



Forerunner

Preparing Christians for the Kingdom of God

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The apostle Paul declares in Romans 6:23 that "the wages of sin is death." We face this truth daily, hearing of the deaths of relatives, friends, acquaintances, and famous people, their lives taken as payment for their transgressions against almighty God. But does this verse also apply to sinful angels, Satan and his demons? Do they really have endless life—despite their rebellious, defiant, and hateful acts and attitudes against God? Or will they suffer His fiery wrath? What does the Bible say?

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Do Angels Live Forever?

Without a doubt, the major subject in the Bible is the gospel of the Kingdom of God. It supplies the important linkage and many details of God's purposes and His plans for bringing them to pass. Most of His plans focus on human salvation, that is, God's deliverance of mankind from the horrific mess all humanity has made of His gift of life. This is good.

However, a major influence on human life is the fact that humanity shares Planet Earth with angels. The biblical truth is that some of these angels are invisible, evil enemies that we must resist if we are to overcome sin. The Bible refers to these angels as "demons."

The Bible focuses on God's dealings with men, but it ignores neither the good angels nor the demons. Hebrews 1:13-14 from the *Amplified Bible* (AMP) provides a clear overview of God's purpose for creating angels:

But to which of the angels has the Father ever said. 'Sit at My right hand [together with me in royal dignity], until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet [in triumphant conquest]?' Are not all the angels ministering spirits sent out [by God] to serve {accompany, protect} those who will inherit salvation? [Of course they are]!"

Angels are created spirit beings (Ezekiel 28:13) assigned by God to serve Him by helping those God is calling into His Kingdom. In other words, long before creating mankind, God created angels as a servant class to carry out responsibilities He assigned. This article searches out the ultimate destiny of the unrighteous angels—demons—compared to God's plans for mankind.

The first angelic being appears in Scripture in Genesis 3 as the Serpent who tempted Adam and Eve. This being was no less than the demon we know as Satan. Isaiah 14:12 identifies him as "fallen from heaven," and in Ezekiel 28:14, he is designated as "the anointed cherub who covers." II Corinthians 11:3 names him as the one who "deceived Eve." Revelation 12:9 calls him "the great dragon, that serpent of old, called the Devil and Satan, who deceives the whole world" (also Revelation 20:2). The Bible certainly does not ignore this demon spirit.

The question of what becomes of the demons is not a burning, doctrinal issue. Our salvation is not tied to whether we know the correct answer to it. However, an Internet search will show a wide divergence of opinions about the demons' ultimate outcome. Some say they will live forever despite their sins. Others claim that they will be removed (terminated from any position of rank they hold)

but not put to death, while yet others, completing the gamut, assert that sinning angels will be put to death by fire.

Angels were not created as mindless robots who mechanically carry out assignments. Rather, God created them with fine minds capable of growth and development, and He left them free to make choices regarding conduct. However, with these gifts, He also charged them with the responsibility of proving their loyalty to Him. Apparently, He placed them on earth to tend and care for it as their domain (Jude 6; II Peter 2:4). A few scriptural mentions reveal them wielding powers far greater than those of men.

This set the stage for the sins of disloyalty to their Creator by one-third of them, led by Satan, the enemy of God and also of mankind to this day (Revelation 12:4, 9). This also answers why Satan is said to be “fallen from heaven” in Isaiah 14:12. He proved his disloyalty in his misuses of his liberties. Even as Christian doctrine teaches that the sins of Adam and Eve brought about their “fall,” the fall of one-third of the angels was not from a physical height as from a tall building, but from the spiritual and moral height of innocence. Satan and his rebellious companions attempted to overthrow God’s loving rule and replace Him with themselves (Isaiah 14:13-14). God defeated them and cast them back to the earth. As a result, the earth became a place of imprisonment for them (*tartarus*, “hell”; II Peter 2:4) until God’s present purpose of creating men in His image is complete.

Unfounded Assumptions

Why is there confusion on this subject? Mainstream scholars tend to make one or more of the following unfounded assumptions, leading to a general lack of truth and clarity on the matter:

1. They assume that all “spirit,” in terms of bodily construction, is identically ever-living and impossible to destroy as is God Himself.
2. They assume that God is somehow guilty of a lack of foresight and judgment for equipping His angels with indestructible properties before testing them for loyalty to Himself and His purposes.
3. They assume that angels are not subject to the same divine principles of judgment as are men. In essence, they assume God’s judgment that “the wages of sin is death” does not apply to them.
4. They assume that the new heaven and new earth will not be of the absolutely pure, holy, and righteous quality God promises.

Do Angels Live Forever by Nature?

Luke 20:34-36 appears to provide scriptural proof that angels can never die:

And Jesus answered and said to them, “The sons of this age marry and are given in marriage. But those who are counted worthy to attain that age, and the resurrection from the dead, neither marry nor are given in marriage; nor can they die anymore, for they are equal to the angels and are sons of God, being sons of the resurrection.”

From the information given in Scripture, we have little room to doubt that angels live very long lives. The Bible contains no record of any angel ever dying, even from the war that broke out because of their rebellion. If we assume that the events of Genesis 1 begin after that climactic battle—accounting for earth’s devastation—we now are close to completing 6,000 years of human history. Angels were created before Adam and Eve, but the two humans died as a result of their sins. Sinning angels, though, live on.

In addition, the Bible reveals nothing about new angels being created. Angels, then, are at least 6,000 years of age. But will sinful angels—demons, equally as old—live eternally? We will establish a few principles before returning to Jesus’ words in Luke 20:36.

We know virtually nothing about what sustains spirit life. What enables angels to live so long? Until the Noachian Flood, even humans routinely lived 900 years and more, but after the Flood, human lives were shortened dramatically. Noah’s son, Shem, nonetheless lived for 600 years. Ten generations later, though, Shem’s descendant, Abraham, died at age 175. Abraham’s grandson, Jacob, died at 147, and his son, Joseph, died at 110. David, a man greatly beloved by God, is described as a very old man at age 70. These men were of the same family line. The Bible shows that God can lengthen or shorten lives as it pleases Him.

Jesus states in John 4:24, “God is Spirit.” Angels are spirit too, but they are creations of God. Is the created spirit of angels identical to what God is? Ecclesiastes 3:21 reveals that even animals have a spirit, which is what enables them to display their characteristics. Man, though a physical creation, clearly has a spirit as well (Job 32:8). It, too, is a created spirit. Are all these spirits identical to God’s?

In Scripture, God differentiates spirits. One spirit that man can receive from Him following faith in Jesus Christ, repentance, and baptism is, of course, the Holy Spirit. It is especially noteworthy because it is pure in every way. He designates it as “holy” partly because it is *different* from other spirits. The Bible shows no animal, despite having a spirit of some sort, being in any way capable of

receiving this Spirit, providing evidence that all spirit is not identical.

Though humans have a spirit, they must eat food and drink water to maintain life, or they soon die. Scripture shows both God and angels eating the same kind of food a man would normally eat. God requires no food to sustain His life, but must angels routinely eat something God has made to remain alive? Regarding the manna God provided Israel in the wilderness, Psalm 78:25 reads, “Men ate *angels’ food*; He sent them food to the full” (emphasis ours throughout). Is there more in this expression than meets the eye?

We cannot know precisely what accounts for the angels’ longevity. Though possessing a spirit, both men and beasts die. Perhaps Hebrews 1:3 provides us with a broad overview:

. . . who being the brightness of His glory and the express image of His person, and upholding [*maintaining, propelling* (AMP)] all things by the word of His power, when He had by Himself purged our sins, sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high.

Though lacking a specific answer from Scripture to the question of angelic longevity, we can generally conclude that God provides life for all those involved in His purposes for as long as He determines. When He withdrew a measure of that provision from humanity following the Flood, He deemed it necessary within His purposes to shorten human lives to their present levels. We can deduce that God is also sustaining angels’ lives for His purposes, though He has created them to live at a much higher level of both intellectual power and bodily health and strength than humans. We will see, however, that Scripture reveals that endless life is not guaranteed for them unless He deems it so. The sovereign God governs His creation.

Did God Err in Judgment?

God warns Adam and Eve in Genesis 2:17, “But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die.” In Romans 6:23, the apostle Paul clarifies God’s meaning, writing, “For the wages of sin is death.” Yet, those who believe in the false doctrine of the immortality of the human soul claim that when a person dies, his life continues but in a different state. Some, they say, rise to heaven to enjoy life with God, while others descend to a place of eternal torment in hell, still alive and fully aware of their new environment—otherwise the torment is useless.

