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Foreword by  
**CARLOS  
ANNAONDIA**



**SLAYING  
DRAGONS**

A PRACTICAL GUIDE TO SPIRITUAL WARFARE

KOLENDA

SLAYING DRAGONS



# SLAYING DRAGONS

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DANIEL KOLENDA



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## FOREWORD

I'VE HAD THE privilege of knowing Evangelist Daniel Kolenda for several years, and I have been able to grasp his passion to see nations and lives transformed by the gospel and our beloved Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. The experiences shared in *Slaying Dragons* will certainly bless many. This book provides deep revelation of the spiritual realm that will empower the reader to step into a higher level of faith.

After reading through *Slaying Dragons*, I am convinced that its content regarding spiritual warfare will enable the reader to access a new level of faith and authority in Jesus Christ. In these times we must strive to deepen our knowledge and understanding of the spiritual realm like never before. Satan and his army are tirelessly working to deceive believers. It is imperative that we are fully clothed with God's armor in order to effectively fight back and take authority over all darkness and evil spirits. We are reminded in Luke 10:19 of the authority Jesus Christ has given us over all the power of darkness.

I fervently encourage every reader to embrace this book's deep revelation of the spiritual realm. Genuine and true revelation can only lead us to be more like Jesus. Furthermore remember there are millions of lost souls waiting for you to be the bearer of good news and present Jesus to them. Be encouraged and believe that God wants to use your life.

—CARLOS ANNACONDIA



## INTRODUCTION

# THE GREAT DRAGON, THAT OLD SERPENT

*There he lay, a vast red-golden dragon, fast asleep; a thrumming came from his jaws and nostrils, and wisps of smoke, but his fires were low in slumber. Beneath him, under all his limbs and his huge coiled tail, and about him on all sides stretching away across the unseen floors, lay countless piles of precious things, gold wrought and unwrought, gems and jewels, and silver red-stained in the ruddy light. Smaug lay, with wings folded like an immeasurable bat, turned partly on one side, so that the hobbit could see his underparts and his long pale belly crusted with gems and fragments of gold from his long lying on his costly bed.*

—J. R. R. TOLKIEN, *THE HOBBIT*

**T**HE IMAGE OF the dragon is as old as human consciousness. The terrifying legends of great serpentine, fire-breathing monsters come from virtually every ancient culture on earth. The word *dragon* comes from the Greek word *drakōn*, which means gazer. It comes from a verb that means to see clearly. The word came to describe ancient monsters, typically intelligent, reptilian, snakelike beings.

One author writes, “In the mythology of the ancient Greeks, such fantastical ‘chimeric’ beasts were created by the Titans, in the distant ‘Kronian Age’ before the Olympian gods, and typically dwelled in the mysterious places at the far reach of the world-river ‘Okeanos’—a metaphor for the most distant place a mortal could travel.”<sup>1</sup>

The Egyptians had Akhekh, an enormous, four-legged serpent. Its name may have been derived from a dialect of the southeastern African Makua where “*Ikuka* is the great Python.” In this area serpents have been found up to thirty-six feet long!<sup>2</sup> In Europe the Drakon Kholkikos, with a three-forked tongue and magic teeth, was said to guard a golden fleece in the sacred grove of Ares in Kolkhis (present-day Georgia).<sup>3</sup> The Scandinavians had Fafnir, who began life as a dwarf but became a dragon through a curse.<sup>4</sup> The Yucatec Maya people (in present-day Mexico) worshipped Kukulkan, the “Feathered Serpent.”<sup>5</sup> The people of India had Vritra, who was depicted as a dragon-like entity so large he was able to block rivers.<sup>6</sup> The Bhutanese had Druk, the Thunder Dragon, who is still depicted on the national flag of Bhutan today.<sup>7</sup> Similar dragons appear in Chinese, Japanese, Korean, Vietnamese, and other Asian mythology.

The Bible also uses dragon imagery. In the first story, in the beginning of the first book of the Bible, we are introduced to the dragon. Satan, in the form of a sentient, talking serpent, beguiles Eve and brings about the fall of mankind. The story ends with a prophetic promise that points to Jesus. God says to the serpent, “And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; he will crush your head, and you will strike his heel” (Gen. 3:15).

Christ, the offspring of Eve, would crush the head of that old serpent. Christ’s body was mortally wounded in the process, but He rose from the dead in victory! His death was but a strike to the heel. On the other hand, Satan was defeated over and over by Jesus during His earthly life. Then at the cross he was utterly conquered with no hope of ever rising again to victory. His head was totally crushed. Even now, as he continues to ravage the world with sickness, disease, temptation, and all kinds of evil, he is a completely vanquished and defeated foe. His only power is what we give him.

Although Satan’s ultimate defeat came through the death and resurrection of Christ, Jesus beat the devil soundly at every turn throughout His earthly life. Jesus demonstrated for us what it is to walk in victory. He gave His disciples authority to walk in that same victory over sin, Satan, and evil. This is our inheritance as children of the light.

Psalm 91 is considered a Messianic psalm. That means it points to and is fulfilled most perfectly by Christ Himself. Satan quoted verses

11 and 12 of the psalm to Jesus in the wilderness. Luke tells us, “The devil led him to Jerusalem and had him stand on the highest point of the temple. ‘If you are the Son of God,’ he said, ‘throw yourself down from here. For it is written: “He will command his angels concerning you to guard you carefully; they will lift you up in their hands, so that you will not strike your foot against a stone”” (Luke 4:9–11). Ironically, the psalm’s next verse perfectly describes what happened to Satan that day in the wilderness when Jesus overcame every temptation: “Thou shalt tread upon the lion and adder: the young lion and the dragon shalt thou trample under feet” (Ps. 91:13, KJV). Jesus is the ultimate dragon slayer! At every point, He trampled the devil underfoot as prophesied.

