

SYSTEMATIC THEOLOGY

WEEK 6: ANGELS, DEMONS AND THE BELIEVER'S DEFENSE

INTRODUCTION TO THE SERIES

- In this 6-week series, we are going to look at three systematics...man, sin, and angels.
 - **November 6th: What are angels, demons, and the believer's defense?**

INTRODUCTION

In our final class, wrapping up this 6-week series, we are going to discuss angels, demons and how the believer is to defend themselves against the enemy. By angels I mean those spiritual beings that God created higher than humans, some of whom have remained obedient to God and carry out his will, and others of whom disobeyed, lost their holy condition, and now oppose and hinder his work.¹

ANGELS

- In Christ's and Paul's days, the Sadducees denied the existence of angels because they wrongly believed that angels did not appear in the books of Moses (**Acts 23:8**). In fact, the undeniable existence of angels can be substantiated by the hundreds of references to them in Scripture from **Genesis 3:24** (cherubim who guarded the garden of Eden) to **Revelation 22:16** (Christ's angel who revealed so much to John).²
- **Angels existed all through Bible times and continue to exist today.**

They have personhood.

- Angels possess the three identifiable traits of personhood: **intellect, emotions, and will**. First, angels are wise beings (**2 Sam. 14:20**) who can converse (**Matt. 28:5**), sing (**Job 38:7**), and worship (**Heb. 1:6**). Second, they have the capacity for emotion. Angels are joyful over the repentance of sinners (**Luke 15:10**). They fear God in worship with awe, wonder, and respect (**Heb. 1:6**). They also find God preeminently praiseworthy (**Ps. 148:2; Luke 2:13–14**). Third, angels possess a will with which they choose to worship God (**Heb. 1:6; Rev. 5:11**). They also desire to understand things related to salvation (**1 Pet. 1:10–12**).³
- **While they do not have permanent bodies, they are categorized as persons.**

¹ Millard J. Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 3rd ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2013), 405.

² John MacArthur and Richard Mayhue, eds., *Biblical Doctrine* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2017), 667.

³ Ibid. 667

They have personal qualities.⁴

- **Angels are beings created by God:**
- To be sure, Scripture does not explicitly state that they were created, nor does it mention their creation in the original creation account in Genesis 1-2. But we know they it is clearly implied.
- Psalm 148:2–5 “Praise Him, all His angels; Praise Him, all His hosts! Praise Him, sun and moon; Praise Him, all stars of light! Praise Him, highest heavens, and the waters that are above the heavens! Let them praise the name of the LORD, For He commanded, and they were created.”
- Nehemiah 9:6 “You alone are the LORD. You have made the heavens, The heaven of heavens with all their host, The earth and all that is on it, The seas and all that is in them. You give life to all of them, And the heavenly host bows down before You.”
- **Since they were created by God, they are called “sons of God”:**
- Job 1:6 “Now there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the LORD, and Satan also came among them.” (also, Job 2:1; 38:7).
- **They are spirit beings:**
- Hebrews 1:13 -14 “But to which of the angels has He ever said, ‘Sit at my right hand, until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet?’ Are they not all ministering spirits, sent out to render service for the sake of those who will inherit salvation?”
- Both Satan (a “lying spirit,” 1 Kings 22:22–23) and demons (“evil spirits,” Luke 7:21) are described as spirits. By Christ’s definition, a spirit is immaterial, one without flesh and bones (Luke 24:39).
- Angels were created morally pure and remain so in eternity, being called holy (Mark 8:38; Luke 9:26). Holy angels are elect angels (1 Tim. 5:21) who do not need redemption from a fallen state (Heb. 2:14–16).
- In contrast, Satan and the demons, who were created pure, subsequently defaulted, sinned, and became evil (Ezek. 28:15; Jude 6). There is no salvation for fallen angels (Matt. 25:41).
- **No special or physical limitations:**
- Angels are mobile and able to travel between heaven and earth (Gen. 28:12; John 1:51; Dan. 9:20–23; 10:1–13, 20; John 1:51) Jacob himself witnessed this angelic mobility (Gen. 28:12).
- Angels may also be either visible or invisible. For example, they were visible in their visit to Sodom (Gen. 18:2; Heb. 13:2) and to Christ’s tomb (John 20:11–12). They were invisible at first to Balaam (Num. 22:31) and to Elisha’s servant (2 Kings 6:15–17).

⁴ Ibid. 667-668

- As spirit beings, angels are without gender (**Matt. 22:30; Mark 12:25; Luke 20:35–36**) and cannot reproduce after their own kind. When they do appear in an angelophany, they look like men, never like women (**Gen. 18:2; Dan. 10:16, 18; Mark 16:5**).
- It seems safe to conclude that angels are spiritual beings; they do not have physical or material bodies. Physical manifestations recorded in Scripture must be regarded as appearances assumed for the occasion.⁵
- Angels are messengers of God’s truth (**Rev. 1:1**). Paul warned that if a spirit being claimed to be a holy angel from God but delivered a false gospel, it was actually a demon who was to be accursed (**Gal. 1:8**).

