

Subject: *Biblical Truth about Angels – Part 3*

Scripture: *Colossians 1:1-17*

Types and Organization of Angels

1. The archangel Michael (Dan. 10:21; 12:1-4; 1 Th. 4:16; Jude 9; Rev. 12:7-9)

The name Michael means "Who is like God?" He is called the archangel (like our words "archbishop" or "arch enemy"), so he is the chief angel. His name may well represent his devotion to God in contrast to Satan (Lucifer) who wanted to be like the most high God (Isa. 14:14). Michael is the chief prince of the nation of Israel in the Old Testament. His activities involve spiritual warfare against Satan and coming with Christ at the rapture of the Church.

2. Gabriel (Dan. 8:16; 9:21-22; Lk. 1:11-19, 26-38)

His name means "Mighty One of God." The angel Gabriel has a special guardian relationship to Israel. He is also the angel who delivered important prophetic messages. He appeared to Daniel, to Zachariah (father of John the Baptist), and to Mary, the mother of Jesus. Gabriel gave Daniel an understanding of his visions and he also gave understanding to Zechariah and Mary about God's intentions.

3. Lucifer (Satan) (Isa. 14:12-14; Ezek. 28:11-17; Eph. 2:2)

He is the anointed cherub associated with the throne of God and the angel who was the worship leader of heaven. Through pride and rebellion he fell from this exalted place.

4. Cherubim (Gen. 3:24; Ex. 25:18-22; 37:8; 2 Chron. 3:10-13; Ezek. 1:5-14; 28:14, 16)

The word "cherubim" is the Hebrew plural of "cherub." Cherubim are spirit beings of the highest order who possess incredible power and beauty. The popular concept of a cherub as a cute baby angel has no Biblical support. The first mention of cherubim is Genesis 3:24. God placed cherubim at the gate to the Garden of Eden when Adam and Eve were expelled. By separating the disobedient couple from the garden they teach us that sin is incompatible in the presence of the holy God.

Cherubim next appear in the form of golden images upon the mercy seat, the lid placed on the ark of the covenant (Ex. 25:17-22). God must have told Moses what the cherubim looked like. Images of them were also present in the temple (2 Chron. 3:7, 10-13). In Hebrews 9:5, they are called "cherubim of glory," overshadowing the mercy seat. The cherubim over the mercy seat faced each other and stretched out their wings toward each other to cover the mercy seat. They looked down at the lid rather than at one another.

Ezekiel saw a vision of the glory of God which involved "four living creatures" (Ezek. 1:1-28). These are later identified as cherubim (Ezek. 10:1-22). The cherubim are never called "angels," but they are apparently spirit beings. They are associated with the place of God's presence. Psalm 80:1 and 99:1 refer to God dwelling between the cherubim. The cherubim reveal God's glory and holiness that is unapproachable without blood atonement. In the ark were kept a golden pot of manna, Aaron's rod that budded, and the tablets with the Ten Commandments. All these contents were reminders of God's gracious provisions that had been rejected by His people. The high priest entered and sprinkled blood on the mercy seat, thus covering the sins of the people. The cherubim therefore reflect God's glory and also His grace. It is probable that the twelve angels at the twelve gates of the New Jerusalem are cherubim (Rev. 21:12). Satan was

originally “the anointed cherub that covers” or the guardian cherub (Ezek. 28:14, 16).

5. Seraphim (Isa. 6:1-7)

These spirit beings are mentioned only here in Isaiah. They are called seraphim ("burning ones"). Their name indicates their consuming devotion to God. In Isaiah's vision these creatures have three pair of wings. One pair is used to cover their faces (holy worship). Even the most exalted spirit beings cannot bear the full vision of God's glory. One pair is used to cover their feet (holy service). This may indicate they are careful as they stand on holy ground. One pair is used to fly (holy obedience). The seraphim swiftly carry out God's commands. God used them to cleanse and commission Isaiah for his prophetic ministry. They continually praise God for His absolute holiness. They are apparently associated with the cherubim and the glory of God.

6. Chief princes (Dan. 10:13, 20-21; 12:1)

Michael is one of the chief princes, so there are at least two, probably more. Scripture refers to “principalities” and “authorities.” The Biblical context determines whether these refer to good or evil angels. Satan is prince over the world system and he has princes over the nations (Jn. 12:31; 14:30; 16:11; Eph. 1:21; 2:2; 3:10; 6:12; Col. 1:16; 2:10, 15; 1 Pet. 3:22).

7. Thrones, dominions, powers, rulers (Col. 1:16)

Thrones may refer to the authority of certain angels. Dominions may refer to areas of influence and control given to angels. Powers may represent authorities or areas of administration that God has given to certain angels. The Bible indicates that there is a vast and highly organized network of angels, both good and evil. We should remember that all authority belongs to God and He delegates authority to certain people and spirit beings. MacArthur comments: “Scripture never elaborates on the specifics of these hierarchies to explain their order or function. Since Satan imitates and falsifies God's character and kingdom characteristics, it seems likely that there is an authoritative functional hierarchy for holy angels who worship God and a parallel counterfeit hierarchy for demons who give their allegiance to Satan” (*Biblical Doctrine*, 673).

8. Holy, elect angels (Mk. 8:38; 1 Tim.5:21)

These are good, elect, unfallen angels who remained faithful to God. Other names include "angels of heaven" (Mt. 24:36); "mighty angels" (2 Thess. 1:7); and "angels of God" (Heb. 1:6).

9. Evil angels (Ps. 78:49; Mt. 25:41; Eph. 6:12; 2 Pet. 2:4; Jude 6)

These are sinful, rebellious, fallen angels who left their original position in heaven. They are now called "demons." Some demons or evil angels are temporarily confined or bound (Rev. 9:1-15) and some are permanently confined until the time of judgment (2 Pet. 2:4; Jude 6). Demons are spirit beings (Mt. 8:16; Lk. 10:17, 20). They are localized, not omnipresent (Mt. 8:28-32; Acts 16:16). They are very powerful beings (Mk. 5:3-4; 9:17-22). The demons or evil angels are Satan's servants, involved in his work of death and deception, and they will share Satan's doom in the lake of fire (Mt. 25:41; Rev. 20:10).

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