If this is so, can it be said that they have truly died? Continued life in another state is not death. God says humans die. Psalm 146:3-4 says, “Do not put your trust in princes, nor in a son of man, in whom there is no help. His spirit departs, he returns to his earth; in that very day his plans [thoughts] perish.” Death is defined as the permanent cessation of all vital functions in an animal or plant.

But what about angels?

One-third of them sinned in their rebellion against Him. The Bible never indicates that any of them have died to this point in time. In terms of “the wages of sin,” could God have a different standard for them than He does for men? Do they continue living because He is using them for His purposes as His plan continues? Does He have a different standard because He *cannot* put them to death? Is God guilty of a misjudgment by failing to consider that some of them might commit sin, having the right from Him at their creation to make choices regarding moral behavior?

How does this last question compare with Paul’s extolling of God’s wisdom and foresight in Romans 11:33-36?

Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and His ways past finding out! “For who has known the mind of the LORD? Or who has become His counselor? Or who has first given to Him and it shall be repaid to him?” For of Him and through Him and to Him are all things, to whom be glory forever. Amen.

We can be sure that God made no error in judgment, nor does He have differing standards for angels and mankind on the wages of sin, as we will see.

Principles of God’s Judgment

To arrive at a correct answer, we need to understand clear principles of God’s standard of judgment. To begin, Exodus 12:49 states, “*One law* shall be for the native born and for the stranger who sojourns among you.” God uses the same standard for everybody.

Paul writes in Romans 1:18-20 about God’s judgment of the unconverted:

For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who suppress the truth in unrighteousness, because what may be known of God is manifest in them, for God has shown it to them. For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead [divine nature], so that *they are without excuse*.

Ignorance of the written law is no defense. God has revealed His character and standards through His creation, which anyone can reflect upon and conclude that it must have had an awesome and loving Creator.

Another principle of judgment from Jesus is helpful:

And that servant who knew his master’s will, and did not prepare himself to do according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes. But he who did not know, yet committed things worthy of stripes, shall be beaten with few. *For everyone to whom much is*

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given, from him much will be required; and to whom much has been committed, of him they will ask the more.” (Luke 12:47-48)

God’s justice is unequivocally fair. Angels knew this, as did Adam and Eve.

I Corinthians 10:13 (AMP) reveals God’s mindset regarding His judgments:

No temptation [regardless of its source] has overtaken or enticed you that is not common to human experience [nor is any temptation unusual or beyond human resistance]; but God is faithful [to His word]—He is compassionate and trustworthy, and He will not let you be tempted beyond your ability [to resist], but along with the temptation He [has in the past and is now and] will [always] provide the way out as well, so that you will be able to endure it [without yielding, and will overcome temptation with joy].

Two more principles from Ezekiel should make God’s standards of judgment crystal clear. Ezekiel 18:20 states:

The soul who sins shall die. The son shall not bear the guilt of the father, nor the father bear the guilt of the son. The righteousness of the righteous shall be upon himself, and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon himself.

This declaration reveals that each person, man or angel, is judged individually. Ezekiel 18:21-23 adds:

“But if a wicked man turns from all his sins which he has committed, keeps all My statutes, and does what is lawful and right, he shall surely live; he shall not die. None of his transgressions which he has committed shall be remembered against him; because of the righteousness which he has done, he shall live. Do I have any pleasure at all that the wicked should die?” says the LORD God, “and not that he should turn from his ways and live?”

God’s declaration informs us that forgiveness is available upon repentance. Does this apply just as equally to demons? We will revisit this below.

We can see that God does not apply random standards of judgment, whether He is judging the conduct and attitudes of men or of angels. He clearly states His standards and holds each person individually responsible in proportion to what He has gifted him with and what He expects from him in terms of the quality of his service.

Ezekiel 28:14-16 says about Satan:

You were the anointed cherub who covers; I established you; you were on the holy mountain of God; you walked back and forth in the midst of fiery stones. You were perfect in your ways from the day you were created, till iniquity was found in you. By the abundance of your trading you became filled with violence within, and you sinned; therefore I cast you as a profane thing out of the mountain of God; and I destroyed you, O covering cherub, from the midst of the fiery stones.

To this day, he and his sinning companions are still alive, though their movements are restricted to the earth unless personally called to appear before God (Job 1:6). To some extent, they are free to continue deceiving and harassing mankind. The penalty for their sins has not been carried out any further than a measure of constraint. Will it ever be carried out further?

The Fear of God

Mankind is fully aware of fear. It can motivate positive change in an individual’s life and help him to avoid dangerous, even fatal, consequences. But it can also be a morbidly negative factor, developing into a chronic agitation that dominates a person’s attitudes and behaviors. Hebrews 2:14-15 comments on this fact of life:

Inasmuch then as the children have partaken of flesh and blood, He Himself likewise shared in the same, that through death He might destroy him who had the power of death, that is, the devil, and release those who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage.

We might mistakenly think that, with the many advantages God created within angels beyond those given to men, no fear could dog their existence. The apostle James disagrees, writing in James 2:19, “You believe that there is one God. You do well. Even the demons believe—and tremble.”

Jesus’ encounter with a demon in Capernaum at the beginning of His ministry sharpens the edge of this angelic fear:

Now in the synagogue there was a man who had a spirit of an unclean demon. And he cried out with a loud voice, saying, “Let us alone! What do we have to do with You, Jesus of Nazareth? Did you come to destroy us? I know You, who You are—the Holy One of God!” But Jesus rebuked him, saying, “Be quiet, and come out of him!” And when the demon had thrown him in their midst, it came out of him and did not hurt him. (Luke 4:33-35)

The demonic spirit clearly expressed his fear of being destroyed by the spiritual power of Jesus of Nazareth. Does he imply that “destroy us” means the end of the demons’ existence?

Another experience Jesus had with evil spirits narrows this demonic expectation of divine reckoning to a specific time:

When He arrived at the other side in the country of the Gadarenes, two demon possessed men coming out of the tombs met Him. They were so extremely fierce and violent that no one could pass by that way. And they screamed out, “What business do we have [in common] with each other, Son of God? Have You come to torment us before the appointed time [of judgment]?” (Matthew 8:28-29 AMP)

Their words plainly state that a set time—a future day—has already been appointed for their destruction, but meanwhile, they feared He would torment them. It seems they were attempting to quell their fear by reminding Him of this and delaying any punishment.

However, this is even more intriguing considering what Jesus says in Matthew 25:41, “Depart from Me, you cursed, into the everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels.” Indeed, Ezekiel 28:16-19 portends a major disaster for the anointed cherub at some future time:

By the abundance of your trading you became filled violence within, and you sinned; therefore I cast you as a profane thing out of the mountain of God; and *I destroyed you*, O covering cherub, from the midst of the fiery stones. Your heart was lifted up because of your beauty; you corrupted your wisdom for the sake of your splendor; I cast you to the ground, I laid you before kings, that they might gaze at you. You defiled your sanctuaries by the multitude of your iniquities, by the iniquity of your trading; therefore *I brought fire from your midst; it devoured you*, and *I turned you to ashes upon the earth* in the sight of all who saw you. All who knew you among the peoples are astonished at you; you have become a horror, and *shall be no more forever*.

Some say that this applies to some human king from the past. Yet, how many human kings are addressed as a “covering cherub” who was in “the midst of the fiery stones” and walked within “the mountain [nation] of God”? This angelic being is to be destroyed, and as the prophecy specifically states, it will be destruction by fire.

The Hebrew term translated “destroyed” is *abad* (Strong’s #6). *Vine’s Complete Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words* states, “Basically, *abad* represents the disappearance of someone or some-

thing. In its strongest sense the word means ‘to die or to cease to exist.’” In Ezekiel 28:18, God prophesies that He will turn the cherub Satan “to ashes upon the earth,” which certainly implies complete destruction.

A few other Old Testament verses will show this sense. Numbers 16:33 reads, “So they and all those with them went down alive into the pit; the earth closed over them, and they perished [*abad*] from among the assembly.” They were buried alive and disappeared. Deuteronomy 4:26 adds, forecasting Israel’s demise as a nation, “I call heaven and earth to witness against you this day, that you will soon utterly perish [*abad*] from the land which you cross over the Jordan to possess; you will not prolong your days in it, but will be utterly destroyed.”