Their capacities and powers.⁶

- In the OT, **angels caused blindness, rescued people, and destroyed cities** (**Gen. 19:1–26**). They struck down seventy thousand men of Jerusalem (**2 Sam. 24:10–17**). Angels appear to be constantly at war with demons in the heavens (**Dan. 10:13, 20–21**).
- In the NT, an angel moved the large stone away from Christ’s tomb (**Matt. 28:2; Mark 16:3–4**) and released Peter from prison (**Acts 12:7–11**). Herod was struck with a fatal case of worms by an angel (**Acts 12:20–23**). **Paul referred to angels as “mighty” (2 Thess. 1:7), and Peter called them “greater in might and power” than humans (2 Pet. 2:11).**
- In Revelation, angels will exercise power over nature (**Rev. 7:1–3**); execute the seven trumpet judgments (**Rev. 8:2, 6**) and the seven bowl judgments (**Rev. 16:1–21**). They will evict Satan and his angels permanently from heaven (**Rev. 12:7–9**), and bind and incarcerate Satan for the 1000 years (**Rev. 20:1–3**).
- To summarize, angels are stronger than humans **but not omnipotent like God** (**Ps. 103:20; 2 Pet. 2:11**). Angels are greater than humans in knowledge **but not omniscient like God** (**Matt. 24:36**). Angels are swifter and more mobile than humans **but not omnipresent like God** (**Dan. 9:21–23; 10:10, 14**).

What do angels do?⁷

- **Angels continually praise and glorify God** (**Job 38:7; Pss. 103:20; 148:2; Rev. 5:11–12; 7:11; 8:1–4**). While this activity usually takes place in God’s presence, on at least one occasion it took place on earth—at the birth of Jesus the angels sang, “Glory to God in the highest” (**Luke 2:13–14**).
- **Angels reveal and communicate God’s message to humans.** This activity is most in keeping with the root meaning of the word “angel.” Angels were particularly involved as mediators of the law (**Acts 7:53; Gal. 3:19; Heb. 2:2**). The New Testament frequently depicts them as conveyers of messages from God. Gabriel

⁵ Millard J. Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 3rd ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2013), 409.

⁶ John MacArthur and Richard Mayhue, eds., *Biblical Doctrine* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2017), 673–674.

⁷ Millard J. Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 3rd ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2013), 413–415.

appeared to Zechariah (**Luke 1:13–20**) and to Mary (**Luke 1:26–38**). Angels also spoke to Philip (**Acts 8:26**), Cornelius (**Acts 10:3–7**), Peter (**Acts 11:13; 12:7–11**), and Paul (**Acts 27:23**).

- **Angels minister to believers.** This includes protecting believers from harm. In the early church it was an angel that delivered the apostles (**Acts 5:19**) and later Peter (**Acts 12:6–11**) from prison. The psalmists experienced the angels' care (**Pss. 34:7; 91:11**). Their major ministry is to spiritual needs, however. Angels take a great interest in the spiritual welfare of believers, rejoicing at their conversion (**Luke 15:10**) and serving them in their needs (**Heb. 1:14**). Angels are spectators of our lives (**1 Cor. 4:9; 1 Tim. 5:21**) and are present within the church (**1 Cor. 11:10**).
- **Angels execute judgment on the enemies of God.** The angel of the Lord brought death to 185,000 Assyrians (**2 Kings 19:35**), and to the children of Israel until the Lord told him to stay his hand at Jerusalem (**2 Sam. 24:16**). It was the angel of the Lord who stood between the people of Israel and the Egyptians (**Exod. 14:19–20**); the result was the deliverance of the Israelites and the destruction of the Egyptians at the Red Sea. It was an angel of the Lord that killed Herod (**Acts 12:23**). The book of Revelation is full of prophecies regarding the judgment to be administered by angels (**8:6–9:21; 16:1–17; 19:11–14**).
- **The angels will be involved in the second coming.** They will accompany the Lord at his return (**Matt. 25:31**), just as they were present at other significant events of Jesus's life, including his birth, temptation, and resurrection. They will separate the wheat from the weeds (**Matt. 13:39–42**). Christ will send forth his angels with a loud trumpet call to gather the elect from the four winds (**Matt. 24:31; cf. 1 Thess. 4:16–17**).
- **What of the concept of guardian angels, the idea that each person or at least each believer has a specific angel assigned to care for and accompany him or her in this life?**
- Two biblical texts are cited as evidence of guardian angels. Upon calling a child and placing him in the midst of the disciples, Jesus said: "See that you do not despise one of these little ones. For I tell you that their angels in heaven always see the face of my Father in heaven" (**Matt. 18:10**). When the maid Rhoda told the others in the house that Peter was at the gate, they said, "It must be his angel" (**Acts 12:15**). These verses seem to indicate that angels are specially assigned to individuals.
- Elsewhere in the Bible, however, we read that not just one, but many angels accompanied, protected, and provided for believers. Elisha was surrounded by many horses and chariots of fire (**2 Kings 6:17**); Jesus could have called twelve legions of angels (**Matt. 26:53**); several angels carried Lazarus's soul to Abraham's bosom (**Luke 16:22**).
- Jesus's reference to the angels of the little ones specifies that they are in the presence of the Father. This suggests that they are angels who worship in God's presence rather than angels who care for individual humans in this world.

