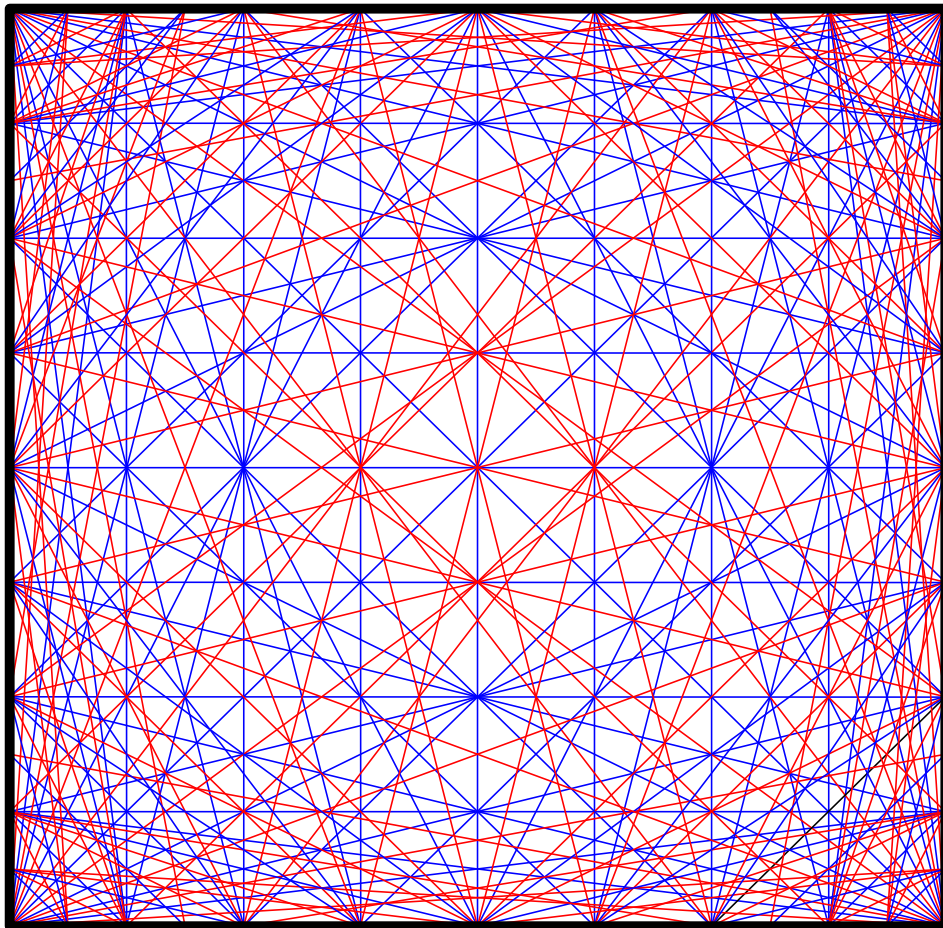


GOD'S PURPOSE AND PLAN



As Told in the Bible

Stuart R. Kerr, III

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REBELLION AND ORIGINAL SIN

**Rebellion in Heaven
The Original Sin of Adam
Death through Adam, Life through Jesus Christ**

REBELLION IN HEAVEN:

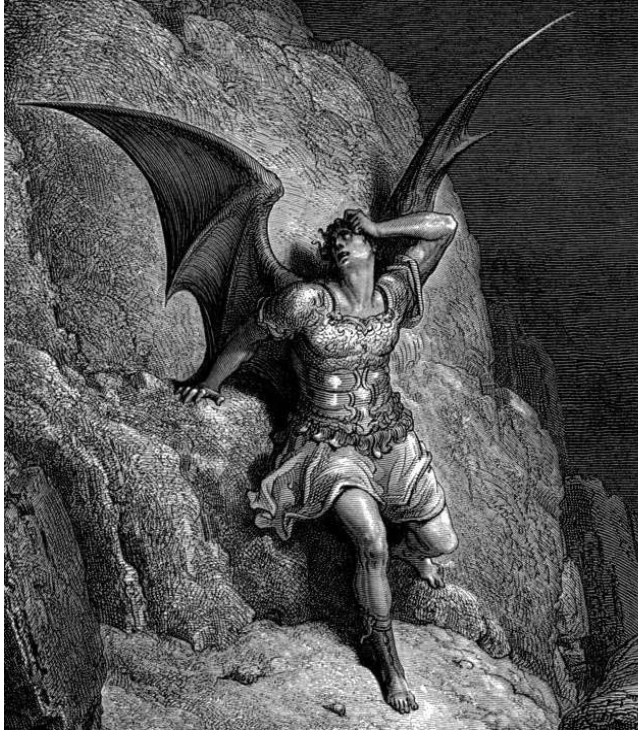
At the beginning of time, the Bible tells us that celestial rebels waged war against God, drawing to their side many legions of angels. The Book of Revelation describes this war in heaven between angels led by the Archangel Michael against those led by "the dragon", identified sometimes as the devil, or Satan, and oftentimes Lucifer, who are defeated and thrown down to the earth. Revelation's war in heaven is related to the idea of fallen angels, and possible parallels have been proposed in the Hebrew Bible and the Dead Sea Scrolls.

Lucifer, "Light Bringer," is specifically shown to be a created being, possibly one of the most beautiful, wise, and perfect of God's creations. But this mighty angel grew proud and vain in his beauty. He began to become envious of God's authority over the universe. Something happened to that great being, and he began a campaign of deceit. He began to separate from God a number of the angels, undoubtedly using the reasoning that they should have more freedom, that God should allow them greater liberty, that God was being unfair, that they did not have the autonomy that was due them. At some point, he began to express, "I will be like the Most High."

Lucifer rebelled against the laws of God; thus, he rebelled against God himself. Desiring independence from God's sovereignty, he tried to depose God and become his own autonomous sovereign ruler of the universe. We are told that one third of the "innumerable company of angels" (Heb. 12:22) chose to rebel with him. John saw this great wonder in heaven, an enormous red dragon, his tail sweeping a third of the "stars" out of the sky and flinging them to the earth. This great dragon is hurled down to the earth, and his angels with him. Great chaos and destruction resulted among the heavenly bodies and on earth when God cast him out of heaven.:

You were filled with violence, and you sinned. So I drove you in disgrace from the mount of God, and I expelled you, guardian cherub, from among the fiery stones. Your heart became proud on account of your beauty, and you corrupted your wisdom because of your splendor. So I threw you to the earth.
[Ez. 28:16,17]

His tail swept a third of the stars out of the sky and flung them to the earth."
[Rev. 12:4]