“Destroy” and “Torment” in the New Testament

The term “destroy” also appears in the New Testament in the context of a demon speaking to Jesus:

Now in the synagogue there was a man who had a spirit of an unclean demon. And he cried out with a loud voice, saying, “Let us alone! What have we to do with You, Jesus of Nazareth? Did You come to destroy us? I know You, who You are—the Holy One of God.” (Luke 4:33-34)

The Greek term underlying “destroy” is *appolumi* (Strong’s #622). *Vine’s* defines it as, “signifies ‘to destroy utterly’; in the middle voice, ‘to perish.’ The idea is not extinction but ruin, loss, not of being, but of well-being.”

Behind “torment” is the Greek word *basanizo* (Strong’s #928). It appears in relation to demons in Matthew 8:6, Mark 5:7, and Luke 8:28, all three recording the same event. In each case, the context indicates torture without the implication of death. Neither of these Greek terms, then, as used in Scripture, can be used dogmatically to prove death for angelic beings.

However, our search is far from over. If a man sins and does not repent, he dies ultimately in the Lake of Fire. Yet, if an angel sins, it appears—at this point—that his only penalty is the torment of being restrained with the knowledge of what he has lost. He lives on like a prisoner in jail with no hope of parole.

Scripturally, though, this does not balance the scales of justice because the Bible clearly states that the wages of sin not repented of is death (Romans 6:23). God says unambiguously, “The soul who sins shall die” (Ezekiel 18:4, 20). An angel is a soul too, that is, a living being with the liberty to make choices about moral conduct. Biblically, “soul” is not restricted to humans but simply indicates a breathing creature, which includes animals. Animals, however, do not make moral choices.

God’s Word reveals much more about the completion of the purpose He is working out, His attitude toward sin, sins’ effects, and what He has prophesied regarding

the purity of His Kingdom that will be established when He completes the purpose He is now working out.

The Costliest Payment for Sin

The costliest payment for sin has a distinct purpose far beyond just providing an acceptable sacrifice for it. God frequently names people and things what they are, calling Satan, not only the enemy, but more specifically identifying him by what he does. In Revelation 9:11, Satan, the king of the bottomless pit, receives the Hebrew name “Abaddon” and the Greek name “Apollyon,” both of which mean “destroyer.” There is no destroyer greater than Satan, and one thing he destroys is life. Jesus says about him in John 8:44, “He was a murderer from the beginning.” Will he reap exactly what he sows?

Satan personifies sin. Sin is what he himself continuously does or plans to do, and sin is what he deceives, persuades, and inspires others to do. Sin destroys anything that is life-giving, beautiful, beneficial, peaceful, and good. Most tragically of all, it destroys relationships—one’s relationship with God and relationships with other humans. Sin destroys trust, and relationships require trust to promote peace and endure.

Genesis 1:1 begins the Bible by describing the chaotic results of the sins of angels. It pictures the earth as lifeless. Genesis 3 records the tragic beginning of Adam’s and Eve’s sins. Jesus warns in Matthew 24:22 that, because of its sins, mankind is headed in the same direction as before the Flood unless God intervenes by sending His Son. Sin is like a roaring forest fire, destroying everything in its path. Reconciliation is the only viable solution to preserve relationships being destroyed by sin.

Reconciliation is supremely important to this issue. Jesus Christ is the means of reconciliation, healing the breach created by mankind’s sins against God. In His death, never has so huge a price been paid for such worthless stock as we are. Mankind is filled with sin, having defiled every beautiful thing God has so freely given. None of us can claim innocence; we have all contributed to the defilement and resulting separation from God.

Reconciliation began some 2,000 years ago with the death of Jesus as the perfect and priceless sacrifice that the Father accepted for the sins we have committed. He suffered the wages of our sins—death—in our behalf, but this payment applies only to those who wholeheartedly express their faith in His sacrifice and repent of their sins. Repentant sinners resolve not to live as they did before, when sin suffused their way of life. Repentant individuals give their lives over to Christ to use as He wills, becoming living sacrifices (Romans 12:1-2). This combination initiates a new process of creation in the lives of those who accept this challenge.

New Creation Has Begun Within the Church

Paul gives an overview of the new creation in II Corinthians 5:16-21:

Therefore, from now on, we regard no one according to the flesh. Even though we have known Christ according to the flesh, yet now we know Him thus no longer. Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away: behold, all things have become new. Now all things are of God, who has reconciled us to Himself through Jesus Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation, that is, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not imputing their trespasses to them, and has committed to us the word of reconciliation. Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were pleading through us; we implore you on Christ’s behalf, be reconciled to God. For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.

God places those who believe Christ, repent, are baptized, and receive His Holy Spirit into the church. They continue in the process of being formed as a new creation in Christ, transforming into the character image of our sinless Savior.

This new creation does not apply to sinning angels. There is not a single reference in the Bible that Jesus paid the penalty for their sins. Not one scripture hints that even one demon has ever repented. No verse claims that any demon believes in the atoning death of Christ as payment for their sins.

This convincingly implies that God never developed a means for their forgiveness other than repentance. It could also indicate that their characters are so set by hatred and self-centeredness that repentance is impossible. They hate God and His children with a savage vengeance and would kill us in the blink of an eye except for God’s wall of protection surrounding us.

Of keen interest in this context is the term “new” in verse 17. Paul had his choice of either of two words, *kainos* or *neos*, but he chose the one best suited to God’s purpose here. He chose *kainos*, indicating newness in the sense of fresh existence. *Neos* means newness in the sense of renovation, for example, repairing something that already exists. In this context, God is describing a transformation in the inner man from carnality to spiritual thought and conduct. The new creation is not merely a repair job of the old, existing, carnal nature. It is a complete change to a nature, a heart, that had not been there before conversion.

The apostle nudges our thoughts to a parallel incident,
(continued on page 16)

Who Fulfills the Azazel Goat— Satan or Christ?

Part One

The Day of Atonement (Yom Kippur) is a Sabbath of solemn rest, set apart by its unique requirements to afflict one’s soul and do absolutely no work (Leviticus 23:26-32). Within its instructions are a few rituals that make it even more extraordinary. Chief among these is the ceremony of the two goats found in Leviticus 16, part of a larger cleansing ritual performed once a year by the high priest.

With the passage of time and the difficulties of translation, the instructions for the two goats are far less clear to us than they were to their original recipients. In particular, the Hebrew word *azazel*, used for the second goat, is surrounded by speculation and contradictory assertions. A common belief among Sabbatarians is that *azazel* is the name of a wilderness demon. From this foundation springs the conclusion that the *azazel* goat—often translated as “scapegoat”—represents Satan. (See the inset, “The Azazel Tradition.”)

If we solely use the Bible as our source, we will find no definitive statement for *azazel* representing Satan. What appears instead is that Satan—whose original name was Hêlêl—has coopted the term to apply to himself in the same way he coopted one of the titles of Jesus Christ, “light-bringer” or “light-bearer” (Lucifer), for himself (see Isaiah 14:12; II Peter 1:19; Revelation 22:16). Yet it is not possible for Satan to be a part of the atonement God provides for His people, a role that can be fulfilled only by the Savior.

Strong’s Concordance does not define *azazel* as a name at all, instead giving the meaning as “goat of departure.” It identifies two roots for this word, the first of which means “goat” or “kid” (#5795). The second root (#235) means “to go away, hence, to disappear.” *The Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon* says it means “complete removal.” These definitions not only fit with the Hebrew, but they also align with the instructions in Leviticus 16. But to start with *azazel* as the name of a fallen angel—representative of Satan—is, at best, to begin with a conclusion, and

Ready Answer

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at worst, to base crucial understanding on an apocryphal tradition. When we look at the totality of what Scripture says, a very different picture emerges.

There is wisdom in not basing a doctrine on the meaning of a word, since meanings can change or become lost with time. A far more solid foundation beyond a word's common definition must be laid. Moving past the definition of *azazel*, then, another foundational principle of Bible study is that significant matters—especially doctrinal ones—must be established by “two or three witnesses.” By comparing what the *azazel* goat accomplishes with the rest of God's revelation, its role—and thus, its identity—becomes clear. There is no second, let alone third, witness for Satan playing a role within this chapter or in the atonement for sin.

Two Goats, One Offering

The two goats are first mentioned in Leviticus 16:5, which contains an often-overlooked detail: “And he shall take from the congregation of the children of Israel *two kids of the goats as a sin offering*, and one ram as a burnt offering” (emphasis ours throughout unless otherwise noted).

The “two kids of the goats” *together* are a *single* sin offering. That is, the two young goats are distinct elements that *jointly* accomplish this offering for sin; both parts are absolutely required for the offering to be accepted. A typical sin offering consists of only one animal, but this sin offering consists of two. This shows that something additional is being accomplished here, something beyond just the payment for sin.

