

Angels

Cedar Springs Baptist Church

What We Teach

We must avoid two extremes on the subject of angels. We should not become preoccupied with angels, for they are not the focus of Scripture. But also we should not ignore them, for they often appear in Scripture, in the margins but still present.

Angels

Angels are spiritual beings created by God (Matt 22:30; Heb 1:14). They possess more glory and power than humans (2 Pet 2:11), yet they also are finite creatures, infinitely inferior to God and his might (Neh 9:6).

Angels are God's ministers who worship God in his heavenly court (Isa 6:1-7; Rev 4-5; Job 1:6; 1 Kgs 22:19-22) and serve his interests in the world. They convey God's revelation to his people, such as Joseph (Matt 1:20-23), Mary (Luke 1:26-28), the shepherds (Luke 2:8-15), Philip (Acts 8:26), and Paul (Acts 27:23). They are God's warriors who carry out God's sovereign rule over the world. They protect God's people (1 Kgs 6:15-17; Ps 34:7; Heb 1:14) by battling Satan and his demons on their behalf (Dan 10; 12:1), and they execute the judgment of God upon his enemies (Isa 37:36-37; Gen 19:1-13; Ps 78:43, 49; Exod 12:13, 23; Rev 6, 14-16).

We do not know whether each one of us has his own guardian angel, but we can say that all of the angels stand ready to serve God by protecting us (Matt 18:10). John Calvin concludes that the question of individual guardian angels is a moot point, for "if the fact that all the heavenly host are keeping watch for his safety will not satisfy a man, I do not see what benefit he could derive from knowing that one angel has been given to him as his especial guardian" (*Institutes* 1.14.7).

Demons

Satan and his demons are fallen angels. We do not know with certainty when and how the angels fell (Rev 12; perhaps Isa 14:12-15 and Ezek 28:11-19), but Paul indicates their sin arose from pride. He warns that leaders who "become conceited" will "fall under the same judgment as the devil" (1 Tim 3:6). James adds that "bitter envy and selfish ambition" come from the devil (Jas 3:14-15), and John says that Satan is "the accuser of our brothers who accuses them before our God day and night" (Rev 12:10).

We conclude that Satan, originally Lucifer, became overly impressed with his created gifts and sought to share in the glory of God. God dealt swiftly with his arrogant rebellion and swept Lucifer and his henchmen from heaven (2 Pet 2:4; Jude 6). Lucifer next appears in the Garden of Eden, where he deceives Eve into following his program. He tells her that she also can

be like God if she asserts herself and rebels against God's unjust rule. Once Eve complies and shares her sin with Adam, Lucifer turns on them and becomes known as Satan, "the accuser" of God's people (Gen 3:1-6; Job 1:6-11; Rev 12:9-10).

Adam and Eve were the image bearers of God, placed here to rule this world on his behalf. When they fell for Satan's temptation they handed the world over to his authority. Satan became "the ruler of this world" (John 12:31) and "the prince of the power of the air" (Eph 2:2).

Jesus has defeated Satan and his demons. Jesus came to our world to destroy the devil and "the devil's work" (Heb 2:14; 1 John 3:8). He refused Satan's offer to worship him in exchange for the world (Matt 4:8-10), and he pushed back the forces of darkness by proclaiming his kingdom's arrival through word and deed. Jesus forgave sinners, healed the sick, raised the dead, and expelled demons from their tortured hosts. The kingdom of God was on the march, and Jesus told his disciples that the success of their ministry made "Satan fall like lightning from heaven" (Luke 10:18).

Jesus decisively defeated Satan on the cross, when "having disarmed the powers and authorities, he made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them by the cross" (Col 2:15). Jesus completed his victory when he rose from the dead to "destroy him who holds the power of death—that is the devil—and free those who all their lives were held in slavery by their fear of death" (Heb 2:14-15).

We may rest in Jesus' victory over Satan. Satan remains "a roaring lion looking for someone to devour" (1 Pet 5:8), but he is now a toothless lion. We do not need to fear Satan or his demons, for "the one who is in you is greater than the one who is in the world" (1 John 4:4). We possess "the full armor of God" which has "divine power to demolish strongholds" (Eph 6:10-18; 2 Cor 10:4), and if we only "resist the devil...he will flee" from us (Jas 4:7).

We may on occasion encounter someone who is demon possessed. We may speak directly to the demon, commanding it to leave the person in the name of Jesus (Luke 9:1; 10:17; Acts 8:7; 16:18). Christians need not worry that they will become demon possessed, for the indwelling Holy Spirit will not share space with a demon. Demons may influence and oppress Christians, but they can only possess a person who has opened himself up to them by repeated sin and rebellion against God.

Because Satan and his demons can only be in one place at one time, we should avoid blaming the devil for our sin. The devil cannot make us sin, but "each one is tempted when, by his own evil desire, he is dragged away and enticed" (Jas 1:14).

Let us not do Satan any favors by choosing on our own to succumb to our sinful passions and "give the devil a foothold" (Eph 4:27). Instead, let us remember that "the God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet" (Rom 16:20). This will happen when our Lord Jesus returns. He "will overthrow" Satan "with the breath of his mouth" (2 Thess 2:8) and cast him "into the lake of burning sulfur" where he "will be tormented day and night for ever and ever" (Rev 20:10).