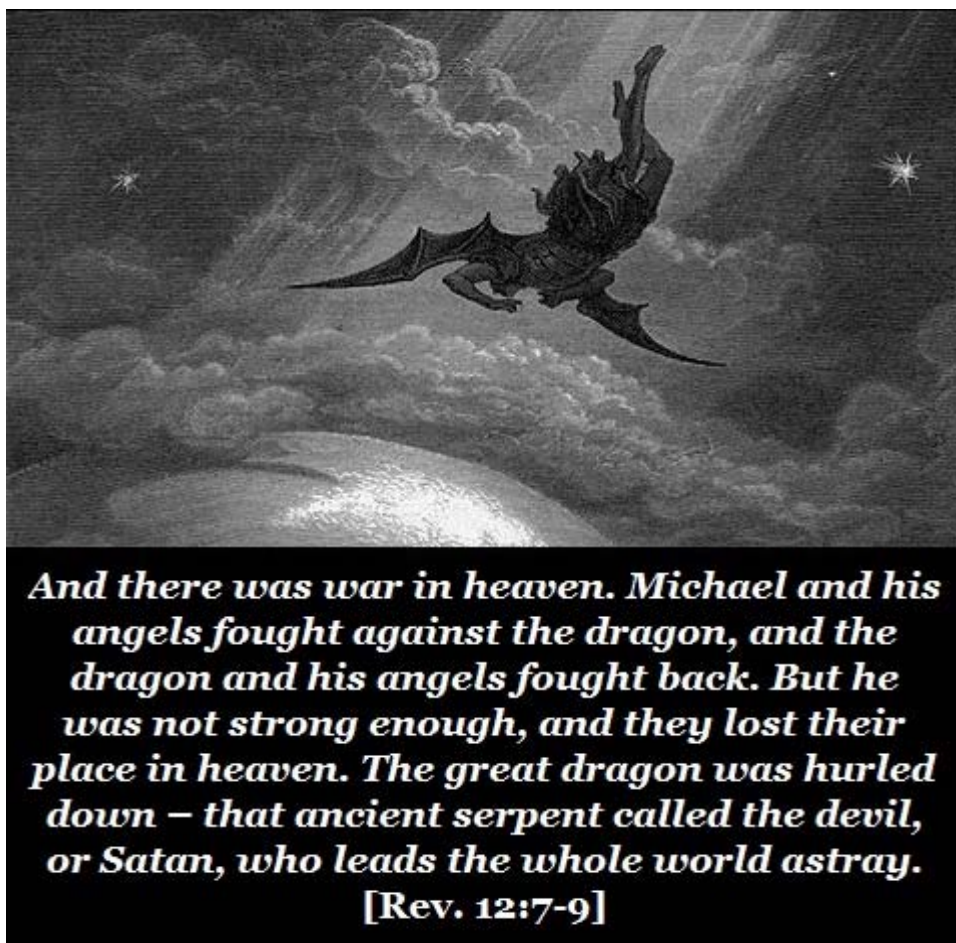
“How you have fallen from heaven, O morning star, son of the dawn! You have been cast down to the earth, you who once laid low the nations! You said in your heart, ‘I will ascend to heaven; I will raise my throne above the stars of God; I will sit enthroned on the mount of assembly, on the utmost heights of the sacred mountain. I will ascend above the tops of the clouds; I will make myself like the Most High.’ But you are brought down to the grave, to the depths of the pit.”

[Is. 14:12-15]

Because of his rebellion, we are today experiencing its evil fruit. Isaiah describes the reaction of people who will look back upon Lucifer’s career after God finally binds him forever in the Lake of Fire:

Those who see you stare at you, they ponder your fate: “Is this the man who shook the earth and made kingdoms tremble, the man who made the world a wilderness, who overthrew its cities and would not let his captives go home?”

[Is. 14:16,17]



Out of one of them came another horn which started small but grew in power... until it reached the host of the heavens, and it threw some of the starry host down to the earth and trampled on them. It set itself up to be as great as the Prince of the host... Because of rebellion, the host of the saints...were given over to it. It prospered in everything it did, and truth was thrown to the ground.

[Dan. 8:9-12]

Satan is an entity in the Abrahamic religions that seduces humans into sin or falsehood. In Christianity and Islam, he is usually seen as either a fallen angel or a jinn, who used to possess great piety and beauty, but rebelled against God, who nevertheless allows him temporary power over the fallen world and a host of demons. In Judaism, Satan is typically regarded as an agent subservient to God. Satan, “the deceiver”, is a liar who ruled the world through the power of sin and unrighteousness. He blinds the minds of those who lust in the world of the flesh. Today, Jesus Christ is now sovereign over tis world – Satan has been judged and his princely power destroyed.

Satan rose up against Israel and invited David to take a census of Israel.

[1Chron. 21:1]

One day the angels came to present themselves before the Lord, and Satan also came with them. The Lord said to Satan, "Where have you come from?" Satan answered the Lord, "From roaming through the earth and going back and forth in it."

[Job 1:6,7]

The Lord said to Satan, "The Lord rebuke you, Satan!"

[Zech. 3:2]

Be afraid of the One who can destroy both soul and body in hell.

[Mt. 10:28]

Some people are like seed along the path where the word is sown. As soon as they hear it, Satan comes along and takes away the word that was sown in them.

