

ANGELS AND PROPHECY

This is another study that resulted from content prepared for my blog. It is a study of how God uses angels in accomplishing His purposes. They are especially prominent in the passages dealing with end times prophecy.

There are two main words translated *angel* in scripture—“malak” in the Hebrew Old Testament and “aggelos” in the Greek New Testament.

4397. mal ak, *mal-awk'*; from an unused root meaning to despatch as a deputy; a messenger; specifically, of God, i.e. an angel (also a prophet, priest or teacher):—ambassador, angel, king, messenger.

32. aggelos, *ang'-el-os*; from **aggello** (to bring tidings); a messenger; especially an “angel”; by implication, a pastor:—angel, messenger.

Both words clearly indicate that their primary role is that of a messenger and a perusal of the context of their use in scripture clearly identify them as messengers of God. The word *angel* is used more often in reference to supernatural beings, but the term is also sometimes applied to human messengers. Many examples come quickly to mind of angels communicating messages from God to humans.

- to Lot regarding Sodom and Gomorrah
- to Daniel regarding enlightenment of his dreams
- to Zechariah regarding the birth of John the Baptist
- to Mary regarding the birth of Jesus
- to the shepherds in announcing the birth of Jesus
- to Peter in releasing him from prison

Scripture is also clear in identifying some angels as holy and some as evil.

Matthew 25:31 “When the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory:”

Psalms 78:49 “He cast upon them the fierceness of his anger, wrath, and indignation, and trouble, by sending evil angels among them.”

Holy angels are dedicated to serving God and ministering to those who trust in God. Evil angels have given their allegiance to Satan and are dedicated to attacking the faith of those who have declared allegiance to God. Scripture is clear, however, in declaring God’s sovereignty over all the angelic creation.

Luke 15:10 “Likewise, I say unto you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth.”

Hebrews 1:13–14 “But to which of the angels said he at any time, Sit on my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool? Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation?”

Revelation 12:9 “And the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world: he was cast out into the earth, and his angels were cast out with him.”

Ephesians 6:12 “For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places.”

1 Peter 5:8–9 “Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour: Whom resist stedfast in the faith, knowing that the same afflictions are accomplished in your brethren that are in the world.”

CHERUBIM – LIVING CREATURES

In this section I will begin to identify other references to “angels” in scripture.

Cherubims – These angels are first mentioned in connection with guarding the way to the tree of life in the Garden of Eden after Adam and Eve were made to leave the Garden in consequence of their disobedience to God.

Genesis 3:24 “So he drove out the man; and he placed at the east of the garden of Eden Cherubims, and a flaming sword which turned every way, to keep the way of the tree of life.”

Scripture indicates that Satan was created a cherub.

*Ezekiel 28:12–14 “Son of man, take up a lamentation upon the king of Tyrus, and say unto him, Thus saith the Lord GOD; Thou sealest up the sum, full of wisdom, and perfect in beauty. Thou hast been in Eden the garden of God; every precious stone was thy covering, the sardius, topaz, and the diamond, the beryl, the onyx, and the jasper, the sapphire, the emerald, and the carbuncle, and gold: the workmanship of thy tabrets and of thy pipes was prepared in thee in the day that thou wast created. Thou art **the anointed cherub** that covereth....”*

Though these verses from Ezekiel are addressed to the King of Tyre, the context makes it clear that the address is to the evil spirit behind the king—a spirit that is identified as having been in the Garden of Eden. Satan is the only logical conclusion in my opinion.

The cherubim are almost always depicted as surrounding the throne of God. Cherubim are prominently depicted in the patterns given to both Moses and David regarding the tabernacle and temple respectively, designated as God’s dwelling place on earth. I believe the mercy seat on the ark was intended to represent God’s throne.

Exodus 25:8-9, 18–20 “And let them make me a sanctuary; **that I may dwell among them.** According to all that I shew thee, **after the pattern** of the tabernacle, and the pattern of all the instruments thereof, even so shall ye make it....And thou shalt make two cherubims of gold, of beaten work shalt thou make them, in the two ends of the mercy seat. And make one cherub on the one end, and the other cherub on the other end: even of the mercy seat shall ye make the cherubims on the two ends thereof. **And the cherubims shall stretch forth their wings on high, covering the mercy seat with their wings,** and their faces shall look one to another; toward the mercy seat shall the faces of the cherubims be.”

1 Chronicles 28:18–19 “And for the altar of incense refined gold by weight; and gold for the pattern of the chariot of the cherubims, that spread out their wings, and covered the ark of the covenant of the LORD. All this, said David, the LORD made me understand in writing by his hand upon me, even **all the works of this pattern.**”

The people of Israel often identified the LORD as “He that dwells between the cherubims.”

1 Samuel 4:4 “So the people sent to Shiloh, that they might bring from thence the ark of the covenant of **the LORD of hosts, which dwelleth between the cherubims;** and the two sons of Eli, Hophni and Phinehas, were there with the ark of the covenant of God.”

2 Kings 19:15 “And Hezekiah prayed before the LORD, and said, **O LORD God of Israel, which dwellest between the cherubims,** thou art the God, even thou alone, of all the kingdoms of the earth; thou hast made heaven and earth.”

Ezekiel’s vision was very detailed in describing the ministry of the cherubim, also called **living creatures**, in association with the throne of God.

Ezekiel 1:3–5 “The word of the LORD came expressly unto Ezekiel the priest, the son of Buzi, in the land of the Chaldeans **by the river Chebar;** and the hand of the LORD was there upon him. And I looked, and, behold, a whirlwind came out of the north, a great cloud, and a fire infolding itself, and a brightness was about it, and out of the midst thereof as the colour of amber, out of the midst of the fire. Also out of the midst thereof came the likeness **of four living creatures.**”

Ezekiel 1:26–28 “And above the firmament that **was over their heads was the likeness of a throne,** as the appearance of a sapphire stone: and upon the likeness of the throne was the likeness as the appearance of a man above upon it. And I saw as the colour of amber, as the appearance of fire round about within it, from the appearance of his loins even upward, and from the appearance of his loins even downward, I saw as it were the appearance of fire, and it had brightness round about. As the appearance of the bow that is in the cloud in the day of rain, so was the appearance of the brightness round about. **This was the appearance of the likeness of the glory of the LORD.** And when I saw it, I fell upon my face, and I heard a voice of one that spake.”

Ezekiel 10:1–2 “Then I looked, and, behold, in the firmament that **was above the head of the cherubims there appeared over them as it were a sapphire stone, as the appearance of the likeness of a throne.** And he spake unto the man clothed with linen, and said, Go in between the wheels, even under the cherub, and fill thine hand with coals of fire from between the cherubims, and scatter them over the city. And he went in in my

sight.... This is the living creature that I saw under the God of Israel by the river of Chebar; and I knew that they were the cherubims."

I am pretty convinced that these are same beings referenced as the "four beasts around the throne" referenced by John in the book of Revelation since the description is so similar to Ezekiel's vision.

Ezekiel 10:12–14 "And their whole body, and their backs, and their hands, and their wings, and the wheels, were full of eyes round about, even the wheels that they four had. As for the wheels, it was cried unto them in my hearing, O wheel. And every one had four faces: the first face was the face of a cherub, and the second face was the face of a man, and the third the face of a lion, and the fourth the face of an eagle."

Revelation 4:6–7 "And before the throne there was a sea of glass like unto crystal: and in the midst of the throne, and round about the throne, were four beasts full of eyes before and behind. And the first beast was like a lion, and the second beast like a calf, and the third beast had a face as a man, and the fourth beast was like a flying eagle."

SERAPHIM – HOSTS – SAINTS - CHARIOTS

Seraphims – Only in Isaiah's vision of God on His throne does scripture make reference to seraphim.

