

Legends, Fables & Biblical Origins

Angels, Demons and Other Flying Objects – Part II

Selected Scripture

Introduction

When we began our study of angels, demons and other flying creatures, I made mention that interest in angels, demons, and other spirit or flying creatures is not new and unique to this generation. For instance, by the fourth century, praying to angels had so infiltrated and enamored the church, that a special church council was convened. This council, among other things, passed a resolution that forbade praying to angels.

The truth is, human nature wants something it can feel close to and even see. Of course we all know that God cannot be seen by mortal eyes and that He so often, does not seem to be readily available or close by. So, angels are the next best thing.

Fascinating Legends, Fables and Myths

“Legend of Tobias”

The Apocryphal book of Tobit introduces an angel named Raphael, who calls himself, “. . . one of the seven holy angels who present the prayers of the saints and enter into the presence of the glory of the Holy One.” (Tobit 12:15 Apocrypha)

The book of Tobit, by the way, was written by an unknown Jewish author two hundred years before the birth of Christ. It has to be good, right? It is so old – it even predates the incarnation of Christ!

Let me pause and comment on this. Old is not necessarily right – unless it is old parents talking to their children, then old is right!

Let me give examples of this fact. The Japanese have been involved in ancestral worship for a few thousand years and the Chinese have governed their lives around veneration for presumed patterns of negative and positive harmony flowing through nature and the body (yin yang). The fact that these practices have been done for thousands of years, does not mean they are anything other than pagan superstitions that were founded on the belief that divinity flows through everything and deceased relatives can open heaven.

Another example is in the fact that Indians predated the Europeans in North America. That does not mean that the Zodiac is the key to the heavens or that the worship of Mother Earth and the belief that animals are animated spirits is right. It is ancient, but that does not mean it is purer or closer to the truth.

Ancient is not synonymous with wisdom. It may just be old lies.

Satan predates all offenses against monotheism, which is the worship of the one and only true and living God. Satan is really old and in fact, he is the original liar.

Today, we have nothing but the repackaging, in different forms, methods, and beliefs, of old lies.

The legend from the book of Tobit is a good example. Let me return to that book – where I was before I was interrupted!

Tobit was a Jew of exceptional piety, who lived among the exiles in Nineveh. Among his other

labors of charity, Tobit took it upon himself to bury the body of any slain Jew he happened to come upon. One night, his son, Tobias, told him that a fellow Jew had been strangled and left in the open marketplace. Tobit immediately went to take care of the situation. That night, because touching the corpse had made him unclean, he slept outside. At this point, Tobit fell victim to a tragic turn of events – bird droppings fell into his eyes and he went blind. (Isn't this a great legend?)

Meanwhile, a young Jewish woman in Ecbatana, named Sarah, had troubles of her own. Seven times she had married, and every time, the jealous demon Asmodeus had come and killed her new husband on their honeymoon night, just before they could consummate their marriage. Her reputation was in ruins. (I cannot imagine why!) Sarah did not know what to do. So, in desperation, she prayed for deliverance and the angel Raphael stepped in.

It just so happened that Tobit – the blind guy – had business in Ecbatana. His handsome young son, Tobias, was sent there to collect the money. The angel Raphael, disguised as a human, volunteered to escort Tobias. On the way to Ecbatana, they camped by the Tigris River and a fish jumped up from the river and tried to swallow Tobias. Raphael told Tobias to catch this man-eating fish, which he somehow accomplished. Raphael then instructed him to cut out and keep the heart, liver, and gall.

In Ecbatana, Raphael introduced Tobias to Sarah and told him she was just the girl for him. Tobias, however, had heard that she had been a somewhat fatal attraction for seven other men and politely refused. But Raphael persuaded him that she really was a wonderful girl and that Tobias could deal with the jealous demon quite easily. All he needed to do was take some hot ashes of incense into the bridal chamber and lay them on the heart and liver of the fish and the demon would flee. The marriage was arranged and of course, Asmodeus came down to do away with Tobias.