[Mark 4:15]

The weeds are the sons of the evil one, and the enemy who sews them is the devil.

[Mat. 13:38]

By God's command, Satan and his fellow rebels are driven out of heaven into a great chasm of utter darkness and chaos. Satan and his conspiring angels find themselves thunder-struck and astonished, lying on a burning lake of fire.

I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven

[Luke 10:18]

God did not spare angels when they sinned, but sent them to hell, putting them into gloomy dungeons to be held for judgment.

[2Pet. 2:4]

And the angels who did not keep their positions of authority but abandoned their own home – these he kept in darkness, bound with everlasting chains for judgment on the great Day.

[Jude 6]

Having been exiled from heaven, unable to re-ascend self-raised to retrieve their former seats in God's luminescent presence, these celestial rebels are condemned to suffer in total shame and sheer woe, to endure inextinguishable fire and torment. These celestial rebels are confined "to the place of no return, to the land of gloom and deep shadow, to the land of deepest night, of deep shadow and disorder, where even the light is like darkness." [Job 10:21,22]

Have the gates of death been shown to you? Have you seen the gates of the shadow of death?

[Job 38:17]

You have put me in the lowest pit, in the darkest depths.

[Ps. 88:6]

Satan himself, though defeated and fallen, a high angel of obscured glory and ruined eminence, still possesses great power of mind and foresight with imposing knowledge of primal past and ubiquitous present. Yet Satan remains an arrogant liar, “the deceiver”, who rules in his domain of perdition through the power of sin and unrighteousness and death.

Pride goes before destruction, a haughty spirit before a fall.

[Prov. 16:18]

He was a murderer from the beginning, not holding to the truth, for there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks his native language, for he is a liar and the father of lies.

[John 8:44]

Satan himself masquerades as an angel of light

[2Cor. 11:14]

Having fought in heaven, and now fully realizing the divine force and irresistible power that brought about their fall, Satan and his horde of evil spirits turn instead to fraud and guile. Rejecting submission to heavenly authority, they resort to open defiance, fiercer through despair and armed with hell’s fury and flames. Rejecting a call to penance, they turn to vengeance with all their hostility and hatred, the desired perversion of all mankind. They are bent on wasting God’s earthly creation and seducing mankind to evil, sin and death.

By authority of the heavenly Father, the Son of God, in his heavenly glory and attended by the ever-present Spirit with a host of assisting angels, had long ago set out to create the heavens and the earth in six days. Being purposely separated from the realms of both heaven and hell, a new Paradise was created on earth whereupon our primeval progenitors Adam and Eve were placed in the magnificent Garden of Eden. From the very beginning, the Spirit was present with the Son, mighty wings spread out dovelike, “hovering over the waters.” [Gen. 1:2] God creates through the agency of his ever-present Son and with the conjoint presence of the living Spirit. Earth has been set apart from and over the great abyss, making it especially fertile to the creator prerogatives of the creator Son, the eternal Word of God:

By the word of the Lord were the heavens made, their starry host by the breath of his mouth.

[Ps. 33:6]



***“I was appointed from eternity, from the beginning,
before the world began....I was the craftsman at his side.
I was filled with delight day after day, rejoicing always
in his presence, rejoicing in his whole world and
delighting in mankind.”***

[Prov. 8:23,30,31]

***“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with
God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the
beginning. Through him all things were made; without
him nothing was made that has been made.”***

[John 1:1-3]

***The God who made the world and everything in it is the Lord of heaven and
earth.***

[Acts 17:24]

***He has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, and
through whom he made the universe.***

[Heb. 1:2]

By God's word the heavens existed and the earth was formed out of the water and by water.

[2Pet. 3:5]

THE ORIGINAL SIN OF ADAM:

The Book of Genesis relates how God sets apart from fathomless eternity a safe and sheltered haven for the creation of our world. He fills the sky with birds and the seas with fish. On the dry land flourish all the fruit-bearing trees and over which creep the wild animals and the cattle of the fields. To crown his creation, God molds the nonliving matter of the earth and breathes life into it to create Adam, the first man. Then to provide this man with a suitable complement and companion, he takes living matter from Adam and creates the first woman Eve.