The biblical sin offering, detailed in Leviticus 4, is God's prescribed way to show sins being paid for through a death. While “it is not possible that the blood of bulls and goats could take away sins” (Hebrews 10:4), God still required blood to be shed to remind the people that sin incurs the death penalty.

A critical part of the sin offering involves the priest placing his hands on the head of the animal before it was slain to show that the animal would stand in the place of the party under judgment. The unblemished, innocent animal, representing the guilty party, symbolically received the guilt. This detail is reiterated four times within the instructions for the sin offering (Leviticus 4:4, 15, 24, 29), as well as in the initial consecration ceremony for Aaron and his sons (Exodus 29:10). A sin offering is incomplete without this symbolic transference taking place.

Every sacrificial animal—through the requirement of it being unblemished—is portrayed as being sinless (Deuteronomy 17:1; Leviticus 22:17-25). The Pentateuch contains at least forty injunctions that the sacrificial animals, either in specific offerings or in general, had to be without blemish or defect. In addition, Malachi 1:6-14 records God's indignation at later priests for offering blind, maimed,

and diseased animals. A reason the animals had to be of the highest quality is that they were offered to God, who deserves only the best. A second reason is that *every* sacrificial animal prefigured the Savior, who was entirely without blemish or defect.

In the symbolism of a substitutionary sacrifice, an innocent participant is chosen to bear the sins of the guilty. However, this utterly fails to apply to Satan, for his millennia of sin make it impossible for him to be pictured as unblemished or innocent. Not by any means!

Leviticus 16:8 has Aaron casting lots, “one lot for Jehovah, and one lot for a goat of departure,” as *Young's Literal Translation* renders it. This first biblical occurrence of lots being cast shows that the matter of choosing what goat fills which role is completely in God's hands. The high priest had to await God's decision before continuing. God does not leave it up to man to choose which would fulfill these roles because of man's inability to judge properly.

This fact was made especially clear during Christ's lifetime, when the people chose to spare Barabbas from crucifixion over Jesus (Matthew 27:17-23), and the high priest Caiaphas chose Jesus to die for the people (John 11:49-50). The people and leaders chose Jesus, not because of their recognition of and devotion to Him, but for His condemnation so that their lives could continue without disruption.

In similar fashion, left to their own devices, the Israelites would incorrectly choose how the God-ordained roles would be filled, so He shows through the casting of lots that the decision was not in their hands. I Chronicles 24–26 shows that governmental roles in Israel were determined by lot. To remove any ambiguity, various officials, Levites, musicians, gatekeepers, and other leaders were assigned their lots in life through God's decision. The same thing occurs in Leviticus 16: God determines which goat will fulfill which role.

“For the LORD”

The matter of the different roles becomes clear after understanding Leviticus 16:8. A difficulty springs up here, though, because the construction *seems* to imply two separate personalities: One lot is cast “for the LORD,” and another “for *azazel*.” However, if we look deeper, we will see that the phrase “for the LORD” is not about identifying a personality at all.

Because we have the benefit of looking back in history on Christ's sacrifice and understand that the sacrificial system pointed forward to the work of the Messiah, our minds tend to interpret “for the LORD” to mean “as a *representation of the LORD*.” While the sin offerings did pre-figure Christ, the phrase was not intended to mean this, but that the first goat was designated “as *belonging to the LORD*.”

It is used in the same sense that the sacred incense was “holy for the LORD” (Exodus 30:37), that in wartime the Israelites were to “levy a tribute for the LORD” (Numbers 31:28), and that an idolatrous city was to be completely burned “for the LORD your God” (Deuteronomy 13:16). The first goat’s role was to appease the Lord and to be sacrificed to Him; it was for the Lord’s satisfaction in the ritual, not to represent Him.

Consider that the Israelites did not truly understand the intent of the sacrificial system. During the first century, the concepts that the Messiah would be God-in-the-flesh and that He would be killed in fulfillment of the whole sacrificial system were entirely foreign. If there was ever a national consciousness that the first goat was a *representation* of the Creator God, dying for the sins of the people, it was clearly forgotten by the time it was fulfilled!

Even though we can now read various psalms and prophecies related to the crucifixion and recognize them as Messianic, the Israelites did not have this understanding; they thought the Messiah would be a human leader who would restore them to national greatness. In like manner, they certainly understood, not that one of the goats would *represent* the Lord, but that the goat was a sacrifice *to* the Lord. *The instructions do not specify how the ritual would later be fulfilled*—only what the goats were for.

The Goat of Departure

Along these lines, *azazel* is not a name in the Bible, nor did the live goat represent a second *personality*, but instead it fulfilled a second *purpose*. It was chosen to accomplish

The Azazel Tradition

When studying Leviticus 16, the typical approach hinges on defining the word *azazel*, the Hebrew word for the second goat. However, difficulties begin right at the outset because no obvious definition scripture exists.

Scholars are little help in arriving at a definition, for scholars can be found to support whatever view one desires. A typical explanatory note is found in *The Comprehensive Commentary of the Holy Bible*, which gives this unrooted viewpoint: “See different opinion in Bochart. Spencer, after the oldest opinions of the Hebrews and Christians, thinks Azazel is the name of the devil, and so Rosenmuller, whom see.” Yet, if the wise of this age cannot give scriptural backing for their views, of what value is their scholarship? Are the “oldest opinions of the Hebrews and Christians” based on the Word of God or dependent upon a heretical book and the traditions of men?

Many have based their understanding of Leviticus 16 on tradition, which claims that *azazel* is the name of a fallen angel. The original, 58-lesson *Ambassador College Correspondence Course* says this about *azazel*: “Ancient Jewish literature knew the Devil by this name. It is, for example, spelled Azalzal and Azael in *apocryphal literature*” (Lesson 37, p. 4, 1965; emphasis ours).

The updated, 32-lesson edition contains a few more sources (Lesson 29, p. 10, 1986). However, the authors do not use the Bible in their evidence, as the Bible does not identify the live goat as a type of Satan. Instead, the authors quote Arabic tradition that *azazel* is the name of a demon. They quote a book entitled *Islam and Its Founder*. They also quote a couple of Protestant theologians on their respective opinions.

The real bombshell, though, is this excerpt:

Let’s notice a modern Jewish commentary that makes it clear that the *azazel* goat represented Satan the devil: “Azazel . . . was probably a demonic being. . . . *Apocryphal Jewish works,*

composed in the last few centuries before the Christian era, tell of angels who were lured . . . into rebellion against God. In these writings, Azazel is one of the two leaders of the rebellion. And posttalmudic documents tell a similar story about two rebel angels, Uzza and Azrael—both variations of the name Azazel. These *mythological stories*, which must have been widely known, seem to confirm the essentially demonic character of the old biblical Azazel” (Union of American Hebrew Congregations, *The Torah—a Modern Commentary*, page 859). (Emphasis ours; ellipses theirs).

This last source is a devastating admission. Jewish tradition is used as the final and most important proof, yet its foundation is “apocryphal Jewish works, composed in the last few centuries before the Christian era.” The best-known apocryphal Jewish work from that era is the Book of Enoch.

The Book of Enoch bears the name of one of God’s faithful servants, but what has come down to us as the Book of Enoch was not written by the prophet, but by individuals during the intertestamental period. Scholars estimate that the earlier parts of the book were written around 300 BC at the earliest, while the remainder was written before 100 BC. While containing biblical themes and names, it also includes many things that directly contradict the rest of the biblical canon.

In the Book of Enoch, Azazel is a fallen angel who teaches mankind unrighteous ways. As a result, he is bound and sentenced to the desert forever. It also contains another tradition typically taught on the Day of Atonement—that Satan is the author of human sin: “And the whole earth has been corrupted through the works that were taught by Azazel: *to him ascribe all sin.*” In other words, the ascribing of all human sin to a fallen angel is from the very same Jewish tradition that identifies the *azazel* as a demon. Yet neither aspect of that tradition is backed up by Scripture.

Ready Answer

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just what the Hebrew root word means: departure, removal, or disappearance. The first goat was for the Lord because His justice must be satisfied; it was for the cleansing of His house (Tabernacle and people). The second goat was for an additional step after the penalty for sin was paid: completely removing the sins from view by bearing them to an uninhabited land. Thus, while many infer that two personalities are in view in Leviticus 16:8, the construction does not require it. Rather, the lots were cast to determine which goat would fulfill each *role* within this compound atonement for sin.