When Asmodeus arrived, he smelled the burning fish heart and liver, which was fairly pungent by this time. He fled to Egypt where an angel bound him. This delighted Sarah's father, who had already dug grave number eight. Tobias picked up the money he had come for, returned to Nineveh, and, using the fish gall on his father's eyes, healed Tobit's blindness. Thus Raphael earned the reputation as one of the angel greats.

Dads, you now have a new bedtime story that will put your kids right to sleep. Of course, the lights will have to stay on throughout the house.

“Testament of Solomon”

By the third century A.D., the “Testament of Solomon” combined mysticism, Judaism, and Christianity together to create a popular legend about the wisest man who ever lived; that is, Solomon. Let me tell the story, but this one might not be a very good bedtime story.

The demon Ornias, was sucking on the thumb of a little boy who was the son of the foreman over Solomon's temple construction project. As the boy began to languish and lose weight, Solomon prayed for help and the archangel Michael came. Michael gave Solomon a ring that would allow him to bind all demons.

With the power of this ring, Solomon trapped and interrogated the demon Ornias. He found out that Ornias dwelt in Aquarius and could transform himself into a man, a winged creature, or a lion. During the interrogation, Solomon learned the names, astrological signs, and powers of the demons, as well as the names of the angels who could defeat them.

The names of the demons included:

- Onoskelis – a female demon who strangled men. Solomon captured her and made her forever sit at a weaver's shuttle and make things.
- Oropel – who gives people sore throats, but flees when the angel Raphael is invoked.
- Soubelti – who causes shivering and numbness, but retreats at the name of Rizoel.
- Anatreth – who, interestingly, gives people gas. (I am not making this up!) He will desist and leave the people alone when they repeat, “Arara, Arare; Arara, Arare.”ⁱ

You could try that the next time you get indigestion. If it works, I do not want to know about it!

The legend ends with Solomon falling in love with Abishag, the idolater. He sacrifices locust blood in order to win her love. God gets upset and Solomon loses control over all the demons and they are loosed again in the world.

“Legend of Metraton”

In the days of the apostle Paul, mixtures of paganism and Judaism had concocted all sorts of fanciful stories.

One example is the legend of Metraton. This is the ascended spirit of Enoch who had since become an angel and was responsible for directing millions of angels.

When the Dead Sea scrolls were discovered, in fact, several scrolls were also discovered that detailed supposedly deeper teaching. There was secret knowledge that involved sacred days in the calendar and, of course, details about the angels and spirit power.

Some of these early writers believed the ultimate discovery was to find a way to enable their souls to pierce the heavenly barrier and escape earth. Angels were an important part in helping spirits ascend. In fact, they viewed Jesus Christ as simply an ascended master who had arrived. It is interesting that two thousand years later, the New Age religion views Jesus Christ exactly the same way.

I will repeat – this is ancient stuff, thousands of years old, but in reality, it is just old lies.

Paul saw all of these as myths and empty philosophies. No spirit master or angel wisdom helps the soul ascend to the next level of consciousness.

I believe that not only is the modern world filled with superstition and legends which are treated as doctrine, but the church has equally fallen into a form of dualism. Dualism is that everything is a battle between good and evil spirits, with humans, unfortunately, caught in the middle. Humans are helpless and somewhat hopeless, unless the angels are stronger and more numerous than the demons. Demons are attached to everything bad and angels to everything good. This sort of dualism has swept into the church.

If you turn on the television and watch a televangelist, you might see him bind some invisible demon with an incantational prayer; you might watch him heal someone by casting out the demon of cancer or the demon of high blood pressure.

I watched one program where the pastor gathered all the MasterCard and Visa balance sheets from people all around the country. He piled them in the church auditorium and proceeded to bind the demon of debt and set those people free.

