

# ANGELOLOGY

## The Biblical Doctrine of Angels

**The holy angels  
Satan and his angels (fallen angels)  
Sorcery  
Occult and magic practices**



by

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**Kreuzlingen, July 2018**

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# Introduction

Angels play an important part in God's plan. They are mentioned 270 times in Holy Scripture. Yet there is an incredible lack of knowledge among many Christians about the biblical doctrine of angels. So-called "experiences" and (supposed) visions or false teachings have to a large extent replaced biblical knowledge.

On the one hand there are those who **deny all transcendent realities (e.g. life in the hereafter, the existence of angels)**:

10 **Act 23:8**                    *The Sadducees say that there is no resurrection, and that there are neither angels nor spirits...*

People brought up in a rationalistic culture run a greater risk of not believing in angels.

15 On the other hand, there are people who emphasise the subject of angels almost too much. This danger especially applies to people who tend towards spiritualism. The apostle Paul rejected and opposed the veneration of angels (cf. Col 2:18-20). In the middle ages, especially during scholasticism, there were amazing and even strange excesses in the realm of Angelology.<sup>1</sup>

20 Angelology is concerned not only with the good (holy) angels, but also with the evil ones; that is Satan's angels or the fallen angels. Because of this, the doctrine of angels is even more important. It is also important to know why there is so much lack of knowledge and confusion in this area. Satan of course wants to fog up the truth about himself.

25 **Joh 8:44**                    *You belong to your father, the devil . . . He was a murderer from the beginning, not holding to the truth for there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks his native language, for he is a liar and the father of lies.*

30 Since early heathen times when the devil and his angels were venerated, up until our modern days of sorcery, Satan has tried to conceal the teaching concerning angels (and therefore the teaching about himself). *Spiritualism*<sup>2</sup> is Satan's teaching about the realm of angels or spirits. Only through a deeper knowledge of Holy Scripture and through faith can we resist the growing demonism and occultism of our days.

35 A Bible study on angels will help us:

- to better discern the revelation of the greatness of God and worship him.
- to more fully discern God's possibilities, his reaching into our lives, how he does this and how he achieves his plan for us.

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<sup>1</sup> The question was asked for instance of how many angels could stand on the head of a needle. That is of course pure speculation. On the other hand the Bible says that numbers of (fallen) angels or demons can "dwell" in a person (cf. Luk 8:30). It was speculated for example as to whether an angel can be in more than one place at one and the same time. What was the time span between the creation of the angels and the fall of some of them? Do angels protect children in their mothers' wombs or only after they are born, or even only after their baptism?

<sup>2</sup> We prefer the term Spiritualism to Spiritism.

- to obey God more consistently in our daily lives (as we see the obedience of these exalted created beings).
- better discern our status, because for the fallen angels there is no redemption (Heb 2:16) and we will in fact judge over them (1Co 6:3); and the angels are sent to serve believers (Heb 1:14).

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# I. Origin of the angels

## A. Definition

The word “*angel*” comes from the Greek ἄγγελος (*angelos*) or from the Latin “*angelus*” (both of which are masculine).

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*Angel* means: *envoy, messenger, representative*. The word *angel* is found in both the Old (in Hebrew: מַלְאָכַי [mal’āk]) and New Testament:

- For human messengers (cf. e.g. Gen 32:3-4; Jam 2:25 [the messengers or Israeli spies who went to Rahab]).
- For messengers of God, i.e. for the prophets (cf. Hag 1:13; Mal 2:7 and Mat 11:10).
- For heavenly messengers, i.e. angels, (cf. e.g. Gen 19:1; Luk 22:43).

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We should take note of the fact that angels in Holy Scripture are also called “*spirits*” (in Greek: πνεύματα [*pneúmata*]). This refers to both holy angels (Heb 1:14) and fallen angels (Eph 6:12).

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“*God is spirit*” (Joh 4:24), therefore it is not surprising that the angels are also called “*sons of God*” (cf. e.g. Job 1:6 und 38:7).

## B. The creation of the angels

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Angels have not existed from eternity, because Holy Scripture speaks about their creation:

**Neh 9:6**                      *You alone are the Lord. You made the heavens, even the highest heavens, and all their starry host, the earth and all that is in it, the seas and all that is in them. You give life to everything, and the multitudes of heaven worship you.*

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**Psa 148:2-5**                *Praise him all you angels . . . for he commanded, and they were created.*

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Compare the creation of the angels with that of man (see the first chapter in my brochure “*Biblical Anthropology*”).

**Col 1:16**                      *For by him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth...*

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Concerning the time when God created the angels, we read in

**Gen 1:1**                        *In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.*

and in

5 **Job 38:4-7**            *Where were you when I laid the earth's foundation . . . and all the angels shouted for joy?*

10 When God created man, the angels obviously already existed. I assume therefore that the angels were created somewhere **between Gen 1:1 und Gen 1:26!** Not least because of the passage in **Job 38:4-7** I think that it was on the first day (Gen 1:1), together with the heavens and earth (which was at this point of time formless and empty), because this passage in the book of Job leads us to the conclusion that the angels already existed when God created the things that are mentioned after Gen 1:5 (i.e. following the first day of creation).

## C. The number of the angels

15 Holy Scripture speaks of *myriads* (cf. Dan 7:10 und Rev 5:11):

**Heb 12:22**            *...thousands upon thousands of angels*

This gives us a better understanding of certain passages of Scripture:

20 **2Ki 6:16-17**        *Don't be afraid. Those who are with us are more than those who are with them.*

Compare the important verse in Jos 5:14 with this (the pre-existent Christ is prince over the armies of the Lord).

25 **Mat 26:53**            *Do you think I cannot call on my Father, and he will at once put at my disposal more than twelve legions of angels?*

30 “*Yahweh Zebaoth*” can be translated by “*Lord of hosts*”. It is true that “*hosts*” can refer to different things (Exo 12:41 = Israel as a people; cf. Jud 5:20), but probably referred originally to myriads of angels.

**Job 25:3**            *Can his forces be numbered? Upon whom does his light not rise?*

## D. The “dwelling place” of the angels

35 Angels are heavenly beings. Their dwelling place is heaven, that is, so to speak, God's world.

**Luk 2:13**            *Suddenly a great company of the heavenly host appeared with the angel, praising God and saying...*

40 **Mat 28:2**            *...an angel of the Lord came down from heaven...*

**Gal 1:8**            *But even if we or an angel from heaven should preach a gospel other than the one we preached to you, let him be eternally condemned.*

Many of the angels departed from heaven, after their rebellion against God (more about this in the chapter on “The fall of the angels”).

- 5 **Mat 25:41** *Depart from me, you who are cursed, into the fire prepared for the devil and his angels.*

## II. The nature of the angels

### A. Angels constitute a “heavenly host” and not a race or species

5 Angels are beings specially created by God and cannot be compared with us as human beings. We have an earthly body of flesh, blood and bones. Angels are also **beings possessing personality**, but unlike us they are *heavenly spirits*. That they have a personality can be discerned from the following abilities:

- 10 • intelligence (1Pe 1:12)
- feeling(s) (Luk 2:13)
- will (Jud 6)

15 Unlike man, angels are not bound to place and time. They also cannot die (Luk 20:36). In the coming age we (who believe) will no longer marry but we will be “like the angles” (Luk 20:35).

20 Hereditary sin is not found in angels. In other words, the angels did not experience a fall into sin (into which the whole species was drawn) as was the case for mankind (see Rom 5:12). In contrast to man, there is no redemption for angels. Christ could share mankind’s humanity (cf. Heb 2:14-16). There is, however, no race or species of angels out of which he could have come and which he could have joined. Angels are individual beings, created by God<sup>3</sup> and they form a group or host (unlike mankind), but not a race.