John Gill, writing about Psalm 91, says, “Some think the Messiah is meant; and that the psalm contains promises of protection and safety to him, as man, from diseases, beasts of prey, evil spirits, and wicked men, under the care of angels; and this not because that Satan has applied one of these promises to him, Matthew 4:6, but because they seem better to agree with him than with any other: and one part of the title of the psalm, in the Syriac version, runs thus, ‘and spiritually it is called the victory of the Messiah, and of everyone that is perfected by him.’”<sup>8</sup>

I love that last phrase: “the victory of the Messiah, and of everyone that is perfected by him.” As brethren of the great dragon slayer Himself, we are all called to trample serpents and scorpions, just as He did. His victory is ours! His authority is ours! His gifts and power are ours!

Matthew Henry, in his commentary on Psalm 91, says, “The devil is called *a roaring lion, the old serpent, the red dragon*; so that to this promise the apostle seems to refer in that (Rom. 16:20), *The God of peace shall tread Satan under your feet*. Christ has broken the serpent’s head, spoiled our spiritual enemies (Col. 2:15), and through him *we are more than conquerors*; for Christ calls us, as Joshua called the captains of Israel, to come and set our feet on the necks of vanquished enemies. Some think this promise had its full accomplishment in Christ, and the miraculous power which he had over the whole creation, healing the sick, casting out devils, and particularly putting it into his disciples’ commission that they should *take up serpents*, Mark 16:18.”<sup>9</sup>

In Revelation, John describes Satan as “the great dragon . . . that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world” (Rev. 12:9, *KJV*). Here we see that the great dragon—warring against almighty God, battling Michael the archangel and other mighty angels (v. 7), persecuting the church, and fighting against believers—is none other than “that old serpent.” He’s the same one who beguiled Eve in the Garden of Eden and whose head was crushed by the Messiah. We battle against him still today. But we fight from a position of victory, not defeat.

In Luke chapter 10 Jesus sent seventy-two disciples out two by two to every place He was about to go. He gave them authority and told them to heal the sick and tell them that the kingdom of heaven is near. They returned to Jesus, rejoicing that the demons were subject to them in His name. Jesus responded, “I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven. I have given you authority to trample on snakes and scorpions and to overcome all the power of the enemy; nothing will harm you. However, do not rejoice that the spirits submit to you, but rejoice that your names are written in heaven” (vv. 18–20).

What an amazing scripture! Jesus, the One who was prophesied of old to crush the head of the serpent, has given us authority to trample on the serpent as well! And yet there is a more glorious promise. No matter what happens to us in this life, our names are written in heaven! No matter what, we win! We fight from a place of victory. This is why Jesus promises, “In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world” (John 16:33).

## AN OVERVIEW

In this book we will look at what the Bible teaches about spiritual warfare. First, we will examine what the Bible has to say about angels, demons, and the spiritual world. Are there different kinds of angels? What purpose do they serve? Who is Satan, and where did he come from? How are angels and demons similar? How are they different? What are demons, and where do they come from? How can demons influence humans? What authority do demons have in this world? What kinds of evil spirits are mentioned in Scripture? What does it mean to be “demon-possessed” or “demonized”?

I will write about the cosmic battle we are engaged in. It's easy to lose sight of the big picture in our day-to-day lives. The small battles we face are part of a much bigger war. Understanding where we fit in God's cosmic strategy will help us to take our individual assignments more seriously. Also, understanding what our enemy is trying to accomplish will help us recognize his devices and resist him with wisdom.

I will also do my best to demystify spiritual warfare. Often Christian books and teachings have presented highly superstitious ideas about spiritual warfare. Some of it has become spooky and weird—closer to a Harry Potter novel than anything in the Bible. I will teach biblical principles about spiritual warfare that are both doctrinally sound and practical.

I will write about the armor that God has provided us, and the mighty weapons of our warfare. I will cover casting out demons, both from Scripture and from my own experience. Finally, I will give you some parting words of wisdom that will help you to walk in victory every day. My prayer is that through this book you will be equipped to slay every dragon you encounter—not only in the world but also in your life.



## CHAPTER 1

# ANGELS AND DEMONS IN THE BIBLE

*How you have fallen from heaven, morning star, son of the dawn! You have been cast down to the earth, you who once laid low the nations! You said in your heart, "I will ascend to the heavens; I will raise my throne above the stars of God; I will sit enthroned on the mount of assembly, on the utmost heights of Mount Zaphon. I will ascend above the tops of the clouds; I will make myself like the Most High." But you are brought down to the realm of the dead, to the depths of the pit.*

—ISAIAH 14:12–15

**I**T WAS A warm night in West Africa. The vast crowd in front of me stretched as far as the eye could see. It's a surreal sight but something that has become as normal to me as a pastor's church congregation. The air was hazy with an orange hue as our portable stadium lights on the crusade field filtered through a thick veil of dust kicked up by hundreds of thousands of dancing feet and the ever-present harmattan.<sup>1</sup> As usual I was preaching the gospel of Jesus Christ. If memory serves me well, I was preaching about the blood of Jesus that night and the power it has to save, heal, and deliver.

A well-known witch doctor in the region was visiting that night. She was famous because it was said that her curses had the ability to kill their victims. I didn't know all of this at the time, but later the local pastors gave me the details, which they were familiar with. One

pastor said that he was personally aware of nearly a dozen people who had died after coming under her curse. As you can imagine, people were terrified of her and her dark arts.

