

WHAT YOU SHOULD KNOW ABOUT THE SPIRIT WORLD

by J. W. Jepson, D.Min.

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CHAPTER ONE: WHAT IS THIS ALL ABOUT?

When someone sees or hears the phrase, "the spirit world," any number of ideas can come to the mind.

In some it conjures up bizarre images from some scary movie. Others immediately think of Halloween ghosts and hobgoblins. Still others relate it to any one or more of a variety of new age "spiritual" beliefs and experiences, including such things as: "spirit guides," communicating with the dead, out-of-body experiences, and witchcraft.

Many sophisticated moderns dismiss the idea altogether as mere superstition, something that witch doctors practice on ignorant folk in primitive cultures.

However, a vast body of people who are knowledgeable in the Scriptures and genuine spiritual realities have a clear and balanced understanding of a subject that others reject or only guess about.

"Spirituality" is a contemporary "buzz" word. It might or might not have anything to do with religion--love, devotion and obedience to God, or to any object of worship external to ourselves. In fact, new age "spirituality" is usually subjective, focusing on a person's inner self. In effect, it is the worship of self, the pseudo-religion that is the counterfeit and antithesis of true religion.

People who are caught up in this egocentric, spurious "spirituality" are typically uninformed or at most marginally informed about what the Bible says on this vital subject. Some are sincerely searching for genuine spiritual experience. Many are disappointed with "organized religion." Some want a "spirituality" that is divorced from morality and therefore does not address their sinfulness and need of salvation. Some find it appealing to their pride because it feeds their sense of self-sufficiency. And some are led into it by liberal churches that encourage experimentation in non-biblical practices.

We must be cautious not to adopt a Pollyanna, "babes-in-the-woods" attitude toward spirituality. Not all "spirituality" is therapeutic, enlightening, and self-actualizing. To realize this one need only think of the Jim Jones tragedy, the David Koresh fiasco, the Rajneesh experience in Oregon, the Heaven's Gate cult suicides, and the whole range of occultic and Satanic options that are sucking people into their groups and entangling them in their webs.

Droves of unsuspecting people are becoming trapped in a "spirituality" that they neither understand nor in many cases from which they can extricate themselves except by the power of the gospel.

Jesus said, "You are in error because you do not know the Scriptures or the power of God" (Matthew 22:29 NIV).

People who know the word of God can and certainly should avoid these spiritual quicksands. The word of God--and where the word of God is preached, taught, and practiced--is where one must go directly and immediately to be rescued from them.

Along this same line, much interest has been shown on the subject of angels. Some of it is good; some of it, including what is shown in the media, is filled with distortion and misinformation.

What the Bible says is true in life. As on every essential subject, it provides all we need to know about the spirit world: angels, demons, and Satan.

Praying to God for the illumination of The Holy Spirit, let us explore the truth about this interesting topic.

CHAPTER TWO: ANGELS

In Colossians 1:16 we are informed that God created all things through Jesus Christ. "For by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers; all things were created by him and for him" (KJV).

Angels and demons, including Satan, are real personalities, not imaginary, mythical symbols of evil. They think, speak, and act. 1 Corinthians 13:1 mentions the languages "of men and of angels."

They are spirit beings. Sometimes they are depicted as having wings. Of course, spirit beings do not need wings. They do not need to overcome gravity in order to move through the air. Wings are depicted only to indicate their unrestricted mobility.

Spirit beings can take human form and at times they do. Hebrews 13:2 says, "Be not forgetful to entertain strangers, for thereby some have entertained angels unawares" (KJV).

Although spirit beings are supernatural, they are limited in their powers and abilities.

Originally, all spirit beings were obedient to their Creator and therefore were holy. Then, sometime before the present physical creation, one of the archangels (Satan) led a rebellion against God (see Isaiah 14:12-17 and Ezekiel 28:11-15). Many of the angels joined the rebellion. They are now the "fallen angels"--the demons. More about them later. Right now we will focus our attention on the good angels--God's angels.

The word "angel" basically means "one who is sent." In that basic definition it is sometimes applied to human beings. When applied to human beings it merely means "messenger." Here we are considering the word in its specific sense, as referring to a spirit being.

The Nature Of Angels.

Angels are innumerable. Hebrews 12:22 speaks of "an innumerable company of angels" (KJV). Innumerable does not mean "without number." Angels are created beings, and all created beings are finite. Only the Creator is infinite. It simply means that it is humanly impossible to number them.

Angels are sexless. They are popularly thought of as feminine, but the Greek word for angel (*angelos*) is actually masculine (but without a sexual connotation). Jesus said that in the resurrection, believers "neither marry, nor are given in marriage, but are as the angels of God in heaven" (Matthew 22:30 KJV. Our Lord's words are recorded also in Mark 12:25 and Luke 20:35).

Angels are strong and mighty. Psalm 103:20 says, "Bless the Lord, you His angels, who excel in strength..." (NKJV). Nevertheless, angels do not fight Satan and evil spirits in their own strength. 2 Peter 2:11 says, "Yet even angels, although they are stronger and more powerful, do not bring slanderous accusations against such beings in the presence of the Lord" (NIV). Echoing this thought, Jude 9 says that when Michael the archangel contended with the devil, he did not overcome him in his own power but rather said, "The Lord rebuke you!"

Angels are inferior to God, of course (Psalm 89:6), but are superior to human beings in this natural life. Quoting the Septuagint version of Psalm 8:5, Hebrews 2:7 says that God made man "a little lower than the angels."

Even though angels are supernatural and therefore superior to human beings, they are not to be worshiped. True worship belongs only to God. Paul wrote, "Let no one defraud you of your reward, taking delight in false humility and worship of angels, intruding into those things which he has not seen, vainly puffed up by his fleshly mind" (Colossians 2:18 NKJV).

Overawed by the dramatic revelation that he was witnessing, the apostle John fell down to worship the angel who appeared to him. Immediately, the angel stopped him. "See that you do not do that! I am your fellow servant, and of your brethren who have the testimony of Jesus. Worship God! For the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy" (Revelation 19:10 NKJV).

It happened again later, with the same remonstrance. "And when I heard and saw, I fell down to worship before the feet of the angel who showed me these things. Then he said to me, 'See that you do not do that. For I am your fellow servant, and of your brethren the prophets, and of those who keep the words of this book. Worship God'" (Revelation 22:8,9 NKJV).

The Orders Of Angels.

God does things in an orderly, organized way. His angelic kingdom is highly organized, with different orders and ranks.

First, there are the archangels. When Christ returns, it will be "with the voice of the archangel" (1 Thessalonians 4:16). Michael is a warrior angel. We meet him in the book of Daniel. He led the hosts that fought for Israel. One of the angels said to the prophet, "'Do you know why I have come to you? And now I must return to fight with the prince of Persia; and when I have gone forth, indeed the prince of Greece will come. But I tell you what is noted in the Scripture of Truth. (No one upholds me against these, except Michael your prince'" (Daniel 10:20,21 NKJV).

Michael was his "superior officer," who alone fought on his side against the leading demonic spirits assigned by Satan over Persia and Greece. Evidently, this angel and Michael together were enough to take care of their adversaries.

Michael is named again in Daniel 12:1 as leading a great future spiritual battle in the spirit world: "At that time Michael shall stand up, the great prince who stands watch over the sons of your people; And there shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation, even to that time. And at that time your people shall be delivered, every one who is found written in the book" (NKJV).

We just read about Michael in Jude 9. Also, in Revelation 12:7-9 we read again the account of Michael leading the armies of Heaven in a decisive battle where Satan and his forces were expelled from Heaven and cast down to the earth. "And war broke out in heaven: Michael and his angels fought against the dragon; and the dragon and his angels fought, but they did not prevail, nor was a place found for them in heaven any longer. So the great dragon was cast out, that serpent of old, called the Devil and Satan, who deceives the whole world; he was cast to the earth, and his angels were cast out with him" (NKJV).

Gabriel is another archangel. He is the messenger archangel. We first meet him in Daniel 8:16 "And I heard a man's voice between the banks of Ulai, which called, and said, Gabriel, make this man to understand the vision" (KJV). Later, he appeared to the prophet again: "while I was speaking in prayer, the man Gabriel, whom I had seen in the vision at the beginning, being caused to fly swiftly, reached me about the time of the evening offering. And he informed me, and talked with me, and said, 'O Daniel, I have now come forth to give you skill to understand'" (Daniel 9:21,22 NKJV).

Gabriel was very busy announcing the events surrounding the first advent of Jesus Christ, as we read in the first two chapters of The Gospel According to Luke. We will come back to it later.