### B. Angels are spirits (Heb 1:14)

25 We have already pointed out their relationship with God, who is spirit. Angels are non-material (i.e. spiritual) beings. They can however take on bodily form (cf. Gen 18:2) and can also eat and drink (Gen 18:8), just as Jesus did after his resurrection (cf. Luk 24:41-43; Act 10:41).

30 When an angel takes on bodily form, it can be an entirely earthly and natural one, cf. Gen 18–19. One of the three men who appeared to Abraham was Yahweh himself (cf. Gen 18:1.22; 19:24), that is the pre-existent Christ before his becoming man; the two others who went to Lot in Sodom were angels (cf. Gen 19:1; see also Heb 13:2).

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<sup>3</sup> In Joh 1:3; Col 1:15-17 and Heb 1:2-3 it says that everything that exists (i.e. the whole universe) was created through Jesus Christ, the Son of God!

**Heb 13:2**                    *Do not forget to entertain strangers, for by so doing some people have entertained angels without knowing it.*

Angels can also appear in a shining glorious body (cf. Mat 28:2-3; Luk 24:4).<sup>4</sup>

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An angelic appearance can be visible for one person and for another invisible (cf. Num 22:22-31; 2Ki 6:16-17).

10 Jesus says that those who have been born again will be “*like the angels*” (Mat 22:30). That does not mean that they will be angels, but that they will have a spiritual body.

## C. Attributes of the angels

Here we are talking of the good or holy angels.

### 1. Angels are holy

15 **Act 10:22**                    *...Cornelius, a centurion, an upright and God-fearing man, respected by the whole Jewish nation was directed by a holy angel to summon you to his house and to hear what you have to say...*

Only holy beings can serve a holy God. Holy beings continually speak of the glory of God:

20 **Isa 6:3 (RSV)**            *Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts; the whole earth is full of his glory.*

### 2. Angels are more powerful than men

Only God is almighty, the angels are not. We read the following concerning the angels:

25 **Psa 103:20**                *Praise the Lord, you his angels, you mighty ones...*

**2Pe 2:11**                    *...yet even angels, although they are stronger and more powerful, do not bring slanderous accusations against such beings in the presence of the Lord...*

30 Some illustrations of this are: Act 5:19; 12:7.23; Mat 28:2-3; Rev 20:1-2. At this point we should not forget Satan’s power (cf. Eph 2:2; 6:12). But, Satan is not almighty; only the triune God is almighty.

### 3. Angels know (at least in part) more than men do

35 **2Sa 14:20**                *...My lord has wisdom like that of an angel of God – he knows everything that happens in the land.*

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<sup>4</sup> Dan 10:4-9 and Rev 10:1 probably refer to the *Angel of the Lord*; that is Jesus Christ; in Dan 10 before and in Rev 10 after his incarnation.



The law was passed on (to Moses) through angels (cf. Act 7:53; Gal 3:19 and Heb 2:2). Some of the angels at least are full of eyes (Rev 4:8), that surely means that they are very intelligent beings or that they possess much knowledge. Even so they must learn the wisdom of God:

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**Eph 3:10** *His intent was that now, through the church, the manifold wisdom of God should be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly places...*

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**1Pe 1:12** *It was revealed to them that they were not serving themselves but you, when they spoke of the things that have now been told you by those who have preached the gospel to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven. Even the angels long to investigate these things.*

#### 4. Angels are humble

15 Although the angels possess more power and knowledge than men, they refuse to receive worship from men (cf. Rev 19:10; 22:8-9). Only Satan, the fallen angel, seeks honour and worship from men (cf. Mat 4:9). A good example of humility is found in the archangel Michael in

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**Jud 9** *But even the archangel Michael, when he was disputing with the devil about the body of Moses, did not dare to bring a slanderous accusation against him, but said, "The Lord rebuke you!"*

#### 5. Angels are obedient

They are constantly ready to receive orders from God:

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**Psa 91:11** *For he will command his angels concerning you to guard you in all your ways.*

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**Psa 103:20-21** *Praise the Lord you his angels, you mighty ones who do his bidding, who obey his word. Praise the Lord all his heavenly hosts, you his servants who do his will.*

**Dan 7:10** *Thousands upon thousands attended him; ten thousand times ten thousand stood before him.*

#### 35 6. Angels can have wings

This is an unimportant question, but it is asked time and time again especially because of art (in many pictures angels are depicted with wings). In many places in the Bible, angels are described as having wings. However, it does not say anything about bird's wings with feathers.

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- Isa 6:2**                    *Above him were seraphs, each with six wings: With two wings they covered their faces, with two they covered their feet, and with two they were flying.*
- 5    **Dan 9:21**                *...while I was still in prayer, Gabriel, the man I had seen in the earlier vision, came to me in swift flight...*
- Rev 14:6**                *Then I saw another angel flying in mid-air...*
- 10    In the *Most Holy Place*, in the tabernacle, and in the temple, there were golden cherubim with their wings spread out over the ark of the testimony (cf. Exo 25:18-20).

### III. Hierarchy among angels

Jesus Christ is also the creator of angels (see Col 1:16). Angels are therefore his creation and serve him. Jesus' self humiliation by becoming man (incarnation) went so far that he was "made a little lower than the angels" (cf. Heb 2:7). It is in fact the letter to the Hebrews which shows us the following in the first two chapters:

**Heb 1:4**                      *So he became as much superior to the angels as the name he has inherited is superior to theirs.*

10    **"Let all God's angels worship him!"** (Heb 1:6)

The relationship of angels to men is also shown in Heb 2:7. For believers (people who have been born again), partakers of the heavenly nature (cf. 2Pe 1:4), God has made the angels "ministering spirits" (cf. Heb 1:14). Following our resurrection, we will one day even judge angels (cf. 1Co 6:3). Holy Scripture also speaks of the angels watching us (cf. Job 1:8; Luk 15:10; 1Co 4:9; 1Ti 5:21).

And how do the angels relate to each other? Holy Scripture speaks of various groups (hierarchies):

20    **Col 1:16**                      *For by him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things were created by him and for him.*

25    The Bible gives the following descriptions of particular groups or individual beings:

#### A. The Angel of the Lord

In the Old Testament, we often find the *Angel of the Lord* in encounters with people. This is the Lord Jesus Christ himself before he became man. Haggai 1:13 seems to be the only exception to this; the expression or the description "*angel of the Lord*", is used for the prophet Haggai himself. This can be explained by the fact that the Hebrew word *mal'āk* (מַלְאָךְ) simply means "*sent one*" (or messenger); this also applies to the Greek word *ἀπόστολος* (*apóstolos*, cf. the verb *ἀποστέλλω* [*apostéllō*] = *to send*). Here are some passages which speak of the "*Angel of the Lord*" appearing to people:

35    **Gen 16:7.13**                      **Hagar** in the desert

**Exo 3:2.4**                      **Moses** at the burning bush

**Jud 6:11-16**                      **Gideon** when he was called

40    **In such passages we see:**

- that the *Angel of the Lord* identifies himself with the Lord or
  - that he is identified by others as *the Angel of the Lord* or that others equate him with the Lord.
- 5      • that he accepts the worship that belongs to the Lord alone.

**In the following passages (to mention just a few), it is a case of Christophanies:**

- Jos 5:13-15    commander of the Lord's army.
- 10      • Gen 18–19    Yahweh with the two angels: Yahweh see Gen 18:22; regarding the two angels see Gen 19:1.

