

DAILY DOSE OF DOCTRINE

November 26-30, 2007



November 26, 2007 **Angels: their Ministry**

*“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.”¹*

Angels exist to do the will of God. Many of them serve him in worship, surrounding God and declaring his praise.² They rejoice particularly at the great acts of God in salvation, both on a cosmic and an individual level.³ As his messengers, they convey God’s will to groups and individuals.⁴

Angels are also instrumental in executing the judgments of God: pouring out God’s wrath on the wicked, bringing death to the enemies of God’s people and initiating the various signs and tribulations that will make the last days.⁵

At the present time, angels are *“ministering spirits sent to serve those who will inherit salvation”*.⁶ Angels watch over believers⁷ to guard and protect. While the existence of a designated ‘guardian’ angel for each believer is uncertain, this does appear to be the case with ‘little ones’.⁸ Angels appear to be present in the Church⁹ and they are fascinated by the grace of God revealed in our midst.¹⁰

¹ Psalm 103:20-21 (TNIV)

² Job 38:7; Isaiah 6; Rev. 5:11

³ Luke 2:13-14; Rev. 5:11; Luke 15:10

⁴ Genesis 18; Matt. 28:5-7; Luke 1:11, 26-38; 2:8-15;

⁵ Genesis 18; 1 Kings 19:35; Revelation 8-10

⁶ Hebrews 1:14 (TNIV)

⁷ Psalm 34:7; 91:11

⁸ Matthew 18:10; Acts 12:15 indicates that belief in guardian angels was present in the Early Church, perhaps due to the influence of Judaism.

⁹ 1 Corinthians 11:10; 1 Timothy 5:21

¹⁰ Ephesians 3:10; 1 Peter 1:12; Revelation 2-3

November 27, 2007

Angels: Fallen

“Jesus said, ‘I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven. I have given you authority to trample on snakes and scorpions and to overcome all the power of the enemy; nothing will harm you. However, do not rejoice that the spirits submit to you, but rejoice that your names are written in heaven.’”¹

As noted previously², some angels chose to rebel against the rule of God, perhaps out of ambition to exalt themselves over God.³ Satan is the recognized lord of the fallen angels. As God’s ‘adversary’, he attacked Adam and Eve, the beloved of Creation. His success in this gave him some kind of lordship over this fallen planet – a hegemony which Christ challenged and broke by his life, sacrificial death and resurrection. The ‘prince of this world’⁴ finds his kingdom lessened each time someone swears allegiance to Christ as King and Lord.

Satan and his fallen host continue to attack humanity through temptation, deception, accusation, etc. Though now defeated by the atoning work of Christ, they continue in a ‘spoiler’ role, knowing their doom is sure, but filled with bitterness and enmity toward God.

While fallen angels (‘demons’, ‘evil spirits’) are possessed of significant power, we need to remember that it is *insignificant* in comparison with the power of God – power which God has placed under the authority of each and every Christian to oppose the devil and all his works.

¹ Luke 10:18-20 (TNIV)

² See entry for November 22

³ The motive of ‘lust’ was also put forward in the Middle Ages, but the dynamic alluded to in Gen. 6:2 is not clearly understood and would appear to be a secondary issue.

⁴ John 12:31; 14:30

November 28, 2007

The Tree of Knowledge

“And God said, ‘You are free to eat from any tree in the garden; but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat of it you will certainly die.’”¹

Humans were created in the image of God as free, rational, moral beings. We were also created to exist in a love relationship with God – an ever deepening experience of fellowship and trust.

But for be morally ‘good’, the possibility to choose evil has to exist. A thief does become a good, honest person simply by being put on a desert island where s/he has no opportunity to steal. That can only happen when they face ‘temptation’ or testing: the opportunity to choose between right and wrong.

Similarly, a loving relationship has to have an opportunity to choose one’s beloved. God could have created humans like robots – with controlled responses that would force us to ‘love’ him and be faithful to him. But that would not be true ‘love’ as it exists in the nature of God. True love has the opportunity to choose or reject one’s beloved. That choice is what makes it precious and glorious.

Placing the ‘tree of knowledge’ in the centre of the garden created for humans the opportunity to be good and loving creatures. God planted it knowing what would happen. He knew before the foundation of the world what it would cost. And God did it because, apparently, in his relationship with us goodness and love and worth it.

¹ Genesis 2:16-17 (TNIV)

November 29, 2007

The Chink

*"The woman said to the serpent...but God did say,
'You must not eat fruit from the tree that is in the
middle of the garden, and you must not touch it, or
you will die.'"¹*

Eve was doing her job. One of the animals was asking for information and clarification. As God's governor, she was answering the question.

The problem is that she added to God's command when she said "*and you must not touch it*". People often do this as a 'hedge' of protection against sin. Some movies contain inappropriate material, so all movies are banned. Drunkenness is a vice, so any consumption at all is a 'sin'. It's important to keep the Sabbath, so many rules are created to define what is and isn't 'work'.

Adam and Eve's intent in 'fencing' the tree with an extra prohibition is understandable. Apparently they had become so used to the idea that they forgot God hadn't actually said it. But it became a weakness that the tempter was able to exploit. Many commentators think he may have touched it as he said, 'you will not die'.

Additions to God's commands can undermine them by making God appear unreasonable and untruthful. 'The kids and I watch Disney movies. What's the harm? Why are you so uptight?'

Believers need to be very careful about saying, 'God said...' this or that. An opening for deception and or temptation may be the result.

¹ Genesis 3:2-3

November 30, 2007

“The Bait”

"For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil."¹

Here is the ‘original sin’ – you can be ‘like gods!’ The temptation was that, with this knowledge, we could know as much as God himself. Instead of God being in the driver’s seat, we could call the shots in our own lives. We could be on an equal footing – a relationship of peers!

So we rebelled against the Lordship of God. We ‘fell’ from that state of perfection, grace and loving, face to face communion with the Ruler of the universe.

It is this propensity that we pass down from one generation to the next. As a baptismal service puts it, “while infants have not sinned willfully, they share with us the sin which began when our first parents rebelled against God.”² Each of us is born asserting our own self-will, desiring to be in the driver’s seat of our own lives. We want it ‘our way’.

Ironically, the devil was somewhat truthful in what he said to Eve. Eating it did give us a knowledge of good and evil. However, while God’s knowledge of evil and its effects comes via his omniscience, our knowledge of the nature and cost of evil comes through bitter experience.

We rebelled against the reign of God and we have paid the price. The only way back is repentance – submitting to God’s lordship again through Jesus Christ who has paid the price of all our sins, including the original one.

¹ Genesis 3:5 (TNIV)

² Reformed Book of Common Order, p. 18