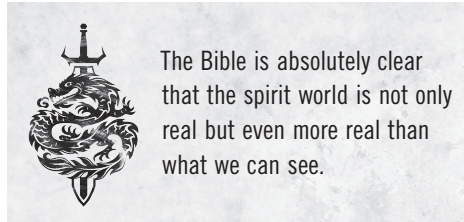
She had come to the service that night not to hear the gospel but to put a curse on me, the evangelist, and to kill me right there on the platform. Now, you might wonder why someone would want to do such a thing to a nice guy like me. But the truth is she was not the first witch doctor to hate us, nor will she be the last. We are bad for their business. Whenever I come into a region where voodoo and animism are practiced, both of which are quite common in West Africa, I confront these demonic systems without hesitation. They bind many people in darkness and fear. Sometimes the locals will not even dare to utter the name of local demonic spirits or curses out of fear that they will come upon them. I defy them with utter contempt. I will often get a list from the local pastors of the names of these spirits and their curses, which are all well known to and held in fear by the people, and I read them aloud from the platform and break their power in Jesus' name! The people often gasp at first—amazed I didn't die on the spot. Then they rejoice in freedom as we burn idols, fetishes, amulets, charms, and all witchcraft juju that people want out of their lives and homes.

I tell the people that once they belong to Jesus, they don't need to be afraid of any demonic curses. Jesus Christ has the power to protect them and to provide whatever they need. Witch doctors go out of business as a result of losing all their clientele to Christianity. In one city the local witch doctor had large stones at his house that were said to have magical powers. People would pay him to stand on those stones and hear what they believed were the voices of their dead ancestors. But after our gospel crusade this witch doctor was angry with us because his stones were no longer "speaking"! I have seen on several occasions how the witch doctors themselves have become Christians and surrendered their juju to be burned, confessing Jesus as Lord!

The woman who came to the meeting to kill me, however, was apparently on another level. Even the pastors acknowledged her power. But I didn't even know she was in the meeting. I was just preaching Jesus as I always do. She stood off to the right side of the stage, out in front of one of the two massive towers that suspend our line array

speakers. She had brought some strange charms to conduct her business. While I was preaching, she began to conjure some curse to hurl against me. Suddenly—and this is when I became aware of her presence—she let out a bloodcurdling scream and fell to the ground. There she lay, writhing like a snake and foaming at the mouth. I ignored her. With a crowd of half a million people or more, I wasn't about to stop to address one demon. Hundreds of thousands of people were listening to the gospel. I kept preaching. But we have a team trained to address such occurrences. They carried this woman behind the platform to a tent we had set up for deliverance. We call it "The Snake Pit."

The deliverance team cast the demons out of her, and she came to her right mind and received Jesus as her Savior. Then they brought her to me on the platform, and she shared her story with me as the massive crowd looked on. The people gasped when they saw her, knowing very well who she was. Even the local pastors on the platform



seemed uncomfortable. She told me how she had come to kill me. She told me that when she went to put the curse on me, she was suddenly struck to the ground. She told me how the demons had been cast out of her and she was free. Then she told me how she had surrendered her life to Jesus as well because, in her words, "Jesus is more powerful than my witchcraft."

This is the reality I live in. I often encounter people who are demonized. I have seen things that would give grown men nightmares (and actually have). If you don't believe demonic spirits are real, I guarantee one trip with me would change your mind. One thing I know for sure. The spirit world is real. Angels are real, and demons are real. God is real, and Satan is real. We are in the midst of a cosmic battle between good and evil that has been going on for millennia and continues to rage all around us. Some people prefer to ignore it and pretend the visible world is all there is, but no Christian is justified in having such a worldview. The Bible is absolutely clear that the spirit world is not only real but even more real than what we can see. The spirit world is

where the battle is raging, and all followers of Jesus need to be sober and vigilant.

In this chapter we will explore some of the basics regarding angels, demons, and the spiritual realm. This will give us a foundation upon which to discuss spiritual warfare in the following chapters.

## WHAT ARE ANGELS?

What comes to mind when you read that question? Do you think back to childhood images of little babies flying around with little wings and harps? Or does a more religious symbol come to mind, such as a medieval painting of humanlike figures with golden wings, long hair, a robe, and a halo? Perhaps you picture a more contemporary rendition, such as those found in Christian bookstores: a superhero-sized man with flowing hair, shining armor, powerful wings, and a huge sword. Or you may be one of those who have seen angels in a vision or in person, so the picture that comes to your mind may not be a mere interpretation—it may be the real deal.

Whatever comes to our minds, the Bible offers its own portrait of angels. But it is not a simple one. There is more to angels than can be captured in any one painting or vision. Scripture spreads many allusions to angels throughout its pages, like pieces to a giant puzzle scattered on a table. We have to put them all together to see the full picture.

Let's begin with the term itself. The word *angel* means messenger. It can actually refer to a human messenger sent to bring news to others (e.g., Gen. 32:3; Num. 20:14; 21:21). The Bible even refers to prophets as angels. The name Malachi means my angel—the Lord called him “My messenger” (Mal. 1:1, AMP).<sup>2</sup> These “angels” are not heavenly spirits. The Bible applies the word to them in the purely practical sense of messenger.

On the other hand, the same word clearly refers to nonhuman, spiritual entities who are God's messengers (e.g., Gen. 19:1, 15; Dan. 3:28; Zech. 1:9; Matt. 1:20; 2:13; Luke 1:26, 28; Rev. 1:1; 5:2; 7:2). God sends them to bring special news (like the angels of the Christmas story) or to accomplish special tasks (like the angels who destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah). Scripture describes angels as powerful spiritual beings who enjoy access to God's presence (Job 1:6; Matt. 18:10; Luke 1:19),

obey His commands (Ps. 103:20–21), worship Him (Ps. 148:2; Rev. 5:11–14), protect His people (Ps. 91:11–12), and minister to their needs (1 Kings 19:5; Matt. 4:11; Heb. 1:14).