In the New Testament we find several indications of the pre-existence of Jesus Christ, that means that he existed before his incarnation, namely from eternity: cf. Joh 1:1.15; 8:58; 17:5.24; 2Co 8:9; Phi 2:5-11; Heb 7:1ff.

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## B. Cherubim

These are beings with wings, which are mainly mentioned in connection with the throne of God. They are not simply messengers, but constantly surround God's throne. In modern translations they are occasionally called "animals" or "living creatures".

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The most well-known passages are:

**Exo 25:20**                    **in the tabernacle** (golden imitations)

25    **1Ki 6:23ff**                **in the temple** in Jerusalem (wooden imitations)

**Eze 1:5-14; 10:1ff**    **beneath the throne of God**

Compare also 1Ch 28:18.

30    **Rev 4:6-9**                **the throne of God**

*Cherubim* are mentioned 90 times in the Old Testament. The meaning of the word "*cherubim*" (כְּרֻבִים or written as *plene* כְּרוּבִים) does not seem to be known.

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According to Psa 18:10, *cherubim* are those who bear the throne (or throne carriage) of God (cf. Eze 1; 10; Rev 4). They are the guardians of God's throne (cf. also Gen 3:24). They are equipped with many eyes to fulfil this responsibility and can at the same time move in all directions (cf. Eze 1:17 and 10:11). In Rev 6 we find the cherubim, i.e. the four living creatures, in the presence of Jesus, when he ushers in the judgement (the plagues) upon the world through the opening of the seals. In Rev 15:7 one of the four living creatures gives the seven angels the seven bowls. In Rev 4:8 they are depicted with six wings, just like the seraphs in Isa 6:1ff.

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## C. Seraphs (seraphim)

*Seraphs* are only mentioned in Isa 6:2.6. “*Seraphs*” means “*the burning ones*” (from the Hebrew שָׂרָפִים [*śārāph*] = *to burn*). They have a burning reverence for their Lord and God and hold a preferential position. The cherubim surround the throne of God and are below it, while the seraphs are over the throne of God (cf. Isa 6:2). They cover themselves with their four wings in reverential fear. Seraphs teach us in spite of their proximity to God to respect a “holy distance” to the three times holy Lord and God.

**Isa 6:3**            *Holy, holy, holy is the Lord Almighty*

Seraphs have, as mentioned before, six wings. The two wings which are for their ministry are mentioned last. There are commentators who take this as an indication that God is first of all interested in our worship; our ministry takes second place (cf. Mat 4:10). The seraphs’ ministry is to keep sin away from God’s throne. Isaiah was cleansed by them (Isa 6:6-7).

## D. The archangel

Holy Scripture, that is the books of the biblical canon (Old and New Testament), only mention one archangel, namely **Michael** (see Jud 9; Rev 12:7). The Catholic Church also speaks of Raphael und Uriel; Jewish tradition even mentions seven archangels: Gabriel, Michael, Raguel, Renuel, Saruel und Uriel. The name *Michael* means “*who is like God?*” Michael even glorifies God through his name. Michael holds a special position within the world of the angels:

**Dan 10:13**            *Then Michael, one of the chief princes, came to help me...*

**Dan 12:1**            *At that time Michael, the great prince who protects your people, will arise.*

**Rev 12:7**            *...Michael and his angels fought against the dragon, and the dragon and his angels fought back.*

Dan 12:1 says that Michael is the angelic prince who is responsible for Israel. In a battle which is not visible to the human eye, he intervenes in favour of Israel against the prince of the Persian kingdom (Dan 10:13). In Rev 12:7-9 he and his angels fight against Satan and his angels. Michael’s victory against Satan and his hordes underlines the power and greatness of this archangel.

## E. Gabriel

*Gabriel* can be translated by “*the strength of God*”, “*God’s hero*” or by “*God is mighty*”. The Hebrew word גַּבְרִיֵּל (“*geber*”) means especially “*masculine man*” or “*strong man*”. Gabriel is the angel who brings God’s messages to men. He is what we would call “*God’s messenger*”.

**Dan 8:16** Gabriel appeared to Daniel

**Dan 9:21** Gabriel appeared to Daniel

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**Luk 1:19** Gabriel appeared to Zachariah

**Luk 1:26** Gabriel appeared to Mary

10 What exalted servants are at God's disposal to announce to somebody an answer to prayer or to convey a promise! Gabriel passes on a wonderful testimony regarding himself:

**Luk 1:19** *I am Gabriel, I stand in the presence of God, and I have been sent to speak to you and to tell you this good news.*

## 15 **F. Other angels**

The Bible uses different expressions to distinguish between the various categories of angels. In Eph 3:10, for example, it speaks of “*rulers*” and “*authorities*” in the heavenly places. Compare this with Rom 8:38; Eph 1:21; 6:12 and Col 1:16. Michael and Satan have “*their*” angels (cf. Rev 12:3-4.7-9).

## IV. The ministry of angels (good angels)

### A. Their ministry for God the Father

For the ministry of the archangel Michael and of Gabriel, the messenger of God, seraphs and cherubim see the above chapter III. *Hierarchy among angels*, B to F.

### 5 B. The ministry of the angels to Jesus Christ

Jesus Christ is – as already mentioned – the creator of the angels (Col 1:16). In becoming man, he was for a short time “made a little lower than the angels” (cf. Heb 2:7). The creator took it upon himself, for our sakes, to become for a certain time lower than the angels that he had created. Even so, the angels served him during the time that he was here on earth. And they serve him today too in heaven (cf. Heb 1:6 und 1Pe 3:22).

#### Examples in the Bible of where angels serve Jesus Christ

- 15 1. Before Christ came to this earth, the angels carried out his commands and since he has returned to heaven, they worship him before the throne of God as the Lamb of God (the Lamb who was slain for our sakes! cf. Rev 5:11-14).
2. Gabriel announced the birth of Jesus to Mary (Luk 1:28-31).
3. After Satan had tempted Jesus (three times) during the 40 days in the wilderness and Jesus had won the victory over him by quoting the Word of God, angels came and attended him (Mat 4:11).
- 20 4. Jesus prayed the Father in the garden of Gethsemane. Then an angel appeared to him from heaven and ministered to him (Luk 22:43). Afterwards, Jesus agonised in prayer.
5. When Jesus was hanging on the cross, he could have called myriads of angels to help him come down from the cross. He did not do this, because he knew that only his (substitutionary) death on the cross could save mankind (cf. Psa 91:11-12; Mat 26:53).
- 25 6. At the resurrection of Jesus, an angel came and rolled the stone away from the entrance to the grave (Mat 28:2-4).
7. As Mary Magdalene entered the grave, two angels were sitting there who proclaimed the resurrection of the Lord to her (Luk 24:4-7 and Joh 20:12-17).
- 30 8. As Jesus ascended into heaven, suddenly two angels stood by the disciples and proclaimed that he would return in the same way (Act 1:11).
9. In Mat 13:41-42 it says that Jesus (on the day of judgement) will send out his angels to throw unbelievers into everlasting fire (Mat 25:31).

## C. The ministry of the angels to men

Hebrews 1:14 says: “*Are not all angels ministering spirits sent to serve those who will inherit salvation?*”

5 God uses the angels to accomplish his plan for the world, for mankind and the peoples. Through the intervention of angels, he often changes a political or social situation or intervenes in the lives of individual people. Angles have a close relationship to all that happens on earth. They are present among us (or at least some of them). Angels rejoice with us over every victory in evangelism. This is confirmed by the following words of Jesus: “*In*  
10 *the same way, I tell you, there is rejoicing in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents.*” (Luk 15:10)

- Angels execute judgement (Mat 13:41-42).
- Angels warned (for example) Lot in Sodom (Gen 19).
- 15 • Angels passed on the law to man (i.e. Moses, cf. Act 7:53; Gal 3:19).