No scripture supports the notion that Satan has been chosen to fulfill any sacrificial role. God gave Hêlêl a role, but he chose his own lot in life when he lifted his heart in pride and left his first estate (Jude 6). God did not choose that for him. Conversely, Matthew 12:18 quotes a Messianic prophecy about the Servant whom God *chose*—Jesus Christ. Similarly, I Peter 2:6 says that Christ is *elect*, another way of saying “chosen.” We have evidence of the lot applying to Jesus Christ because God chose Him. He was also chosen to fulfill the sin offering, the burnt offering, the meal offering, the Passover, and the Wavesheaf as well. God chose Him to be High Priest (Hebrews 5:10; 9:11). But the Scriptures completely preclude Satan from receiving such honor.

Another, often-overlooked instruction in this regard is the ritual for the cleansing of leprosy, found in nearby Leviticus 14:3-7 (for people) and 49-53 (for houses). It contains similar figures and activities as the ritual of the two goats, and is a type of the more important Day of Atonement ritual. Involving two birds instead of two goats, it functions on the level of an individual or a family (house) rather than the nation. In considering the lesser ritual, nothing suggests that the two birds are somehow opposites or represent opposing personalities. Instead, the birds are two essentially equal elements, each chosen to serve a different role to accomplish a single purpose. The two goats are likewise two equal actors, which again precludes Satan, for the only place he is equal to Jesus Christ is in his own estimation!

A detail in the leprosy ritual clarifies a part of the ritual with the two goats. The bird that is set free is dipped in the blood of the one that is killed (Leviticus 14:6, 51), showing that a cleansing or sanctification is made for the bird that is then freed. This is more obscure in the instruction for the goats, but can be found in Leviticus 16:10: “But the goat on which the lot fell to be the scapegoat shall be presented alive before the LORD, to make atonement *upon* [Hebrew ‘*al*] it, and to let it go as the scapegoat into the wilderness.”

The NKJV here says atonement is made *upon* the goat, which is a reasonable translation since ‘*al*’ is simply a preposition with any number of English equivalents. Other translations and commentators, such as the *Companion*

Bible and the *Cambridge Bible*, hold that here ‘*al*’ indicates *for* the live goat—that is, the goat is presented alive before the Lord to make atonement *for* it. *Ellicott’s Commentary* makes this observation: “Better, *to make atonement for it*, that is, it was placed before the Lord in order that it might receive expiation and sanctification, and thus be fitted for the sacred purposes it was destined to fulfill” (emphasis theirs).

Scripture backs up this observation. The *azazel* parallels the live bird that was dipped in the blood of the sacrificed bird and then let go. A sanctification had to take place before the second animal (bird or goat) could fulfill its role. Even though Jesus had no need to be cleansed from sin, He was still sanctified (John 10:36). In contrast, no sacrifice is ever mentioned for Satan’s “sanctification” prior to fulfilling an imagined sacrificial role.

This sanctification is further indicated by the phrase “shall be presented alive before the LORD.” Numerous verses imply this same sense when one person “stands before” another of higher authority, whether God or another man. The “standing before” can be for rendering judgment (Leviticus 27:8, 11; Numbers 5:16-18; 35:12) or to show that a person is in the service of another (Genesis 41:46; Numbers 27:18-23; Deuteronomy 1:38; 10:8). In either case, what is symbolized is an inferior waiting on a decision or instruction from his superior (see also Genesis 43:15; 47:7).

The *azazel* is not brought before the Lord for the sake of judgment (Leviticus 16:10), since it is the symbol of innocence at this point, as the priest has not yet laid his hands on its head. Instead, the goat stands before the Lord in order to be sanctified, receiving its charge to bear the burden of sin and depart out of sight.

In both the leprosy and the Day of Atonement rituals, one animal is killed while another is set free, with the implication of bearing the uncleanness (in the case of leprosy) or sins (in the case of the *azazel*) to another place. The single sin offering has two aspects: 1) the sacrifice for the payment or propitiation for sin, and 2) the complete removal of sin from view—including from memory and the consciousness. God sees to both the payment for and removal of sin; even our conscience is cleansed (see Isaiah 43:25; Psalm 103:12; Hebrews 9:14).

What is accomplished, then, is more than just payment for sin. The ritual makes use of two animals to show different features of this unique sin offering. One animal died as a type of payment, so that justice would be satisfied. The other remained alive to demonstrate the complete removal of sin from view. Without this aspect, our sins could be paid for yet still plague us, as the payment of sin solves only part of the problem.

Consider what happens when a person commits a crime. Civil justice may be served through fines, incar-

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The Binding of Satan

Imagine enjoying a grand time at a gathering of friends and family, eating good food, engaging in lively and pleasant conversation, and soaking up a warm glow of mutual affection and goodwill. Just as the party reaches full-swing, an uninvited guest with an obnoxious personality walks into the room. Immediately, the party's "good vibes" retreat, leaving a palpable chill behind.

Depending on what the obnoxious person does on entering the room, he can cause uneasiness, anxiety, or even perturbation in just about everybody there. His dislikable attitude may break up the party or instigate an argument or even a fight. Where agreement, peace, and enjoyment had been the rule, now there is frustration, negative feelings, and division—all because one person's attitude has disrupted the peace.

What does a person do in such a situation? Attempting to make the most of a bad situation often ends in making everybody equally miserable. Some may try to endure it until it is time to go home. A few brave or perhaps foolhardy souls may confront the offensive guest, telling him that he is not welcome. Others do their best to ignore the intruder, but obnoxious people often do not allow that to happen, demanding everyone's attention. The only way to restore the former pleasant situation—short of the unwanted person having a

miraculous change of personality—is for the host to demand that he leave for the sake of his other guests.

This is how our world began. God and mankind, represented by Adam and Eve, enjoyed an agreeable relationship in the Garden of Eden until Satan, an uninvited, obnoxious intruder—a deceiver, accuser, and destroyer—disturbed the peace and ruined paradise. He has caused unbelief, fear, distrust, hatred, and division ever since.

God—our Host, if you will—has prophesied in His Word that He will one day, for a time, throw the intruder out and restore peace to His fellowship with humanity. The church has speculated that this may occur on a future Day of Atonement which represents accord and unity between God and man, something that can never truly be real until Satan is removed from the picture. We look forward to the time when this part of God's plan is fulfilled.

Satan is a major cause of the present separation between God and man, and his binding after Christ's return will be a vital step toward the restitution of all things (Acts 3:21), restoring conditions to the earth that will facilitate harmony between God and man during the thousand-year reign of Jesus Christ on earth. This restored relationship will open the way for astounding blessings, achievements, and advancements in the Millennium.

A COVERING CHERUB FALLS

The being we know as Satan the Devil began his life as a glorious cherub covering God's throne. Ezekiel 28:12-15 describes him:

You were the seal of perfection, full of wisdom and perfect in beauty. You were in Eden, the garden of God; every precious stone was your covering: The sardius, topaz, and diamond, beryl, onyx, and jasper, sapphire, turquoise, and emerald with gold. The workmanship of your timbrels and pipes was prepared for you on the day you were created. You were the anointed cherub who covers; I established you; you were on the holy mountain of God; you walked back and forth in the midst of fiery stones. You were perfect in your ways from the day you were created, till iniquity was found in you.

Before he sinned, this archangel, Hêlêl ("shining one"), had everything going for him. God had created him perfect, wise, and beautiful. He had astounding skills and talents, especially musical talents, which were probably used in praising God. He was given high position as "the anointed cherub who covers" (emphasis ours), meaning that his wings stretched over God's throne. Always at the hub of God's activity, Hêlêl was the perfect specimen of creation—beautiful, wise, talented, skilled, and eminent. Then he spoiled it all through sin.

Isaiah 14:12-15 illustrates the process of his thinking that led to his fall:

How you are fallen from heaven, O [Hêlêl], son of the morning! How you are cut down to the ground, you who weakened the nations! For you have said in your heart: "I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God; I will also sit on the mount of the congregation on the farthest sides of the north; I will ascend above the heights of the clouds, I will be like the Most High." Yet you shall be brought down to Sheol, to the lowest depths of the Pit.

Evidently, God had at some point also given him the earth to govern, as this passage shows him ascending to heaven, implying that he must have come from the earth. Isaiah also writes that he had a throne that he desired to exalt over all the "stars"—angels—of God. Revelation 12:4 reveals that a third of the angels were thrown to the earth with him, probably those whom God had earlier given him to assist him with his job on the earth, but Isaiah 14:13 reports that he wanted to rule *all* the angels, not just a mere third of them.

