

WHAT JESUS TAUGHT ABOUT SPIRITUAL BEINGS

(Taken and adapted from 'The Red Bits – A Study Guide' by Michael Button)

INTRODUCTION

Continuing our study of what Jesus taught about spiritual realms, we shall take a look at what He said of spiritual beings. He mentions three: Angels, Satan and demons (or evil spirits).

1. **Angels.** The Greek word *angelos*, which has come over in English as 'angel,' simply means 'messenger.' Apart from those that have defected to, and now serve, Satan, angels are agents of God, doing His will either in heaven or on earth.¹ They are spiritual beings, having no physical bodies and therefore usually invisible to human eyes, but they can make themselves seen in human form, as they did for example at the empty tomb.²

Activity 1: Identify in which verses Jesus reveals the following information about angels:

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|---|-----|
| (a) They are very numerous (at least 72,000) | [] |
| (b) They surround God's throne | [] |
| (c) They are holy | [] |
| (d) They rejoice at our salvation | [] |
| (e) They will gather believers in the last days | [] |
| (f) They will deliver the wicked for judgment | [] |

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|--------------|----------------|
| 1 Mark 8:38 | 4 Matt 13:41 |
| 2 Matt 24:31 | 5 Luke 12:8-9 |
| 3 Matt 26:53 | 6 Luke 15:7-10 |

Angels do not know everything, for they do not know the time of Jesus' return.³ They will, however, accompany Him on His return (*read* Matt 16:27). Two other interesting things that Jesus told us about the work of angels were:

- (i) Some have a special responsibility for looking after children (Matt 18:10).
- (ii) Some especially attended Jesus (*read* John 1:51). A few commentators have deduced some significance in the angels' order of progression – ascending before descending, suggesting those angels are working on earth, visiting heaven to receive orders from the Father in Heaven and returning to earth to carry them out.

2. **Satan.** *Satan* means 'adversary' and *Devil* means 'slanderer.' Jesus referred to the arch evil being under both titles. Having rebelled against God, he was thrown out of heaven, as witnessed by Jesus,⁴ and took over rule of this world, from which also he will one day be cast out and thrown into hell, a

¹ Matt 25:41; Matt 24:36.

² Luke 24:4.

³ Matt 24:36.

⁴ Luke 10:18.

place that has been prepared for him and his angels (*read* John 12:31). The ministry of Jesus, with His power to overcome Satan's areas of rule, marked the beginning of this downfall (*read* Matt 25:41).

There is nothing good to be said of him. He is a liar and a murderer (*read* John 8:44). His mission on earth seems to be to lead mankind to join his rebellion against God, preventing people from believing and receiving God's Word whenever he can, 'stealing' the word of God from their hearts like a bird taking seed fallen by the wayside.⁵ One way he does this is by infiltrating the Kingdom of God with his people, like weeds sown among the wheat.⁶ Certainly some sickness and disabilities can be attributed to him, though he may not be directly responsible for them all (but he is responsible for leading people into the sin that lies behind such abnormalities) (*read* Luke 13:16).

Jesus referred to those who follow the devil's ways as the *devil's children* (*read* John 8:44).

Though Satan is the accuser, he can find nothing of which he can accuse Jesus (*read* John 14:30).

Though we must have no illusions about the devil's power (Jesus referred to him as 'the strong man' needing to be bound⁷) we can take heart from the fact that he must get permission from God to inflict trials on God's children (*read* Luke 22:31-32). Jesus prayed, not only for Peter to be kept safe from Satan's evil intentions, but for the safety of all His disciples (*read* John 17:15). Disciples have the authority of Jesus over Satan and the evil powers under his control (*read* Luke 10:19).

3, Demons/Unclean Spirits. Jesus actually said little about them; He just dealt with them! The few times He referred to demons were all to do with casting them out of people. His authority over them was such that the mere *finger of God* was sufficient to evict them (*read* Luke 11:20). His disciples are also given power to cast them out (*read* Luke 9:1).

Likewise, He rarely referred to *unclean spirits*, other than His using them as an illustration of the unrepentant state of the Jewish nation of His day (*read* Matt 12:43-45). What He said here serves as a warning, that unclean spirits might return to one from whom they had been cast out, bringing others with them. The implication is that, once delivered, a person must not give such spirits another foothold in their lives.

Demons and unclean spirits may well be different terms for the same evil beings. Most likely they are the angels who rebelled against God along with Lucifer. Jesus spoke of seeing *Satan fall from heaven*⁸ and referred to the devil's angels (*read* Matt 25:41).

⁵ *The Parable of the Sower*, Luke 8:11-12.

⁶ Matt 13:38-39.

⁷ Matt 12:29.

⁸ Luke 10:18.