### Some examples which show how angels minister to men

1. **Dan 5** An angel wrote on the wall (“*m<sup>e</sup>nē’, m<sup>e</sup>nē’, t<sup>e</sup>qēl, upharsīn*”).
- 20 2. **2Ki 6:14-17** Angels protect men of God from their enemies (Elisha).
3. **Act 27:23-25** An angel appeared to the **apostle Paul** when he was travelling by ship to Rome.
4. **Gen 16:7** The Angel of the Lord appeared to **Hagar** in the wilderness.
5. **Act 12:5-11** An angel freed **Peter** from prison in Jerusalem.
- 25 6. **2Ki 19:35** The Angel of the Lord killed 185’000 men of the **Assyrian army**, during the siege of Jerusalem (Isa 37:36).
7. **Act 8:26** An angel appeared to the **evangelist Philip** and sent him on the way to Gaza.
8. **Rev 1:1-3** An angel appeared to the **apostle John** on the island of Patmos.

30 In Mat 18:10 it says in relation to children: “*For I tell you that their angels in heaven always see the face of my Father in heaven.*” This is often interpreted as meaning that every child has a (or several) guardian angel(s).

35 We learn from 1Co 4:9 that angels watch us at all times. In Psa 34:8(7) it says: “*The Angel of the Lord encamps around those who fear him, and he delivers them.*”

We should take note of the fact that there is a difference between the Old and New Testaments. God has passed on to us the final revelation through his Son who became man.  
40 Therefore, in this dispensation of grace, Christ does not have to reveal himself to us as the Angel of the Lord. Consequently, the angels of the New Testament – and today – are “*created spirits*” and not God as the *Angel of the Lord*, as was often the case in the Old Testament. Since the incarnation of Christ, God’s appearance in the form of man, as happened in the times of the Old Testament (Theophany or Christophany) is no longer necessary.



## V. Satan and his angels

### A. Introduction

In talking about Satan, we handle a particularly “hot” (controversial) subject. Satan does all he can to veil the truth about himself. He has succeeded in preventing many from recognising the reality so that:

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- **They see in him merely a principle or a power.** This means that many people do not believe that Satan is a person. Many people speak rather of “good” and “evil”. All too often they do not believe in a personal God and even less in Satan as a person.
- **He is only spoken of as some grotesque figure of the Middle-Ages.** In the Middle Ages Satan was often portrayed with horns and horse hooves. The result of these ridiculous caricatures is that many people today do not take the devil and his power seriously. He is thought to be simply a sort of mythological fairytale figure. Satan is of course happy when people underestimate his real purposes or do not even believe he exists.

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Satan tries to divert Christians through their lack of knowledge or on the other hand to get honour from them in that they talk too much about him (instead of talking about Jesus Christ).

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I believe in Jesus Christ; I also believe that Satan exists as a person, because he who denies the existence of Satan finally also denies the purpose for which Jesus came into this world:

**1Jo 3:8**

*The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the devils work.*

25

The Bible speaks of Satan just as much as it speaks of the angels. For this reason, too, it would be inconsistent to see in him and his angels simply mythological figures. Because the devil has great power, we must consciously “take up” the shield of faith with which we can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one (cf. Eph 6:10-16). We must praise the Lord for his victory over the devil and at the same time pursue the question of over whom Jesus Christ won the victory. Holy Scripture shows us that Satan is a conquered foe:

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*Satan* (Hebrew שָׂטָן [*Šātān*]; Greek Σατανᾶς [*Satanas*] — used 56 times for the devil) meaning:

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**Opponent, enemy, adversary** (cf. 1Ki 5:4 [some translations verse 18]; 11:14,23, in these passages the word *Satan* is used for a human enemy); but also **antagonist, accuser before the court of law** (cf. Zec 3:1).

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*Devil* (Greek Διάβολος [*Diábolos*] — it is only found in the singular and that 35 times) meaning:

***Slanderer, one who divides, one who causes confusion.***

When we read in some translations (e.g. Luther) of “*devils*” (plural), then it means the angels who fell with the devil. The following terms are used for them in the New Testament:

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<i>evil spirits</i>	Greek: πνεύματα πονηρά ( <i>pneúmata ponērá</i> ; cf. Luk 8:2; Act 19:12)
<i>unclean spirits</i>	Greek: πνεύματα ἀκάθαρτα ( <i>pneúmata akátharta</i> ; cf. Mat 10:1; Mar 5:2)
<i>demons</i>	Greek: δαιμόνια ( <i>daimónia</i> ; cf. Mat 7:22; 1Co 10:20)

**B. The origin of Satan**10 **1. The creation of Satan**

There are many suggestions concerning the origin of evil.<sup>5</sup> The Bible does not give us much information about the origin of Satan. However, quite a lot is of course clear (contrary to what the Koran teaches)

15 **God cannot be the creator of evil!**

To be sure, God is the creator of Satan, but he did not make him as a rival, but as an exalted and holy spiritual being. This spiritual being only became Satan through his rebellion – just as man was good at the beginning and then unfortunately became a sinner because of lack of obedience. Some of the angels fell through sin (cf. 2Pe 2:4; Jud 6), because they followed the devil in his rebellion against God (probably Rev 12:3-4 refers to the fall of Satan and his angels). God, who is light (1Jo 1:5), could not have created darkness, because in him there is no darkness. By this, of course, I mean *darkness* in the sense of evil and not in the sense of absence of light, then this sort of darkness was surely created by God (cf. Isa 45:7). We must not forget what sin cost God! He became man in Jesus Christ in order to blot out sin and vanquish the devil (cf. Rom 8:32; 2Co 5:19; 1Jo 3:8).

Since Holy Scripture does not say much on this subject we must accept it as one of many mysteries which will remain God’s secret (at least) during our time on this earth.

30

**Pessimistic systems**, like certain religions (e.g. **Buddhism**) or philosophers (e.g. the German Schopenhauer) explain the presence of evil in the world by saying that the world (matter) tends to evil anyway. The existence of the world per se is seen as the root of all evil. Compare this with Greek philosophy, for example **Gnosticism** and **Neo-Platonism**. These conceptions maintain that the spirit is imprisoned in the body and that the latter is bad because it is material. The Bible though says exactly the opposite:

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**Gen 1:31**     *God saw all that he had made, and it was very good.*

Matter as such is not bad. When God created it at the beginning, it was good. It only became bad through the fall of man (his sin). Evolutionists would say that evil is an indispensable factor in the process of the development of life (from simple forms to complex ones). They

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<sup>5</sup> I discuss this question in my brochure “*Biblical Anthropology*”.

believe that all that exists has developed from the most primitive stages to the most complex ones. This concept contradicts what the Bible says and is unacceptable for Christians. The world is not developing for the better nor is it developing to a higher level. The Word of God shows us exactly the opposite. Because of sin and the fact that most of mankind opposes the one true God, the creator of the universe, the world is steadily degenerating.

## 2. The fall of Satan

The early Church already saw a reference to the origin and fall of Satan in two prophetic texts. If we read the passages **Isa 14:9-14** and **Eze 28:11-19**, we must admit that the descriptions and statements can hardly all be applied to the kings of Babylon and Tyre. If it could be that God wanted to reveal certain truths about Satan through these passages – and I believe this to be the case –, then these prophetic passages will give us insight into the beginnings and early past:

- Satan was created by God (Eze 28:13.15).
- He held a special position (Eze 28:12-13). Maybe he was even the fourth after the trinity?
- He possessed a throne in heaven (Isa 14:13).
- He is called “*morning star*”, “*son of the dawn*” (Isa 14:12). The Vulgate (Latin translation of the O.T.) translates this expression with “*Lucifer*” (= *bearer of light*).