The Seraphim ("burning ones") are spoken of in Isaiah 6:1,2 as the angels who attend the very throne of God. "In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord sitting on a throne, high and lifted up, and the train of His robe filled the temple. Above it stood seraphim; each one had six wings: with two he covered his face, with two he covered his feet, and with two he flew" (NKJV).

The Bible also introduces us to the Cherubim ("one who is grasped, held fast"). No, they are not chubby little baby boys with wings!

According to Ezekiel 28:14, Satan himself was once a cherub: "You were the anointed cherub who covers" (NKJV).

Cherubim serve as guardians. "So he drove out the man; and he placed at the east of the garden of Eden Cherubims, and a flaming sword which turned every way, to keep the way of the tree of life" (Genesis 3:24 KJV).

In the architecture and furnishings of the Old Testament worship, Cherubim are pictured in their guardian role. Psalm 18:10 represents them symbolically as "bearing" God's throne: "and he rode upon a cherub, and did fly" (KJV).

For interesting appearances of cherubim, read Ezekiel, chapters one and ten. Also, in Ezekiel 11:22 we read, "Then did the cherubims lift up their wings, and the wheels beside them; and the glory of the God of Israel was over them above" (KJV).

On the Ark of the Covenant, God's presence dwelled between the cherubim (see 1 Samuel 4:4; 2 Samuel 6:2; Psalm 99:1; Isaiah 37:16).

The Character Of Angels.

The good angels are "elect," that is, they are eternally chosen in the purpose and foreknowledge of God. Paul writes to Timothy, "I charge you, in the sight of God and Christ Jesus and the elect angels, to keep these instructions without partiality, and to do nothing out of favoritism" (1 Timothy 5:21 NIV). Likewise, the doom of the fallen angels is forever sealed.

Of course, the good angels are holy. Jesus promised, "When the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory" (Matthew 25:1 KJV).

The holy angels are obedient to God and accountable to Him (see Job 1:6 and 2:1). Also, remember Psalm 103:20, "Bless the Lord, you His angels, mighty in strength, who perform His word, obeying the voice of His word!" (NASB).

When Jesus was facing the ordeal of the cross, He said to impulsive Peter, "Do you think that I cannot now pray to My Father, and He will provide Me with more than twelve legions of angels?" (Matthew 26:53 NKJV). Had Jesus chosen to avoid crucifixion, all He had to do was call, and 72,000 angels would have responded. We are eternally grateful that our Lord chose instead to suffer and die to save us.

Jesus Christ is now in His glory in Heaven, "angels and authorities and powers being made subject unto him" (1 Peter 3:22 KJV). He "is the head of all principality and power" (Colossians 2:10 KJV. See also Ephesians 1:21 and Colossians 1:16).

The Ministry of Angels: The Old Testament.

Angels are "all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation" (Hebrews 1:14 KJV). They are assigned to assist believers.

Angels minister to God in praise and worship. At the creation, "all the sons of God shouted for joy" (Job 38:7 KJV). Psalm 148:2 commands, "Praise Him, all His angels; praise Him, all His hosts!" (NKJV).

In his glorious vision the prophet Isaiah heard the seraphim crying to one another antiphonally, "Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of hosts; the whole earth is full of his glory" (Isaiah 6:3 KJV).

At the birth of Jesus Christ, the angel of the Lord (probably Gabriel) appeared to some shepherds who were "keeping watch over their flock by night." He told them not to fear because he came with good news. He told them where to find the Christ child. "And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host, praising God, and saying, Glory to God in the highest..." (Luke 2:13,14 KJV).

The apostle John was given a vision of the entire host of Heaven engaged in mass worship to Jesus Christ. "And I beheld, and I heard the voice of many angels round about the throne and the beasts and the elders; and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand and thousands of thousands, saying with a loud voice, Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honor, and glory, and blessing" (Revelation 5:13,14 KJV).

Also, in Revelation 7:11,12 we see another awe-inspiring sight. "And all the angels stood round about the throne, and about the elders and the four beasts, and fell before the throne on their faces, and worshiped God, saying, Amen: Blessing, and glory, and wisdom, and thanksgiving, and honor, and power, and might, be unto our God forever and ever. Amen" (KJV).

Throughout God's workings with the human race, angels have been very much involved.

The angel of the Lord appeared to Hagar and directed her to return to Sarah, her mistress (Genesis 16:7-12). Later, the angel of the Lord rescued her and her son, Ishmael (Genesis 21:17-19).

Angels were present when the coming birth of Isaac was announced to Abraham and Sarah (Genesis 18).

Angels were involved in God's judgment on Sodom and Gomorrah and the forcible rescue of Lot and his family (Genesis 19:1-16).

The angel of the Lord stopped Abraham from sacrificing Isaac on the altar (Genesis 22:11-19).

Abraham promised his servant Eliezer that God would send an angel before him to guide him in finding a bride for Isaac (Genesis 24:7 and 40).

Angels were busy communicating with Jacob and helping him get out of trouble.

On his way east, Jacob had a dream. He saw a ladder that reached from Heaven to earth, and the angels of God were going up and down on it (Genesis 28:12). Jesus explained to us that He is the "ladder" that spans the impassable divide between God and man, and that the ministry of angels is mediated through Him (see John 1:51).

About twenty years after this dream, the angel of God spoke to Jacob in a dream, directing him to return home to the land of Canaan (Genesis 31:11-13). On his return journey, angels met him and his family and flock, and protected him when he met Esau, his estranged twin brother (Genesis 32). In his desperation he wrestled with an angel all night until daybreak as a demonstration of his determination to receive the blessing he so urgently needed (32:24-32). Of course, the angel only sparred effortlessly with Jacob. It was Jacob who needed to exercise his undaunted faith. The prophet Hosea referred to this event: "he wrestled with the angel and prevailed" (Hosea 12:4 NASB).

And then there was Moses. As he tended the flock of his father-in-law, "the angel of the Lord appeared unto him in a flame of fire out of a bush" (Exodus 3:2 KJV). Stephen mentioned this event in his defense before the council (Acts 7:30).

Angels were directly involved in the giving of the law to Moses on Mount Sinai. In Psalm 68:17 we read "The chariots of God are twenty thousand, even thousands of angels; the Lord is among them, as in Sinai, in the holy place" (KJV). Galatians 3:19 says that the law was set in place by angels. Stephen also referred to this event in his defense (Acts 7:38), and he concluded his indictment of the unbelieving council members with the penetrating charge that they had received the law by the arrangement of angels and had not kept it (verse 53)! In the same vein the Epistle to the Hebrews warns, "For if the word spoken by angels was steadfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompense of reward, how shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation...? (Hebrews 2:2,3 KJV).

The angel of God protected ancient Israel and escorted them in their journeys.

"And the angel of God, which went before the camp of Israel, removed and went behind them" (Exodus 14:19 KJV).

"Behold, My angel shall go before you" (Exodus 32:34 NASB).

"But when we cried out to the Lord, He heard our voice and sent an angel and bought us out from Egypt" (Numbers 20:16 NASB).

"The angel of His presence saved them" (Isaiah 63:9 KJV).

Read also Exodus 23:20-23 and Exodus 33:2.

After Israel completed their forty-year wandering in the wilderness, they were ready to go in and possess the promised land. As they moved north, along the east side of the Jordan river, they camped near Moab. There they encountered the Midianites. In desperation Balak, the Moabite king, attempted to hire Balaam to curse Israel.

Balaam was a strange character. He was not known as a righteous man, only as a professional "blesser and curser," a sort of religious "hired gun."

At first Balaam refused the deal, but soon he gave in to his desire for the money. As Balaam went to meet Balak, an angel stood in his way to oppose him. Balaam should have given up the whole idea right then and there. Yes, he offered to turn back, but it did not come from his heart. Because there was no real repentance, God let him go on his own way. We read the fascinating details in Numbers, chapters 22 through 24.

Eventually the Israelites crossed the river Jordan and stood poised before the city of Jericho. The situation was tense. At the height of the drama, an angel in human form stood opposite Joshua, a sword drawn in his hand.

"And Joshua went to him and said to him, 'Are you for us or for our adversaries?' And he said, 'No, rather I indeed come as captain of the host of the Lord'." (Joshua 5:13,14 NASB).

On one occasion during the lifetime of Joshua, the angel of the Lord rebuked the nation of Israel for failing to complete the explicitly assigned task of executing divine justice on the wicked inhabitants of Palestine (see Judges 2:1-5).

On one occasion when God delivered Israel from oppressing Canaanites during the time of the Judges, God gave a song of victory to the prophetess Deborah. Her song included this scathing denunciation against the inhabitants of a town that had refused to commit themselves to the struggle against the enemy: "'Curse Meroz,' said the angel of the Lord. 'Utterly curse its inhabitants; because they did not come to the help of the Lord, to the help of the Lord against the warriors'." (Judges 5:23 NASB).