Isaiah 6:1–7 "In the year that king Uzziah died I saw also the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and his train filled the temple. Above it stood the seraphims: 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. And the posts of the door moved at the voice of him that cried, and the house was filled with smoke. Then said I, Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips: for mine eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts. Then flew one of the seraphims unto me, having a live coal in his hand, which he had taken with the tongs from off the altar: And he laid it upon my mouth, and said, Lo, this hath touched thy lips; and thine iniquity is taken away, and thy sin purged."

Not much is given to allow us to make comparison to the cherubim. We know that they stood above the throne and have six wings. Ezekiel described the cherubim as having four wings.

Ezekiel 1:6 "And every one had four faces, and every one had four wings."

If there is a distinction to be made between the seraphim and the cherubim, I think we could say that their focus is on praising God's holiness and signifying the importance of holiness in God's presence. The cherubim seem to have more extensive responsibilities in connection with events on earth.

hosts (of LORD/God; of heaven) – This term is first associated with angels in the book of Genesis.

Genesis 32:1–2 “And Jacob went on his way, and the angels of God met him. And when Jacob saw them, he said, This is God’s host....”

The term is also used specifically of angels in conjunction with the announcement of the birth of Jesus.

Luke 2:10–14 “And the angel said unto them, Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord. And this shall be a sign unto you; Ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger. And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God, and saying, Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men.”

It is most often used in reference to the armies of the Lord—both in heaven and on earth.

Psalms 24:8–10 “Who is this King of glory? The LORD strong and mighty, the LORD mighty in battle. Lift up your heads, O ye gates; even lift them up, ye everlasting doors; and the King of glory shall come in. Who is this King of glory? The LORD of hosts, he is the King of glory.”

I think the following verses are definitely referring to the angels.

1 Kings 22:19 “And he said, Hear thou therefore the word of the LORD: I saw the LORD sitting on his throne, and all the host of heaven standing by him on his right hand and on his left.”

1 Chronicles 12:22 “For at that time day by day there came to David to help him, until it was a great host, like the host of God.”

Psalms 103:20–21 “Bless the LORD, ye his angels, that excel in strength, that do his commandments, hearkening unto the voice of his word. Bless ye the LORD, all ye his hosts; ye ministers of his, that do his pleasure.”

Psalms 148:2 “Praise ye him, all his angels: praise ye him, all his hosts.”

The term **saints** is also used to describe the armies of the Lord.

Deuteronomy 33:2 “And he said, The LORD came from Sinai, and rose up from Seir unto them; he shined forth from mount Paran, and he came with ten thousands of saints: from his right hand went a fiery law for them.”

Jude 1:14–15 “And Enoch also, the seventh from Adam, prophesied of these, saying, Behold, the Lord cometh with ten thousands of his saints, To execute judgment upon all, and to convince all that are ungodly among them of all their ungodly deeds which they have ungodly committed, and of all their hard speeches which ungodly sinners have spoken against him.”

The following verses connect the saints mentioned above to the angels.

Matthew 25:31 "When the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory:"

2 Thessalonians 1:7–8 "And to you who are troubled rest with us, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, In flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ:"

The angels are also depicted in battle as an army of **chariots**.

2 Kings 6:17 "And Elisha prayed, and said, LORD, I pray thee, open his eyes, that he may see. And the LORD opened the eyes of the young man; and he saw: and, behold, the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire round about Elisha."

Psalms 68:17 "The chariots of God are twenty thousand, even thousands of angels: the Lord is among them, as in Sinai, in the holy place."

Isaiah 66:15–16 "For, behold, the LORD will come with fire, and with his chariots like a whirlwind, to render his anger with fury, and his rebuke with flames of fire. For by fire and by his sword will the LORD plead with all flesh: and the slain of the LORD shall be many."

SONS OF GOD - STARS

"sons of God" - I gave a bit of attention to this phrase in my study of Genesis regarding the "sons of God" that chose to procreate with the daughters of men and whose offspring became giants (fallen ones), mighty men of renown.

Genesis 6:1–4 "And it came to pass, when men began to multiply on the face of the earth, and daughters were born unto them, That the sons of God saw the daughters of men that they were fair; and they took them wives of all which they chose. And the LORD said, My spirit shall not always strive with man, for that he also is flesh: yet his days shall be an hundred and twenty years. There were giants in the earth in those days; and also after that, when the sons of God came in unto the daughters of men, and they bare children to them, the same became mighty men which were of old, men of renown."

Though many deny this interpretation, I think it is the only reasonable interpretation since there is no reasonable explanation for normal procreation between human men and women to produce children that were so distinct from their peers. I believe Jude makes reference to these rebellious angels in his letter.

Jude 1:6–7 "And the angels which kept not their first estate, but left their own habitation, he hath reserved in everlasting chains under darkness unto the judgment of the great day. Even as Sodom and Gomorrha, and the cities about them in like manner, giving themselves over to fornication, and going after strange flesh, are set forth for an example, suffering the vengeance of eternal fire."

Jude is making reference to angels who left their own habitation and went after “strange flesh.” The Greek for *strange* makes reference to flesh that is different from their own.

The first chapter of Job also gives support to the term sons of God referencing angels.

Job 1:6 Now there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the LORD, and Satan came also among them.

It would seem that there is a time of discussion in heaven between God and His angels regarding their interactions with men. The writer of Hebrews tells us that they were created as “ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation.” (Hebrews 1:14) Satan evidently continues to present himself on these occasions to “accuse the brethren,” as stated by John in Revelation 12:10 and as the story of Job so vividly pictures.

Not until the New Testament is the phrase “sons of God” applied to men in reference to those who believe on Jesus for their salvation. I think it was Chuck Missler that I heard give a very reasonable explanation regarding the term “sons of God” referencing direct creations of God. It wasn’t until New Testament times that men could become a “new creation” in Christ.

2 Corinthians 5:17 “Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.”

Job also refers to the sons of God as witnessing the creation of the earth; this would also support this term as a reference to angels.

Job 38:4–7 “Where wast thou when I laid the foundations of the earth? declare, if thou hast understanding. Who hath laid the measures thereof, if thou knowest? or who hath stretched the line upon it? Whereupon are the foundations thereof fastened? or who laid the corner stone thereof; When the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy?”

The verse in Job above also connects the “sons of God” with the “morning stars.” There are other places in scripture that reference angels as **stars**.

Revelation 9:1 “And the fifth angel sounded, and I saw a star fall from heaven unto the earth: and to him was given the key of the bottomless pit.”

This “star” is obviously making reference to a heavenly being.

Revelation 12:3–4, 9 “And there appeared another wonder in heaven; and behold a great red dragon, having seven heads and ten horns, and seven crowns upon his heads. And his tail drew the third part of the stars of heaven, and did cast them to the earth: and the dragon stood before the woman which was ready to be delivered, for to devour her child as soon as it was born.... And the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the

Devil, and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world: he was cast out into the earth, and his angels were cast out with him."

This section from Revelation specifically connects "the third part of the stars of heaven" to the devil's angels that were cast out of heaven with him.

HOLY ONES – WATCHERS – PRINCIPALITIES – POWERS – RULERS OF DARKNESS OF THIS WORLD – SPIRITUAL WICKEDNESS IN HIGH PLACES – THRONES - DOMINIONS

holy ones – watchers – These terms are used by Nebuchadnezzar in describing his dream in chapter 4 of Daniel.

Daniel 4:13–17 "I saw in the visions of my head upon my bed, and, behold, a watcher and an holy one came down from heaven....This matter is by the decree of the watchers, and the demand by the word of the holy ones: to the intent that the living may know that the most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever he will, and setteth up over it the basest of men."

This is the only chapter in scripture that mentions the *watchers* in reference to beings other than humans. I have heard them referenced as evil beings from those who use non-biblical sources, but I can find no biblical support for such a statement.

principalities, powers, rulers of darkness of this world, spiritual wickedness in high places – These are the titles Paul gives to the evil spiritual forces that are in ongoing warfare against the follower of Christ in his letter to the Ephesians.

Ephesians 6:11–12 "Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places."

He uses some of the same terminology in his letters to the Romans and the Colossians.