As God gave him more, Hêlêl's greed grew until he began to conceive thoughts of taking everything for

himself, not just the angels, but God's very throne. As several modern translations read, "I will make myself like the Most High." In essence, he wanted to *be* God. He deceived himself into thinking he was smart and powerful enough to boot the "Old Man" out and take over ruling all things!

So we see the sins that most describe Satan: vanity, greed, selfishness, self-exaltation, and pride, of course. Who knows how long these sins festered in him before they broke out into action? However long the time, these sins embittered him until he began to plan a coup against the very throne of heaven and to recruit other angels to his cause.

The story picks up Revelation 12:3-4:

And another sign appeared in heaven: behold, a great, fiery red dragon having seven heads and ten horns, and seven diadems on his heads. His tail drew a third of the stars of heaven and threw them to the earth.

Surely, these angels did not just fall obediently into line, especially as he was proposing full-blown rebellion against God, but Hêlêl eventually managed to convince one-third of them to follow him. From this we can see that Satan has formidable powers of persuasion, an uncanny ability to deceive others into doing things to further his aims. He likely promised them freedom and power.

We find more information in verses 7-9. Although written in a prophetic sense, they probably also describe what happened when Hêlêl attacked God's throne in pre-history:

And war broke out in heaven: Michael and his angels fought with the dragon; and the dragon and his angels fought, but they did not prevail, nor was a place found for them in heaven any longer. So the great dragon was cast out, that serpent of old, called the Devil and Satan, who deceives the whole world; he was cast to the earth, and his angels were cast out with him.

God and His angels, led by Michael, cast the former Hêlêl—no longer a "shining one," but now called Satan the Devil, the Deceiver, the Adversary, the Opposition—along with his angels, back to the earth, evidently causing great destruction all over the galaxy. And here they have remained.

Jude 6 records, "And the angels who did not keep their proper domain [the earth], but left their own abode, He has reserved in everlasting chains under darkness for the judgment of the great day." God has bound them to the earth while they await their ultimate judgment. Though no place was found in heaven for them anymore, the book of Job says that Satan can present himself before God's throne on occasion. Earth, however, is their habitation.

While only as free as God allows them to be, they can still deceive and prey on mankind.

A BEING UNDER JUDGMENT

The Bible and human history fill in what has happened since. It is evident that from creation, mankind has been living side by side with millions of demonic opponents led by the chief adversary, Satan the Devil. Apparently, this was part of God's plan for His children. He wants us to choose His way, to overcome and grow despite being surrounded by evil.

Satan had little trouble deceiving Eve and goading Adam to sin—just as he has swayed every other human being except Jesus to sin. However, he will not go unpunished for his part in deceiving the whole world. God makes this clear in Genesis 3:14-15, where he curses the serpent:

So the LORD God said to the serpent: "Because you have done this, you are cursed more than all cattle, and more than every beast of the field; on your belly you shall go, and you shall eat dust all the days of your life. And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her Seed; He shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise His heel."

God says plainly that Satan would be put down; the woman's Seed—Messiah—would "bruise his head." The Hebrew word for "bruise," *qâmal*, means "to slay, kill." When a person's head is "bruised" in this way—given a killing blow—he dies, while the same blow on the heel causes pain and damage, but not death. God's curse on the serpent signals what the ultimate end of Satan will be.

Even so, we still must resist the Devil's daily, evil influences. He and his demons are still around. Despite putting a hedge around us, God does not forbid Satan to try to deceive us after baptism. He tried his best to turn Jesus from His course (Matthew 4, Luke 4), but our Savior showed us how to fight and repel him. Satan is still trying to deceive and tempt human beings, especially God's children, since they have been chosen to be part of the Family destined to take over his throne with Jesus Christ.

God will always be faithful to His character and to His promises, so Satan does not waste his time attacking Him. There are easier fish to fry—us. Some doubt still exists in Satan's mind whether we will endure to the end, so we must be strong and resist him in the faith (I Peter 5:9), remembering Paul's encouraging words in Romans 16:19-20: "I want you to be wise in what is good, and simple [pure] concerning evil. And the God of peace will crush Satan under your feet shortly. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you. Amen."

The Greek word rendered as "crush" (*syntribô*; *Strong's #4937*) in verse 20 means "to break the power of, deprive of strength, debilitate." It can also be translated as "crush" or "bruise," as in Genesis 3:15. Someday soon, just after Christ's return, God will break Satan's power over

humanity for a thousand years, as prophesied in Revelation 20:1-3:

Then I saw an angel coming down from heaven having the key to the bottomless pit and a great chain in his hand. He laid hold of the dragon, that serpent of old, who is the Devil and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years; and he cast him into the bottomless pit, and shut him up, and set a seal on him, so that he should deceive the nations no more till the thousand years were finished. But after these things he must be released for a little while.

Many commentators believe this angel is Christ Himself, as no single angel seems to be the match for Satan. When Daniel cried for God's help, it took two angels, both Gabriel and Michael to overcome "the prince of the kingdom of Persia," thought to have been Satan (Daniel 10:13). If the key to the bottomless pit is like the keys of Hades and Death—that is, in the possession of Christ alone—Revelation 1:18 may support this speculation.

TIMES OF REFRESHING

Satan's imprisonment in the bottomless pit is not his final sentence, but he will be "bound and gagged" for a thousand years, no longer able to deceive anyone. It is almost inconceivable to imagine what the world will be like without Satan around. Except for a short time in Eden, mankind has never experienced a time when his anti-God attitudes were not constantly pervading our environment (see Ephesians 2:2).

Once Satan is sealed away, a great weight will be lifted from the minds of people. A great sigh of relief will go up. When that prison door clangs shut and Satan's influence is cut off, people may finally experience true peace of mind. The brain-fog caused by his attitudes will be gone, and human beings will for once be able to think clearly. Sin will not disappear altogether, since people will still have to overcome their carnal natures, but without Satan's encouragement, they will have a fighting chance to conquer it.

With Jesus, the Prince of Peace (Isaiah 9:6), triumphant over rebellious humanity, and Satan out of action, peace will descend over the whole earth. With peace, as James writes in James 3:18, the fruit of righteousness can flourish. Over time, under Christ's righteous government administered by the children of God, the creation will begin to return to the way it was before Adam sinned (Romans 8:18-21). With Satan a nonfactor, healing can begin.

Peter describes it in different terms in Acts 3:19-21:

Repent therefore and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, so that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord. And that He may send Jesus Christ, who was preached to you

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when God created Adam in Genesis 1. Adam was an entity who did not exist before God acted. In this creation described in II Corinthians 5, though, God is not exercising His divine powers by creating an entirely new person, but He is fashioning a new heart, a new nature, that will produce righteousness, in contrast to the old nature that produced self-centered sin.

One by one, God is calling people out of Satan's worldly system and creating a Family Kingdom described in multiple locations throughout His Word. We have all borne the physical and character image of the sinner Adam; we are now being created in the spiritual image of the holy, righteous, and sinless Jesus Christ (I Corinthians 15:48-49). But know this: The new creation does not end with the spiritual creation of the sons of God. It carries on to include even a New Heaven and a New Earth.

No End to the Process Begun

The new creation begun by God with repentant and converted human beings is just the beginning of a massive creation that will surely follow because God has willed it as part of His plan (Isaiah 55:11). His Word provides an idea of what it entails, alerting God's children of the new creation that has begun in them and will expand indefinitely.

Isaiah 42:9 reads, "Behold, the former things have come to pass, and new things I declare; before they spring forth I tell you of them." Isaiah 65:17 adds, "For behold, I create new heavens and a new earth; and the former shall not be remembered or come to mind." The prophet chose to use the Hebrew word *hadash* ("new"; *Strong's* 2319) that, as *kainos* in New Testament Greek, indicates "that which did not exist before."

Isaiah 9:7 clinches the never-ending expansion of God's purpose:

Of the increase of His government and peace there will be no end. Upon the throne of David and over His kingdom, to order it and establish it with judgment and justice from that time forward even forever. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will perform this.

Isaiah 66:22-23 contains even more exciting news:

"For as the new heavens and the new earth which I will make shall remain before Me," says the LORD, "so shall your descendants and your name remain. And it shall come to pass that from one New Moon to another and from one Sabbath to another, all flesh shall come before Me," says the LORD.