But the biblical portrait of angels is more complex than this. This chapter will expand on it by looking at several names that apply to angelic beings throughout Scripture. We begin in the Old Testament.

## **OLD TESTAMENT NAMES FOR ANGELS**

Not only does the Old Testament speak often of angels (e.g., Ps. 91:11), but its depictions are also fascinating and sometimes shocking. In fact, *angel* is only one term among several that describe these spiritual beings.<sup>3</sup> God created several different kinds of angelic creatures that attend Him and perform His will. This section will look at some of the terms in the Old Testament.

### **The council of the Lord**

First, we will look at a broader term that encompasses all kinds of angelic beings. The Old Testament is framed in a worldview that sees the Lord seated on His throne, atop His heavenly mountain, surrounded by a great assembly of the heavenly host. He is utterly unique, but He is not alone. God is surrounded by a massive throng of spiritual beings that constitute a great heavenly assembly—an assembly Jeremiah calls “the council of the LORD” (Jer. 23:18; see also v. 22).

God has taken his place in the divine council; in the midst of the gods he holds judgment.

—PSALM 82:1, ESV

And so the heavens will praise your wonderful deed, O Yahweh, even your faithfulness, in the assembly of the holy ones. For who in the sky is equal to Yahweh? Who is like Yahweh among the sons of God, a God feared greatly in the council of the holy ones, and awesome above all surrounding him?

—PSALM 89:5–7, LEB

Both of these passages refer to a great heavenly council ruled by God and attended by angels. It is a place of spectacular worship. But it

is also a place of legislation and decrees. Several prophets had a vision of this gathering. Indeed, they themselves stood with angels on this council. Isaiah's vision is probably the most well known. He saw the Lord on His throne surrounded by angelic beings. After his confession of sin and his cleansing, Isaiah heard the call for a volunteer to go for "us"—a pronoun that included the Lord and the entire angelic council (Isa. 6:1–8).

Daniel saw this same council sitting in judgment over wicked nations (Dan. 7). God, "the Ancient of Days," presided over the court (v. 9). There were other thrones and multiplied thousands of angelic beings in attendance. The council ruled against the rebellious nations and transferred their dominion to "one like a son of man" (v. 13).

The prophet Micaiah probably gives us the most fascinating glimpse into this council (1 Kings 22:1–40; 2 Chron. 18). Like Isaiah did, he



God uses His heavenly host for the same reasons He uses redeemed people. He is full of love and does not want to execute His plan alone.

saw the Lord on a throne surrounded by the heavenly host. After decreeing that King Ahab would die in battle, the Lord asked His council how to coax Ahab into that battle. A debate among the

council members followed! "One suggested this, and another that" (1 Kings 22:20; 2 Chron. 18:19). Then one "spirit" stepped forward before the Lord and volunteered his services. He suggested going out as "a deceiving spirit in the mouths of all his [false] prophets" (1 Kings 22:22; 2 Chron. 18:21). The prophets would encourage Ahab to go into the battle, prophesying he would be successful. God said the idea would work and sent the spirit to do the job. The plan did work—Ahab died in battle.

It seems strange that God would like the idea of a lying spirit. It may seem even stranger that God would consult with lesser beings at all. Why does God need the counsel of lesser spirits when He has all knowledge and power? But this is exactly why it is so important to understand angels and the council of the Lord. God uses His heavenly host for the same reasons He uses redeemed people. He is full of love and does not want to execute His plan alone. He wants all kinds of children—in heaven and on earth—to work with Him and for Him.

This vision of heaven's council shows us that God has servants other than humans. They have ranks in His kingdom and various functions in God's family. God loves and respects them. They are part of His household, assisting Him as He governs creation. Further, the existence of this council—with its various kinds and levels of spirits—helps us understand the origin of demons and why they have different evil characteristics. And finally, the council gives us greater clarity about Jesus' lordship. His life, death, resurrection, and ascension mean He is exalted to the highest place of a universe filled with powerful spirit beings. Jesus helps preside over this huge, heavenly council *as a man*. The eternal Son of God, who is also now the chief human being, is "superior to the angels" (Heb. 1:4)! This is what Jesus means when He says, "All authority *in heaven* and on earth has been given to me" (Matt. 28:18, emphasis added). In light of all this let's look at a few more names the Old Testament gives these angelic beings.

### ***Elohim***

You may already be familiar with this Hebrew word. It can be translated either "God" or "gods." Its Hebrew form is plural, but it can have a singular meaning (like *sheep* in English).<sup>4</sup> That's the way the Old Testament writers most often use it. *Elohim* usually refers to the one eternal God of Israel. But in other contexts the same word can be a plural reference either to false gods (e.g., Exod. 20:3) or to angelic beings (Ps. 8:5). Psalm 82:1 describes the angelic beings on the divine council. According to the Old Testament, these angels are, in one sense of the word, *elohim*.

