

THE SPIRIT WORLD

As sure as there is a natural, material, visible realm, there is a supernatural, immaterial, invisible realm. The Word of God makes this very clear in Colossians 1:16 when it states:

“For by him were all things created, that are in heaven and that are in earth, visible and invisible . . .”

The Bible informs us this invisible, supernatural realm is inhabited by “spirits”. Jesus told His disciples the “spirits are subject unto you,” (Luke 10:20) and Paul warned of “seducing spirits” (I Tim. 4:1). Peter spoke of “spirits in prison” (I Pet. 3:19) and the writer of Hebrews tells of “ministering spirits” (Heb. 1:14). So, it is evident that this invisible realm is the world of spirits!

What are Spirits?

Modernists and skeptics explain spirits as merely ignorant superstitions and folklore. They say ancient civilizations invented spirits to explain certain happenings and forces they did not yet understand. However, the Word of God gives us the truth concerning spirits. The Bible informs us that spirits are living beings with definite personality and intelli-

gence. In the Bible we see spirit beings performing duties, speaking and carrying on as only living, personal beings can. In fact, the Scriptures inform us that spirit beings even have names such as Michael, Gabriel, Lucifer, Legion and Apollyon. Names that certainly reflect the fact spirits are actual living personalities.

Spirits are invisible to the human eye because they are immaterial. Jesus said, “. . . a spirit hath not flesh and bones” (Luke 24:29). Speaking of spirit beings, Paul said, “For we wrestle not against flesh and blood . . .” (Eph. 6:12). So, in order for spirits to possess a material form they must either materialize a body or possess a body of a human being. Spirits are of a different realm or dimension. They are “supernatural” or beyond what we consider the natural realm. Compared to human beings they are supernatural in knowledge, power and abilities. Spirits are certainly something we should know as much about as possible.

The Origin of Spirits

It should not surprise us that there is an invisible spirit realm, since God Himself is spirit. John 4:24 tells us “God is a spirit . . .”. Referring once again to Colossians 1:16 we are reminded that God, by His Son, created all things “that are in heaven and that are in earth, visible and invisible . . .”. Just as the visible, earthly realm was created by God, so was the invisible heavenly realm of spirits. Hobart Freeman in his book “Angels of Light?” comments, “The Scriptures inform us that God created not only a material or physical world, but also an invisible spiritual realm . . .”. So, God is the source and sustainer of the spirit realm as well as the physical realm.

The Two Divisions of the Spirit World

These invisible spirits are divided into two orders: the good and the evil. These two orders are clearly seen in Revelation 12:7, where it says, “. . . Michael and his angels fought against the dragon; and the dragon fought and his angels.” Thus we see there is the angelic host of God, headed by Michael the archangel. This angelic host of spirit beings comprise the holy order of the spirit world. The evil order of the spirit realm is headed by Satan and is composed of evil spirit beings called demons (Matt. 12:24-26). Just as there is good and evil in the visible realm; there is also good and evil in the invisible spirit realm. In fact, we will see that the good and evil of the invisible spirit world influence greatly the actions and events of the visible, material world.

The Angelic Realm

Angels are spoken of in the Scriptures many, many times. The Bible does not attempt to prove the existence of angels, but simply presents their existence as a fact.

It is clear Jesus believed in angels for He said, “But of that day and that hour knoweth no man, no not the angels which are in heaven” (Mark 13:32). The apostle Paul and the other apostles believed in angels as seen in their writings. Paul wrote, “And to you who are troubled, rest with us, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels” (II Thess. 1:7). Other Scriptures which reflect the apostles belief in angels are John 1:51; Revelation 12:7; I Peter 3:22; Jude 9 and Hebrews 12:22. Any honest mind must confess the Scriptures teach without reservation, the existence of angels.

The Nature of Angels

As we have already seen angels are spirits and so are immaterial and invisible. William Evans comments con-

cerning the nature of angels, “Although the angels are “spirits”, they nevertheless oftentimes have appeared to men in visible and even human form (Gen 19; Judges 2:1; 6:11-22; Matt. 1:20; Luke 1:26; John 20:12). There seems to be no sex among the angels, although whenever the word “angel” is used in Scripture it is always in the masculine form.” Jesus seems to confirm this sexless state of the angels as He says that angels “neither marry, nor are given in marriage” (Matt. 22:30).