These verses not only indicate an everlasting Kingdom, but also that, since all flesh is coming before Him each

Sabbath, no wickedness will be happening. Perhaps Daniel 9:24 shows this more conclusively:

Seventy weeks are determined for your people and for your holy city, to finish the transgression, to make an end of sins, to make reconciliation for iniquity, to bring in everlasting righteousness, to seal up vision and prophecy, and to anoint the Most Holy.

The angel says that our Savior came to end sin, make reconciliation, and usher in everlasting righteousness! What an awesome future God has planned for His Family. The time is coming when no unrighteousness in any form, including angelic sins, exists in God's New Heaven and New Earth!

No Unrighteousness in Any Form

As we saw, Isaiah 65:17 provides us with a succinct but clear view of a breathtaking circumstance lying ahead: "For behold, I create new heavens and a new earth; and the former shall not be remembered or come to mind." God says of Himself in Isaiah 43:25, "I will not remember your sins." A world is coming in which *not even the memory of sins or of sinners* exists! How can that be? This wonderful era will begin when God purges sin and unrepentant sinners from existence. The time is coming when sin never even comes to mind, and nothing will be happening to remind anyone of it.

We will review some familiar Scriptures that speak of the times just ahead:

The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance. But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, in which the heavens will pass away with a great noise, and the elements will melt with fervent heat; both the earth and the works that are in it will be burned up. (II Peter 3:9-10)

God has already begun His purging. The evidence is in Christ's death and resurrection and in the existence of converted people and the church. He is continuing to work to bring these parts of His plan to completion. Consider two things regarding this passage: First, it is necessary for all—including sinning angels—to come to repentance. Second, all the sinful works done on earth are to be burned up, which includes the works of sinning angels as well. They are not excused as God purges the entire earth of sin's contamination.

Revelation 20:11–21:1 records this for our understanding:

Then I saw a great white throne and Him who sat on

it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away. And there was found no place for them. And I saw the dead, small and great, standing before God, and books were opened. And another book was opened, which is the Book of Life. And the dead were judged according to their works, by the things which were written in the books. The sea gave up the dead who were in it, and Death and Hades delivered up the dead who were in them. And they were judged, each one according to his works. Then Death and Hades were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. *And anyone not found written in the Book of Life was cast into the lake of fire.* And I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away. Also there was no more sea.

Are the names of the Destroyer and his constantly sinning demon companions written in the God's Book of Life? Of course not. Revelation 20:10 affirms this: "The devil, who deceived them, was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone where the beast and the false prophet are [were cast]. And they will be tormented day and night forever and ever." The Scriptures reveal that it is impossible for God to lie (Hebrews 6:18). Yes, Satan and his demons are to be burned up in the Lake of Fire prepared for them, as Jesus states in Matthew 25:41. According to God's law, death is what they have earned for their sins.

We should understand that, biblically, *forever* does not always mean "everlasting." It sometimes indicates "as long as conditions exist." For instance, the Old Covenant sacrifices were instituted forever. The book of Hebrews, however, shows that they are clearly no longer required for the sons of God. "Forever" lasted only until Christ died for our sins. Ezekiel 44 suggests that they will be revived in the future for a brief time, but when the Lake of Fire occurs, they will no longer be needed for a relationship with God (II Peter 3:10).

II Peter 3:13 makes an encouraging statement immediately following Peter's statements about the Lake of Fire: "Nevertheless we, according to His promise, look for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells." A dwelling is where a person or family lives. In the New Heaven and New Earth, *only* righteousness dwells in them.

Does this mean "except for the unrepentant demons who continue living on despite the Lake of Fire because God cannot exterminate their existence because He mistakenly created them of imperishable spirit"? No! They are not there because they were burned up in the everlasting fire. Not one iota of sin—not even the remembrance of sin!—will exist in those living where only righteousness dwells. The unrepentant demons will be completely purged from the New Heaven and New Earth, and only holiness will remain. By the way, "new" in II Peter 3:13 and in Revelation 21:1 is *kainos*, the same word Paul uses in II Corinthians 5:17, meaning

"something that did not exist before." Since there will be no unrighteousness in any form in the world to come, Satan and his fellow demon spirits must be totally annihilated.

But what about Luke 20:36, where Jesus says of angels, "nor can they die anymore"? The only answer that squares with the rest of Scripture is that Jesus is referring only to righteous angels. They indeed do not die. Demons, though, will pay for their sins with death like every other unrepentant being.

Revelation 21:2-8 gives us this encouragement:

Then I, John, saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from 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 will be with them and be their God. And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying; and there shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away." Then He who sat on the throne said, "Behold, I make all things new." And He said to me, "Write, for these words are true and faithful." And He said to me, "It is done! I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End. I will give of the fountain of the water of life freely to him who thirsts. He who overcomes shall inherit all things, and I will be his God and he shall be My son. But the cowardly, unbelieving, abominable, murderers, sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars shall have their part in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death."

Jesus says that Satan "was a murderer from the beginning" and "is a liar and the father of it" (John 8:44). Is this passage in Revelation 21 wrong because the unrepentant, unbelieving, lying, and murderous demons will still be alive? There is no contradiction. They will have been burned up in the Lake of Fire.

Conclusions

1. The Bible clearly shows that not all spirits are identical. To assume that an angel is immortal just because it is composed of spirit is a false assumption. An angel's bodily composition of created spirit is no guarantee of eternal life. In each case in which the term "spirit" is used, it must be defined accurately to be understood correctly. Only God's Holy Spirit stands above and apart from all others.

2. God was not lacking in wisdom when He created the angels of spirit. They continue living at God's discretion and for His purposes, and if He desires, He can destroy them through fire, as the prophecies

Personal

Do Angels Live Forever?

show. Because God will put an end to all sin and unrighteousness before the New Jerusalem descends, unrepentant demons will not live beyond the Lake of Fire. God's wisdom in creating them as He did is justified.

3. Angels are subject to the same principles of divine judgment as are human beings; "the wages of sin is death" for angels just as surely as it is for men and women. God declares, "I am the LORD, I do not change" (Malachi 3:6). Regarding judgment, the biblical standard is that the greater the gifts, the sterner the judgment. Because angels were gifted more than mankind—even being able to see Him and live in His presence—the standards of judgment will be more stringently carried out.

4. The prophecies describing the level of righteousness in the New Heaven and New Earth allow no room for any sin at all—not even in anyone's memory. Scripture speaks of righteousness so pure that even the leftover garbage of living beings—including defiled angels—will be burned in the Lake of Fire. Nothing will mar the pure moral and spiritual environment of the New Heaven and the New Earth.

God hates sin because it destroys the beauty and purity of His creations, including those resurrected into His Family Kingdom. There will be nothing, absolutely nothing, that will destroy loving relationships in the New Heaven and the New Earth! Satan and his fellow demon spirits will not live through the Lake of Fire.

In Christian love,



Prophecy Watch

The Binding of Satan

(continued from page 15)

before, whom heaven must receive until the times of restoration of all things, which God has spoken by the mouth of all His holy prophets since the world began.

Two very important steps in God's plan will occur in quick succession: the return of Jesus Christ prompting the first resurrection and the binding of Satan. The Devil will be imprisoned for most of the thousand-year reign of Christ with His saints, and until he is released for a little while (Revelation 20:7), the earth and its inhabitants, human and otherwise, will enjoy "times of refreshing." During this time, God will work with humanity through His resurrected firstfruits and a proper relationship between man and God will be restored.

What an advantage those people will have then, able to live, overcome, and grow without Satan's constant pressure to ignore or defy God! Instead, godly teachers will be near to say, "This is the way, walk in it" (Isaiah 30:21). People will still have to make their own choices, but free from the Devil's hateful and rebellious attitudes, they will be much more inclined to decide to do what is good.

Yet, because of this advantage, they will not receive as great a reward as God's firstfruits. Because those in this age have had to fight Satan's influence all their converted lives, they will receive, as the author of Hebrews puts it, "a better resurrection" (Hebrews 11:35), one that includes, among other things, reigning with Christ throughout the Millennium (Revelation 20:6) and following the Lamb wherever He goes (Revelation 14:4). As overcomers of Satan with Christ, the firstfruits stand on the first tier of those who are raised into God's Kingdom.

When Christ returns, so many wonderful things will come to pass, not the least of which is the confinement of Satan for a millennium. What an excellent reason to pray, "Your kingdom come" (Matthew 6:10)!

—Richard T. Ritenbaugh

Ready Answer

Who Fulfills the Azazel Goat—Satan or Christ?