Because of king David's sin in numbering the people, God sent an angel with authority to destroy Jerusalem. Early in the action, at the point when appropriate had been accomplished, God called a halt and commanded the angel to suspend the operation. This sad event is recorded in both 2 Samuel 24 and 1 Chronicles 21.

King David knew the power of the angels. In Psalm 35:5&6 he called for the angel of the Lord to chase his enemies.

Angels fed the prophet Elijah during a time of drought (1 Kings 19:5,7). How is that for excellent dining service!

The angel of the Lord directed Elijah to intercept the messengers of the ailing king Ahaziah of northern Israel and give them a message to deliver to the king from God (see 2 Kings 1:2-4). That triggered a series of dramatic events, including a directive from the angel to Elijah to allow the soldiers to escort him to the king (verse 15).

For more high adventure involving Elijah and angels, read 2 Kings 6:8-23.

Now let's move on to the time of Hezekiah, king of Judah. When the cruel Assyrians threatened Jerusalem during Hezekiah's reign, the angel of the Lord struck down 185,000 Assyrian invaders in one night! That's that force of a nuclear bomb without harm to the environment! This demonstrates the power of even one of God's warrior angels. This event is recorded three times in sacred history: 2 Kings 19:35; 2 Chronicles 32:21; Isaiah 37:36.

The prophet Daniel records that one night the Babylonian king Nebuchadnezzar had a dream that included angels. The pagan king called them "watchers" (Daniel 4), though he had earlier used the word, "angel," in his interpretation of the deliverance of the three Hebrews from the fiery furnace (see Daniel 3:28).

When Daniel himself had been delivered out of the lions' den, he reported to Darius, the new Medo-Persian ruler, "My God sent His angel and shut the lions' mouths..." (Daniel 6:22 NKJV).

Angels were very actively involved in communicating God's revelation to Daniel concerning future events (see Daniel 7:16; 8:15-17; 9:21, 9:23; 10:5, 10:11, 10:21; 12:6,7).

As we saw earlier, angels appeared to the prophet Ezekiel in very dramatic ways.

Angels communicated God's word to the prophet Zechariah (Zechariah 1:8-19; 2:3; 3:1-10; 4:1-14; 5:1-11; 6:4).

The Ministry Of Angels: The New Testament.

From the Biblical data, we have a vivid picture of angelic activity throughout the history of God's dealings with the human race before the first advent of Christ. We move now into the New Testament and explore the ministry of angels in this Christian era.

It is important to remind ourselves that in this New Testament dispensation angels are messengers, not mediators. There is now only one Mediator, Christ Jesus (1 Timothy 2:5). Even

the ministry of angels is now mediated through Christ. We noted this fact in our reference to Jacob's dream of a ladder (Genesis 28) and our Lord's explanation (John 1:51).

Angels were directly involved in the events surrounding the first advent of Christ. They announced the conception of John the Baptist, the forerunner of Jesus (Luke 1:11,13,19,36).

Angels announced the conception of Jesus Christ in the womb of the virgin Mary (Luke 1:25-30).

It was probably the angel Gabriel who brought the wonderful news to Joseph (Matthew 1:20,21).

Angels announced the birth of the Savior to the shepherds (Luke 2:9-12,15).

Angels ordered Joseph and Mary to take the baby Jesus to Egypt for safety, and also to return when the danger was past (Matthew 2:13,19-21).

Angels appeared to Jesus and assisted Him after His temptation by Satan (Matthew 4:11).

Angels strengthened our Lord in His agony in Gethsemane (Luke 22:43).

Over 72,000 angels were poised to rescue Jesus at the moment of His arrest had He asked the Father for them (Matthew 26:53).

At the resurrection of Jesus Christ, the angel of the Lord rolled away the stone from the entry of the tomb and sat on it (Matthew 28:2).

Angels witnessed the resurrection of Jesus Christ. According to 1 Timothy 3:16 He "appeared in a body, was vindicated by the Spirit, was seen by angels, was preached among the nations, was believed on in the world, was taken up in glory" (NIV). Read also Matthew 28:2-7; Luke 24:23; John 20:12.

Angels also appeared to the cloud-gazing disciples and announced the ascension of our Lord and also the fact and manner of His future return.

"Men of Galilee, why do you stand gazing up into heaven? This same Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will so come in like manner as you saw Him go into heaven" (Acts 1:11 NKJV).

Other angelic activities are described in the Bible. Luke 16:22 records that when Lazarus died, angels carried him to "Abraham's bosom," that is, to Paradise.

John 5:4 relates that an angel came down at a certain season to the pool of Bethesda and troubled the waters. Tertullian, an ancient church father, mentions verse 4 (c. 200 AD), and it is contained in Codex Alexandrinus, a fifth century AD manuscript. It is absent from some other manuscripts, most of which are a century or more later than Tertullian.

We now enter The Acts Of The Apostles and follow the ministry of angels in the early Church.

The angel of the Lord supernaturally opened the doors of the prison where the apostles were being held and instructed them to "go, stand and speak in the temple to the people all the words of this life" (Acts 5:18,19).

The angel of the Lord ordered Philip the evangelist to go south and follow the road from Jerusalem to Gaza to the desert area (Acts 8:26). That put him in a position to meet up with the Ethiopian eunuch and share the gospel with him.

Cornelius was a Roman centurion who was devoutly seeking the true God, the God of Israel. God honored his honest and sincere search by sending an angel to instruct him to send for the apostle Peter to come and bring the gospel to him and his household. We read the dramatic account in Acts, chapter ten.

When Peter was in prison awaiting his expected execution the next day, "Peter was sleeping, bound with two chains between two soldiers; and the guards before the door were keeping the prison. Now behold, an angel of the Lord stood by him, and a light shone in the prison; and he struck Peter on the side and raised him up, saying, 'Arise quickly!' And his chains fell off his hands. Then the angel said to him, 'Gird yourself and tie on your sandals'; and so he did. And he said to him, 'Put on your garment and follow me.' So he went out and followed him, and did not know that what was done by the angel was real, but thought he was seeing a vision. When they were past the first and the second guard posts, they came to the iron gate that leads to the city, which opened to them of its own accord; and they went out and went down one street, and immediately the angel departed from him. And when Peter had come to himself, he said 'Now I know for certain that the Lord has sent His angel, and has delivered me...' (Acts 12:6-11 NKJV).

Not long afterward, king Herod Agrippa (the one who had imprisoned Peter) gave a flowery speech at Tyre. As he basked in the shallow adulation of the audience "the angel of the Lord smote him, because he gave not God the glory; and he was eaten of worms, and gave up the ghost" (Acts 12:23).

As the ship carrying the apostle Paul lurched through the stormy waters of the Mediterranean, the angel of God stood by him, saying, "Do not be afraid, Paul; you must be brought before Caesar; and indeed God has granted you all those who sail with you" (Acts 27:23 NKJV).

Angels were actively involved in carrying the special revelation of the Apocalypse to the apostle John on the island of Patmos. Angelic involvement is mentioned at least twenty times in the Book of Revelation.

The Present And Future Role Of Angels.

Angels witness our worship (1 Corinthians 11:10). Angels come into our church services from the holy and awesome presence of Almighty God. May they find the same awesome presence of God among us!

Angels know and delight in the gospel (see Ephesians 3:9-10). This passage tells us that the angels now see in the Church "the manifold wisdom of God." When Satan and the angels who followed him rebelled against God, the angels who remained faithful saw a display of the justice of God in the ultimate judgment He pronounced on them. A breach had been made in God's perfect kingdom. The moral integrity of Heaven had been violated. What would God do?

The angels watched as God created the human race, then as Adam and Eve and their descendants became progressively corrupt, then as God intervened with a universal flood. They watched as humanity started over again with Noah and his family. As time went by things did not look very promising. Sin became epidemic again.

What is God up to?

Ah, Abraham. God had a man, then a family, then a nation. Plagues in Egypt. Miracles. The Red Sea. Moses. Sinai. The divine law.

To the angels it all seemed to be coming together.

Then came the set backs. Rebellion. Forty years in the wilderness.

Joshua. The crossing of the Jordan. Jericho. Divine justice on an entire Palestinian culture that become so morally corrupt that it had forfeited its privilege to exist.

Then came hundreds of years of Israelite failings, interspersed with periodic renewal under the leadership of strong judges. The overall trend was downward.

A kingdom. A tentative start with Saul. Then came David. A covenant. A strong nation. Solomon.

Oh, no! It's happening again. The nation splits in two. Wicked kings drag the people of God lower and lower. Surrounding nations despise them.