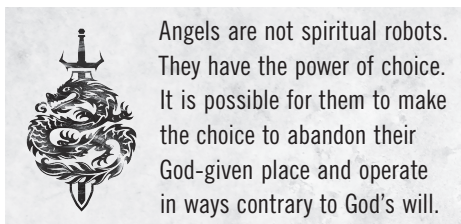
Context must always determine which meaning is used.<sup>5</sup> When the Bible applies the word *elohim* to angelic beings, of course it is not saying they are literally gods to be worshipped, served, or obeyed (though the ungodly nations see them this way). Instead it is using the word to highlight the fact that they are not humans. They are instead powerful, supernatural creatures who inhabit the spiritual realm.<sup>6</sup> As such, they sit on the Lord's heavenly council and help administer His justice among the nations (Ps. 82). The term *elohim* also brings attention to the authority these beings have in the world as God's agents. He presides over them and even judges them when they rebel. "God

[*elohim*] stands in the divine assembly; he administers judgment in the midst of the gods [*elohim*]” (Ps. 82:1, LEB).<sup>7</sup>

### The sons of God

There is only one eternal Son of God. Jesus Christ is the Father’s “one and only Son,” equal to the Father and Spirit in divinity (John 1:14, 18). He is fully human, fully divine, and greater than all angels (Heb. 1). But did you know the Bible speaks of other “sons of God” besides Jesus and redeemed humans? The unique phrase “sons of God” is yet another way the Old Testament refers to angelic beings who dwell in the heavens. The term means something similar to *elohim*. In fact, Psalm 82 identifies the *elohim* with the “sons of the Most High” (v. 6). It seems these divine sons are the same as the *elohim*. Both terms are general descriptions of the supernatural beings who stand on the Lord’s council and exercise authority in the world on God’s behalf.

So why refer to angelic beings as sons of God? Because it draws out other important aspects of angels we must understand. First, angelic



Angels are not spiritual robots. They have the power of choice. It is possible for them to make the choice to abandon their God-given place and operate in ways contrary to God’s will.

beings are in some sense God’s children. Even though they do not reproduce their own children like humans (Matt. 22:30), they are still God’s offspring. He made them; they are His sons. The

Father carefully, creatively, and compassionately created each and every angelic being for His pleasure. He is the One who gave them existence. They are part of His heavenly family and therefore part of His massive household (Eph. 3:15).

Second, the phrase “sons of God” means these spiritual beings are supernatural and powerful. Though they can enter the earthly realm, even appearing and functioning within it, this world is not their natural habitat. Heaven is. They are, after all, God’s own sons. As His spiritual kin—His children—they stand on the royal council and share God’s dominion in the world.

And finally, “sons of God” bear God’s image. Though they are not humans, they have powerful abilities, intellects, and emotions. They also possess free will. Angels are not spiritual robots. They have the

power of choice. It is possible for them to make the choice to abandon their God-given place and operate in ways contrary to God's will (Jude 6). As we will see later, some have done this. Most of them, however, have remained loyal to their Father and Lord and continue to serve Him on His council.<sup>8</sup>

### **Cherubim and seraphim<sup>9</sup>**

These spiritual creatures seem to comprise the highest order of God's angelic sons. Some scholars would even say we should not call them angels.<sup>10</sup> But even though the use of terms can be debated, it is clear that these extraordinary creatures belong to a highly specialized class of angelic beings. Descriptions of them strike us as quite peculiar and even bizarre. Modern movies that create outlandish, CGI space creatures don't even come close to these *real*, extraterrestrial creatures who abide close to God's throne.

The prophets give us our most poignant descriptions of cherubim and seraphim.<sup>11</sup> Some also come from the stories of the tabernacle and temple,<sup>12</sup> and a few references occur in the psalms.<sup>13</sup> *Seraph* means "fiery serpent."<sup>14</sup> The verb form of this Hebrew word means to burn, and the noun means serpent, so most translators simply combine the meanings. In some places in the Old Testament, *seraph* denotes a literal snake. When used in judgment against God's people in the wilderness, their venom is their fire (Num. 21:6, KJV). Yet in that same story, the Lord tells Moses to "make a snake [seraph]" out of bronze (v. 8). When the bitten Israelites look at the bronze figure, they are healed.

The prophet Isaiah sees seraphim as angelic figures on the council of the Lord (Isa. 6:1–4). They are close to the throne, shouting, "Holy, holy, holy!" to one another. Both stories give us clues to the function of the angelic seraphim. From Isaiah's story it is clear these angelic creatures help steward God's presence (along with the cherubim, discussed below). They must cover their faces at the sheer, unapproachable brilliance of the Lord's light. And they must warn one another neither to look nor to perhaps come too close (e.g., Exod. 19:12–22). That is why Isaiah experienced such terror. He was *not* covering his face, and he "saw the Lord" (Isa. 6:1).

The Moses story seems to indicate seraphim are also related to

God's restoring powers. That is why a bronze fiery serpent is a symbol of healing for the Israelites in the wilderness. Even Jesus compares His being lifted on the cross to Moses' lifting the serpent in the wilderness (John 3:14). Isaiah's experience confirms this idea. When he confesses his sin, one of the seraphim brings a burning coal to touch his lips. This act restores Isaiah, enabling him to go forth on a mission (Isa. 6:5–8). Seraphim seem to attend the Lord's throne as guardians and to administer the Lord's restoring power.

The word *cherub* comes from a Semitic word that means "to bless, praise, adore."<sup>15</sup> Ezekiel sees four cherubim beneath the throne of God. Each has four faces, four wings, human hands, and calves' feet (Ezek. 1:6–8). With giant, whirling wheels next to each of them, they seem to "carry" God on His throne (vv. 15–28). Yahweh sits atop these beings like He's riding a glory chariot through the skies (Ps. 18:10). All of this indicates that the cherubim are also stewards of the Lord's presence. They attend and escort Him. This is why two cherubim flank the top of the ark of the covenant. And it is why the tabernacle curtains and the holy place in Solomon's temple have several images of cherubim in them. The Lord sits on a throne between the cherubim, and He speaks to people from that position (Exod. 25:22).