What does that mean?! Does it mean that they do not have to pay next month?! This is as superstitious as the third century belief that a demon causes indigestion.

In Colossians, chapter 2, verses 6 through 10a, Paul exhorted the believers,

Therefore as you have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him,

having been firmly rooted and now being built up in Him and established in your faith, just as you were instructed, and overflowing with gratitude.

See to it that no one takes you captive through philosophy and empty deception, according to the tradition of men, according to the elementary principles of the world, rather than according to Christ.

For in Him all the fullness of Deity dwells in bodily form,

and in Him you have been made complete . . .

In other words, you do not need secret knowledge to be made free in Christ. You do not need the help of angels against demons to make it through life. You do not need to be released from the demon of poverty. As verse 10a tells us,

. . . and in Him you have been made complete . . .

The word Paul uses for “complete” refers to the completeness of the believer whose needs are fully met through the exalted Lord.

The problem in the Christian life is not that we need secret keys to get more of Christ – we have all of Christ. The problem is that He does not have all of us due to our stubbornness and selfishness.

If we have a problem with MasterCard, it is not because of a demon, it is because of materialism; it is not the devil’s fault, it is our fault. All of the blame going to the demons has a wonderful way of letting us off the hook.

I will talk more about demons in a later study.

Forging Biblical Sense from Nonsense

Let us now forge some biblical sense from all the nonsense.

Starting with Creation

We will begin by going back to the time of creation.

Angels had a moment of origin

1. First, angels had a moment of origin.

Look at Psalm, chapter 148, verses 2 through 3 and verse 5.

Praise Him, all His angels; praise Him, all His hosts!

Praise Him, sun and moon; praise Him, all stars of light! . . .

Let them praise the name of the Lord, for He commanded and they were created.

Turn to John, chapter 1, verses 1 through 3.

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.

He was in the beginning with God.

All things came into being through Him, and apart from Him nothing came into being that has come into being.

Note Colossian, chapter 1, verses 16 and 17.

For by Him all things were created, both in the heavens and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things have been created through Him and for Him.

He is before all things, and in Him all things hold together.

These passages inform us that all the angels were created by Jesus Christ – the divine agent in creation.

Angels were created before anything else and saw the wonder of all the rest of creation as it occurred

2. Secondly, angels were created before anything else, so they saw the wonder of all the rest of creation as it occurred.

We learn this from Job, chapter 38, verse 7. Look at verses 4 through 7 of that chapter.

Where were you when I laid the foundation of the earth? Tell Me, if you have understanding,

Who set its measurements? Since you know. Or who stretched the line on it?

On what were its bases sunk? Or who laid its cornerstone,

When the morning stars sang together and all the sons of God shouted for joy?

This is a reference to the angels shouting for joy and singing as a response to the creative acts of God.

I was asked the question as to whether angels have souls. We are not specifically told this, but the

angels exhibit the activities that we normally attribute to the soul; that is, mind, emotions, and will.

Angels were created with the attribute of mind or intelligence

- Thus, angels were created with and exhibit the attribute of mind or intelligence.

In I Peter, chapter 1, we are told that angels are fascinated with the doctrine of our salvation and desire to learn about redemption. Verse 12 says that these are,

. . . things into which angels long to look.

This lets us know that angels may be brilliant, but they are not omniscient; that is, they cannot read your mind; they do not know the future unless God has revealed it to them.

However, they are incredibly brilliant – and they have had several thousand years to grow even smarter.

In Ezekiel, chapter 28, verse 17a, God told Satan,
Your heart was lifted up because of your beauty; you corrupted your wisdom by reason of your splendor. . . .

Angels were created with emotions

- Angels were also created with emotions, which is another property of the soul.

Angels:

- were filled with joy at God's creative acts (Job 38:7);
- worship God with awe and humility (Isaiah 6:3);
- recognize the deity of Christ and worship the Lamb, ascribing to Him, blessing and honor and glory and power (Revelation 5:13);
- rejoice when a sinner comes to faith in Christ (Luke 15:10).