The northern kingdom collapses. Judah struggles on. Hopeful times come under Hezekiah, and later, Josiah.

But Manasseh! His long, wicked reign put the people so far down into idolatry and its cruel, violent practices that they were beyond restoration.

The Babylonians invade. Jerusalem is destroyed. The very temple of the living God is demolished. The people are carried away into captivity.

After seventy years from the start of the captivity, a remnant of about fifty thousand return and begin rebuilding. It certainly did not look promising. And the next few hundred years did nothing to raise angelic optimism as they watched the Jews struggle under one oppressor after another.

Yes, the angels watched all of this. What is going on? Are the purposes of the eternal, Almighty God failing? They witness God's patience, forbearance, and mercy with a disappointing covenant people.

Still, through it all the quality of God's character that has been most prominent is His justice. Ever since the fall of Satan and his angels, the holy angels have had a fully developed view of the justice of God as they watched His judgments on the wicked. Generation after generation of the earth's population have gone into eternity in their sins, while God seems to be engaged in a futile attempt to raise up a chosen people who will be His true witnesses to the world.

All appearances seem to point to a cosmic failure!

Would that be forever the incomplete way the angels would know God? Would they have a full revelation of His justice without a commensurate and compensating full revelation of His mercy?

But what is this?

Something is happening! The Godhead is in dramatic action! In His Second Person, God is taking upon Himself full humanity. The Third Person, The Holy Spirit, is overshadowing a Jewish virgin. The greatest miracle of the ages has taken place--Deity has become united with humanity in Mary's womb!

The angels are astir. Heavenly messengers are dispatched with astonishing news--to Mary, to Zachariah, to Joseph.

Then it happened! In a lowly stable in Bethlehem the Son of God was born. Gabriel the archangel had announced His name--JESUS! He is Immanuel--God with us.

Excitement rolls through the universe. The heavenly hosts burst out in thunderous praise: "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men" (Luke 2:14).

Angels watch over Him. They direct Joseph and Mary to take Him into Egypt, then tell them when it is safe to return.

Angels strengthen Him after His temptation. They observe His ministry. Then comes the agony of Gethsemane; an angel rushes to strengthen Him. And then the arrest. As was mentioned previously, over 72,000 angels are ready to rescue Him should He ask the Father for them. But He does not. He goes to the cross, suffers, dies, and is buried in a tomb.

Never had the angels witnessed the full display of the mercy of God. Now they see the complete revelation of God's character, and it is beautiful beyond description!

But that is not the end. On the third day, an angel is sent on a special assignment--"roll that stone away and sit on it!" Jesus rises from the dead and walks out of the tomb. Two more angels were posted inside the now empty tomb to announce His resurrection to the astonished women.

Yes, it is clear that God does have a plan and it is succeeding--gloriously. Thousands of Jews are believing in their Messiah. Salvation has come to Israel!

That is still not all. The drama continues to unfold before the heavenly hosts. The good news is spreading beyond Jerusalem, beyond Judea, beyond Samaria--to the whole world! The apostles are forging ahead, becoming a spectacle to the angels (1 Corinthians 4:9). Gentiles are coming in. The Church Universal has emerged, and it is growing awesomely.

Toward the end of the first century AD, an angel is sent to the apostle John with an inspired "video" into the future. And what does John see? "A great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, stood before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands" (Revelation 7:9)

Hallelujah!

Yes, "now to the principalities and powers in heavenly places" is "known by the Church the manifold wisdom of God" (Ephesians 3:10).

Yes, these are "things the angels desire to look into" (1 Peter 1:12).

The angels will remain on duty until the end of this present age.

Jesus Christ is our Mediator. God's grace and blessings to us come through Him, including the ministry of angels. Jesus said, "You shall see heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man" (John 1:51 NKJV). He was referring to Jacob's vision of a ladder that extended from heaven to earth (Genesis 28:12). In other words, Jesus Himself is the "angels' ladder." The ministry of angels to believers is mediated through Him.

"The angel of the Lord encamps around those who fear Him, and rescues them (Psalm 3:7 NASB). "He will give His angels charge concerning you, to guard you in all your ways" (Psalm 91:11 NASB).

Jesus warned, "See that you do not look down on one of these little ones. For I tell you that their angels in heaven always see the face of my Father in heaven" (Matthew 18:10 NIV).

"Do not forget to entertain strangers, for by so doing some people have entertained angels without knowing it" (Hebrews 13:2 NIV).

Angels are also God's agents to execute divine judgment. Revelation 16:1-9 introduces us to the seven angels who hold the seven bowls full of God's wrath, awaiting His command to pour them out upon those who practice evil.

Jesus told us that the angels do not know when He will return (Matthew 24:26; Mark 13:32). But when He does return, the angels will accompany Him. He said, "When the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory" (Matthew 25:31 KJV. See also Matthew 16:27; 24:31; Mark 8:38; 13:27; 2 Thessalonians 1:7).

Jesus also said that the angels will be the "reapers." (Matthew 13:39-42,49,50).

The angels will witness the judgment. Jesus said that whoever confesses Him before men He will confess before the angels of God, and whoever denies Him before men He will deny before them (Luke 12:8,9).

In Revelation 20:1 the Bible tells us that an angel is given the privilege to throw Satan into the pit for a thousand years. After all the evil that Satan has done in the sight of the holy angels, any one of them would have been most happy to have that privilege!

In fact, Revelation 14:9 and 10 says that Satan shall be tormented forever in the presence of the angels. They will have an ever-present reminder of the final and permanent consequences of rebellion against a holy and just God--in case any of them might ever get the notion of trying it.

In Revelation 21:17 it is recorded that angels guard the New Jerusalem.

And, finally, Jesus tells us that there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents (Luke 15:7,10). They know what will happen to people who disobey God. Each person who repents and is saved is like a person being rescued from a burning building.

If you are not right with God, you can be the next one to send a wave of joy through Heaven by turning to God from sin and being reconciled to Him by faith in His son, Jesus Christ.

Do it now.

CHAPTER THREE: SATAN

One day as a pastor was walking down the street, he happened to meet a Christian brother who was going through a difficult time. As they stood and chatted, he told the minister about the problems he was facing.

During the conversation he said something like this: "I don't know why things aren't working out as they should. I've been rebuking the devil all day."

The pastor replied, "You've been talking to the wrong person all day."

Spiritual warfare is real. "We wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places" (Ephesians 6:12 KJV). At the same time, we should not pay too much attention to Satan. A life of victory is focused on the Lord, not on the devil.

Nevertheless, it is important to have a realistic, Biblical understanding of our adversary.

Satan is a real personality, not a mythical symbol of evil. He is a spirit being. He does not have horns or a tail. He does not wear a red suit, and he does not carry a pitchfork. He can take various forms and even transform himself into an angel of light, as we shall learn.

Satan is a created being. Because he is created, he is a limited being. He is not all-powerful, all-knowing, and everywhere present at once. Only God is unlimited as to His being.

But why did God create Satan? Some people teach that God does not know the future completely and therefore did not know what Satan would do. But that makes God a captive of time, a myopic "deity" who makes horrible mistakes. Such a being would not be God but only a caricature of Him.

God has not given us in this present life a full explanation as to why He created Satan. Perhaps the ultimate answer will be something similar to the reason why there always has to be an opposing team in an athletic contest. Without an opposing team there would be no need to be our best and do our best. The victory would be easy, but it would mean nothing.

Because Satan is a finite, created being, he has a history. The Bible gives us a brief glimpse into his origin and early history in two classic passages.

In Isaiah 14:12-17 the prophet speaks directly to the king of Babylon. But some of the things that are said in the prophecy cannot apply to any human being. Thus the king of Babylon becomes what is known as a "prophetic type" of someone else, and the only person who fits the description is Satan.

As you read the prophecy, see if you can identify the parts that apply to Satan.

The same is true in Ezekiel 28:11-15. Here the prophet speaks directly to the king of Tyre. Again, some of the parts of this prophecy cannot apply to the king of Tyre himself. Thus he also is a prophetic type of Satan.

Again, as you read the prophecy, see if you can identify the parts that apply to Satan.

Various names and appellations are given to Satan in the Bible. As such names usually do, they tell us something about Satan's character and activities.