Cherubim also act as guardians for the Lord. He placed cherubim and a flaming sword on the east side of the Garden of Eden to prohibit Adam from returning (Gen. 3:24). The cherub whom the Lord expelled from His holy mountain, an apparent reference to the angelic being who became Satan, was "anointed as a guardian cherub" (Ezek. 28:14, 16).

The Bible mentions cherubim almost one hundred times. They are much more prominent than seraphim, yet they seem to have similar roles as guardian stewards of God's holy presence. The seraphim offer protection between the holy God and an unholy world, but they can also serve to bring restoration to penitent humans when that border is crossed. Meanwhile the cherubim act as protective escorts of their holy King. These extraordinary angelic beings stand on the Lord's council as stewards of His presence and throne.

### Princes

Angelic beings called princes appear mainly in the Book of Daniel (10:13, 20–21; 12:1). This term refers to a group of high-ranking angelic

leaders over nations.<sup>16</sup> The biblical worldview sees spiritual governments in the heavens as parallel to and ruling over earthly governments (e.g., 1 Kings 22:19–23; Ps. 82; Isa. 34:4–5; Dan. 2:21; 7; Rev. 16:14). The angelic princes in the Book of Daniel have a level of authority over various nations. Michael, for example, is called the prince of Daniel’s people, Israel (Dan. 10:21; 12:1), while two rebellious princes are called the “prince of Persia” and the “prince of Greece” (10:20). All three are princes, yet only one is loyal to the Lord. The other two fight against Him. That means the rebellious princes previously served as high-ranking angels on God’s council but have since revolted and used their authority for evil purposes. Further, Michael is called “one of the chief princes” and “the great prince” (10:13; 12:1). That means there is a hierarchy with higher-ranking princes leading military contingents. (See Matthew 26:53 and Revelation 12:7.)

The heavenly conflicts in Daniel correspond to earthly conflicts. Just as the Persian kingdom ruled before giving way to Alexander the Great’s Greek kingdom, so the messenger in Daniel had to fight the spiritual prince of Persia while the prince of Greece was on the way (Dan. 10:20). All of this means that some members of the original angelic council were called princes because they had authority over nations. Among the princes there were various ranks and probably hosts of military angels under their command.

## **ANGELS IN THE NEW TESTAMENT**

The Old Testament sketches a complex but stunning portrait of angelic beings. The New Testament uses that portrait as its backdrop, assuming its description of the Lord’s council with its various kinds of angelic members. But it subsumes most of these members under one simple name: *angels*. In the New Testament, then, the word *angels* refers to the various spiritual beings that convene on the Lord’s council. This section will look at some functions of New Testament angels in light of the Old Testament categories.

### **Elohim and sons of God**

Jesus refers to angels as *elohim* when He quotes a psalm using the same phrase (Ps. 82:6; John 10:34).<sup>17</sup> The same reference also implies that Jesus sees angels as the sons of God (John 10:35–36). His use of

these terms affirms His adoption of the Old Testament's worldview. Angels in the New Testament are nonhuman, heavenly entities God created as His spiritual children. They bear God's image, sit on His heavenly council, and assist Him in governing the universe.

### **Messengers**

When angels appear in the New Testament, most of the time they carry messages to humans or accomplish tasks for the Lord. Angelic messengers famously appear to Zechariah, Mary, Joseph, and the shepherds to announce the births of John the Baptist and King Jesus (Matt. 1:20–2:23; Luke 1:11–20, 26–38; 2:8–15). They give commands, warnings of danger, and physical guidance. Angels rescue people, watch over churches and individuals, and carry out various acts of judgment (Matt. 18:10; Acts 5:19; 12:7–10, 23; Rev. 2:1). Whatever the case, this role of angels as messengers is the most prominent in the New Testament. As in the Old Testament, angels are spiritual beings who do not possess natural, earthly bodies but can appear in human form (Heb. 13:2).

Angels in the New Testament also have crucial roles as messengers in the end times. Thus angelic activity will increase on the earth as the day of the Lord approaches. Angels help the Lord Jesus reap the last-days harvest and “weed out” people from the church who look like Christians but are not (Matt. 13:39–41). One of the reasons God created the heavenly host was to assist in the renewal of the earth at the end of the age, no doubt to unite His heavenly and earthly families (Eph. 3:15). In the end these spiritual messengers will be subject to humans and after the judgment will help them take care of the new, glorious world in the age to come (1 Cor. 6:2–3; Heb. 1:14; 2:5–18).

### **Council of the Lord**

The New Testament, like the Old Testament, describes scenes of the angelic council of the Lord (which also includes humans in both Testaments). The most vivid example occurs in the Book of Revelation. The Father sits on a throne that gleams with color and is encircled by twenty-four elders on thrones, four living creatures, myriads of angels, and the Lamb (Rev. 4–5; see also Dan. 7:9–10). This council is convened for the unrolling of the great scroll and God's last-days judgments.

The other New Testament mention of the council occurs in Hebrews 12:22–24. The author describes the council to encourage Jewish believers that their church gatherings carry tremendous significance in the spiritual realm. When they assemble, they join a larger council in the “heavenly Jerusalem” on Mount Zion. In attendance are myriads of angels, the broader church, God, the perfected spirits of righteous people, and Jesus.<sup>18</sup>

Both New Testament visions of the council include humans with angels, and both include Jesus as coleader of the council with the Father. It is no wonder the author of Hebrews begins his epistle insisting that Jesus is “much superior to the angels” (Heb. 1:4). He stands on the great angelic council, not as a prophet or even merely an earthly ruler but as the *Lord* of the council. He is uniquely and eternally God’s Son; therefore, all the angels—the entire council—worship and serve Him the way they do the Father (Heb. 1).



In the end these spiritual messengers will be subject to humans and after the judgment will help them take care of the new, glorious world in the age to come.