Romans 8:38–39 "For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."

Colossians 2:15 "And having spoiled principalities and powers, he made a shew of them openly, triumphing over them in it."

In all three instances the same Greek word is used for *principalities*; it goes back to a root that seems to be referencing evil spiritual forces of the highest rank. Two different Greek words are used for the word *powers*; taken together they seem to be referencing beings possessing power beyond human capabilities. In looking at the Greek for the phrase "rulers of the darkness of this world," I understood it

to be referencing evil forces that are the “shadows” or spirits behind the evil rulers of this world. “Spiritual wickedness in high places” seems to be referencing supernatural, malicious spirits in the heavens. All of these seem to be making a reference to “the devil and his angels” talked about in scripture.

Matthew 25:41 “Then shall he say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels....”

Revelation 12:9 “And the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world: he was cast out into the earth, and his angels were cast out with him.”

There is another verse in Colossians that appears to be referencing spiritual beings that we would call angels.

Colossians 1:16 “For by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him:”

It seems to me that these *thrones* and *dominions* are being grouped with the *principalities* and *powers*. The Greek for both terms indicate positions of power and mastery.

This concludes my attempt at identifying the different names by which references to angels are made in scripture.

I think it is important to note that angels are created beings as stated in the verse from Colossians above. Nehemiah also makes a specific statement regarding their creation.

Nehemiah 9:6 “Thou, even thou, art LORD alone; thou hast made heaven, the heaven of heavens, with all their host, the earth, and all things that are therein, the seas, and all that is therein, and thou preservest them all; and the host of heaven worshippeth thee.”

The “host of heaven” is a reference to beings with the ability to worship God.

SPECIFIC ANGELS NAMED IN SCRIPTURE

I was about to move on to the characteristics of angels, but realized that we should also look at the four specific angels named in scripture: Gabriel, Michael, Lucifer and “the angel of the Lord.” There are other angels named in apocryphal writings, but I am going to limit my study to scripture.

Gabriel is probably most widely known for delivering the message to Mary regarding her privilege of being chosen to give birth to the Messiah.

Luke 1:26–27 “And in the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent from God unto a city of Galilee, named Nazareth, To a virgin espoused to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David; and the virgin’s name was Mary.”

He is also identified in scripture as delivering messages from God to Zechariah regarding the birth of John the Baptist and to Daniel regarding the explanation of his visions.

Luke 1:18–19 “And Zacharias said unto the angel, Whereby shall I know this? for I am an old man, and my wife well stricken in years. And the angel answering said unto him, I am Gabriel, that stand in the presence of God; and am sent to speak unto thee, and to shew thee these glad tidings.”

Daniel 8:15–16 “And it came to pass, when I, even I Daniel, had seen the vision, and sought for the meaning, then, behold, there stood before me as the appearance of a man. And I heard a man’s voice between the banks of Ullai, which called, and said, Gabriel, make this man to understand the vision.”

Daniel 9:21–22 “Yea, whiles I was speaking in prayer, even the man Gabriel, whom I had seen in the vision at the beginning, being caused to fly swiftly, touched me about the time of the evening oblation. And he informed me, and talked with me, and said, O Daniel, I am now come forth to give thee skill and understanding.”

Although we often hear Gabriel referenced as an archangel, Michael is the only archangel identified in scripture.

Jude 1:9 “Yet Michael the archangel, when contending with the devil he disputed about the body of Moses, durst not bring against him a railing accusation, but said, The Lord rebuke thee.”

The Greek root from which the word archangel is derived indicates that Michael is first in rank among the angels. This would lead me to believe that there is only one archangel. It is also significant to me that he is the one that is shown in direct conflict with Satan. I think it is possible that he may have replaced Lucifer/Satan as the chief among angels after his rebellion against the Creator. The scripture we looked at in a previous post identified Lucifer as one who “sealest up the sum, full of wisdom, and perfect in beauty” and as “the anointed cherub that covereth.” (Ezekiel 28:12-14)

Michael is the one appointed to lead the angelic forces in battle that results in the Satan and his angels being cast out of their place in the heavens.

Revelation 12:7–8 “And there was war in heaven: Michael and his angels fought against the dragon; and the dragon fought and his angels, And prevailed not; neither was their place found any more in heaven.”

I think it is interesting to note that the reference is to “Michael and *his* angels.” This again seems to support the thought of one archangel, chief among the angels.

Michael is also referenced by a messenger who is sent to explain a vision to the prophet Daniel. He calls Michael “one of the chief princes.”

Daniel 10:13 “But the prince of the kingdom of Persia withstood me one and twenty days: but, lo, Michael, one of the chief princes, came to help me; and I remained there with the kings of Persia.”

I would liken this reference to one as equating with the chairman of the joint chiefs of staff to the president; he is the chief among chiefs. I will defer discussion on other implications of these passages until we begin looking more closely at the characteristics and purposes of the angels.

Michael is also identified to Daniel as the guardian angel of Israel so to speak.

Daniel 10:21 "But I will shew thee that which is noted in the scripture of truth: and there is none that holdeth with me in these things, but Michael your prince."

Daniel 12:1 "And at that time shall Michael stand up, the great prince which standeth for the children of thy people...."

THAT OLD SERPENT, CALLED THE DEVIL, AND SATAN

In looking at scriptures describing Satan, it would seem that he was created as the angel Lucifer.

Isaiah 14:12 "How art thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning!"

The Hebrew defines Lucifer as "the morning star." Though it is obvious to me that this section in Isaiah is referencing Satan, I think we need to lay more groundwork beginning in the book of Ezekiel. As discussed in the post on cherubim, though addressed to the king of Tyre, this "king" is a supernatural being. He is identified as having been in the Garden of Eden and as "the anointed cherub that covereth" as stated in the previous post. Ezekiel is specific in describing him as a created being.

Ezekiel 28:15 "Thou wast perfect in thy ways from the day that thou wast created, till iniquity was found in thee."

The Hebrew for the word *found* makes reference to something coming forth, appearing or being acquired. It is interesting that he is described as perfect in his ways, his walk, his actions until those actions revealed him to be evil. The prophet goes on to tell us the root of these evil actions—PRIDE.

Ezekiel 28:17 "Thine heart was lifted up because of thy beauty, thou hast corrupted thy wisdom by reason of thy brightness...."

The prophet Isaiah adds to our discussion on this point.

Isaiah 14:13–14 "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."

Lucifer wasn't content with being one of the chief, if not the chief among all the angels; he aspired to be "like the most High." Just as he used the king of Tyre and so many others throughout history, he will utilize the Antichrist as he seeks to achieve this goal. Paul describes it like this.

2 Thessalonians 2:3–4 & 8-9 *“Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day shall not come, except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, **the son of perdition**; Who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, shewing himself that he is God.... And then shall that Wicked be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of his coming: Even him, whose coming is after the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders....”*

I believe that Satan indwells the Antichrist just as he entered Judas to bring about the death of Jesus. Only Judas and Antichrist are referred to as “the son of perdition” in scripture, and that seems to be descriptive of how Satan uniquely used them.

Luke 22:3–4 *“Then entered Satan into Judas surnamed Iscariot, being of the number of the twelve. And he went his way, and communed with the chief priests and captains, how he might betray him unto them.”*

John 17:12 *“While I was with them in the world, I kept them in thy name: those that thou gavest me I have kept, and none of them is lost, but **the son of perdition**; that the scripture might be fulfilled.”* [Jesus speaking in reference to Judas as He prayed for His disciples.]

I’m struggling with how far to take this study of Satan at this point. It is not a subject I enjoy, but it is certainly important for us to understand our enemy. He will also certainly play a huge role as the prophetic scenario for end times unfolds. Satan is known by several other names in scripture, but he is most often referenced as Satan or the Devil.

Revelation 12:9 *“And the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world: he was cast out into the earth, and his angels were cast out with him.”*

I think the most important things we need to understand about Satan is that he is focused on his mission of usurping God’s authority (as explained above) and in destroying the faith and/or testimony of those who place their faith in Christ as Savior.