This angel prince was wonderful to such a degree (Eze 28:13) and mighty (Eze 28:14) “...*til wickedness was found in you.*” (Eze 28:15) What then was his sin?

His pride led to his downfall. **Sin originated in him** (Eze 28:16-17), — on the other hand it was introduced into man (by the temptation of Satan, cf. Gen 3). What was the sin of the devil, the sin of Lucifer? **Isa 14:13-14** gives us a possible answer to this question:

- *I will ascend to heaven...*
- *I will raise my throne above the stars of God.*
- *I will sit enthroned on the mount of assembly.*
- *I will ascend above the tops of the clouds...*
- *I will make myself like the Most High.*

The verbs here in Hebrew are in the cohortative, which means, they are in the 1<sup>st</sup> person singular: “*I will ascend...*” or “*Let me ascend...*” etc.

**Eze 28:16-18** summarises as follows:

- *Through your widespread trade you were filled with violence...*
- *Your heart became proud on account of your beauty...*
- *You have desecrated your sanctuaries.*

God declared his first judgement on Satan (others followed, see for instance in **Joh 12:31**; cf. **2Pe 2:4**):

...*you sinned. So I drove you in disgrace from the mount of God...* (Eze 28:16).

*How you have fallen from heaven, O morning star! (Isa 14:12)*

The Bible says nothing about the time of Satan's fall. Basically the following interpretations (hypotheses) are usually put forward:

### a.) The restitution theory

5 Those who advocate this theory maintain that **Gen 1:2** speaks of a catastrophe in the first creation. This was caused by the fall of Satan. The Hebrew expression "*tohū wābohū*" indicates devastation. This hypothesis is called the "*restitution theory*" because it maintains that following this devastating catastrophe, God restored the world, i.e. beginning with Gen 1:3. The following biblical assertions seem to contradict this hypothesis.

- 10
1. According to **Gen 1:31**, up to the 6<sup>th</sup> day of creation everything was "*very good*". The restitution theory however proceeds from *devastation* at the beginning of creation. The advocates of the restitution theory answer this by saying that the assertions of Gen 1:31 relate to the restored creation which is spoken of after Gen 1:3. But this
  - 15 allegation can be refuted by pointing out that Satan and his angels (i.e. those that rebelled with him against God) were never restored. Hence the statement "and everything was very good" would be negated.
  2. According to **Rom 5:12**, evil (sin) – and with that also death – only entered the world with the fall of Adam. How can evil have existed on earth before the fall of Adam
  - 20 (which is implicit in the restitution theory)?

### b.) The fall of Satan must have happened after the completion of creation

**Gen 1:31** speaks of a completed creation which was very good. The fall of Satan should not be placed in **Gen 1:2**, but rather between **Gen 2:25** and **Gen 3:1**! This interpretation is not

25 inconsistent with other assertions in the Bible. I prefer therefore this interpretation to that of the restoration theory.

## C. The person and work of Satan

### 1. Satan is a mighty person

30 The Bible speaks of Satan as a mighty person. He is not omniscient like God but possesses considerable knowledge:

- he knows the future (at least to some extent): cf. Rev 12:12
- he offers people his knowledge by the means of sorcery, spiritualism or consulting of the dead (cf. Deu 18:10-11)
- 35 • he knows the Word of God (cf. Mat 4:6; Jam 2:19)

His **feelings** show themselves in anger (Rev 12:12.17). His **will** showed itself when he fell (Isa 14:13-14; cf. 2Ti 2:26).

His activities and his names are also an indication of his personality. Here are some of his names (the Bible makes mention of more than 40):

- 5 1. **Tempter** (Mat 4:3: in Greek *πειράζων* [*peirátsōn*]): this name reveals Satan's main purpose. He began in Gen 3:1 with the temptation of man. He even tempted Jesus Christ the Son of God (cf. Luk 4:2; Heb 2:18; 4:15).
2. **Beelzebub** (Mat 12:24: in Greek *Βεελζεβοὺλ* [*Beelzebul*]): literally "lord of the flies", "lord of the dung" or "lord of the dwelling place"; that means that he is lord of the demons (cf. Rev 9:1.11: "Apollyon" = "destroyer").
- 10 3. **The evil one** (Mat 13:19; Eph 6:16: *ὁ πονηρός* [*ho ponēros*]): this name informs us about the corrupt and perverse nature of Satan (evil personified), but also about his activities, namely that he uses every opportunity to carry out evil and perversity.
4. **Liar and murderer** (Joh 8:44): this says everything! In Gen 3:4-5 the first lie succeeded. Satan is the initiator of all wars and murders (Rev 16:13-16; Dan 10:12ff).
- 15 5. **Prince of this world and god of this age** (Joh 14:30; 2Co 4:4): these names illustrate his influence on politics and religions. As prince, yes even "god" of this world, he has his own servants at his disposal (2Co 11:15), his own teachings (1Ti 4:1), his own sacrifices (1Co 10:20), his own temple (Rev 2:9) etc. The culmination of his activity as god of this world will be seen in the Antichrist in the end times (2Th 2:4; Rev 13).
- 20 6. **Roaring lion** (1Pe 5:8): the devil has an animal like nature (*tearing, strangling, and killing*). In other passages, his servants are spoken of as *wolves* (Mat 10:16; Act 20:29).
7. **Dragon** (in Greek *δράκων* [*drákōn*]: Rev 12:3-4.7-9.13.16-17; 13:4; 16:13; 20:2): the power and danger of Satan are clearly indicated through the image of the dragon. He spreads fear, terror, and murder. With reference to the Old Testament expression of *Leviathan*, we also call him "monster of the sea" (cf. "Leviathan" [לִיָּתָן] in Isa 27:1). Maybe this name is an allusion to his activities in "the sea of the nations" (cp. Rev 17:1.15)?
- 25 8. **Serpent** (Rev 12:9; 20:2): he is even called the "ancient serpent", presumably an allusion to Gen 3:1ff. Serpents are crafty (Gen 3:1) and shrewd (Mat 10:16).
- 30 9. **Accuser** (Rev 12:10): Satan accuses us before God. The simile of a court of law is used. Compare with Job 1:6-12 and Zec 3:1-9. How good that these passages are supplemented by 1Jo 2:1-2 and Rom 8:34. Satan also accuses believers before men. Satan the accuser does all in his power to make our sins public (not least in order to undermine our testimony) — see e.g. Tit 2:7-8 and 1Ti 5:14-15. The day is coming though when the
- 35 accuser will be finally silenced!

## 2. The various activities of Satan

Holy Scripture says:

40 **1Jo 3:8** *He who does what is sinful is of the devil, because the devil has been sinning from the beginning.*

**Joh 8:44** *He was a murderer from the beginning...*

45 Satan is the enemy of God. As such he opposes everything coming from God. The Bible is full of illustrations (and biographies) and expressions which reveal the activities of Satan. The actual aim of Satan's attacks is "to be like God"! He seeks dominion and wants to be worshipped.