### **Cherubim and seraphim**

Though these creatures are not mentioned by name in the New Testament, it appears the cherubim appear in Revelation as “the four living creatures” (Rev. 4:6–8). They bear some striking similarities to Ezekiel’s cherubim, although they also have some differences. Some Bible teachers see them as the same beings appearing in different forms.<sup>19</sup> Still others identify them with the seraphim of Isaiah.<sup>20</sup>

### **Princes**

One of the princes from Daniel also appears in the New Testament. Michael, the prince who looks after the nation of Israel, is called an “archangel” in the New Testament (Jude 9). He is also pictured in a battle with “his angels” against “the dragon and his angels” (Rev. 12:7). The Greek prefix *arch* can mean first, beginning, ruler, or prince. So *archangel* clearly refers to a chief angel. Michael’s description in Revelation shows us that he is a chief or prince angel because he oversees other princes, as well as other angels in his military contingent. He

also has oversight over the nation of Israel.<sup>21</sup> Further, in Jude, Michael disputes with the devil (v. 9), which implies his level of authority in the hierarchy of angels. Michael and the devil probably had similar ranks before the rebellion.

## WHAT ARE DEMONS?

What happens when any of these powerful angelic creatures rebel against the Most High? These angels, after all, are the “sons of God.” God created them as His spiritual kindred, giving them the ability to choose loyalty to Him and obedience to His word. But not all made that choice. The angelic beings who did not choose to obey God were cast away from their heavenly sphere. They remained spirits, of course, and therefore continue to populate the spiritual realm. But by choosing to go their own way, they lost their intimate connection with God as well as their place in the atmosphere of His glory. I see two major consequences to such a fall. First, these angels experience a perversion of their original attributes. Different types of angels who had various abilities and responsibilities in heaven now, after rebellion, have distorted versions of their original characters. The expulsion and perversion of these fallen angels turns them into what the New Testament calls demons.

Second, without the atmosphere of glory for which they were made, they need another environment in which to express themselves and fight against God. That new environment is the earth. Specifically, they must work through human agency. This is because God designed humans to rule and take care of the earth. Demons must usurp humanity’s role as rulers of the earth. But they also must create a kind of partnership with humans as hosts for their mission against God.

## THE FALL OF ANGELS

The prophet Ezekiel offers an interesting proclamation of judgment and lamentation against the king of Tyre (Ezek. 28:1–19). The arrogance of this evil, human prince inspired him to claim invincibility and equality with God, so the prophet rebuked him. But as Ezekiel unfolds his prophecy, he clearly switches into another mode and begins to speak of a supernatural being. Remember that human princes correspond to spiritual princes. (See Daniel 10:13, 20.) For Ezekiel’s prophecy about

Tyre's king to slide into a parallel description of a supernatural being should offer no surprise.

The prophet says this spiritual entity used to be “an anointed guardian cherub” who dwelled “on God’s holy mountain,” was covered with precious stones, had the seal of perfection, was “full of wisdom and perfect of beauty,” walked among the stones of fire, and was “in Eden, the garden of God” (Ezek. 28:12–14, *LEB*). Such a list clearly describes a member of God’s angelic council who appeared even in Eden. But the prophet goes on to say, “Your heart was proud because of your beauty; you ruined your wisdom because of your splendor” (v. 17, *LEB*). Further, and leaving no room for doubt that he addresses a fallen angelic being, the Lord says, “You sinned; and I cast you as a profane thing from the mountain of God, and I expelled you, the guardian cherub, from the midst of the stones of fire” (v. 16, *LEB*).<sup>22</sup>

It is logical, then, that we would encounter an evil, spiritual being in the Garden of Eden (Gen. 3:1–7). The serpent was the former cherub prince who wanted to rise to the highest place of the Lord’s council, even making himself “like the Most High” (Isa. 14:14). He was a high-ranking council member that now appeared in the garden to seduce Eve and steer Adam into human rebellion and death. The New Testament identifies this serpent with none other than “the devil” and “Satan” (Rev. 12:9; see also 2 Cor. 11:3, 14). His rebellion inspired other angelic beings to follow suit. They also were expelled from the heavenly council (Rev. 12:9; see also Matt. 25:41).

Was this all one rebellion? Or were there several rebellions of other council members at different times? Scripture gives various references to angelic rebellion. Genesis tells us that “sons of God” took human wives for themselves (Gen. 6:1–4). These seem to be the same “angels who did not keep to their own domain but deserted their proper dwelling place, [that are now] kept in eternal bonds under deep gloom for the judgment of the great day” (Jude 6, *LEB*). Psalm 82 reveals that some of the sons of God who stood on the Lord’s council became corrupt, while other sons of God clearly remained loyal to Him (Job 1:6; 2:1). These rebellious sons in Psalm 82, called *elohim*, refused to use their authority among the nations to help the weak, poor, and fatherless. Finally, Revelation tells us that the dragon’s tail “swept away a third of the stars from heaven and threw them to the earth” (Rev. 12:4,

LEB). Clearly we find different references to angelic rebellion, which may have occurred at different times. But whether these are separate events or not, they clearly show us that demonic beings are former members of the angelic council who rebelled against the Lord.