- The reply to Rhoda reflects the Jewish tradition that a guardian angel resembles the person to whom he is assigned. **In the absence of definite didactic material, we must conclude that there is insufficient evidence for the concept of guardian angels.**

DEMONS OR FALLEN ANGELS OR EVIL ANGELS

- The evil angels should be studied in close connection with the good angels since they have the same origin, and much of what has been said about angels is true of demons as well. **The good angels are still what the evil angels once were.**⁸

Origin of demons

- **Demons are angels created by God and therefore were originally good; but they sinned and thus became evil.** Just when this rebellion took place we do not know, but it must have occurred between the time when God completed the creation and pronounced it all “very good,” and the temptation and fall of the humans.⁹

Activities of demons

- As Satan’s subjects, demons carry out his work in the world. It may therefore be assumed that they engage in all the forms of temptation and deception he employs. They inflict disease: dumbness (**Mark 9:17**), deafness and dumbness (**Mark 9:25**), blindness and deafness (**Matt. 12:22**), convulsions (**Mark 1:26; 9:20; Luke 9:39**), and paralysis or lameness (**Acts 8:7**). **Most particularly, they oppose the spiritual progress of God’s people (Eph. 6:12).**¹⁰

Demon possession¹¹

- **There is no reason to believe that demon possessions are restricted to the past.** There are cases, especially but not exclusively in less developed cultures, which seem explainable only on this basis.
- The Christian should be alert to the possibility of demon possession occurring today. At the same time, one should not too quickly attribute aberrant physical and psychical phenomena to demon possession.
- Even as Jesus and the biblical writers distinguished cases of possession from other ailments, so should we, testing the spirits.
- Satan, the great deceiver, may be encouraging interest in demon possession in hopes that Christians will become careless about other more subtle forms of influence by the powers of evil.

⁸ Millard J. Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 3rd ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2013), 415.

⁹ *Ibid.* 416.

¹⁰ *Ibid.* 417-418.

¹¹ *Ibid.* 419.

The Fiery Darts of Satan (Eph 6:16)¹²

- Satan will attempt to distort or deny the truth of God’s Word.
- Satan will try to discredit the testimony of God’s people.
- Satan will seek to depress or destroy the believer’s enthusiasm for God’s work.
- Satan will aim to dilute the effectiveness of God’s people.

OUR DEFENSE AGAINST SATAN AND HIS ATTACKS¹³

- **The primary text that speaks of spiritual armor and weaponry is Ephesians 6:10–20**, especially the whole armor of God. Elsewhere, Paul also refers to armor of light (**Rom. 13:12**), weapons of righteousness (**2 Cor. 6:7**), and weapons of our warfare (**2 Cor. 10:4**).
- We must keep in mind that our war is not against the people who are around us. **Ephesians 6:12** “*For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood*, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places.”
- **2 Corinthians 10:3-5** “For though we walk in the flesh, *we do not war according to the flesh*, for the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh, but divinely powerful for the destruction of fortresses.”
- **1 Peter 5:8** “Be of sober spirit, be on the alert. *Your adversary*, the devil, prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour.”
- **James 4:7** “(YOU ALL) *Submit therefore to God*. Resist the devil and he will flee from you.”
- **The Belt of Truth:**
 - In the spiritual realm, Christians are to gird their loins with “truth” (Eph. 6:14). That can refer to the content of truth (i.e., Scripture) or to an attitude of truthfulness, sincerity, honesty, and integrity. Since Paul referred to Scripture as a spiritual weapon in Ephesians 6:17, it means that here he was referring to a Christian’s attitude. Believers who gird their loins with truth have a heart for the battle because of a commitment to Christ and his cause.
- **The Breastplate of Righteousness:**
 - God has provided the breastplate of righteousness (Eph. 6:14) to protect both the mind and emotions. What is this righteousness specifically? It is the practical, personal righteousness of a true believer that is born in him at regeneration and afterward strengthened by God the Spirit, so that a Christian becomes progressively more like Christ (2 Cor. 3:18; 2 Pet. 3:18).