Morally, the Bible informs us the angels are “holy” (Matt. 25:31, Mark 8:38). They are sinless and morally perfect. Angels are primarily the servants of God and as such are completely obedient to God. This perfect obedience reflects their sinless nature and perfect holiness.

Angelic Sphere of Activity

Angels are first of all heavenly beings. They occupy heaven and stand in the presence of God. When the great angel Gabriel appeared to Zacharias in the temple, he referred to himself as the one who stands “in the presence of God” (Luke 1:19). Jesus spoke of the “angels which are in heaven” (Mark 13:32). While angels are heavenly beings, they also have an earthly ministry as they carry out the will of God. Speaking of angels, the Bible tells us they are all, “ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation” (Heb. 1:14). So, throughout the Scriptures we see angels ministering in relation to the saints who are upon the earth. Angels appeared as men to Lot in Sodom (Gen. 19). An angel appeared to Gideon and gave him instructions and encouragement (Judges 6). When Elijah, the prophet, was worried and weary, God sent an angel to minister to him (I Kings 18). After Jesus had been tested of the devil, the Bible says, “Then the devil leaveth him, and, behold, angels came and ministered unto him” (Matt 4:11). An angel

delivered Peter from prison (Acts 12), and instructed Paul what to do in an emergency situation (Acts 27). So, we thank God for the wonderful ministry of the mighty angels toward His saints on earth. Many a Christian can testify to the fact of ministering angels. Hebrews reminds us that many “have entertained angels unawares” (Heb. 13:1).

The Ranks and Orders of Angels

The Scripture divides the angelic hosts into various ranks and orders. The great angel, Michael, is referred to as the “archangel” (Jude 9), which in accordance with other Scriptures, would indicate that Michael is the chief or supreme angel (Rev. 12:7). Speaking of archangels, Evans says, “In the Apocryphal books we find a hierarchy with seven archangels, including Michael, Gabriel, Raphael and Uriel. The fact that only one archangel is mentioned in the Scriptures proves that its doctrine of angels was not derived, as some supposed, from Babylonian and Persian sources, for there we find seven archangels instead of one.” Other ranks of angels are indicated in such verses as Ephesians 1:21, Colossians 1:16 and I Peter 3:22. In these passages we read of principalities, powers, might, dominions, thrones, powers and authorities. Certainly these terms speak of authority and rank in the angelic realm. God has a heavenly government, just as there is earthly government. His rule is administrated through and by the various orders and ranks of heavenly beings, including angels.

Not only do we read of ranks of angelic beings, we also read of different orders or classes of angelic beings. After the fall, the Garden of Eden was guarded by angels called cherubims. (Gen. 3:24). The cherubims are mentioned

dozens of times in the Bible and seem to be an order of guardian angels. They are associated with the throne of God as indicated by their place in the tabernacle and the temple (Ex. 25:18; Kings 6:23; I Chron. 3:7-14) and stand for the holiness of God in the light of man’s sin.

Also mentioned in the Scriptures are the seraphim. In a vision, Isaiah the prophet sees the throne of God and the relation of the angelic seraphim to it. Isaiah wrote, “Above it stood the seraphim: each one had six wings; with twain he covered his face, and with twain he covered his feet, and with twain he did fly. And one cried unto another, and said, Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of hosts: the whole earth is full of his glory” (Isa 6:2-3). The seraphim seem to declare the glory of God and lead in praise and worship of God. The “beasts” or “living creatures” described in Revelation 4:6-9 as being around the throne of God and crying day and night, “Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty,” could well be seraphim. Unger, in his Bible Dictionary, says this concerning the cherubim and the seraphim, “The cherubim apparently have to do with the holiness of God as violated by sin; the seraphim with uncleanness in the people of God.” Whatever their position and duties, it is clear the cherubim and seraphim refer to different orders of angelic beings.

The Number of Angels

The Bible nowhere tells us the exact number of angels. Revelation 5:11 allows us to see the angels around the throne of God and says, “and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands.” A number so large it is beyond our calculations. Indeed, Hebrews 12:22 tells us the angels are “innumerable”. We cannot count them as the number is so large!

The prophet Daniel also expresses the vastness of the angelic host as he views the throne of glory and writes,

“thousand thousands ministered unto him” (Dan. 7:10). None need worry that the number of God’s host are few or feeble! The angels are not only mighty; they are also many!