1. Of course, he is called Satan, which means opposer or adversary (Job 1:6).
2. The King James Version and New King James Version call him Lucifer. Most modern versions do not use this word, preferring to use the definition of the word instead--"shining one," or "son of the morning" (Isaiah 14:12).
3. He is called the devil, a name that is commonly used. It means "an accuser, a slanderer" (Matthew 4:1).
4. He is referred to as the tempter (Matthew 4:3).
5. He is called "Abaddon" and "Apollyon," meaning "destroyer." Revelation 9:11 identifies him as "the angel of the bottomless pit" or abyss.
6. He is "Belial," meaning "worthless," "reckless," "lawless one" (2 Corinthians 6:15).
7. He is "Beelzebub" ("Beelzebub"), that is, "prince of devils" (Matthew 12:24).
8. He is the "dragon" (Isaiah 27:1), and the "serpent" (Revelation 12:9).
9. He is "the accuser of the brethren" (Revelation 12:10).
10. He is "the prince of the power of the air" (Ephesians 2:2). That is, his present activity is now on this earth, including its atmosphere.
11. Jesus called him "the prince of this world" (John 14:30).
12. In 2 Corinthians 4:4 he is called "the god of this world."
13. He is the wicked one in Matthew 13:19. In verses 23 and 28 he is identified as "the enemy."
14. He is called "your adversary, the devil" in 1 Peter 5:8, and is likened to a roaring lion.
15. Jesus called him a liar and a murderer (John 8:44). He is the arch-deceiver, and he will always lie to you.

Satan's Nature And Character.

The Bible reveals Satan's nature and character. First, as was mentioned, he is not divine. He is a powerful being, but that power is limited. So are his abilities. For example, in Job 1:12 and 2:6 he says that he has been going to and fro, and up and down, in the earth. He is not referring to his influence, but to his actual being. This tells us that Satan is not omnipresent, that is, he is not everywhere present at once. That belongs only to God.

We notice also that Satan did not know what Job would do in times of adversity. He predicted that Job would curse God to His face, but he missed his guess.

It comes as no surprise to us to say that Satan is wicked. "He who sins is of the devil, for the devil has sinned from the beginning" (1 John 3:8 NKJV). After he was created, this archangel did not bother to bond to his Creator, to know and love Him, to consider the wisdom and blessedness of obeying Him, to be humbly grateful for his status. Instead, realizing his own power and exalted position as the anointed and covering cherub (Ezekiel 28:14,16), he chose to become proud and thus to turn his powers to the pursuit of his own selfish ends in destructive disregard for the interests of God and of the universe. He deliberately, openly, totally, and recklessly violated the universal moral law--the law of love.

Pride was, and still is, his chief sin. Pride is self-will. It is putting self first. It is the essence of all sin. It is implacably hostile to God and to His creation. Notice in Isaiah 14 that five times he said, "*I will.*"

That is why the apostle Paul warned Timothy not to put a "novice" (new believer) into the ministry "lest being lifted up with pride, he fall into the condemnation of the devil" (1 Timothy 3:6). That is, by being lifted up with pride, the prematurely elevated new believer will fall into the same condemnation that Satan fell into. That would be an eternal tragedy beyond imagination.

Satan is presumptuous. According to Job 1:6 and 2:1, he presumed to barge right into the holy presence of Almighty God. What unmitigated gall! Also, what marvelous forbearance on the part of God. The only thing that kept (and still keeps) Satan out of eternal torment was and is the fact that his usefulness to the sovereign purposes of God is not yet over. We must remember that God's ways are far above our ways and His thoughts are far above our thoughts (Isaiah 55:8,9).

Satan is full of raging anger. Frustrated selfishness is a monster, and Satan is the supreme example of frustrated selfishness. Realizing his defeat and ultimate doom, he is bitterly engaged in a massive "scorched earth" strategy to do all the harm he can while he can. He is fierce and cruel. He has declared all-out war and all who stand with God. He is a "roaring lion, going about seeking whom he may devour" (1 Peter 5:8). "Woe to the inhabitants of the earth and of the sea! for the devil is come down unto you, having great wrath, because he knoweth that he hath but a short time" (Revelation 12:12 KJV).

In all of this Satan is very subtle, very tricky. Referring to the way Satan deceived Eve, our first mother, the apostle Paul wrote, "I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through

his subtlety, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ" (2 Corinthians 11:3 KJV. "Simplicity" here means sincere, single-hearted devotion).

In verse 14 Paul goes on to write that "Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light." So we must beware of "angels" who introduce any "gospel" other than the historic, divinely established gospel of Jesus Christ and His inspired apostles! Not every thing that is supernatural or "spiritual" is genuinely from God.

Ephesians 6:11 urges believers to "put on the whole armor of God" so we can stand against the tricks of the devil. Without the helmet of salvation, the breastplate of righteousness, the shield of faith, and the sword of the Spirit, a person is vulnerable to the doctrines and devices of the devil and his cohorts.

The Works Of Satan.

The Bible also reveals the works of Satan. And what the Bible reveals we also observe in real life around us.

The picture that emerges from the Biblical record shows that Satan has a well-organized demonic system. Daniel, chapter 10 records statements that were made to the prophet by an angel. "The prince of the kingdom of Persia withstood me one and twenty days; but, lo, Michael, one of the chief princes, came to help me..." (verse 13). "Now will I return to fight with the prince of Persia; and when I am gone forth, lo, the prince of Grecia shall come" (verse 20). These "princes" of Persia and Greece were not human rulers but high-ranking demons in charge of Satan's work in those countries.

Also, the highly organized structure of Satan's kingdom is implied in our Lord's message to the first century church in the city of Pergamos. "I know your works, and where you dwell, where Satan's throne is..." (Revelation 2:13 NKJV). Pergamos was a center of the imperial cult--the State religion, with its worship of the emperor--and therefore a center of demonic forces and activity.

With such a vast network of organized demonic forces at his command, almost all of Satan's work is done by and through others.

In the parable of the sower and the seed (Matthew 13:39), Jesus said that the devil is enemy who sowed the "tares" (darnel) among the wheat. The darnel are "the children of the wicked one," that is, the world of sinners. It is obvious that Satan did not do all of the "sowing" by himself. Many others are busy doing his work. Nevertheless, it is still Satan's work, even if done by others.

Satan works in people and through people who follow him and his rebellion. Wittingly or otherwise, they do what he wants them to do. He knows how to manipulate them through their

personal desires, ideas, prejudices, and ignorance. He is "the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient" (Ephesians 2:2 NIV).

False teachers are Satan's servants. "For such are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ. And no marvel; for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light. Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also be transformed as the ministers of righteousness..." (2 Corinthians 11:13-15 KJV).

The context of this passage shows that these were people who preached "another Jesus" and were animated by "another spirit" than the Holy Spirit.

Even genuine believers can unknowingly say and do what Satan suggests to the mind. A classic example of this is Peter when he blurted out, "Far be it from You, Lord; this shall not happen to You!" (NKJV). Although in his reply the Lord addressed Peter, His words were directed essentially to Satan, the real source of Peter's thoughts and words. "Get behind me, Satan!" the Lord commanded (see Matthew 16:21-23).

We must think and speak Biblically, being careful not to entertain thoughts and say things that are contrary to God's word.

As we saw from Isaiah 14, Satan weakens nations and causes desolations. The entire panorama of human history is a continual demonstration of the political and social devastation that human beings cause when they allow Satan to stimulate their basest of passions.

Satan resists and opposes God's people and His works. "And he showed me Joshua the high priest standing before the angel of the Lord, and Satan standing at his right hand to resist him" (Zechariah 3:1 KJV). "And Satan stood up against Israel, and provoked David to number Israel" (1 Chronicles 21:1 KJV).

Satan tries to hinder the spread of the gospel and the work of the ministry. Paul wrote to the church at Thessalonica, "We would have come unto you, even I Paul, once and again, but Satan hindered us" (1 Thessalonians 2:18 KJV).

Satan instigates persecutions. Jesus said to the church at Smyrna, "Do not fear what you are about to suffer. Behold, the devil is about to cast some of you into prison..." (Revelation 2:10 NASB).

Satan inspires "lying wonders." Again, everyone needs to be aware that not everything that is supernatural or "spiritual" is of God. Millions of misinformed and spiritually hungry (but gullible) people, including many who are highly educated, are caught up in the web of new age pseudo-spirituality. They are spiritual "babes in the woods," religious Pollyannas, "fresh meat" for demonic predators. Like the antichrist, they come according to "the working of Satan... with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish, because they receive not the love of

the truth that they might be saved" (from 2 Thessalonians 2:9,10 KJV. See also Revelation 13:4).

From 1 Timothy 3:6-7, and also 2 Corinthians 2:10-11, we learn that some of Satan's traps are pride, a bad reputation, and an unforgiving attitude.

Satan knows the Bible very well, and he is a master at twisting what it says. When he suggested that Jesus show off by throwing Himself off the pinnacle of the temple, he quoted Psalm 91:11-12. Jesus corrected Satan's mis-use of The Scriptures by countering, "It is written..." (see Matthew 4:6; Luke 4:10).