Man is created a little lower than the angels, less in power and excellence but more favored possessing both free will and the Father's divine indwelling presence:

When God created man, he made him in the likeness of God. He created them male and female and blessed them. And when they were created, he called them 'man'.

[Gen. 5:1,2]

What is mankind that you are mindful of them, human beings that you care for them? You have made them a little lower than the angels and crowned them with glory and honor. You made them rulers over the works of your hands; you put everything under their feet.

[Ps. 8:4-6]

To man, the crown of creation, God gave the privilege and responsibility for subduing the earth and wielding dominion over the fish in the sea, the birds of the sky, and every living thing that moves upon the land. God entered into a personal relationship with Adam and Eve, forming a fellowship with them. By virtue of God's bestowal of custodianship over the Edenic garden, Adam became the first caretaker of the Garden of Eden and he accordingly assigned each animal a name according to its traits.



Now the Lord had formed out of the ground all the beasts of the field and all the birds of the air. He brought them to the man to see what he would name them; and whatever the man called each living creature, that was its name. So the man gave names to all the livestock, the birds of the air and all the beast of the field.
[Gen. 2:19,20]

The Lord planted his garden in Eden. In the middle of this garden, among the trees that were pleasing to the eye and laden with edible fruit, he placed a “tree of life” and a “tree of the knowledge of good and evil.” The Lord commands Adam, “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 surely die.” [Gen. 2:16,17] Notice that God does not forbid the eating from the tree of life, a tree that provides for everlasting life.

Satan sets out to deceive Eve in the guise of a serpent: “Now the serpent was craftier than any of the wild animals the Lord God has made.” [Gen. 3:1] The serpent finds Eve alone. Gazing at her intently, he speaks to her with flattery. Eve wonders at the serpent’s human speech and understanding reason. The serpent alludes to a certain tree in the garden that happens to be the forbidden tree of the knowledge of good and evil. He induces her to eat of its fruit, convincing her that not only will she not die but rather she will gain divine

understanding and insight. Having eaten thereof, Eve brings the fruit to Adam, who, perceiving her lost estate and resolving to perish with her, extenuates the trespass and eats also of the fruit.

With their eyes now “opened”, they then seek to cover their nakedness and their shame, and they fall to variance with one another in blame and accusation. Man has committed his first disobedience, eating fruit from the forbidden tree whose mortal taste brings death into the world and the loss of the Edenic paradise. Man has offended the majesty of God by aspiring to omniscience of godhead; grace cannot be extended to fallen man without the propitiatory satisfaction of divine justice.

God created and gave to man a companion – Eve. Eve was tempted by the serpent Satan and she ate from the forbidden tree. She shared this fruit with her husband Adam, and he too ate from the tree. Adam’s sin does not change God’s sovereign expectation for his creation; it does not alter his original purpose and plan for creation. Adam was allowed to live out a mortal life, and he became the father of all mankind. But Adam’s original sin is passed on to all born of his seed. So, the whole human race is thenceforth born in spiritual darkness, separated from God’s holiness.

It is of interest to note that Adam was allowed to eat from the tree of life while he dwelt in the Garden of Eden. But when Adam and Eve broke God’s commandment, they were no longer allowed to eat from the tree of life that would have allowed them to live forever. They are henceforth banished from Eden, and a cherubim with a flaming sword is placed at the garden’s entrance to guard and block the way back to the tree of life. The tree of life possesses a special property that had endowed Adam and Eve with on-going, unending life. Exile from the garden meant inevitable mortality and death.