¹² John MacArthur and Richard Mayhue, eds., *Biblical Doctrine* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2017), 687.

¹³ *Ibid.* 699-702.

- **Ready Shoes:**

- In spiritual warfare, it's vital for the believer to be wearing the right kind of footwear. One can cinch up the waist with commitment and adorn the breastplate of holy living, but unless one has sure footing, there is a strong possibility of falling. So in Ephesians 6:15, Paul said that the feet are to be shod "with the readiness given by the gospel of peace."
- Here, Paul is describing defensive armor, and when he writes of "readiness given by the gospel of peace," he is speaking of having embraced the gospel. If one is outfitted with the good news of peace, the spiritual combatant is protected and will be enabled to withstand the enemy's schemes (Eph. 6:11, 13).

- **The Shield of Faith:**

- Spiritually speaking, when the flaming darts of the Evil One fly, a believer will be protected by raising the shield of salvific faith (Eph. 6:16; cf. Ps. 18:35). The shield will be so effective that the weapons of Satan will be extinguished, because well-equipped believers conquer overwhelmingly in the battle (Rom. 8:37).

- **The Helmet of Salvation:**

- In the spiritual realm, the believer must wear the helmet of salvation (Eph. 6:17). What does salvation here refer to? There are three possibilities: the past, present, or future aspects of salvation. Paul was not referring to the past aspect of salvation. He did not intend to say, "After girding one's loins with truth, donning the breastplate of righteousness, shodding one's feet with the gospel of peace, and taking up the shield of faith, one should—by the way—get saved." Paul assumes that the past act of salvation is already a reality. Instead, he is referring to the present and future aspects of our salvation. It is both the assurance of God's continuing work in the Christian life and the confidence in a full and final salvation to come. Paul elsewhere mentioned the helmet of salvation in 1 Thessalonians 5:8–9 (cf. Isa. 59:17).

- **The Sword of the Spirit:**

- The sword of the Spirit, therefore, is not a broadsword that one just flails around, hoping to do some damage. It is incisive; it must hit a vulnerable spot, or it won't be effective. Elsewhere in Scripture, the Word of God is also referred to with this same Greek word (see Heb. 4:12).

- The whole armor of God proves effective against the ploys of Satan. It is not optional but required. It is not partial but complete. It is not negotiable but commanded. With it, the believer will be strong (Eph. 6:10) and will be enabled to stand firm (Eph. 6:11, 13–14).

God's Provisions¹⁴

- God has provided multiple means by which a Christian can be victorious over Satan in this life. **The following ten provisions focus on the most important and encouraging truths found in the Bible to this end.**

The Savior's Victory at Calvary. The ruler of this world will be cast out (John 12:31). Through his death, Christ will destroy the Devil, the one who has the power of death (Heb. 2:14). Believers have conquered the accuser of the brethren by the blood of the Lamb (Rev. 12:11).

The Overcomer's Promise. Believers will ultimately overcome the Evil One (1 John 2:13; 5:4–5).

Christ's Intercessory Prayer. Jesus, in his High Priestly role in the upper room, prayed that the Father would keep believers from the Evil One (John 17:15, 20; see 10:28–29).

Christ's Protection. Believers are protected by Christ, so the Evil One can do no eternal harm (1 John 5:18).

The Spirit's Indwelling Power. Believers will overcome Satan because the power of the Holy Spirit within is greater than the power of the Devil without (1 John 4:4).

The Knowledge of Satan's Schemes. God has forewarned believers of Satan's evil plans in Scripture so that Christians can be prepared when the spiritual battle erupts (2 Cor. 2:11; 1 Pet. 5:8).

The Believer's Prayer. Paul commanded believers to be in constant prayer for victory over the spiritual forces of evil (Eph. 6:12, 18).

Biblical Instructions for Defeating Satan. Submit to God (James 4:7a) and draw near to God, knowing that he will also draw near to you (James 4:8). Second, resist the Devil and he will flee (James 4:7b; 1 Pet. 5:9).

Shepherds Who Strengthen and Encourage the Church. Pastors are to establish and exhort the flock of God in the faith (1 Thess. 3:2), so that the tempter will fail with his temptations (1 Thess. 3:5).

Confidence That Christ Has Won the Ultimate Victory. At the end of Christ's millennial reign over earth, he will cast Satan into the lake of fire to be tormented for all eternity future (Rev. 20:10).

¹⁴ John MacArthur and Richard Mayhue, eds., *Biblical Doctrine* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2017), 702–703.