It is important that we correctly and thoroughly understand Satan's control over people who follow him. He does this in various ways and to varying degrees, including: oppression, obsession, and possession. Here again, almost all of Satan's influence over people is actually exerted by demons, not by Satan personally although it is still Satan's work and he is responsible for instigating and leading it.

So how does Satan work in people's lives? One of his most familiar and successful tactics is temptation. He is repeatedly referred to as the tempter. He tempts both believers and unbelievers. As we noted, he tried his tricks even on Jesus. References to his temptations are found in the Bible in Genesis 3; 1 Chronicles 21:1; Matthew 4:1-3; 16:23; Luke 22:31,32; 1 Corinthians 7:5; 1 Thessalonians 3:5.

Satan blinds people's minds to the truth. We have already referred to the parable of the seed and the sower, where Jesus said that the wicked one (Satan) "catches away the seed" that was sown in the heart (Matthew 13:19). He does this by diverting the attention; by instilling wrong values and priorities into the mind; by suggesting to mind selfish reasons to reject the truth; by the contrary suggestions, arguments of others; by social pressures and distractions; and by a huge arsenal of other weapons that he has to direct against people's thinking.

"If our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost; in whom the god of this world has blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them" (2 Corinthians 4:3,4 KJV).

Satan's objective is to secure the consent of the person's will. He cannot succeed in destroying the person unless he or she yields to him. After that, the devil has a "field day" wreaking havoc in the person's life and relationships.

The Bible calls the consent of the will the "opening of the heart," whether it be to God or to Satan.

John 13:2 records that Satan "put into the heart" of Judas Iscariot to betray Jesus. That is, Satan gained the consent of Judas Iscariot's will. Satan built the wrong purpose in him, first by

suggesting thoughts to his mind, then by appealing to his desires, and finally by successfully urging him to make the actual decision.

We see the same process in Ananias. "Ananias, why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit?" (Acts 5:3 NASB). Satan did it, but Ananias let him by listening to his appeals. In the next verse Peter said to Ananias, "Why have you conceived this thing in your heart?" Satan planted the seed thought, and Ananias accepted it and put it into practice.

The ultimate degree of Satanic influence in a person is *possession*. Satan did not stop at putting into the heart of Judas Iscariot to betray Jesus. John 13:27 records that after Judas received the bite of food Jesus offered to him, "Satan entered into him."

When Satan succeeds in gaining the voluntary consent of a person's will to disobey God, that person then becomes his willing captive. He takes them captive for his will (2 Timothy 2:26).

When a person ceases to follow Christ, he or she has switched allegiance and begins to follow Satan. Paul told Timothy the sad news that "some are already turned aside after Satan" (1 Timothy 5:15 KJV).

Sinners not only follow Satan; morally and spiritually they are Satan's children. In their hearts they are reproductions of Satan's character; in their conduct they are reproductions of Satan's actions.

Remember the parable of the sower (Matthew 13)? Jesus said that the "tares" (darnel) are the children of the wicked one (verse 38). He said to the religious hypocrites, "You are of your father the devil" (John 8:44). Paul said that Elymas the sorcerer was a child of the devil (Acts 13:10). The apostle John stated clearly: "He who sins is of the devil" (1 John 3:8 NKJV); "In this the children of God and the children of the devil are manifest: Whoever does not practice righteousness is not of God, nor is he who does not love his brother" (verse 10). Read also Revelation 2:9 and 3:9.

Also, Satan is the cause, either directly or indirectly, of much physical sickness. He afflicted Job (Job 2:7). Luke 13 records that satanic action had kept a woman doubled over for eighteen years, and that Jesus liberated her.

This does not necessarily mean that she was demon "possessed," but that there had been demonic activity in the crippling process, either at the onset or perhaps throughout the entire eighteen years.

Peter stated that God anointed Jesus with the Holy Spirit and power, and that He went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil (Acts 10:38).

Paul even referred to his "thorn in the flesh" as "a messenger of Satan" (2 Corinthians 12:7).

On the subject of Satan's activity in some human physical ailments, two interesting Bible passages come to mind. In 1 Corinthians 5 we read that a grossly immoral practice was going on in the church at Corinth. A man was sexually cohabiting with his father's wife, and it appears that the church was doing nothing about it. So Paul tells them that they are to come together to deal with it as a church. He assures them that in spirit he will be with them with his full apostolic authority. What is more important, the power of the Lord Jesus Christ will be with them. They are to deliver this unrepentant man to Satan "for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus" (verse 5). In other words, in the authority of Jesus Christ, they are to remove God's protecting hand off this man so that Satan can attack his body. The purpose is to bring this man to repentance so that he will be saved, even if it costs him his health and perhaps his life. This was an extreme measure for his own eternal good.

In this same vein, Paul writes to Timothy that some had put away faith and a good conscience and had made a shipwreck of their faith. He specifically mentions Hymenaeus and Alexander, whom he had delivered to Satan "that they may learn not to blaspheme" (1 Timothy 1:20). Here again, the purpose of delivering these men to Satan was to bring them to repentance as a result of Satan's attack on their bodies.

At one time Satan even "had the power of death" (Hebrews 2:14). Jesus came to "destroy" him, that is, to make Satan's power of death ineffective.

The Defeat Of Satan.

In spite of the power and authority that people give him by yielding their obedience to him, Satan is a defeated foe!

God has always placed limits on Satan, and often "puts him in his place." In Zechariah 3:2 "the Lord said to Satan, 'The Lord rebuke you, Satan? Indeed, the Lord who has chosen Jerusalem rebuke you!'" God invoked the imperial dignity and authority of His own Name in shutting up Satan's accusations against Joshua the high priest. We read a similar statement in Jude, verse 9.

When Jesus had enough of the devil's suggestions, he ordered, "Get thee behind me, Satan!" (Matthew 4:10).

Jesus Christ as both God and man totally defeated Satan. This victory was predicted from the very dawn of human history. God said to the serpent (the embodiment of Satan) that the seed of the woman (Jesus Christ) would bruise his (the serpent's) head (Genesis 3:15).

By living a sinless life, Jesus completely defeated Satan as a tempter. Just before His crucifixion, our Lord said to His disciples, "The prince of this world cometh, and hath nothing in me" (John 14:30 KJV).

Christ's spiritual triumph was accomplished on the cross. "And having disarmed the powers and authorities, he made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them by the cross" (Colossians

2:14 NIV). Through His death on the cross, Jesus Christ rendered powerless and ineffective the one who had the power of death, that is, the devil (Hebrews 2:14). "For this purpose the son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil" (1 John 3:8 KJV).

The Scriptures declare that Satan has been thrown out of Heaven. No longer can he come into God's presence and accuse believers, as he did Job. Christ has entered into Heaven, presented His own blood, and is now in the presence of God the Father on our behalf (Hebrews 9:11-26). To allow Satan to voice his accusations in the presence of Christ, our High Priest, and in the presence of the blood that speaks on our behalf (Hebrews 12:24), would be an outrage.

Satan's eviction from Heaven was prophesied by both Isaiah and Ezekiel (Isaiah 14:12; Ezekiel 28:17). Jesus declared it (Luke 10:18; John 12:31). John wrote the report of it (Revelation 12:7-17).

The Bible clearly teaches that the angels that sinned are now restricted by the "chains" of God's authority in Jesus Christ (2 Peter 2:4; Jude 6. Read also Revelation 20:1-8).

Jesus Christ has given believers authority over all the power of the devil (Luke 10:19). The only authority and influence Satan and his forces have over believers is what we give him by listening to him and allowing him to dump his "garbage" on us! That is why we are commanded in Ephesians 4:27, "Neither give place to the devil."

"The God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly" (Romans 16:20 KJV).

As believers, we must "put on the whole armor of God, including picking up the shield of faith, by which we will quench all the flaming arrows of the wicked one (Ephesians 6:10).

We are instructed to resist Satan. We do not have to defeat him; Jesus already did that.

Our Lord showed us how to resist Satan. He did so by The Scriptures. To each of the devil's temptations, He retorted, "It is written."

James 4:7 says, "Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you." Note first that we must submit ourselves to God before we can resist the devil.

To resist Satan we must "be sober; be vigilant" (1 Peter 5:8). A careless Christian will not successfully resist the devil. Verse 9 urges us to resist him "steadfast in the faith." "The faith" is a definite, revealed body of truth to be believed and lived. It is the truth of God's word.

"I have written to you, young men, because you are strong, and the word of God abides in you, and you have overcome the wicked one" (1 John 2:14 NKJV). Again, spiritual strength and victory are directly related to having God's word established in us.

