can, on occasion, afflict God's people with suffering (Job 1:1-2:10; Luke 13:16; Acts 10:38); but this is only done with the Lord's permission. Satan's use of suffering is intended to get us to turn away from God, who is the source of life, goodness, and strength. Job is the classic example of a believer who was attacked by Satan (Job 1:1—2:10). Though Job suffered greatly, he understood his life was in God's hands and he kept faith, saying, "Naked I came from my mother's womb, and naked I shall return there. The LORD gave and the LORD has taken away. Blessed be the name of the LORD" (Job 1:21). And on another occasion he said, "Though He slay me, I will hope in Him" (Job 13:15a). Jesus said to Peter, "Simon, Simon, behold, Satan has

demanded permission to sift you like wheat” (Luke 22:31). Satan’s request was granted. But the Lord also told Peter, “I have prayed for you, that your faith may not fail; and you, when once you have turned again, strengthen your brothers” (Luke 22:32). Peter did return to the Lord and was strengthened (John 21:15-17). The apostle Paul knew suffering and said, “there was given me a thorn in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to torment me” (2 Cor 12:7). Paul understood the reason for his suffering, and twice said it was intended “to keep me from exalting myself” (2 Cor 12:7). Paul prayed three times for the Lord to remove his suffering (2 Cor 12:8), but God denied his request, saying, “My grace is sufficient for you, for power is perfected in weakness” (2 Cor 12:9a). God refused to remove Paul’s suffering because it kept him humble and close to the Lord. Paul accepted God’s answer and, by faith, said, “Most gladly, therefore, I will rather boast about my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may dwell in me. Therefore, I am well content with weaknesses, with insults, with distresses, with persecutions, with difficulties, for Christ’s sake; for when I am weak, then I am strong” (2 Cor 12:9b-10). The key for us as Christians is to trust in God’s love and goodness when we face Satan’s attacks against our flesh. This is a faith response not born of feelings or circumstances.

4. **Satan masquerades as a messenger of light.** Satan was created as a beautiful cherub (Ezek 28:12-14), and he retains all his outward attractiveness. Inwardly he is prideful (Ezek 28:15-16), and this is part of what makes him dangerous. Satan uses his outward appearance as a disguise to deceive others, and many of his messengers do the same. Paul wrote, “Satan disguises himself as an angel of light. Therefore, it is not surprising if his servants also disguise themselves as servants of righteousness, whose end will be according to their deeds” (2 Cor 11:14-15). The Pharisees were satanic deceivers. They referred to themselves as God’s children, saying, “we have one father, God” (John 8:41b). But Jesus said of them, “You are of your father the devil, and you want to do the desires of your father” (John 8:44a). The Pharisees were very religious. They read the Scriptures, prayed, fasted, offered sacrifices, and spent much of their time at the temple. Jesus said they had “seated themselves in the chair of Moses” (Matt 23:2). This was because they coveted positions of power. Jesus said, they “tie up heavy burdens and lay them on men’s shoulders” (Matt 23:4), they “do all their deeds to be noticed by men” (Matt 23:5), and they “love the place of honor at banquets and the chief seats in the synagogues, and respectful greetings in the market places, and being called Rabbi by men” (Matt 23:6-7). But Jesus also revealed their true identity as “hypocrites” (Matt 23:13-15), “blind guides” (Matt 23:16-19), and those who “neglect justice and mercy and faithfulness” (Matt 23:23). Outwardly they

look attractive, “but inside they are full of robbery and self-indulgence” (Matt 23:25), and are “like whitewashed tombs which on the outside appear beautiful, but inside they are full of dead men’s bones and all uncleanness” (Matt 23:27), and “outwardly appear righteous to men, but inwardly you are full of hypocrisy and lawlessness” (Matt 23:28). Jesus established policy for His disciples when He told them on a previous occasion, “Let them alone; they are blind guides of the blind. And if a blind man guides a blind man, both will fall into a pit” (Matt 15:14). He also warned them, “Watch out and beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees” (Matt 16:6), by which His disciples understood *leaven* to refer to “the teaching of the Pharisees and Sadducees” (Matt 16:12b). Knowing God’s Word helps us identify and avoid Satan’s beautiful messengers, who outwardly appear righteous, but twist Scripture and promote false doctrines.

5. **Satan accuses us before God.** The apostle John tells us Satan is “the accuser of our brethren”, and he “accuses them before our God day and night” (Rev 12:10). This activity goes on in heaven before God. But there’s good news, because “we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous” (1 John 2:1). Jesus continually defends us based on His shed blood (1 Pet 1:18-19), and He clothes us in a robe of righteousness (Isa 61:10; cf., Phil 3:9). When Joshua the high priest was accused by Satan in heaven as being defiled with filthy garments unbecoming a high priest (Zec 3:1-3), the Lord handled the problem directly.

He spoke and said to those who were standing before him, saying, “Remove the filthy garments from him.” Again, he said to him, “See, I have taken your iniquity away from you and will clothe you with festal robes.” Then I said, “Let them put a clean turban on his head.” So they put a clean turban on his head and clothed him with garments, while the angel of the LORD was standing by. (Zec 3:4-5)

God then charged Joshua to “If you will walk in My ways and if you will perform My service, then you will also govern My house and also have charge of My courts, and I will grant you free access among these who are standing here” (Zec 3:7). Paul, who wrote to the Christians in Ephesus, describes God’s great mercy and love toward us (Eph 2:4), and even though “we were dead in our transgressions, [He] made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), and raised us up with Him, and seated us with Him in the heavenly *places* in Christ Jesus” (Eph 2:5-6). As a result of our heavenly position in Christ, we should now live holy and righteous lives before the Lord. Paul states, “Therefore I, the prisoner of the Lord, implore you to walk

in a manner worthy of the calling with which you have been called” (Eph 4:1). God, who makes us right in heaven, calls us to live rightly on earth. Our performance in life should represent our position in heaven.

6. **Satan empowers his false prophets to perform miracles in order to deceive.** When Moses was executing God’s plagues upon Egypt, it is recorded that three times “the magicians of Egypt did the same with their secret arts” (Exo 7:10-11; cf., 7:21-22; 8:6-7). Moses warned the Israelites who were about to enter the land that they should guard themselves against false prophets and dreamers of dreams who arise and give them a “sign or wonder”, and then seek to lead them away from God (Deut 13:1-4). Jesus warned of “false Christs and false prophets will arise and will show great signs and wonders, so as to mislead, if possible, even the elect” (Matt 24:24). And Paul spoke of the coming Antichrist, “whose coming is in accord with the activity of Satan, with all power and signs and false wonders, and with all the deception of wickedness for those who perish, because they did not receive the love of the truth so as to be saved” (2 Th 2:9-10). Those who know God’s Word and live by it will guard themselves against the deceiving power of false miracle workers.

Satan desires that we turn from God and His Word and live independently of Him. He promotes sinful pride, twists God’s Word, uses suffering to pressure God’s people, masquerades as a messenger of light, accuses us before God, and empowers false teachers to perform miracles in order to deceive. Knowledge of God’s Word informs us about Satan’s strategies, and the humble believer who lives by faith will be able to stand when he attacks.