Angels are not some sort of robotic beings who are without thought or feeling.

Angels were created with a will

- Angels were also created with a will.

They have what theologians call, self-determination; that is, they can choose from various courses of action and seek to carry one out. They

were created to know, understand, and obey the will of God intelligently and faithfully.

In fact, when you look at the record of Lucifer's fall, which we will do in more detail later, five times Lucifer said, "I will . . .". Look at Isaiah, chapter 14, verses 13 and 14.

But you said in your heart, I will ascend to heaven; I will raise my throne above the stars of God, and I will sit on the mount of assembly, . . .

I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will make myself like the Most High.

"I will . . ., I will . . ." On that basis, he chose to defect and millions of angels went with him.

Angels made their choice to defect and confirmed their judgment

3. The choice of angels to defect confirmed their judgment and, according to Matthew, chapter 25, verse 41, they are already guaranteed an eternal future in hell.

Luke, chapter 20, verse 36, informs us that once created, the angels, both holy and fallen, will never cease to exist – they are immortal.

Can a demon or an angel be saved? No. Angels do not repent and are not redeemed. Hebrews, chapter 2, verses 14 through 18, makes it clear that redemption is for humanity, not angelic beings.

The angels who chose to follow God – more than two thirds of them were likewise confirmed in holiness. They were not redeemed, but were confirmed in holiness.

When did this choice take place in the world of angelic beings? When did the great rebellion occur? We are not told exactly when, but putting together the clues, we can arrive at this:

- Clue number 1 – Angels were created before Genesis, chapter 1, as Job tells us in Job, chapter 38, verses 4 through 7.
- Clue number 2 – Satan was present in the Garden of Eden to tempt Eve in Genesis, chapter 3.

Thus, angels either chose to rebel or follow God during the time between the six days of creation and Genesis, chapter 3, or at some point during Genesis, chapter 2. So, if you can determine how much time elapses in Genesis, chapter 2, or to put it another

way, how long Adam and Eve lived in the Garden of Eden, you will have the answer.

The legend of Enoch, by the way, has the answer. It says that Adam and Eve were only able to hold on to the Garden of Eden for five hours.

The legend is fanciful, of course. According to Genesis, chapter 2, Adam had enough time to name all of the animal species, realize he was missing his other half, have major surgery to remove a rib, have a wedding ceremony with a woman he named Eve, and still have time left over to get talked into eating some fruit he should have never eaten. To accomplish all of that, it would certainly take more than five hours. It takes my wife five hours sometimes to get me to take out the trash!

We can say this with certainty – angels made their choice prior to the fall of man.

Serving with Passion

If we can learn anything from the angels, it is that they serve God with great passion. The fallen angels hate God with passion; the holy angels love Him and serve Him with great passion.

If angels had a mission statement, it would be, "Serving God with Passion".

Angels serve with privileges

1. Angels serve with privileges.

Imagine what the angels see! Imagine what they know! They are so close to the throne and the things of God.

Angels serve with purpose

2. Angels serve with purpose.

Let me give you three ways the angels serve with purpose.

Angels exalt the character of God

- Angels exalt the character of God.

Look at Revelation, chapter 5, verses 11 through 14a.

Then I looked, and I heard the voice of many angels around the throne and the living creatures and the elders; and the number of them was myriads of myriads, and thousands of thousands,

saying with a loud voice, “Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power and riches and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing.”

And every created thing which is in heaven and on the earth and under the earth and on the sea, and all things in them, I heard saying, “To Him who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb, be blessing and honor and glory and dominion forever and ever.”

And the four living creatures kept saying, “Amen.” . . .

Angels execute the will of God

- Angels execute the will of God.

We will look at this later in this series of studies.

Angels enforce the judgment of God

- Angels also enforce the judgment of God.