**Luther** spoke of the devil as “God’s ape”, because he apes (imitates) what God is doing. You could say that he always twists the truth. The Bible speaks of:

- 5 • Satan’s kingdom (Luk 4:5-6)
- Satan’s throne (Rev 2:13)
- his power and splendour (Luk 4:5-6)

The Bible underlines the “religious character” of Satan’s activity:

- 10 • His **Triad** (Rev 16:13)
- His **prostitute** (as counterpart to the Church, the bride of Christ, cf. Rev 17:1-5; 19:6-9)
- His **angels** (cf. Rev 12:3-4.7-9)
- 15 • His **servants** (2Co 11:15): see in Rev 2:24 the mention of the so called “*Satan’s deep secrets*”, “*another gospel*” (Gal 1:6-7 R.S.V.), “*thieves*”, “*robbers*” and “*strangers*” (Joh 10:1.8-12), “*wolves*” (Act 20:29), “*false teachers*” (2Pe 2:1) and so on.
- His **synagogue** (Rev 2:9): he has his own “*worshippers*” (Rev 13:4), his “*sacrifices*” and “*fellowship*” (1Co 10:20 King James), his “*table*” and his “*cup*” (1Co 10:21).
- 20 • His “*miracles*” (2Th 2:9): through these he will, especially in the end times, deceive many (2Th 2:8-9; Rev 13:4.13-15; Mat 24:4-5.23-24). Compare this also with Pharaoh in Exo 7:11-13!

When speaking of the religious seduction of Satan, we think especially of the dark (→ occult) areas of sorcery, spiritualism, and also superstition. In these spheres, Satan develops his enormous power.

Many activities are attributed to Satan, e.g.:

- 30 1. He tempts (Mat 4:1)
2. He lies (Joh 8:44)
3. He takes possession of (Joh 13:27; Luk 13:16)
4. He blinds (2Co 4:4)
5. He hinders (1Th 2:18)
6. He devours (1Pe 5:8)
- 35 7. He accuses (Rev 12:10)

Satan works with **unbelievers**, that is he makes use of them (2Co 4:4; Eph 2:2-3; 1Jo 5:19; cf. Mat 13:19.25). His attacks are mainly directed against **believers**.

## D. Victory over Satan

40 Satan is a conquered foe. In God’s eyes he is already judged. These are the stages of his judgement:

- 45 1. The first judgement followed his fall when he was thrown down from heaven to earth (cf. Rev 12:3-4 and chapter V.B.2. “*The fall of Satan*”).
2. The second judgement followed the death and resurrection of Christ (cf. Joh 12:31; Col 2:15; Heb 2:14; Rev 1:18).

3. Rev 12:9-10 speaks of a third judgement. From the time that the 42-month reign of the Antichrist begins (Rev 13:5; 12:9-14), Satan will no longer be able to accuse the brethren before the throne of God. The text of Rev 12:10ff indicates that at that time Satan and his Antichrist will commence on earth the greatest persecution of all times.
- 5 4. A fourth stage of his judgement will follow at the return of Christ, namely that Satan will be bound for 1000 years so that he cannot deceive mankind during that time (Rev 20:1-3.7).
- 10 5. His final judgement will follow the Millennium (Rev 20:3.7-10). He will then be thrown into the lake of fire, i.e. into hell, prepared for the devil and his angels (cf. Mat 25:41). Every person who follows him in his rebellion against God will join him there too (cf. Rev 20:14-15).

As believers we have to do with an enemy who is already defeated through the blood of Jesus Christ. That does not alter the fact that he is still powerful. God still allows him to act. Every believer is involved in a battle of faith against him:

- 15 **1Pe 5:8** *Be self-controlled and alert. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour.*
- 20 **1Pe 5:9** *Resist him, standing firm in the faith...*
- Jam 4:7** *Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.*
- 25 **2Co 2:11** *...in order that Satan might not outwit us. For we are not unaware of his schemes.*

The well-known passage that speaks of the battle of faith against Satan is **Eph 6:10-18**. Alongside this there are other passages which refer to it:

- 30
- Faith (Eph 6:16; 1Jo 5:4)
  - The Word of God (Eph 6:17)
  - The indwelling Holy Spirit (Joh 16:13; 1Jo 4:4)
  - The blood of Jesus and the word of testimony (Rev 12:11)

- 35 **1Jo 3:8** *The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the devils work.*

## E. Demons

The Greek word *δαιμόνια* (*daimónia*) is translated as “spirits” or “demons”. There are some translations in which this word is even translated as “devils” (e.g. the Luther’s German translation); this in spite of the fact that in the Greek New Testament the word “devil” (in Greek: διάβολος [*diábolos*]) is always in the singular. The word “*daimónion*” appears in the New Testament over 60 times. In classical Greek “*daimónion*” means a lesser god. It is a fact that especially people of animistic background confuse demons with the souls or spirits of the dead. There is also a view which maintains that demons are the body-less spirits of a race that existed before Adam! However, these theories are not supported by biblical teaching. See for example Psa 9:18; Eze 32:17-21; Luk 16:23, the spirits of unbelieving dead are in Hades (in O.T. *Sheol*, in N.T. *Hades*). It appears that the spirits of the dead can be questioned by those

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who are (still) living. Nevertheless, it is very likely that in fact it is not the spirit of the dead person who answers the questions but a “disguised demon”. An exception to this is probably found in the well-known passage 1Sa 28. Saul demands that the witch of Endor consults the dead Samuel on his behalf. Maybe God allowed an exception in that the spirit of Samuel appeared to the disobedient and hardened Saul; this, however, only to announce to him the impending defeat against the Philistines and his death. However this may be, God forbids any contact with the dead (see Deu 18:11). Spiritualism is the religion of Satan. He is a liar (Joh 8:44), therefore his religion is full of lies. Believers must never accept teachings or messages originating from spiritualism. We must never listen to declarations from spirits, sorcerers or mediums. We must rather resist these in the authority of Jesus:

**Mar 1:25**                    *But Jesus rebuked him saying “Be silent and come out of him!” (R.S.V.)*

## 1. The origin of demons

Compare this with the origin of Satan. The Bible speaks of:

15 **Jud 6**                    *...and the angels who did not keep their positions of authority but abandoned their own home – these he has kept in darkness, bound with everlasting chains for judgement on the great day.*

20 **2Pe 2:4**                *For if God did not spare angels when they sinned, but sent them to the underworld, putting them into gloomy dungeons to be held for judgement.*

25 **Demons are without any doubt fallen angels;** they are subject to Satan (cf. Mar 3:22; Rev 12:4). Some of them were immediately “bound” and held for judgement (2Pe 2:4; Jud 6; Luk 8:31). They are probably identical with those beings that are to be found in the Abyss and who will be freed for a certain time during the end time judgements to torment unbelieving men (cf. Rev 9:1 ἄβυσσος [*abyssos*]).

## 2. The activities of demons

30 Demons are subject to Satan (Mat 12:24) and help him in his fight against God and his angels. Among them there is also a hierarchy (cf. Eph 6:12; Mat 12:45). The Bible uses various expressions for them:

- 35
1. Lying spirits (1Ki 22:21-23)
  2. Unclean spirits (Mat 10:1)
  3. Evil spirits (Eph 6:12; cf. 1Sa 16:14)
  4. Deceiving spirits (1Ti 4:1)

40 They oppose the plan and will of God (Dan 10:13.20; Rev 12:7). Today too, there is a relentless fight going on in the heavenly places (cf. Eph 6:12).

45 The end times will be marked by increasing demonism (cf. 1Ti 4:1ff; Rev 12:9.12; 16:14). When demons make their home in a person, we speak of “*possession*” (as regards obsession cf. e.g. Mar 5:2.16.18; Act 8:7). Here are some characteristics of a person possessed by evil spirits:



1. Someone “else” speaks out of this person (Mat 8:28-29)
2. Fear and resistance against God and his work (Mar 1:24)
3. Supernatural strength (Mar 5:4)
- 5 4. Rage and self-destruction (Mar 5:5)
5. Fortune telling (Act 16:16)

Possessed people can have a wide variety of sicknesses:

- 10 1. Muteness (Mat 9:32)
2. Blind and mute (Mat 12:22); blind (Mat 9:27ff; Mar 8:22ff)
3. Leprosy (Mat 8:1ff)
4. Insanity (Mar 5:2-4; 9:18; cf. Mat 17:14ff)
5. Deafness (Mar 9:25)
- 15 6. Crippled (Luk 13:11-13)

The aim of demons is the self destruction of men (Mar 9:22; cf. 5:13). Therefore, possessed people are often also in danger of committing suicide.