1 Peter 5:8 *“Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour....”*

He doesn’t really have many different weapons in his arsenal; he pretty much sticks with what has proven successful. He is the father of lies and is very skillful in using them.

John 8:44 *“Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because 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.**”*

Not only is he a liar, he is also adept in using deceit to get people to believe his lies. This was his primary mode of attack on Eve.

1 Timothy 2:14 "And Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived was in the transgression."

How did he deceive her? He got her to question the truth of God's word.

Genesis 3:1–5 "Now the serpent was more subtil than any beast of the field which the LORD God had made. And he said unto the woman, Yea, hath God said, Ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden? And the woman said unto the serpent, We may eat of the fruit of the trees of the garden: But of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God hath said, Ye shall not eat of it, neither shall ye touch it, lest ye die. And the serpent said unto the woman, Ye shall not surely die: For God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil."

This is still one of his primary modes of attack on both believers and unbelievers today. I am truly amazed at how many in the "church" today are willing to profess faith in God while questioning the truth of His word. How can you declare God as Lord and Savior and reject the truth He has given us in His word? This is one of the key evidences of how good Satan is at what he does. Scripture even warns us that Satan and his followers often present themselves as ministers of righteousness.

2 Corinthians 11:13–15 "For such are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ. And no marvel; for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light. Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also be transformed as the ministers of righteousness; whose end shall be according to their works."

The believer's main line of defense is the truth of God's word. Once Satan or his henchmen deceive you into questioning the truth of scripture, you are suddenly left defenseless and soon defeated. Sinful lifestyles are presented as something inherent in their nature at birth or inherent as part of their freedom to make their own choices about how to live their lives. (The Apostle Paul specifically addresses this type of reasoning in Romans 1.) Ethics are determined by the wisdom of men instead of the wisdom of God, and it becomes OK to kill the unborn child and the aged. "Christian" service to mankind replaces worshipping God and investing in one's relationship to God through the study of His word and time spent in prayer. Being seeker sensitive is more important than warning people of the consequences of sin. Wealth and prosperity is declared to be God's will for all His children, yet the scripture states that we are to be content with what we have and trust God daily for our needs. It also states that we are to expect tribulation in this world.

Proverbs 16:25 "There is a way that seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death."

1 Timothy 6:7–8 "For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out. And having food and raiment let us be therewith content."

John 16:33 "...In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world."

Standing firm on the truth of God's word is vital to not falling for the lies and deceit of Satan and those who follow him. The only way you can stand firm on the truth of God's word is to spend enough time in scripture to know that truth. Once you know that truth, take to heart the words of the Apostle James.

James 4:7 "Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you."

We will talk more about Satan when we get into the role of angels during end times.

THE ANGEL OF THE LORD

A quick search in Accordance identifies 59 uses of the phrase "the angel of the Lord" in scripture, and only 9 of these are in the New Testament. Though not true in every instance, context in many instances proves this to be a reference to a physical manifestation of God, the preincarnate Jesus.

It is interesting that the first appearance of this Angel in scripture is to Hagar, the Egyptian maid of Sarah, Abraham's wife. This incident is recorded in Genesis 16, and the Angel makes the following statement, which can only be regarded as coming from the Lord.

*Genesis 16:10 "And the angel of the LORD said unto her, **I will multiply thy seed exceedingly**, that it shall not be numbered for multitude."*

Scripture is clear in declaring God as the one who opens and closes wombs and children to be a gift from God.

Genesis 29:31 "And when the LORD saw that Leah was hated, he opened her womb: but Rachel was barren."

1 Samuel 1:5 "But unto Hannah he gave a worthy portion; for he loved Hannah: but the LORD had shut up her womb."

Psalms 127:3 "Lo, children are an heritage of the LORD...."

In Exodus we find the account of Moses at the burning bush, and "the angel of the Lord" clearly identifies Himself as God.

Exodus 3:2-6 "And the angel of the LORD appeared unto him in a flame of fire out of the midst of a bush: and he looked, and, behold, the bush burned with fire, and the bush was not consumed. And Moses said, I will now turn aside, and see this great sight, why the bush is not burnt. And when the LORD saw that he turned aside to see, God called unto him out of the midst of the bush, and said, Moses, Moses. And he said, Here am I. And he said, Draw not nigh hither: put off thy shoes from off thy feet, for the place whereon thou

*standest is holy ground. Moreover he said, **I am the God of thy father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.** And Moses hid his face; for he was afraid to look upon God."*

In Numbers 22 we find "the angel of the Lord" confronting Balaam and allowing the donkey to speak to Balaam and then commanding Balaam only to speak the words that He [God] speaks to him.

*Numbers 22:32–35 "And the angel of the LORD said unto him, Wherefore hast thou smitten thine ass these three times? behold, I went out to withstand thee, because thy way is perverse before me: And the ass saw me, and turned from me these three times: unless she had turned from me, surely now also I had slain thee, and saved her alive. And Balaam said unto the angel of the LORD, I have sinned; for I knew not that thou stoodest in the way against me: now therefore, if it displease thee, I will get me back again. And the angel of the LORD said unto Balaam, Go with the men: **but only the word that I shall speak unto thee, that thou shalt speak....**And Balaam said unto Balak, Lo, I am come unto thee: have I now any power at all to say any thing? **the word that God putteth in my mouth, that shall I speak.**"*

In Judges 2 it appears that "the angel of the Lord" spoke to the people of Israel regarding their disobedience in taking possession of the Promised Land. He identifies Himself as the author of the covenant with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.

*Judges 2:1 "And an angel of the LORD came up from Gilgal to Bochim, and said, I made you to go up out of Egypt, and have brought you unto the land **which I swore unto your fathers;** and I said, I will never break my covenant with you."*

In Judges 6 "the angel of the Lord" appears to Gideon and commissions him to serve Him in delivering Israel from Midian. Why did Gideon fear death? Because scripture records that no one can see God and live.

Judges 6:22–23 "And when Gideon perceived that he was an angel of the LORD, Gideon said, Alas, O Lord GOD! for because I have seen an angel of the LORD face to face. And the LORD said unto him, Peace be unto thee; fear not: thou shalt not die."

*Exodus 33:17–20 "And the LORD said unto Moses....And he said, I will make all my goodness pass before thee, and I will proclaim the name of the LORD before thee; and will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will shew mercy on whom I will shew mercy. And he said, Thou canst not see my face: **for there shall no man see me, and live.**"*

I think these incidents are enough to prove that God did manifest Himself physically through "the angel of the Lord," the preincarnate Jesus, several times in the Old Testament. The important thing to remember is to let the context make the identification. I do not believe this term was used of Jesus in the New Testament.

CHARACTERISTICS AND FUNCTION OF ANGELS

Angels are spirit beings that are most generally identified as servants of God in heaven.

Psalms 104:1–4 “Bless the LORD, O my soul. O LORD my God, thou art very great; thou art clothed with honour and majesty....Who maketh his angels spirits; his ministers a flaming fire:”

Hebrews 1:6–7 “...And let all the angels of God worship him. And of the angels he saith, Who maketh his angels spirits, and his ministers a flame of fire.”

Hebrews 1:13–14 “But to which of the angels said he at any time, Sit on my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool? Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation?”

The only times I can recall fallen angels being referenced as “angels” are in connection with identifying the devil and his angels, as those who rebelled against God, and in Jude when he identifies those angels that “did not keep their first estate,” again emphasizing rebellion to their Creator. They are more often identified as “principalities...powers...the rulers of the darkness of this world...spiritual wickedness in high *places*” as referenced by the Apostle Paul in his letter to the Ephesians (6:12).

We do not know how many angels God created, but scripture is clear that they exist in numbers beyond normal human expression.