The Work and Ministry of Angels

Hebrews 1:14 says, “Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation?” Angels are servants sent forth from God to carry out His will and also to assist the saints of God when needed. The Bible is filled with accounts of the ministry of angels.

Angels stand before God and worship Him (Matt. 18:10; Psa. 148:2). They protect and deliver God’s people (Gen 19:11; I Kings 19:5; Psa. 91:11). Angels guide and encourage God’s servants (Matt. 28:5-7; Acts 8:26; 27:23-24). Often in the Scripture angels interpret God’s will to men (Job 33:23; Dan. 7:16; 10:5-11). At times angels are used by God to execute judgment toward individuals or toward nations (Acts 12:23; Gen 19; II Sam. 24:16). The angels will also have future ministries as related to us in prophetic portions of Scripture. The angels will come with Jesus at His second advent (I Thess. 4:16; Matt. 25:31). They will gather together the elect when Christ returns (Matt. 24:31), as well as separate the true from the false (Matt. 13:39, 49-50). They will “sever the wicked from among the righteous, and shall cast them into the furnace of fire: there shall be the weeping and the gnashing of teeth.” They will stand before the gates of the New Jerusalem and serve as sentinels to guarantee that nothing unclean or defiled will ever enter that city (Rev. 21:12).

Angels also had a ministry to the Lord Jesus during His life upon the earth. His birth was announced and heralded by angels (Luke 1:26-28; Matt 1:20; Luke 2:8-15). The angels came and ministered to Christ after His temptation in the wilderness (Matt. 4:11). An angel came and strength-

ened Him in the Garden as He prayed (Luke 22:43). Jesus said that He could ask the Father for twelve legions of angels to come to His aid and they would be sent (Matt. 26:53). All of this indicates a very intimate relation between Christ and the angels.

The angels are mighty, tireless, perfectly obedient servants of God. Thank God for the ministry they have toward the saints of God!

The Fall of Angels

Originally all angels were created good. However, the Scriptures speak of “the angels that sinned” (II Pet. 2:4). How and why would angels rebel and sin against God? Concerning this question and the origin of evil, Freeman comments, “Inasmuch as God is not the author of evil, for the Scriptures show that He created all things good in the beginning (Gen. 1:31), how then could sin originate in a perfect universe, or holy angels and spirits fall into the sin of rebellion against God in the first place? In order to shed light on this mystery, it will first be necessary to examine what God has revealed in His Word concerning Satan, inasmuch as the Scriptures designate him as the father and source of all that is evil.” What do the Scriptures reveal as to the origin of Satan, the source of evil?

Satan

The sin and fall of Satan is recorded in the Old Testament. Before he fell, Satan was a great and glorious angel who stood in the very presence of God. Satan’s name before his rebellion was Lucifer (Isa. 14:12) and he was “the

anointed cherub that covereth” (Ezk. 28:14), but because of his glory and beauty, he was lifted up with pride and ambition. Ezekiel writes,

“Thou was perfect in thy ways from the day that thou was created, till iniquity was found in thee. Thine heart was lifted up because of thy beauty, thou hast corrupted thy wisdom by reason of thy brightness” (Ezk. 28:15, 17).

Lifted up in such pride, the desire of Lucifer’s heart was to exalt himself and to no longer exalt and glorify God! Isaiah writes:

“For thou hast said in thine heart, I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God: I will sit also upon the mount of the congregation in the sides of the north: I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will be like the Most High” (Isa. 14:13-14).

Lucifer rebelled against the rule and authority of God. In this rebellion, he evidently influenced a third of the angels of heaven to follow him (Rev. 12:3-4). So, Lucifer became Satan, the adversary of God and the people of God. Clarence Larkin, commenting on Satan’s rebellion says this, “When God created the angels, and all the glorious beings that He originally created, there was no sin or ‘evil’ in the universe. But as free moral agents they had the power of choice, not between ‘good’ and ‘evil’, but between following the ‘will of God’, or their ‘own will’. As long as Satan chose the ‘will of God’ there was no ‘evil’ in the universe, but the moment he chose to follow his own will, then he fell, and by persuading others to follow him he introduced ‘evil’ into the universe.”

The Work of Fallen Angels

The Bible warns that fallen angels or demons are pernicious enemies of man and gives many examples of the tragic role they play in human experience.