- 20 How does it come about though that people were or can be possessed by demons? In Holy Scripture we find indications e. g. in the biographies of Saul and Judas Iscariot. Hardening in sin and disobedience caused them to become possessed (1Sa 16:14; Joh 13:27). They both committed suicide. However, we must not forget that Saul and Judas were under the old covenant; that is they both lived before Pentecost. When they lived, the Holy Spirit had not yet been poured out on the believers (cf. Joh 7:38-39) to dwell in their hearts for ever (Joh 14:16; cf. Isa 59:21).

## F. Victory over demons

- Demons know that Jesus is the victor (also over them) (Luk 4:34 “*Have you come to destroy us?*”). They know that the day of their judgement is coming (Mat 8:29). They shudder before God (Jam 2:19).

**Col 2:15** *And having disarmed the powers and authorities, he [Christ] made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them by the cross.*

- 35 **1Jo 3:8** *The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the devil’s work.*

Their eternal abode will be hell (eternal fire), compare Mat 25:41.

- Up to that time, believers can gain wonderful victories over demons. In a counselling ministry it is very important to know this. Jesus gave his disciples the following instructions:

**Mat 10:1** *He called his twelve disciples to him and gave them authority to drive out evil spirits...*

- 45 **Mat 10:8** *Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse those who have leprosy, **drive out demons!***

**Mat 17:16-21**      *...But this kind does not go out except by prayer and fasting.<sup>6</sup>*

**Luk 10:20**      *However, do not rejoice that the spirits submit to you, but rejoice that your names are written in heaven!*

5

Take note of the practice of the early Church:

**Act 5:16**      *Crowds gathered also from the towns around Jerusalem, bringing their sick and those tormented by evil spirits, and all of them were healed.*

10

**Act 8:7**      *With shrieks, evil spirits came out of many, and many paralytics and cripples were healed.*

The apostles cast out spirits in the authority and **name of Jesus:**

15

**Mar 16:17**      *And these signs will accompany those who believe: **in my name** they will drive out demons; they will speak in new tongues...*

20

**Act 16:18**      *“In the name of Jesus Christ I command you to come out of her!” At that moment the spirit left her.*

Demons are only afraid of God and the name of Jesus Christ, compare Act 19:13-16. The letters of the New Testament call on us to distinguish between the spirits (1Co 12:10) and to test the spirits (1Jo 4:1). Compare also with the chapter “Victory over Satan” (chapter V.D.)

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## **G. Occult practices (magic, witchcraft, fetishism etc.)**

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Let us not have any illusions, witchcraft, idolatry etc. are nothing less than the work of the devil. People who give themselves to these practices –whether they like it or not– come into contact with demonic powers. A person who is bound by such things can only be freed through the blood of Jesus Christ, by which Satan has been overcome (cf. 1Jo 3:8; Col 2:14-15).

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If we want the work of God to progress in our churches, then we must clearly speak against such practices. People who have not broken with these practices should not be accepted as church members. Any church member, professing to be a Christian, who (again) compromises in having to do with occult practices, and does not repent by turning from them, should be excluded (excommunicated) from the Christian fellowship.

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You cannot use occult practices to get into contact with demonic powers and at the same time serve Jesus Christ. You must decide for one or the other... you cannot do both!

**Mat 6:24**      *No one can serve two masters; either he will hate the one and love the other or he will be devoted to one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and money.*

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<sup>6</sup> This verse is not found in all manuscripts.

Compare also **1Co 10:22!**

5 Unfortunately I notice that in the realm of the occult there is great confusion even among Christians. Not only the heathen but also many Christians live in fear of spirits and witchcraft.

10 Two examples of this: in areas where animism (still) prevails, people are often afraid to walk past a grave yard. Especially at night people are afraid that they will be attacked by the spirit of a dead person. Others are afraid to go near to the bank of a river in which it is said a 'crocodile-man' lives (a crocodile possessed by the spirit of an occult man). The list of such phenomena could be extended at will.

15 People who are afraid of such powers buy a "protective charm" from a sorcerer to wear on the body (e.g. on a necklace, on the hips or as a bracelet or anklet) or to place it for example under the bed or in the house entrance (e.g. buried there). Many people sacrifice animals in order to procure the favour of spirits or genies (imaginary gods).

20 Ancestor worship (animism) believes more or less the following: There is a transcendent god who created everything. When the first man sinned, this god withdrew.<sup>7</sup> Animism teaches that after this god had withdrawn himself he gave man lesser gods (genies) and sorcerers. Some of these lesser gods are good-natured others are malicious. You offer sacrifices to these gods in order to appease them. Therefore an adherent of this religion will sacrifice a chicken to the river-god to gain his favour so that he will grant a successful catch of fish. As I said before, the adherents of this religion believe that the transcendent god has, among other things, given  
25 man magic and sorcerers. A difference is made between *white magic* and *black magic*. Sorcerers, who sell "protective charms", practice white magic, while those who sell a charm that will harm someone practice black magic. However, this may be — both avail themselves of the same source. They work with satanic power! People who contact these powers find themselves in a vicious circle; they become slaves of satanic deceit. The cost of this is high,  
30 not only does the sorcerer demand money for his devilish services but the Word of God tells us that those who give themselves to such practices cannot inherit the kingdom of God which is everlasting life (cf. Deu 18:10-14; 1Co 5:10-13; 6:9-10; Rev 21:8; 22:15).

35 The first missionaries who were confronted with such practices reacted in various ways. I have heard of Catholic pioneer missionaries,<sup>8</sup> who went around armed with scissors, to cut strings on which locals wore amulets on the hips. This can by no means be the right method of persuading people to do away with occult practices. You must first convince someone of the true God, who alone can protect us from evil powers, before taking away his false god. When a person, by the grace of God comes to true faith in Jesus Christ, then he should destroy  
40 his amulets of his own free will (cf. e.g. Act 19:19).

45 The Bible forbids sorcery. As opposed to ancestor worship the Word of God says that there is only one (true) God (Deu 6:4; 1Co 8:4; Eph 4:6; Jam 2:19) and no "lesser gods". Am I saying that there are no evil spirits? No, because the Bible actually speaks of the existence of evil spirits. The question to be asked is rather that of the identity of these spirits of which many people are afraid. Animists believe that they are the spirits of their ancestors. I will illustrate

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<sup>7</sup> The Bible also speaks of an almighty God who created all things. But we are taught in God's Word that he did not withdraw from man after the fall of man, rather he did everything possible to save man in his lost estate (cf. Gen 3:9, where it says that God called Adam: "*Adam, where are you?*").

<sup>8</sup> A white Catholic priest in the D. R. Congo told me this!

this pointedly with something that actually happened. A young wife<sup>9</sup> in the jungles of the Congo had cared in an exemplary way for her bed ridden father in law. As he realised he was going to die he called his son and told him: “*My son, be careful to also treat your wife well also after my death* [she was the first of his two wives], *otherwise you will have to face me!*”

5 In this way the father wanted to make it clear to his son that he would have to reckon with his father’s spirit if he did not treat his first wife well. The son (influenced by animistic beliefs), believing that when his father died his spirit could in fact appear to him, would, all his life, be afraid to mistreat his first wife. You are tempted to think that, in this case at least animism had a positive outworking even if based on a misunderstanding or on erroneous beliefs.