*Daniel 7:9–10 “I beheld till the thrones were cast down, and the Ancient of days did sit, whose garment was white as snow, and the hair of his head like the pure wool: his throne was like the fiery flame, and his wheels as burning fire. A fiery stream issued and came forth from before him: **thousand thousands** ministered unto him, and **ten thousand times ten thousand** stood before him: the judgment was set, and the books were opened.”*

*Hebrews 12:22 “But ye are come unto mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an **innumerable company of angels**....”*

*Revelation 5:6 & 11 “And I beheld, and, lo, in the midst of the throne and of the four beasts, and in the midst of the elders, stood a Lamb as it had been slain, having seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God sent forth into all the earth....And I beheld, and I heard the voice of many angels round about the throne and the beasts and the elders: and the number of them was **ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands**....”*

Though angels are spirit beings, they clearly are able to make themselves visible to man and even take on the appearance of man. The men of Sodom thought the two angels that rescued Lot from Sodom were men.

*Genesis 19:1 & 5 “And there came **two angels** to Sodom at even; and Lot sat in the gate of Sodom: and Lot seeing them rose up to meet them; and he bowed himself with his face toward the ground.... And they called unto Lot, and said unto him, Where are **the men** which came in to thee this night? bring them out unto us, that we may know them.”*

Daniel referred to the angel Gabriel as a man.

*Daniel 9:21 "Yea, whiles I was speaking in prayer, even **the man Gabriel**, whom I had seen in the vision at the beginning, being caused to fly swiftly, touched me about the time of the evening oblation."*

When the two Mary's and Salome came to Jesus' tomb to anoint His body with spices, they encountered a "young man" who told them that Jesus had risen from the grave. This seems to be an obvious reference to an angel.

Mark 16:5 "And entering into the sepulchre, they saw a young man sitting on the right side, clothed in a long white garment; and they were affrighted."

The writer of the book of Hebrews encourages us to be hospitable because of the possibility of entertaining angels. This would imply that they often appear as normal human beings.

Hebrews 13:2 "Be not forgetful to entertain strangers: for thereby some have entertained angels unawares."

Contrary to popular portrayals of angels in our culture, I could find no biblical support for female angels or angels that look like babies. I guess one could possibly infer angels of both genders from Luke's account of the Lord's answer to the Sadducees concerning a woman who had been married seven times and whose wife she would be in eternity.

Luke 20:34–36 "And Jesus answering said unto them, The children of this world marry, and are given in marriage: But they which shall be accounted worthy to obtain that world, and the resurrection from the dead, neither marry, nor are given in marriage: Neither can they die any more: for they are equal unto the angels; and are the children of God, being the children of the resurrection."

After reading the three gospel accounts of this incident, it seems to me that the context is focused on what *man* will get to claim her as wife. The comparison seems to be directly comparing the angels and the men. It does seem clear from these accounts that family relationships established on earth will be different in heaven. I know that thought might disturb some people, but everything about our eternal future in the Lord's presence will be wonderful and far beyond what we can imagine—so there is no reason for concern.

1 Corinthians 2:9 "But as it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him."

Revelation 21:3–4 "And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God. And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away."

MESSENGER & GUARDIAN ANGELS

Just like the resurrected Jesus, angels seem to be able to materialize and disappear at will. The angel that announced the birth of John the Baptist appeared to Zacharias while he was serving in the temple.

Luke 1:11–13 “And there appeared unto him an angel of the Lord standing on the right side of the altar of incense. And when Zacharias saw him, he was troubled, and fear fell upon him. But the angel said unto him, Fear not, Zacharias: for thy prayer is heard; and thy wife Elisabeth shall bear thee a son, and thou shalt call his name John.”

An angel and a host of angels suddenly appeared to announce the birth of the Saviour to the shepherds.

Luke 2:8–13 “And there were in the same country shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night. And, lo, the angel of the Lord came upon them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them: and they were sore afraid. And the angel said unto them, Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord. And this shall be a sign unto you; Ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger. And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God”

Two angels identified as men encouraged the body of believers who witnessed Jesus’ ascension with the promise of His return.

Acts 1:9–11 “And when he had spoken these things, while they beheld, he was taken up; and a cloud received him out of their sight. And while they looked stedfastly toward heaven as he went up, behold, two men stood by them in white apparel; Which also said, Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? this same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven.”

Whether they choose to materialize or not, the angels are ever at work in ministering to believers and intervening in events on planet earth as necessary in accomplishing God’s will. I would love to have been with Elisha when he asked God to reveal the mighty angelic forces that were protecting them to his servant.

2 Kings 6:15–17 “And when the servant of the man of God was risen early, and gone forth, behold, an host compassed the city both with horses and chariots. And his servant said unto him, Alas, my master! how shall we do? And he answered, Fear not: for they that be with us are more than they that be with them. And Elisha prayed, and said, LORD, I pray thee, open his eyes, that he may see. And the LORD opened the eyes of the young man; and he saw: and, behold, the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire round about Elisha.”

The messenger angel that came to reveal God’s vision to Daniel about end times made reference to angelic forces that were engaged in battle involving events on planet earth.

Daniel 10:12–13 “Then said he unto me, Fear not, Daniel: for from the first day that thou didst set thine heart to understand, and to chasten thyself before thy God, thy words were heard, and I am come for thy words. But the prince of the kingdom of Persia withstood me

one and twenty days: but, lo, Michael, one of the chief princes, came to help me; and I remained there with the kings of Persia."

Noting that Michael was identified as the guardian angel of Israel so to speak in a previous post, this passage seems to indicate that there are angelic forces, both good and evil, that are connected to different nations. I am convinced that is also in evidence regarding the reference to Gog by the prophet Ezekiel.

Ezekiel 38:1–2 "And the word of the LORD came unto me, saying, Son of man, set thy face against Gog, the land of Magog, the chief prince of Meshech and Tubal, and prophesy against him...."

The prophet goes on to make reference to Gog as an entity about whom the prophets of Israel had prophesied "in old times."

Ezekiel 38:17 "Thus saith the Lord GOD; Art thou he of whom I have spoken in old time by my servants the prophets of Israel, which prophesied in those days many years that I would bring thee against them?"

This same being is again aligned in battle against God's people at the end of the millennial reign of Christ. This being can only be supernatural—obviously utilizing men in achieving his purposes.

Revelation 20:7-8 "And when the thousand years are expired, Satan shall be loosed out of his prison, And shall go out to deceive the nations which are in the four quarters of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them together to battle: the number of whom is as the sand of the sea."

Daniel declares that an angel closed the mouths of the lions to protect him from harm in the lion's den.

Daniel 6:21–22 "Then said Daniel unto the king, O king, live for ever. My God hath sent his angel, and hath shut the lions' mouths, that they have not hurt me: forasmuch as before him innocency was found in me; and also before thee, O king, have I done no hurt."

An angel delivered Peter out of prison.

Acts 12:7–11 "And, behold, the angel of the Lord came upon him, and a light shined in the prison: and he smote Peter on the side, and raised him up, saying, Arise up quickly. And his chains fell off from his hands. And the angel said unto him, Gird thyself, and bind on thy sandals. And so he did. And he saith unto him, Cast thy garment about thee, and follow me. And he went out, and followed him; and wist not that it was true which was done by the angel; but thought he saw a vision. When they were past the first and the second ward, they came unto the iron gate that leadeth unto the city; which opened to them of his own accord: and they went out, and passed on through one street; and forthwith the angel departed from him. And when Peter was come to himself, he said, Now I know of a surety, that the Lord hath sent his angel, and hath delivered me out of the hand of Herod, and from all the expectation of the people of the Jews."

Angels seem to have a special guardianship ministry in connection with children.

Matthew 18:2-3, 6 & 10 "And Jesus called a little child unto him, and set him in the midst of them, And said, Verily I say unto you, Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven....But whoso shall offend one of these little ones which believe in me, it were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and that he were drowned in the depth of the sea....Take heed that ye despise not one of these little ones; for I say unto you, That in heaven their angels do always behold the face of my Father which is in heaven."