### VARIOUS KINDS OF DEMONS

A large portion of the angelic host rebelled. Whatever characteristics they bore in their previous state, they bear a twisted form of them now. Former high-ranking angels—cherubim, seraphim, and princes—are now dark forms of their prior selves. They still carry authority over nations, but they now use their authority to pervert justice, oppress people, resist God’s plan, and create war and death on the earth. These are the principalities and powers to which Paul and Peter refer in their epistles (Eph. 1:21; 6:12; 1 Pet. 3:22). The demons’ former power stations carry over into present rank-and-file positions. We read of “rulers . . . authorities . . . powers of this dark world . . . spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms” (Eph. 6:12). We also find words such as *lordships*, *names*, *thrones*, and *angels* (Eph. 1:21, LEB; 3:10; Col. 1:16; 1 Pet. 3:22). These are all references to hierarchical positions originally on the Lord’s council. But they became evil positions on the satanic council.

In any hierarchical system, higher and lower ranks exist. Lower-ranking angels who rebelled became something like ground soldiers in the satanic army. These are usually called demons in the Gospels. They wreak havoc in people’s lives in various ways. Previously they operated beneath higher-ranking angels and carried out certain assignments. Now they do the same for their overseers in the demonic realm. Previously they had various areas of expertise. Now they use perverted versions of those skills to exert the devil’s oppressive power over people.

For instance, an angel originally tasked with various kinds of communication may now have become a “demon that [is] mute” (Luke 11:14). An angel assigned to extend beauty may now be a demon that causes blindness (Matt. 12:22). One given to steward the purity of worship may now be “an impure spirit” right in the middle of a synagogue service (Luke 4:33)! Popularly we may call such a demon a religious spirit. It camouflages gross impurity behind false piety. On a

larger scale a seraph initially given extensive power to restore may now be a high-ranking prince with power to inflict the worst kinds of diseases on many people.

Demons cover a large spectrum of rank and power, and they work together. Jesus makes that clear (Matt. 12:26). Obviously they do not unite out of love. They unite out of fear. If they do not pool their resources around their common evil cause, they have no hope to succeed. Therefore, as in the case of Legion, lower-ranking demons can conglomerate to yield greater power over a region (Mark 5:1–20). The cluster of unclean spirits, Legion, demonizes a man *and* keeps a ten-city area under its dominion. This story reveals both planes of demonic activity: bondage over an individual but also government over a region.<sup>23</sup> This Legion, the name given to a detachment of as many as four thousand to six thousand demons, must also have worked under the authority of higher-ranking princes.<sup>24</sup>

### **DEMONS' NEED FOR REST**

Jesus teaches, “When an impure spirit comes out of a person, it goes through arid places seeking rest and does not find it. Then it says, ‘I will return to the house I left’” (Luke 11:24). Why do demonic spirits seek rest? As fallen spirits without the comfort and compatibility of their original environment, they must have some semblance of a “house” in this world where they can reside and through which they can express their agitated need for evil. Demons need hosts. Even the swine were better to Legion than the prospect of being disembodied, leaving their region, or heading to the premature judgment of the abyss (Matt. 8:29; Mark 5:10; Luke 8:31).

On the other hand, higher-ranking spirits inhabit heavenly regions, also called “the kingdom of the air” (Eph. 2:2). They do not seem to need individual humans to inhabit. But they do still need human regimes through which to express their dominion. They also seem to work through a chain-link connection that extends from lower-level evil activity on the ground up to higher-level government in the heavens. Again, this is what Legion seemed to be doing.

This human connection is the “rest” demonic forces need. Added to this is the fact that God designed us humans to live by His Spirit.

Adam naturally lived when the breath of life entered him (Gen. 2:7). And believers supernaturally live when we receive the Spirit of God and Christ (Rom. 8:9). God created us to be inspired by His Spirit. But if we do not have *His* Spirit, we will have a cavity in our hearts longing for some other kind of spirit. We must have spirit.

Meanwhile, demonic spirits traverse the earth needing hosts. These two dark requirements find one another like a match made in hell. This is why Paul says we were subject to “the spirit that is now working in the sons of disobedience” when we were sinners (Eph. 2:2, NASB). Without the Holy Spirit, humans must have some kind of connection with spirit—whether direct demonization or a general inspiration from the spirit of the world. Some people are more influenced by specific spirits than others.

This is why there seem to be different depths of demonic influence over people. Demons need rest, and people need spirit. The degree of mutual cooperation, as well as other factors, determines the degree of influence. In extreme cases demonic beings express themselves openly through human speech or behavior. The New Testament calls this being demon-possessed or demonized or having a demon (Matt. 8:16; Mark 9:17).<sup>25</sup> This does not mean that everyone without Christ is demonized. But it does mean everyone without Christ comes under the influence of the spirit of the world.

### **JESUS CHRIST IS LORD!**

But Jesus has defeated every rebellious angelic spirit! His life, death, resurrection, and ascension did more than give us a way to be forgiven of sins. *His victory overthrew the entire host of dark powers.* When Jesus took His throne as the perfect Son of God and Son of Man, He specifically took dominion over the entire network of fallen angels. That is a huge part of what the Bible means when it says that Jesus is Lord! It is not even possible to understand this great confession fully without a worldview that sees a hierarchy of evil spirits ruling individuals and nations but now subjugated to Christ!

When we turn to the Lord and receive His Spirit, our vacuum for spirit is filled by the Holy Spirit. That means we are brought from spiritual death to eternal life. It also means we are raised to the place

of dominion with Christ (Eph. 1:19–2:6). No longer are we subject to the spirit of the world, living under the tyranny of wicked forces. We are both liberated and elevated. In the man Christ Jesus, the original design for humans to rule the earth has been restored. We can walk in victory over these evil powers now, and one day we will rule with Christ over all creation. Jesus Christ is Lord.

### **QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION**

- Why do you think God has created so many different kinds of creatures in heaven and on earth?
- Why does God use human and angelic agents rather than doing everything Himself?
- Why do demons need/want human hosts?
- Have you ever had an encounter with a demonized person? Have you ever seen an angel or a demon?