In 1 John 5:18 genuine, "born-again" Christians are given the assurance that the wicked one does not touch them. To be born again is to be born victorious! We overcome the devil "by the

blood of the Lamb and by the word of our testimony" (Revelation 12:11). And it goes on to say that we love not our lives "unto the death." Because Jesus Christ is more precious than even life itself, we can overcome anything.

Satan's rebellion is doomed. His judgment is assured. As we have read, the prophets foretold it. Jesus declared it ("the prince of this world is judged"--John 16:11); He said that the everlasting fire is prepared for the devil and his angels (Matthew 25:41). His ultimate destination is previewed in Revelation 20:10, "And the devil that deceived them was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are, and shall be tormented day and night forever and ever" (KJV).

Friend, does Satan have you under his control, harnessed by your sins with the reins in his hands? You can be set free by the gospel. Paul declared that God had sent him to declare the good news to the nations, "To open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins..." (Acts 26:18 KJV).

The apostle Paul told Timothy to instruct those who oppose themselves in the hope that they would come to repentance and the knowledge of the truth, sober up, come to their senses, and escape out of the snare of the devil (2 Timothy 2:25,26).

It is like a drunken man sleeping on the railroad tracks. Suddenly he wakes up, feels the ground vibrating under him, looks up and in horror sees the locomotive bearing down on him. Immediately he jumps up and dives out of the way.

No delay. It's time to act.

CHAPTER FOUR: DEMONS

Most of what is true about the origin, fall, character, work, and destiny of Satan is true also of demons.

Like Satan, the demons (devils) are angels who sinned. Please open your Bible to Revelation, chapter 12 and read verses 3 through 12.

In Job 4:18, Eliphaz says that God "charges His angels with error" (NASB). In chapter 15, verse 15 he goes on to say that the heavens are not clean in God's sight. The reference is probably to the disobedience of the angels that fell, and their subsequent evil presence and activities in the heavenlies (Ephesians 6:12).

Let us look again at 2 Peter 2:4 and Jude 6. "...God spared not the angels that sinned, but cast them down to hell" (2 Peter 2:4). "And the angels which kept not their first estate, but left their

own habitation, he hath reserved in everlasting chains under darkness unto the judgment of the great day" (Jude 6 KJV).

From Daniel 10:12-20 and Revelation 2:13 we learned that Satan is at the head of an organized demonic kingdom. Jesus also gave us insight into this subject on the occasion of one of His encounters with the Pharisees. We read the account in Matthew 12:24-29. See also Mark 3:22-30 and Luke 11:17-20.

Satan is called Beelzebub, the chief of the demons. From the Biblical record we learn that all the demonic forces are mobilized in a hierarchy of positions under Satan himself.

Demons are not capricious little poltergeists going around on their own playing annoying but harmless tricks on people. They are deceptive and destructive enemies of God and man, who are united in a single evil purpose and are motivated by a selfish hatred toward everything good.

Demons are categorized according to their assignments. One of the main categories is "familiar spirits." These are demons who familiarize themselves with an individual in order to be able to impersonate that individual, particularly after that person's death. The demon's purpose is to deceive the living and trap them in error.

God gave us a very strong warning against following people who are under the influence of familiar spirits. "Give no regard to mediums and familiar spirits; do not seek after them, to be defiled by them: I am the Lord your God" (Leviticus 19:31 NKJV). "And the person who turns after mediums and familiar spirits, ...I will set my face against that person..." (Leviticus 20:6 NKJV.)

In the ancient theocracy of Israel, people who operated by familiar spirits were to be put to death (Leviticus 20:27; Deuteronomy 18:10-12). This had nothing to do with the infamous "witch hunts" in colonial Salem, Massachusetts. That sad chapter in American history was not based on the Bible but on a gross distortion of the Bible.

Other Bible passages that speak of familiar spirits are: 2 Kings 23:24; Isaiah 19:3 and 29:4.

Because so many people are dabbling dangerously in new age "spirituality" it must be emphasized again that *not everything that is supernatural is of God*. The fact that some mediums or "spiritual guides" relate events in the life of a departed loved one is no proof that the communication is of God.

"Connie, this is Alfred. It's so good to talk to you again. I miss our walks along the beach, just the two of us. Remember the evening we sat down on the big driftwood log and planned what we would do when we retired? We were all by ourselves, not another soul as far as we could see."

"Driftwood log!" "Just the two of us!" This *has* to be Alfred!

No, it is *not* Alfred! It is a "familiar" spirit, out to trap you into error. Remember, Jesus said that people err because they do not know the Scriptures nor the power of God (Matthew 22:29).

In this same classification, some demons are called "spirits of divination" (Acts 16:16). These are demons who energize people who claim to be able to see into the future and discern secret "mysteries." One could call them "fortune telling demons"). Along with them are "seducing spirits," demons who specialize in promoting doctrinal error (1 Timothy 4:1).

Demons take advantage of ignorance and gullibility. So it is important to be Biblically informed. We must know the truth about God and the supernatural. We must stay away from mediums and new age gurus, and leave astrology, necromancy and other occult practices alone. Even seemingly innocent things such as ouija boards and tarot cards can become a snare and open the door to the demonic.

Some demons are called "deaf spirits" and "mute spirits" (see Mark 9:25). This is not to say that these handicaps are always or even usually caused by demonic activity. Physiological and other factors are involved. Nevertheless, it is true that at times demonic activity is also involved, to varying degrees.

The Bible relates the story of one woman who was physically devastated by a "spirit of infirmity" (Luke 13:11,12). The demon had done its crippling work and was gone, leaving the poor lady permanently bent over. Jesus healed the damage the demon had done, and set her free.

Let it be emphasized that not all or even most deafness, muteness, or physical handicaps are caused by demons. Usually the problem is rooted in a somatic or neurological cause. Psychological factors are also often present. It is still true that demonic activity can be and at times is an agency in the condition, either by direct causation or by aggravating the physiological cause or causes.

To what extent demonic activity might be involved is not to be determined by guesswork. Unless observable behavioral expressions that fit definite Biblical criteria are present (e.g., Mark 5:3-5), the matter can be determined only by an exercise of a "gift" of The Holy Spirit known as "the discerning of spirits" (1 Corinthians 12:10). Much harm can be done to persons by telling them that they are demon possessed when in fact they are not.

Some other demons are called "lying spirits" (2 Kings 22:22,23). "Foul spirits" or "unclean spirits" seems to be a term that describes the evil and impure character of demons as a whole. The term is widely used in the New Testament.

On occasion God has providentially used demons as agents of judgment. He does this by simply lifting His restraint on them to a degree in certain cases. That happened in ancient Egypt at the time of Israel's deliverance from bondage. We read in Psalm 78:49, "He cast upon them the fierceness of his anger, wrath, and indignation, and trouble, by sending evil angels among

them" (KJV). Modern versions attempt to avoid what is perceived to be a difficulty by translating "evil" as "destroying," but this is unnecessary.

In Judges 9:23 it is recorded that "God sent an evil spirit between Abimelech and the men of Shechem; and the men of Shechem dealt treacherously with Abimelech" (KJV). Sometimes God uses evil spirits to cause division among evil people in order to defeat evil purposes.

When king Saul turned away from following God, "an evil spirit from the Lord troubled him" (1 Samuel 16:14 KJV. Read also verses 15, 16, and 23, and also 18:10 and 19:9). This was real demonic activity, not merely a primitive way of trying to understand some mental disorder. Both the mental disorder and the demonic activity involved were real.

Another incident where God brought judgment by permitting an evil spirit to carry it out is recorded in 1 Kings 22:19-23. King Ahab of Israel set his greedy heart to capture Ramoth-gilead, thus breaking a three-year peace. It was a purely selfish act by a very selfish king. It ended in disaster and death, and God permitted a demon to incite it to its destructive outcome, as a punishment on an evil king and his evil scheme.

Demons' Evil Works.

Demons do Satan's works. What he does, they do. What they do is spoken of in The Scriptures as Satan's works.

"...you once walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience" (Ephesians 2:2 NKJV).

Demons tempt. Demons promote war. Demons incite and inflame human passions. They incite selfish rulers and their followers to war by holding their selfish goals before their minds, thus inflaming the corresponding and resulting passions and thus move the will. The Bible calls this process "filling the heart" to do evil (see John 13:2; Acts 5:3).

Revelation 16:13,14 describes "three unclean spirits like frogs," who are "spirits of devils," who gather the kings of the earth "to the battle of that great day of God Almighty."