I would tend to think that these guardian angels continue to minister in the lives of those who are "heirs of salvation" according to the writer of the Hebrews.

Hebrews 1:13-14 "But to which of the angels said he at any time, Sit on my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool? Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation?"

One other comforting thought for the believer is alluded to in the record of the death of Lazarus. Scripture indicates that angels carried Lazarus to "Abraham's bosom," the place where the souls of people of faith were comforted until Jesus took them to heaven after His resurrection.

Luke 16:22 "And it came to pass, that the beggar died, and was carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom...."

Some argue that this is just another one of the stories in scripture. I personally believe this to be a true story about real people. The Lord named the people involved, the details are specific and in the surrounding context He is teaching truth. Though you can't build a doctrine on one verse, I tend to think God treats all His children the same. The only place that indicates deferential treatment is regarding the determination of rewards given or treasures earned in light of how we invest our time and energy in this life. Though my desire is to enter the presence of the Lord through the rapture, I like the idea of being ushered into His presence by an angelic escort.

ANGELS OF JUDGMENT

Angels are also involved in executing God's judgment against sin and evil on planet earth. David brought judgment upon the people of Israel when he numbered the people in direct disobedience to God.

2 Samuel 24:15-16 "So the LORD sent a pestilence upon Israel from the morning even to the time appointed: and there died of the people from Dan even to Beersheba seventy thousand men. And when the angel stretched out his hand upon Jerusalem to destroy it, the LORD repented him of the evil, and said to the angel that destroyed the people, It is enough: stay now thine hand."

The Psalmist tells us that "evil angels" were used in God's judgments against Egypt in deliverance of His people.

Psalms 78:49 "He cast upon them the fierceness of his anger, wrath, and indignation, and trouble, by sending evil angels among them."

The angel of the Lord killed 185,000 Assyrians in answer to Hezekiah's prayer as a bold declaration of His power and authority to protect His people when Sennacherib and his forces came to conquer Jerusalem while publicly blaspheming God in the process.

2 Kings 19:35 "And it came to pass that night, that the angel of the LORD went out, and smote in the camp of the Assyrians an hundred fourscore and five thousand: and when they arose early in the morning, behold, they were all dead corpses."

An angel was sent to kill King Herod for not humbling himself before God.

Acts 12:23 "And immediately the angel of the Lord smote him, because he gave not God the glory: and he was eaten of worms, and gave up the ghost."

At this point we will transition into seeing what scripture has to say about the role of angels in future events according to prophecy, much of which has to do with enacting God's judgment.

In the study of prophecy one is continually confronted with angels who are intent on boldly serving God with perfect obedience as He accomplishes all He has purposed. Since I am working without an outline, I think the easiest thing to do is follow the timeline presented in the book of Revelation.

The first mention of angels in the book of Revelation is in chapter 1 in regard to the "angels" of the seven churches. I personally believe this to be a reference to the pastors, the human messengers of God's word to these seven churches.

We next encounter angelic beings in Revelation 4. In this chapter John gives witness of activity in heaven centered around the throne of God. Though most will probably disagree with me, I have come to believe that the 24 elders most likely represent a heavenly council of angels upon which David patterned the 24 courses of the priesthood.

*1 Chronicles 28:11–13 "Then David gave to Solomon his son the pattern of the porch, and of the houses thereof, and of the treasuries thereof, and of the upper chambers thereof, and of the inner parlours thereof, and of the place of the mercy seat, **And the pattern of all that he had by the spirit**, of the courts of the house of the LORD, and of all the chambers round about, of the treasuries of the house of God, and of the treasuries of the dedicated things: **Also for the courses of the priests and the Levites**, and for all the work of the service of the house of the LORD, and for all the vessels of service in the house of the LORD."*

*1 Chronicles 24:3 "And David distributed them, both Zadok of the sons of Eleazar, and Ahimelech of the sons of Ithamar, according to their offices in their service....The three and twentieth to Delaiah, **the four and twentieth** to Maaziah. These were the orderings of them in their service to come into the house of the LORD, according to their manner, under Aaron their father, as the LORD God of Israel had commanded him."*

Though I won't go into more detail here regarding support for this conclusion, further explanation is given in my commentary on Revelation.

The next mention of angelic beings would be the four beasts (KJV) or living creatures that appear to be the same as the cherubim described by Ezekiel that were identified in an earlier post.

*Revelation 4:6–7 “And before the throne there was a sea of glass like unto crystal: and in the midst of the throne, and round about the throne, were four beasts **full of eyes** before and behind. And the first beast was like a lion, and the second beast like a calf, and the third beast had a face as a man, and the fourth beast was like a flying eagle.”*

*Ezekiel 10:12–15 “And their whole body, and their backs, and their hands, and their wings, and the wheels, were **full of eyes** round about, even the wheels that they four had. As for the wheels, it was cried unto them in my hearing, O wheel. And **every one had four faces**: the first face was the face of a cherub, and the second face was the face of a man, and the third the face of a lion, and the fourth the face of an eagle. And the cherubims were lifted up. This is the **living creature** that I saw by the river of Chebar.”*

The interesting thing to note is that the primary focus of these angels—the elders and the beasts/living creatures—is on giving praise and worship to God. The living creatures do have an active part in calling John's attention to the opening of the first four seal judgments (Revelation 6). One of the creatures also has the responsibility of delivering the vials of God's wrath to the seven angels that dispense those last seven judgments.

Revelation 4:8–10 “And the four beasts had each of them six wings about him; and they were full of eyes within: and they rest not day and night, saying, Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, which was, and is, and is to come. And when those beasts give glory and honour and thanks to him that sat on the throne, who liveth for ever and ever, The four and twenty elders fall down before him that sat on the throne, and worship him that liveth for ever and ever....”

Revelation 15:7 “And one of the four beasts gave unto the seven angels seven golden vials full of the wrath of God, who liveth for ever and ever.”

Overall, however, I tend to think that the service of the “elders” and living creatures centers around the throne of God. Elders also serve to guide John into understanding what he is seeing at times.

In Revelation 5 we encounter a “strong angel” who calls for anyone qualified to open the sealed book to step forth (verse 2). This angel is another one of many in scripture whose purpose it is to speak as God's representative. When Jesus the Lamb steps forth to claim that right, the angels (innumerable) break out in praise and worship of Father and Son.

THE FOUR HORSEMEN OF THE APOCALYPSE

As we reach chapter 6, we encounter the notorious four horsemen of the Apocalypse. These riders are actual beings that would better be understood as spiritual or angelic beings going out with authority to execute God's wrath upon

the wicked. Obviously, some of these judgments will be accomplished through the actions of men as motivated and empowered by these beings. I hadn't really thought about the first seal in this context before. Again, preconceived ideas raise their ugly head to prevent gaining a better understanding within the context. It would seem that to be consistent, the first rider would probably better be described as representing Satan going forth to exert his power and influence on the world through the being we call Antichrist. It stands to reason that all of these "riders" are fallen angelic beings that have aligned themselves with Satan.

The second rider is given empowerment to destroy peace and stir up war among the inhabitants on earth. He is obviously going to utilize several wicked men in accomplishing his objective.

The third rider is empowered to destroy the world's economy and promote worldwide poverty; again, this will require that he influence wicked men to accomplish his objective.

The fourth rider and his companion, called Death and Hell respectively, go forth with an objective to bring about death through violence, hunger/famine, disease, and wild animals. The scripture indicates that $\frac{1}{4}$ of the world's population will die as a result of the actions of these two. Death could not ride alone; more than just our physical body is affected by one's death. The soul of unbelievers, one's eternal nature, is taken to Hell/Hades, the temporary abode of these souls until the final judgment. We know that the bodies of believers are "absent from the body, present with the Lord." (2Corinthians 5:8)

The next angels identified in Revelation are introduced at the beginning of chapter 7. John sees four angels "standing on the four corners of the earth, holding the four winds of the earth." Though certainly not conclusive, one could surmise that there are angels positioned in authority over other phenomena attributed to nature on earth. Then again, maybe this authority is temporary for this particular point in time. Significant to our study is how God is involving the angelic creation in accomplishing His purposes—both in judgment against the wicked and in protection of His servants.