Let me give several ways they accomplish this.

By:

- chastising believers (II Samuel 24);
- punishing unbelievers (Genesis 19 – God used angels in the condemnation of Sodom and Gomorrah);
- destroying earth’s resources (the book of Revelation – the incredible power of angels is revealed as they destroy much of planet earth during the great tribulation);
- casting unbelieving humanity, after the final judgment, into the lake of fire (Matthew 13:49-50 and Revelation 20:15).

Turn to Matthew, chapter 13. Verses 49 and 50 give us a preview of the end of the kingdom.

So it will be at the end of the age; the angels will come forth and take out the wicked from among the righteous, and will throw them into the furnace of fire; in that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

Revelation, chapter 20, verse 15, tells us,

And if anyone’s name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire.

What a horrifying moment it will be as the history of time ends and eternity begins. The great white throne of God will thunder the word, “Guilty!” and all the unredeemed will kneel and every tongue will cry out, “You are Lord! We know and believe now that You are Lord!”

Then, the angels will swoop down upon billions of unredeemed, from all time, pick them up and throw them into hell.

Three Points to Remember

There are three points to remember as you attempt to make sense from the nonsense.

To depend on the activity of angels is to dilute the power of God

1. First, to depend on the activity of angels is to dilute the power of God.

The apostle Paul said,

I can do all things through Him [Christ] who strengthens me. (Philippians 4:13)

He wrote his personal testimony to the Corinthian believers as he penned,

And He has said to me, “My grace is sufficient for you, for power is perfected in weakness.” Most gladly, therefore, I will rather boast about my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may dwell in me. (II Corinthians 12:9)

To evaluate the role of angels, diminishes our relationship with Christ

2. Secondly, to elevate the role of angels, diminishes our relationship with Christ.

The Bible says,

fixing our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith . . . (Hebrews 12:2a)

The word “fixing” is “aphorao,” in the Greek, and means, “to concentrate on Jesus Christ”.

Jesus said,

And I, if I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to Myself. (John 12:32)

The believer’s responsibility is not to determine which stories are true, but to rightly divide the word of truth

3. The believer's responsibility is not to determine which stories are true, but to rightly divide the word of truth.

Dorothy Maclean and her colleagues apparently had spectacular success with their gardens in Scotland. They wrote a book about their alleged secret – and it was that she had learned to communicate with the angels of her plants. She wrote that, “She would get centered on her higher self through meditation and then address a question to the angel of a particular species of plant.” She found that, “the being behind the garden pea held the design of all pea plants in a sort of inner energy stream of divinity.”

I know this cannot be true! There is no such thing as an angel of garden peas, or at least *if* an angel is responsible for peas, it would be a fallen angel! That one is easy!

The truth is, we are not told to be expert students of legends. We are told to,

Study to show yourself approved unto God, a workman that need not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth. (II Timothy 2:15 KJV)

The next verse is very interesting, in light of our study,

But avoid worldly and empty chatter, for it will lead to further ungodliness, and their talk will spread like gangrene. . . . (II Timothy 2:16-17a)

We are told to avoid “empty chatter,” which literally means “empty sounds”; that is, the chatter is interesting, but empty. This is like the chatter of Tobias and Sarah; the chatter of the Testament of Solomon; the chatter of the Books of Enoch. It is interesting, but empty.

Stay close to the Bible, this book of divine origin. Study it, and in so doing, not only will you discover the truth, but you will also be protected against all sorts of legends and myths.

God has not told us everything about the unseen world of angels and demons and other flying creatures, but *He has told us everything . . . everything we need to know!*

In our next discussion, we will take a closer look at what God *has* said about how angels interact with human beings.

This manuscript is from a sermon preached on 6/17/2001 by Stephen Davey.

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ⁱ Duane A. Garrett, Angels and the New Spirituality (Nashville, TN, Broadman and Holman, 1995), chapter 5.