(continued from page 12)

ceration, or capital punishment, but a record of the infraction remains. The felon's name is permanently tainted, and assuming he is not executed, he will face significant challenges from society even after the state's justice has been served.

In addition, his sentence does nothing to heal the pain he has caused others, let alone cleanse his own conscience. Thus, what is needed is a complete expunging of his crime, so that his past failures are not only paid for, but are also made to depart from all awareness.

The same principles apply to the problem of sin. It is the work of Jesus Christ that brings about the ultimate solution to sin, not the binding of Satan. What we need is to have God's laws written on our new hearts and for our sins to be remembered no more. That is what our Savior does.

Is there a single verse in the Bible that shows Satan accomplishing this? Where is the second witness that shows the blemished, corrupt Adversary as set apart for this incredible purpose?

—David C. Grabbe

The Satanic Surge

For generations, mankind—including even nominal Christians—has debated the existence of Satan. Bishop Fulton Sheen, the much-venerated Catholic bishop who rose to prominence in the 1960s, made popular the adage that the greatest trick that Satan plays on mankind is to make us believe that he does not exist.

Accordingly, national polls now indicate that the number of Americans who do not believe in Satan's existence is growing at a rapid pace. A 2003 Gallup poll showed that 68 percent of all Americans believed in the existence of Satan. By 2013, a YouGov poll indicated that number had fallen to 57 percent.

Score one for the Devil.

However, in a seeming contradiction, membership in pagan, occultist, and satanic worship organizations in America is on the rise. Three days following the 2016 presidential election, the Satanic Temple (established in 2013), announced a sudden surge in membership of 50,000 people, bringing their total numbers to around 100,000. And though, by policy, no official numbers are released by the much larger Church of Satan (founded in 1966), observers and former members estimate its membership at 4 million in the U.S. and at least 10 million worldwide.

In the meantime, interest in witchcraft, Wicca, and other forms of paganism has grown to epic proportions. A 2010 census revealed witchcraft as the fourth-largest religion in America, with approximately 200,000 registered witches and an estimated 8 million unregistered practitioners.

While pagans and the occultists promote a more indirect, and even at times unacknowledged worship of Satan, Satanism is thought to embrace him more openly. However, with a strong sense of irony—perhaps even a predictable one—both the Temple of Satan and the Church of Satan “officially” deny their namesake's existence even as they commonly invoke his name in many of their “worship” rituals.

If Bishop Sheen was correct, perhaps it is only natural that the two largest organizations promoting Satan's beliefs and his adulation would actively disavow his reality, while at the same time depict him as a being deserving of our respect and admiration. Regardless of one's beliefs, the fact is that Satan has cleaned up his act—he is going “mainstream”—and is seen as admirable, cultivated, and even cool.

In that vein, we find the hit television show, “Lucifer,” of the Fox network (just recently renewed for its

third season), where Satan is depicted as a “devilishly” attractive and intelligent being who has abandoned his throne in hell and retired to Los Angeles to pursue his favorite indulgences: wine, women, and song. However, in the midst of his new life, he begins to develop feelings of compassion and empathy that motivate him to reach out with his “unique” brand of assistance to the LA police department.

Beyond “Lucifer,” a cursory glance at the daily offerings of entertainment on television or at the movies reveals an untold number of shows portraying some semblance of the demonic world in an exciting and fun fashion.

Beyond entertainment, Satanists are becoming more involved socially. In 2014, the Satanic Temple launched its Protect Children Project, aimed at providing First Amendment protection in the form of legal assistance to children who were “victims” of corporal punishment (spanking) in schools across the nation.

Two years later, the same organization introduced the “After School Satan Clubs,” an extracurricular program designed to counter what it roughly characterizes as the evangelical Christian influence on schools across America. According to its website:

It's important that children be given an opportunity to realize that the evangelical materials now creeping into their schools are representative of but one religious opinion amongst many. . . . *After School Satan Clubs* will focus on free inquiry and rationalism, the scientific basis for which we know what we know about the world around us. We prefer to give children an appreciation of the natural wonders surrounding them, not a fear of everlasting other-worldly horrors.

As we accelerate to the climactic end of this age, wisdom dictates that we stay close to our Creator and take heed to the growing influence of Satan and his demonic horde (I Timothy 4:1; I John 4:1), not to mention his cunning efforts to deny his own existence while simultaneously rehabilitating his reputation (II Corinthians 11:14; 2:11).

He is the master of all deception, but his time is growing short. As Paul writes, “The God of peace will crush Satan under your feet shortly. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you. Amen” (Romans 16:20).

—Joseph Baity

God's Ministering Angels

I John 4:7-8 states clearly that “love [*agape*] comes from God” and that “God is love.” Since we have been created in God’s image (Genesis 1:26) and tasked with imitating Him (Leviticus 11:44; I Peter 1:16), then our learning to define and express love is of paramount importance (I Corinthians 16:14).

Without putting too fine a point on it, Romans 5:8 and John 15:13 provide both definition and expression for the godly concept of love: the working of selfless and/or beneficent acts that provide no reciprocal benefit to the doer.

In this context, could we then say that angels—those remarkable beings created to be “ministering spirits” (Hebrews 1:14) to those seeking salvation—further define, reflect, and express God’s love? As God’s peerless agents, providing protection, assistance, guidance, and comfort to His creation, as well as to Jesus Christ, these angels also provide something else we need: sterling examples of what it means to lead lives of service to God and man.

We should also note that some scriptural references to “the Angel of the LORD” (Psalm 34:7, Genesis 16: 7-13, Judges 6:11-23, etc.), actually refer to the pre-incarnate Christ. But here we take a closer look at the noble efforts of the ministering angels who were created by the *same being who was the pre-incarnate Christ* and consider how they exemplify lives of giving.



1. Do God’s angels provide for our protection?

COMMENT: Psalm 91:11-12 shows that God has charged His angels with our protection and well-being: “For He shall give His angels charge over you, to keep you in all your ways. They shall bear you up in their hands, lest you dash your foot against a stone.”

Consider the well-known story of Daniel and the lions’ den. After spending a night in what should have been a deadly lair of lions, an unmolested Daniel remarked: “My God sent His angel and shut the lions’ mouths, so that they have not hurt me, because I was found innocent before Him” (Daniel 6:22). The angels who went into Sodom to pull Lot and his family out also rescued him from the violent mob (Genesis 19:1, 10-11).

2. Do angels facilitate God’s will?

COMMENT: God has commissioned His angels to guide events for the benefit of the elect. When Abraham sent his servant to find a wife for Isaac, he said, “He [God] will send His angel before you” (Genesis 24:7). Later, the servant repeated Abraham’s instructions to Bethuel and Laban, Rebekah’s father and brother: “The LORD, before whom I walk, will send His angel with you and prosper your way” (verse 40). *Prosper* in this context means “to make successful.”

3. Are angels capable of providing for our physical needs?

COMMENT: In I Kings 19:1-8, a despondent Elijah had escaped from the threats of Jezebel by fleeing into the wilderness. In verses 5-7, Elijah receives food and water from one of God’s benevolent agents:

Then as he lay and slept under a broom tree, suddenly an angel touched him, and said to him, “Arise and eat.” Then he looked, and there by his

head was a cake baked on coals, and a jar of water. So he ate and drank, and lay down again. And the angel of the LORD came back the second time, and touched him, and said, “Arise and eat, because the journey is too great for you.”

4. Do angels possess a capacity to administer comfort and strengthen?

COMMENT: The angels must sometimes comfort God’s people. In Acts 27, Paul is taken by ship to Rome to appear before Caesar. While at sea, a tempestuous storm with high winds arose, and the situation became critical. Afraid that the ship would run aground or sink, the crew began to fear for their lives. But an angel appeared to Paul and said, “Do not be afraid, Paul; you must be brought before Caesar; and indeed God has granted you all those who sail with you” (Acts 27:24). Consider also the angel who comforted Jesus before His trial and crucifixion (Luke 22:43). Similarly, Gabriel’s words to Daniel were comforting and strengthening (Daniel 10:10-19).

In Exodus 23:20 our Creator makes this reassuring statement to the Israelites: “Behold, I send an Angel before you to keep you in the way and to bring you into the place which I have prepared.” Perhaps no other words from our Father more effectively reveal both His love for us as well as the role He designed for the angels to help further define and express that love. When combined with the incomparably superior life of Jesus Christ (Hebrews 1:4), the tireless efforts of the ministering angels bolster our confidence that God is providing all we need to attain our goal of eternal life in His Kingdom.

—Martin G. Collins