Demons not only incite rulers and the masses to war but also work false miracles. Many fall into error, delusion, and bondage because they assume that all "spirituality" is valid, especially if it is accompanied by supernatural events. That is a very dangerous assumption. Demons operate in the dark side of "spirituality." Spiritual hunger must not become spiritual gullibility. No matter how great our spiritual hunger might be, we must be careful what we swallow. Genuine spirituality is founded on the truth, revealed in the Bible. Watch out for substitutes.

Someone has said, "Watch out for half-truths; you might get hold of the wrong half."

Demons are professional deceivers. They aggressively and skillfully false teachings. "Now the Spirit speaks expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits and doctrines of devils" (1 Timothy 4:1. See also 2 Thessalonians 2:2).

Because these are the "latter times," we are witnessing a flurry of this kind of demonic activity.

A favorite target is either the full deity or the full humanity of Jesus. Most errors today involve a denial of one or both. When offered a religious or "spiritual" system, it is of utmost importance to examine carefully what it teaches about Jesus Christ. If it deviates from the historic, revealed faith of the Church, it *must* be rejected. Please read carefully 1 John 4:1-6.

Demons also cause much sickness. We covered this earlier when we examined the works of Satan himself. It is another example of how demons carry out Satan's work. For Biblical examples please refer to: Matthew 9:32-34; Matthew 12:22 (and Luke 11:14,15); Matthew 17:14-18 (and Mark 9:17 and Luke 9:37-42); and Luke 13:11.

Again, not all illness is caused by demons. In fact, most illness results from natural causes, such as: infections, biological and anatomical malfunctions, unhealthy living habits, mental and emotional stress. Nevertheless, demonic activity is involved in much sickness. Some demonic activity is direct. Some is indirect in that demons aggravate some of the stress factors that are involved.

Demonic attacks are of three levels: oppression, obsession, and possession. Each level has degrees of intensity. Oppression is an attack upon the mind. Obsession is a manipulation of the mind by securing a mental/emotional fixation on an idea, a physical object, or a relationship. Possession occurs when a demon or demons enter the body and control its actions and alter the personality of the individual.

It is very important that we understand that demons have no place in believers--people who are in a living, personal relationship with Jesus Christ, Who dwells in every believer by His Spirit. Jesus Christ defeated all satanic power, and that victory belongs to each and every believer by faith. The only power demons have over believers is what believers allow them to have by ignorance and/or lack of faith. "We know that whoever is born of God does not sin; but he who has been born of God keeps himself, and the wicked one does not touch him" (1 John 5:18 NKJV).

Demons do possess many of the unconverted--people who are living in disobedience and therefore are not in a personal relationship with God through Christ and under His protective covenant.

We learn from The Scriptures that demons do not like to be disembodied. Jesus taught us this fact (Matthew 12:43-45).

At the same time, because demons are spirit beings and are not limited by physical space, more than one can possess an individual. Jesus cast seven demons out of Mary Magdalene (Luke

8:2). Also, in Mark 5 we read that Jesus cast out a legion of demons--about 6,000--from the demoniac (in addition to the demons He cast out of the other man who was with him; see Matthew 8:28). The demons begged Jesus to allow them to go into a herd of about 2,000 swine, which He did. That is three demons to a pig!

That episode is another example of the fact that demons do not like to be disembodied. The subsequent behavior of the swine leads us to believe that the demons had not had much prior experience with swine, because their presence destroyed their new hosts. This is something the demons probably did not anticipate.

The gospels record a number of cases where Jesus cast (threw) demons out of people. He did so by the authority of His word in the power of the Holy Spirit. In the incident recorded in Mark 5 just mentioned (and recorded also in Matthew 8 and Luke 8), the Lord merely spoke the one-word command--"Go!"

For further study of the occasions when Jesus cast out demons, please read: Matthew 4:24 (and Mark 1:39); Mark 1:23-27 (also Luke 4:33-36); Mark 1:32-34 (and Matthew 8:16 and Luke 4:40,41); Luke 6:17,18; Luke 13:32; Matthew 15:22 (and Mark 7:24-30).

Most of modern psychology and psychiatry would claim that these were only mentally and emotionally ill people, and that "demon possession" was merely a primitive, pre-scientific way of accounting for their behavior. If this were the case, then modern mental health science should do the research necessary to find out how Jesus cured these people. After all, His success record was phenomenal!

Jesus cast out demons because real demons were present.

When our Lord died on the cross, He ruined Satan's powers. "Having spoiled principalities and powers, he made a show of them openly, triumphing over them" in the cross (Colossians 2:15).

Jesus Christ is now risen from the dead, glorified, and exalted to the right hand of God the Father, "far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come" (Ephesians 1:21).

Jesus gave His disciples (and us) authority over the entire host of demons (Matthew 10:1; Mark 3:15; 6:7,13). He announced: "I beheld Satan as lightning fall from heaven. Behold, I give unto you power to tread on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy, and nothing shall by any means hurt you. Notwithstanding in this rejoice not, that the spirits are subject unto you, but rather rejoice because your names are written in heaven" (Luke 10:18-20).

No wonder that demons believe and tremble (James 2:19)!

Look at the record of the early Church. "There came also a multitude out of the cities round about unto Jerusalem, bringing sick folks, and them which were vexed with unclean spirits, and

they were healed every one" (Acts 5:16). In Acts 8:5-8 we see Philip the evangelist at Samaria, preaching Jesus Christ and expelling demons from people.

At Philippi, the apostle Paul turns to the girl possessed with a "spirit of divination" and in the name of Jesus Christ commands it to come out of her, which it did immediately (Acts 16;16-18).

Exorcising demons was so common in first-century evangelism that even some non-Christian "spiritual" professionals thought they would try it, too. On one occasion seven brothers, sons of a man named Sceva, attempted to do it "in the name of Jesus whom Paul preaches." "And the man in whom the evil spirit was leaped on them, and overcame them, and prevailed against them, so that they fled out of that house naked and wounded" (for the whole story, read Acts 16:12-16). Beat up and their clothes ripped off, they barely escaped with their lives. They got a sudden education in dealing with demons. They found out the hard way that seven ordinary men are no match for one demon-possessed person. They also learned that invoking the name of Jesus is not effective unless one has a personal relationship with Jesus. They probably never tried that again.

Believers today have the same authority over demons that the early Church had. We are born of God and the wicked one does not touch us (1 John 5:18). The "prince of this world" has nothing in us if we are abiding in Christ and walking in the light with a pure heart. Jesus Christ has delegated to us the authority of His name. The power of the Holy Spirit is given and is available to us (Matthew 10:8; Mark 16:17). Demonic powers cannot separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus (Romans 8:38).

It is crucial that we must "take the whole armor of God," because "we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places" (Ephesians 6:12).

The "shield of faith" is essential. Demons will play mind games with believers who do not realize their own position in Christ. When demons realize that a Christian knows his or her authority in Christ, the "game is up."

For this reason, when casting out demons, do not take any "back talk" from them. Let them know that they do not dare to defy the name of Jesus Christ and that you have the authority in Christ's name to send them to their torment before the time. Do not become involved in a dialogue with them. Order them out--NOW--in the name of Jesus Christ.

One of the nine supernatural "gifts" of the Holy Spirit is "discerning of spirits." This is supernatural insight into the spirit world in order to detect the presence and activity of demons.

To exercise authority over demons, we must remain in prayer and communion with God. Also, we must live lives of faith, exercising faith in our daily living.

Jesus taught that we must avoid a sectarian attitude (Mark 9:38-40).

At the final judgment, believers will judge demons (1 Corinthians 6:3). If you are a disciple of the Lord Jesus Christ, some day you will have the privilege to tell those demons who have been bothering you "where to go."

Hell is prepared for the devil and his angels (Matthew 25:41). That is their destiny. Hell is prepared for them because they have prepared themselves for hell.

In the Sermon on the Mount Jesus made the startling statement that many will say to Him on the day of judgment, "Lord, Lord, have we not... cast out devils in your name?" He will reply, "I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers!" (Matthew 7:22 NIV).

So then, the *claim* to have cast out devils provides no basis for a claim to salvation and eternal life. People who claim "spirituality" but live in sin are in for a terrible shock. What matters is not our religious involvement, but having a heart that is right with God.

That is why Jesus tells us not to rejoice in the fact that demons are subject to us in His name. That is a testimony to His power and authority, not to any spirituality on our part. Instead, Jesus said, genuine believers are to rejoice because their names are written in heaven (Luke 10:20).

So, friend, is your name "written in heaven?" If not, turn to Christ with all your heart. He knocks at the door of your heart. Receive Him. Trust Him as your Savior. Be baptized in water as the outward testimony of your faith in Him and the pledge of eternal devotion and obedience to Him. Then you will not have to spend eternity with the devil and his angels.

Do it now.