As these four angels maintain control of the winds, another angel appears with instructions for them to withhold judgment in the form of strong winds until the servants of God are sealed for protection. This angel appears to be the lead angel of a contingent of angels assigned to this purpose.

Revelation 7:3 "Saying, Hurt not the earth, neither the sea, nor the trees, till we have sealed the servants of our God in their foreheads."

The following verses go on to detail that these servants will be comprised of a group of 144,000 Jews—12,000 each from the twelve tribes of Israel.

Next John sees a "great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, standing before the throne, and before the Lamb." I believe this is a picture of the raptured church. Then John goes on to describe this multitude as participating in another huge time of praise and worship with the angels joining in.

TRUMPETING ANGELS

At the beginning of chapter 8 John describes seeing seven angels being given seven trumpets that the following context indicates will be used to signal the unleashing of seven more judgments against those on planet earth. Another angel appears holding a golden censer which he uses to offer incense mingled with the prayers of the saints before God. The angel acts decisively and confidently. He then fills the censer with fire from the altar and casts it to the earth; this results in the people on earth experiencing “voices, and thunderings, and lightnings, and an earthquake.” (verse 5)

After this, the first four angels blow their trumpets one after another. The sounding of these trumpets result in great destruction from hail, fire and possible meteors poisoning the sea, rivers and springs of water. Indications are that 1/3 of the planet is impacted by these judgments. I can't help but think back to the angels controlling the winds and wonder if these “natural” events are resulting from authority being exercised by other angels.

At this point John records seeing an angel flying through the heavens warning the inhabitants of earth to beware the judgments yet to come when the angels holding the last three trumpets give their signal.

When the fifth angel blows his trumpet (at the beginning of chapter 9), John notes that he sees a “star” falling from heaven to earth and “he” was given the key to the bottomless pit. Obviously, this is not a normal star; it is another angelic being. When he opens the bottomless pit, locusts appear out of a cloud of smoke to torment men for five months. Again, these are obviously not normal locusts. In doing my study of Revelation, I found this note by Darrell Young of Focus on Jerusalem Prophecy Ministry in an article on “Iran in Bible Prophecy.” It will reference Amos 7:1, so I am showing it as stated in the KJV to preface his quote.

Amos 7:1 Thus hath the Lord GOD shewed unto me; and, behold, he formed grasshoppers in the beginning of the shooting up of the latter growth; and, lo, it was the latter growth after the king's mowings.

“...an earlier translation of the OT into Greek, known as the Septuagint, embodies a different rendering of Amos 7:1, “*thus the Lord showed me, and behold a swarm of locusts were coming and behold one of the young devastating locusts was Gog, the King.*”

It was already established in a previous post, that I believe Gog is a fallen angel of higher rank. It's very interesting to me how each study can give a fresh perspective on previous study. I had not made a specific connection between Gog and Appollyon, the angel of the bottomless pit identified as the king of the locusts. If the Septuagint rendering is correct, this would seem to be a correct deduction.

Revelation 9:11 "And they had a king over them, which is the angel of the bottomless pit, whose name in the Hebrew tongue is Abaddon, but in the Greek tongue hath his name Apollyon."

When the sixth angel sounds his trumpet, John tells us that four angels that have been bound in the great river Euphrates are loosed to kill a third of mankind. Implied in the following verse is that they have a 200,000,000 man army at their ready to accomplish this objective. During my study of Revelation, I remember thinking that these angels were probably angels connected to nations bordering the Euphrates River in light of Daniel's record of angelic princes in authority over nations that were ever engaged in battle with the angels of God in trying to prevent His will being done (as explained in a previous post). The one thing that can definitely be said about this army is that it is composed of enemies of God.

There is yet one trumpet to sound, but we will first encounter another explanatory section in the book of Revelation before picking back up in real time. I think it is already clearly evident that the angels, both good and bad, play a prominent role in bringing about the purposes of God concerning mankind and the events that affect those on planet earth.

WAR IN HEAVEN

Chapter ten begins with John's record of seeing another (different) mighty angel/messenger come down from heaven, clothed with a cloud, a rainbow is on his head, his face is as the sun, and his feet as pillars of fire. This description has much in common with his description of Jesus in chapter one.

Revelation 1:15–16 "And his feet like unto fine brass, as if they burned in a furnace; and his voice as the sound of many waters. And he had in his right hand seven stars: and out of his mouth went a sharp twoedged sword: and his countenance was as the sun shineth in his strength."

I am convinced that this is Jesus since as you continue reading and follow the pronouns, by the time you come to Revelation 11:3 He makes reference to "my two witnesses." In previous posts we discovered several instances in the Old Testament when the preincarnate Jesus was identified as "the angel of the Lord." The purpose of this angel is to announce that the completion of God's plan is at hand and to give John further revelation of coming judgments. He also told John about two special witnesses that would complete their prophetic assignment after the first 1260 days of the 70th week of Daniel that is more commonly known as the seven-year tribulation. He explains that they have been given special empowerment to protect themselves for that time period and to call down plagues on planet earth as needed. At the end of 1260 days, they will be killed and their dead bodies left exposed in the streets while those on earth celebrate their death. After 3.5 days God will resurrect them to life and take them up to heaven in a cloud in view of all their enemies.

Finally, the seventh angel sounds his trumpet signaling that Christ will soon establish His kingdom on earth. At this point heaven is filled with the sounds of

another wonderful time of angelic praise and worship.

Chapter 12 records the account of the final war in heaven between Satan and his fallen angels and Michael and his host of holy angels. It's at this point, the mid-point of the seven-year tribulation period, that Satan (also called the dragon, the serpent, and the Devil) that Satan and the fallen angels are evicted from the heavens permanently. No longer will the enemy be able to accuse men of faith before God.

Revelation 12:9–12 “And the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world: he was cast out into the earth, and his angels were cast out with him. And I heard a loud voice saying in heaven, Now is come salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of his Christ: for the accuser of our brethren is cast down, which accused them before our God day and night....Therefore rejoice, ye heavens, and ye that dwell in them. Woe to the inhabitants of the earth and of the sea! for the devil is come down unto you, having great wrath, because he knoweth that he hath but a short time.”

I think this might be the first time that Satan really knows he is beaten and is determined to take as many with him as he can.

DECEIVING SPIRITS AND MESSENGERS OF HOPE

It's at this point that John introduces the beasts from the sea and the earth more commonly known as the Antichrist and the False Prophet. These two beings are obviously men, but they are empowered by the dragon that was identified as Satan previously. Scripture declares that God is going to allow Satan great leeway in the exercise of his power at this period in time.

Revelation 13:13–14 “And he doeth great wonders, so that he maketh fire come down from heaven on the earth in the sight of men, And deceiveth them that dwell on the earth by the means of those miracles which he had power to do in the sight of the beast....” (in reference to the False Prophet)

2 Thessalonians 2:8–9 “And then shall that Wicked be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of his coming: Even him, whose coming is after the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders....” (in reference to the Antichrist)

I think that is an area in which many people are deceived by false prophets today. The ability to do signs and wonders does not verify one as a true prophet of God. Scripture is clear in telling us that Satan and his ministers often appear as an “angels of light” in the guise of righteous ministry. Paul warns us of this very truth.

2 Corinthians 11:13–15 “For such are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ. And no marvel; for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light. Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also be transformed as

the ministers of righteousness; whose end shall be according to their works."

The apparitions of the Virgin Mary so venerated in the Catholic church today I believe fall into this category. Scripture is clear in its teaching that the holy angels and the Holy Spirit all present themselves in light of bringing honor and glory to Father and Son and no one else.