10 The question is, can spirits of the dead (spirits of ancestors) in actual fact intervene in the lives of those living on this earth? Are spirits which here and there manifest themselves really spirits of the dead?

15 I do not think so because the Word of God teaches us something else. He who studies the Bible carefully will perceive that when someone dies, his spirit cannot return to this earth in order to act in any way. The spirit of the unbelieving deceased person must wait in the place of the dead (Hades) to be judged (O.T. = *Sheol*, N.T. = *Hades*; cf. Psa 9:17-18; Isa 14:21; 26:14; Luk 16:19-31), while the spirit of the believing deceased person will, immediately following his death, be “taken up” into the presence of his Lord Jesus Christ in heaven (cf. 20 Luk 23:39-43; Rev 6:9-11). The example of the dead child of David and Bathsheba in 2Sa 12:23 could illustrate this. However, we need to remember that this happened during the times of the Old Testament; that is before the death of Jesus. Heb 9:27 says explicitly that *man is destined to die once*. After that, there is only one thing that awaits him, the eternal judgement of God (cf. Isa 24:21-22; 2Pe 2:9; Rev 20:13-15). When will this judgement take place? After 25 the bodily resurrection of man, cf. Dan 12:2; Joh 5:24-29! When will the resurrection of man take place? That of believers at the return of Christ (1Th 4:13-17; 1Co 15:22-23.51-53, Rev 20:4-6), that of unbelievers however only following the kingdom of Christ, that is the reign of a thousand years (millennial kingdom), on the verge of eternity (Rev 20:7-15).

30 You may think that I am one of those rational Westerners who think that Africans (along with the Indians of South America etc., in short, all peoples who are influenced by animism) are hopelessly superstitious. It is true that most Europeans do not take occult practices seriously but regard them as antiquated superstition. I am not one of them; I believe in the existence of 35 spirits and that magic (occult) powers are a reality. **I do believe though that the Word of God shows us that these spirits are not the spirits of ancestors (spirits of the dead) but demons.** What or who are demons then? Demons are – as I said above – fallen angels, angels who have rebelled against God, together with their leader, Satan, the once glorious cherub who fell (cf. Isa 14:12-14 and Eze 28:13-16). They are mentioned for example in 2Pe 2:4, Jud 40 6 and Rev 12:4. Their aim is to harm mankind (see e.g. Mar 5:1-20; Eph 6:12). Their leader is Satan in person. This also seems to be shown in the passage in **Rev 9:1ff**. The terrible and malicious locusts in this passage are undoubtedly demons which harm unbelieving mankind. In **Verse 11** it says explicitly that their leader is *Apollyon*; a Greek term meaning (also the 45 Hebrew term *Abaddon*) “*destroyer*”. The fact that it says Apollyon is an angel, leads to the conclusion that the devil and his followers the demons are angelic beings. The devil’s aim is to destroy mankind (cf. Joh 8:44; Luk 13:16; 2Co 4:4; 1Pe 5:8) often through supernatural and deceptive appearances (cf. 2Th 2:9-12; Rev 13:2-4.13-15).

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<sup>9</sup> She was the daughter of one of my employees.

We must call to mind that if holy (good) angels can appear to men in the form of a human being, so also can fallen angels or demons (cf. Gen 18:8; Heb 13:2; 2Co 11:14). Satan has “his” people, his servants, who carry out his work (2Co 4:4; cf. Deu 18:10-12).

5 Many people are afraid of evil spirits, magic, amulets and the curses of those hostile to them. This fear is not just an expression of ridiculous superstition, because evil spirits and witchcraft actually exist; if this were not the case, the Bible would not speak of them as phenomena that really exist. People who do not have any protection against these dark powers can in actual fact be in danger. However, he who thinks he can get protection from a  
10 “protecting charm” made by a sorcerer is mistaken. Why is this? It is because it is not possible to fight effectively by means of occult diabolical power against demonic satanic power (cf. **Mar 3:22-26**). How can you then protect yourself against evil spirits? What must you do in order not to be afraid of bad dreams, phantoms, crocodile-men etc? I must repeat again that evil spirits are demons, fallen angels; therefore curses or crocodile-men have nothing to do  
15 with the spirits of ancestors, rather with demonic powers. If someone thinks that a person from the dead has appeared to him in a dream or as a phantom, then this is not true. It would rather be a demon, disguised as a man looking like the particular dead ancestor. Also hunting with the help of the spirits of the dead (an occult practice which is found in various tribes) is in that case the work of evil spirits not the spirits of the ancestors.

20 The only “medicine” which alone can guarantee true and effective protection against satanic powers is Jesus Christ, the Son of God, who came into the world to destroy the works of the devil (cf. 1Jo 3:8; Heb 2:14). Jesus has conquered the devil and his demons. How and by what means? In **Col 2:13-15** it says that Jesus has conquered the devil through his blood shed on  
25 the cross. In Rev 12:11 we read that we can resist the devil through the blood of Jesus Christ, that we even have the victory over him. Now we do not carry the blood of Jesus like an amulet in a little bottle round our necks or our hips as the heathen do with their protective charms. No, we believe rather that we are victorious through faith in him and his work of redemption. A person escapes from Satan’s power by giving his life to Jesus Christ who has  
30 conquered the devil and his angels (i.e. the evil spirits, the demons) on the cross. When Christians feel troubled by bad dreams or similar things, then he must simply call on the name of Jesus, then the devil and his demons must flee from him. They cannot stand against the blood of Jesus. No fetish can harm a person who belongs to Jesus, because he is under the protection of the blood of Jesus which is a more powerful “medicine” than all magic charms.  
35 And we must not forget that the ineffective and deceitful magic of the magician is very expensive, whereas the blood of Jesus Christ – by which we mean his redemption – is free of charge for us (cf. Isa 55:1-3; Mat 10:8; Joh 7:37-39; Act 8:18-21; Gal 2:16; Eph 2:8-10; Rev 22:17). We must resist the devil and his demons in the name of Jesus, yes and even cast them out (cf. Mat 10:1; Mar 16:17; Act 16:18). He who is in Jesus is on the victory side, what a joy  
40 and assurance!

I am closing this chapter with the recommendation to read the wonderful passage in Rom 8:34-39 and at the same time to remember that it is not enough to believe in Jesus only with the understanding and to confess his name with our lips, no, the daily life of a Christian must  
45 be in harmony with the commandments of Jesus Christ, that means corresponding to Biblical standards. Faith without obedience to the commandments of the Lord is useless. Read the following Bible verses in this regard: Joh 3:36; Act 5:32; Heb 5:9; 12:14. In Jam 2:19 it says that the demons also believe that there is only one God. And in spite of this, they oppose him! Hence their “faith” is useless. The same is true for us, it is not enough to have a purely mental  
50 (rational) faith, what is more important is that our (every day) life reflects our faith. Obedience and sanctification are indispensable. For this reason, James says (Jam 2:26) that

5 faith without deeds is dead. Judas Iscariot was one of the disciples of Jesus during the whole three years of his ministry. He had preached, evangelised, and possibly even cast out demons (cf. Mat 7:22; Luk 10:1-20). In spite of this, Judas was a thief (cf. Joh 12:4-6). Because of this, it also became possible for him to be a tool in Satan's hand and to betray Jesus (cf. Joh 13:26-27).

**For this reason, victory over the devil and his demons is exclusively the portion of Christians who live lives of obedience and sanctification.**

10

*AMEN*

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My special thanks are due to Ulrich and Marion Bruderer-Jeffery for translating this brochure from German into English as well as to Heinz Weber, my former teacher, on whose notes this brochure is built up.

Kreuzlingen, July 2018

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