Primarily, Satan and his demonic host are liars and deceivers. They blind the minds of the lost against the truth of God’s Word and then substitute lies for the truth. Paul tells us “The god of this world (Satan) hath blinded the minds of them which believe not” (II Cor. 4:4). Upon blinding the mind to truth, it is then easy to replace truth with error. Again Paul writes, “In the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils” (I Tim. 4:1).

The originator of error and false doctrines is Satan and satanic lies are promoted by his demonic host. Jesus, speaking of Satan, said, “There is no truth in him, when he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it” (John 8:44). With lies and deception fallen angels oppose God’s purposes and deceive the lost into executing Satan’s desires. False religion, cults, sects and isms as well as the occult, have their origin with Satan and the demons. Satanic delusion often appears appealing to the fleshly deceived mind because, “Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light” (II Cor. 11:14).

Satan appeals to the desires of the flesh and so draws away multitudes who have “itching ears,” “ever learning, and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth” (I Tim. 4:3; 3:7). Unger, commenting on demonology and heresy writes, “The whole body of revealed truth, as constituting the Bible, inspired and God-given, is the great bulwark and defense against all wicked power and evil supernaturalism. It is only when revealed truth is neglected or rejected, either in whole or in part, that the powers of darkness have opportunity to inflict damage and work havoc upon the Christian. It is not

surprising, therefore, in the light of these facts, to find satanic and demonic assault directed particularly and relentlessly against the Word of God, nor is it amazing to discover that attack against the citadel of revealed truth is, perhaps, the most conspicuous and potent role played by demons.”

Satan’s delusions also include the deceiving of human governments. Satan, himself, is referred to as the “prince (archon, ruler or governmental chief) of this world” (John 12:31; 14:30; 16:11). Paul refers to Satan as the “prince (ruler) of the power (authority) of the air (lower atmosphere)” (Eph. 2:2). John, the apostle, mentions Satan as the head of this present world system. “Because greater is he that is in you than he that is the world (the satanic system)” (I John 4:4). Not only is Satan the directing head of the satanic world system, but according to Scripture, the system itself is wholly evil. The moral, educational, religious, scientific and cultural aspects of man’s civilization are not of God, but are of this world and in opposition to God (I John 2:15-16).

In the light of these facts Satan’s persistent efforts to keep man under his dominion (which he won when he caused man’s fall in Eden) and to keep man away from the saving grace of Christ, become more understandable, as does the ceaseless war Satan is waging against the Most High to retain possession of the earth.

Perhaps the most frightening form of demonic affliction is demonic oppression or possession of the body. Demons can cause physical ailments such as muteness (Matt. 9:32-33), blindness (Matt. 12:22), and various other defects and deformities (Luke 13:11-17). Medical treatment cannot cure such cases because the case is demonic and not physical. The worst form of demonic attack on the body is actual possession. In possession the demon or demons actually inhabit and possess the body. Unger comments, “In demon possession, which is an extreme form of enslavement and oppression, the speech and behavior abnormalities appear in

greatly accentuated form with such violent physical manifestations as retching, screaming, cursing, blaspheming, foaming at the mouth, convulsions and displays of tremendous physical strength. So completely does the demonic spirit gain mastery that he takes over the body of the victim and speaks through it with his own voice and language, which may be completely foreign to the language of the demonized.”

Perhaps the clearest case of such demon possession is given to us in Mark 5:1-20. The Scriptures tell us of a man possessed by a legion of demons who possessed all the classic characteristics of demon possession while inhabited by these horrible spirit beings. While possessed he was anti-social, very strong, wild acting, full of inner turmoil, self-destructive, clairvoyant, dual in personality and mentally deranged. Moreover, there was nothing anyone could do for him. He was entirely under the power of the demons until Jesus Christ came upon the scene and expelled the demons from the man’s body. With the demons gone, the man found himself entirely free from all demon bondage and influence!

Human Relation to the Spirit World

The spirit world is real! The question now is, “what is your relationship to the spirit world?” Mankind is naturally connected to the satanic-demonic realm of the spirit world (Eph. 2:1-3). The end of that evil realm and everything associated with it is the “lake of fire” (Rev. 20:10-15), but through Jesus Christ, man can be saved from that evil realm and made a part of God’s realm. Paul writes, “Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness (Satan’s realm), and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear son” (Col. 1:13). Again, Paul tells us the purpose of the Gospel of Christ is 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, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in me (Christ)” (Acts 26:18).