*John 15:26 "But when the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth, which proceedeth from the Father, **he shall testify of me:**"*

*John 16:13 "Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for **he shall not speak of himself;** but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will shew you things to come."*

The next angel we meet is flying through the heavens boldly proclaiming the gospel to all on planet earth (Revelation 14:6). He is immediately followed by another angel proclaiming the destruction of the city of Babylon. Right on his heels appears another angel warning the people on planet earth not to take the mark of the beast. All three of these angels are proud messengers of God basically declaring that God is still in control and His plan is unfolding just as He purposed. They are also reminding the people who find themselves enduring the terrible events associated with God's wrath that His grace is still available to those who will choose to place their faith in Him.

REAPERS OF THE HARVEST

The next angels on the scene are shown reaping a harvest resulting from God's wrath. These angels are also referenced in the gospels. Matthew is clear in telling us that the "tares," the impostors in the kingdom, will be harvested before the "wheat," true believers are ushered into the kingdom.

Matthew 13:30 "Let both grow together until the harvest: and in the time of harvest I will say to the reapers, Gather ye together first the tares, and bind them in bundles to burn them: but gather the wheat into my barn."

The Lord Jesus is very specific in clarifying the meaning of His teaching when He interprets this parable for His disciples.

*Matthew 13:37-42 "He answered and said unto them, He that soweth the good seed is the Son of man; The field is the world; the good seed are the children of the kingdom; but **the tares are the children of the wicked one; The enemy that sowed them is the devil; the harvest is the end of the world; and the reapers are the angels.** As therefore the tares are gathered and burned in the fire; so shall it be in the end of this world. The Son of man shall send forth his angels, and they shall gather out of his kingdom all things that offend, and them which do iniquity; And shall cast them into a furnace of fire: there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth."*

Finally, as we reach chapter 15 we are introduced to the seven angels that will dispense the seven last judgments representing the culmination of God's wrath before Jesus returns as King of kings. As referenced earlier, the angels are presented in possession of the seven final judgments, but one of the living creatures presents each with a vial of God's wrath to mix with those judgments. The first six judgments seem to follow in fairly rapid sequence. The sixth judgment appears to provide a pause to allow the forces of Satan to gather the armies of the world together in preparation for battle with Almighty God. Once the final judgment is poured out, the stage is set for the return of Jesus to destroy the Antichrist and False Prophet and their armies and establish His kingdom.

One of the angels involved in pouring out the last seven judgments then approaches John and carries him into the wilderness to explain the destruction of Babylon, the kingdom of the Antichrist. In Revelation 18:2 yet another angel appears to announce the fall of Babylon as a done deal, and I can't help but wonder if it is the same angel who made the announcement that its destruction was imminent (Revelation 14:8). Emphasis is given to this declaration by the appearance of another angel casting a millstone into the sea illustrating the truth that Babylon would never arise again. Satan will never again be able to establish a wicked kingdom on planet earth once the Savior has taken His earthly throne.

USHERING IN THE KINGDOM

After yet another time of praise and worship in heaven by both angels and humans, the Lord Jesus comes bodily to earth for the second time to destroy His enemies and take His throne.

Yet another angel appears in the heavens to invite the birds of prey to the great supper of the corpses of the armies of Antichrist.

Next on the scene is the angel in possession of the key to the bottomless pit who takes authority over Satan and imprisons him in the bottomless pit for 1,000 years. After the thousand years he will be released to make one last attempt at overthrowing the Lord Jesus, and—in one of the most astonishing prophecies presented in scripture considering the righteous rule of Jesus during that time—he will be able to gather an army numbering as “the sand of the sea” from all the nations. This is when Gog reemerges for one last time to join him in this attempt. There is no battle to speak of; God destroys this army with fire from heaven and Satan is cast into the lake of fire never to emerge again.

John then tells us that another angel that participated in the last seven judgments presents himself to introduce John to the “bride, the Lamb's wife.” The intriguing part of this introduction is that he is referencing the New Jerusalem descending from heaven to earth. Point is made that all that are written in the Lamb's book of life are welcome to enjoy the city; this would include all believers from all times—not just those identified as “the church.”

Now we come to a very intriguing couple of verses in connection with this last

“angel.”

Revelation 22:8–9 “And I John saw these things, and heard them. And when I had heard and seen, I fell down to worship before the feet of the angel which shewed me these things. Then saith he unto me, See thou do it not: for I am thy fellowservant, and of thy brethren the prophets, and of them which keep the sayings of this book: worship God.”

The plain understanding of this verse indicates that this “angel” is one of God’s earthly prophets, a brother and fellowservant of John. Though we tend to interpret references to angels to be supernatural beings in the heavens that are God’s special ministering servants on behalf of man, the term is inclusive of any individual doing God’s bidding as requested at any given time.

The book of Revelation closes with one more intriguing verse and angel, and I am going to quote from my journal in closing.

Revelation 22:16 “I Jesus have sent mine angel to testify unto you these things in the churches. I am the root and the offspring of David, and the bright and morning star.”

Jesus identifies Himself by name. He tells John that He has sent His angel/messenger to testify (give evidence, bear record, witness) to him (John) all the things that have been revealed to him during the revelation. John, in turn, is to share these things with the churches.

Again, the subject comes up regarding the signifying angel and Jesus and their identities. After reading through this book many times, it is obvious to me that God has used Jesus, real “angels” and redeemed saints to communicate with John throughout the duration of this revelation. I’m not sure I will ever be able to correctly distinguish between the angel and/or saint in given instances.

When I checked all the New Testament uses of the word for angel, every single instance was the word “aggelos”—a messenger; especially an “angel,” by implication a pastor—angel, messenger (except for Luke 20:36, which uses “isaggelos,” angelic—equal unto the angels). All the uses of the words “messenger or messengers” utilize the Greek word “aggelos.”

I’m not sure it really matters that we identify the speaker. What is important is to understand the message of the messenger—and in every case we know that this “messenger” is sent/provided by God. Every word is inspired by the Holy Spirit.

ANGELS AND ETERNITY

It seems to be quite obvious that the holy angels take delight in serving God and honoring Him with praise and worship. Throughout eternity it seems that the angels and mankind will live in fellowship with at least equal standing before God.

Luke 20:36 "Neither can they die any more: for they are equal unto the angels; and are the children of God, being the children of the resurrection."

There is a section of scripture in Romans that emphasizes the position of believers in eternity as being joint-heirs with Christ. This would seem to make us no longer "a little lower than the angels."

Romans 8:16-17 The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God: And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together.

Taken in context with a verse from 1Peter and a verse from Revelation, the indication is that just as angels are subject to Christ, they will be subject to His joint-heirs.

1 Peter 3:21–22 "The like figure whereunto even baptism doth also now save us (not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God,) by the resurrection of Jesus Christ: Who is gone into heaven, and is on the right hand of God; angels and authorities and powers being made subject unto him."

Revelation 3:21 "To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne."

Until that time comes, scripture indicates that the angels are quite interested in the affairs of men. They rejoice over every sinner that comes to know Jesus as Lord and Savior.

Luke 15:7 & 10 "I say unto you, that likewise joy shall be in heaven over one sinner that repenteth, more than over ninety and nine just persons, which need no repentance....Likewise, I say unto you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth."

According to Peter, the angels are interested in the amazing process by which Jesus has provided for the redemption of mankind and will eventually redeem the earth from the curse of sin. I think they are trying to figure out how He could love us so much and why we would ever choose to reject this most precious gift.

*1 Peter 1:10–12 "Of which salvation the prophets have enquired and searched diligently, who prophesied of the grace that should come unto you: Searching what, or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow. Unto whom it was revealed, that not unto themselves, but unto us they did minister the things, which are now reported unto you by them that have preached the gospel unto you with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven; **which things the angels desire to look into.**"*

I hope you enjoyed our journey through the scripture in a study of how angels are interacting with events on planet earth—in the past, present and future. It gives me great comfort to know as the times grow darker and the enemy gains in power and authority, that just as with Elisha, more and mightier are those

aligned with us than those that are against us. The cry of my heart—"Come Lord Jesus!"