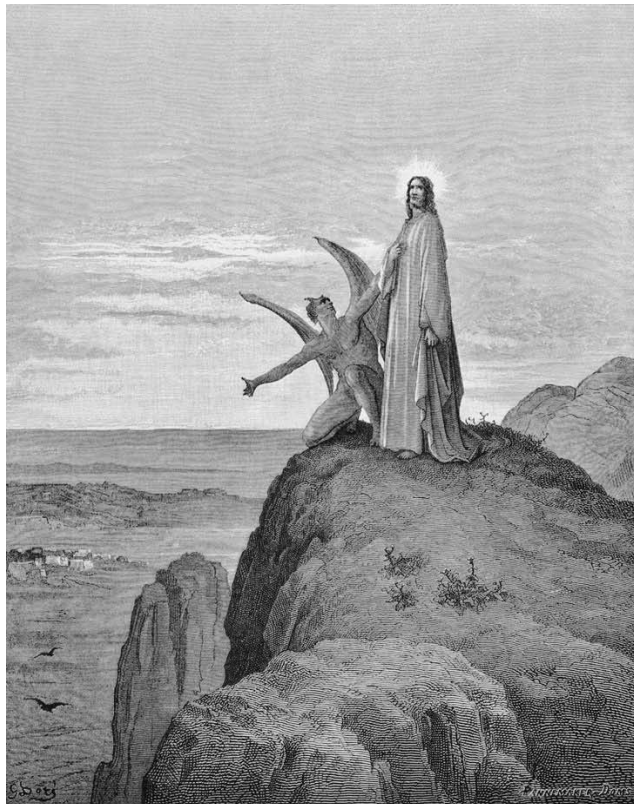
On the side of the river stood the tree of life, bearing twelve crops of fruit, yielding its fruit every month.

[Rev. 22:2]

That Satan has succeeded in perverting mankind, God as mankind’s Creator is cleared of any complicity, having given man free will and ability enough to withstand Satan’s temptation. God extends some degree of grace to man on the grounds man was seduced into disobedience, but this grace still requires the satisfaction of divine justice. Man has offended the sanctity of God’s presence with his willful disobedience; all mankind’s progeny are subject to mortal death and must eventually die unless someone can be found to step in and answer for this offense and undertake a satisfactory punishment. The Son of God willingly offers himself as a ransom for man. The Father accepts him and ordains his incarnation as the Son of Man, exalting his name in heaven and earth.

Satan has a continued history for attempting to pervert God’s purposes and plans for us and our world because “the whole world is under the control of the evil one” (1John 5:19). Jesus Christ “gave himself for our sins to rescue us from the present evil age” (Galatians 1:4). Our heavenly Father has “rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves” (Colossians 1:13). Christ has vanquished Satan’s ultimate

power over this world and delivered believers from Satan by his death: "Now is the time for judgment on this world; now the prince of this world will be driven out" [John 12:31]. Christ's victory over Satan has freed those of the faith from the ravages of sin with a profound expectation for salvation after death: "Since the children have flesh and blood, he too shared in their humanity so that by his death he might break the power of him who holds the power of death - that is, the devil - and free those who all their lives were held in slavery by their fear of death." [Heb. 2:14,15]



Then Jesus was led by the Spirit into the desert to be tempted by the devil... The tempter came to him... The devil took him to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their splendor. "All this I give you," he said, "if you will bow down and worship me." Jesus said to him, "Away from me, Satan! For it is written, 'Worship the Lord your God, and serve him only.'" Then the devil left him, and angels came and attended him.
[Mat. 4:1,3,8-11]

The unsaved can "enjoy the pleasures of sin for a short time, [Hebrews 11:25], but a true Christian cannot. Once the Spirit has taken up residence in his life, his carnal desires will prove disappointing and unsatisfactory – the Spirit will not let him enjoy his sin.

DEATH THROUGH ADAM, LIFE THROUGH CHRIST:

Death Through Adam, Life Through Christ



Therefore, just as sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin, and in this way death came to all people, because all sinned... death reigned from the time of Adam to the time of Moses, even over those who did not sin by breaking a command, as did Adam, who is a pattern of the one to come... just as sin reigned in death, so also grace might reign through righteousness to bring eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.

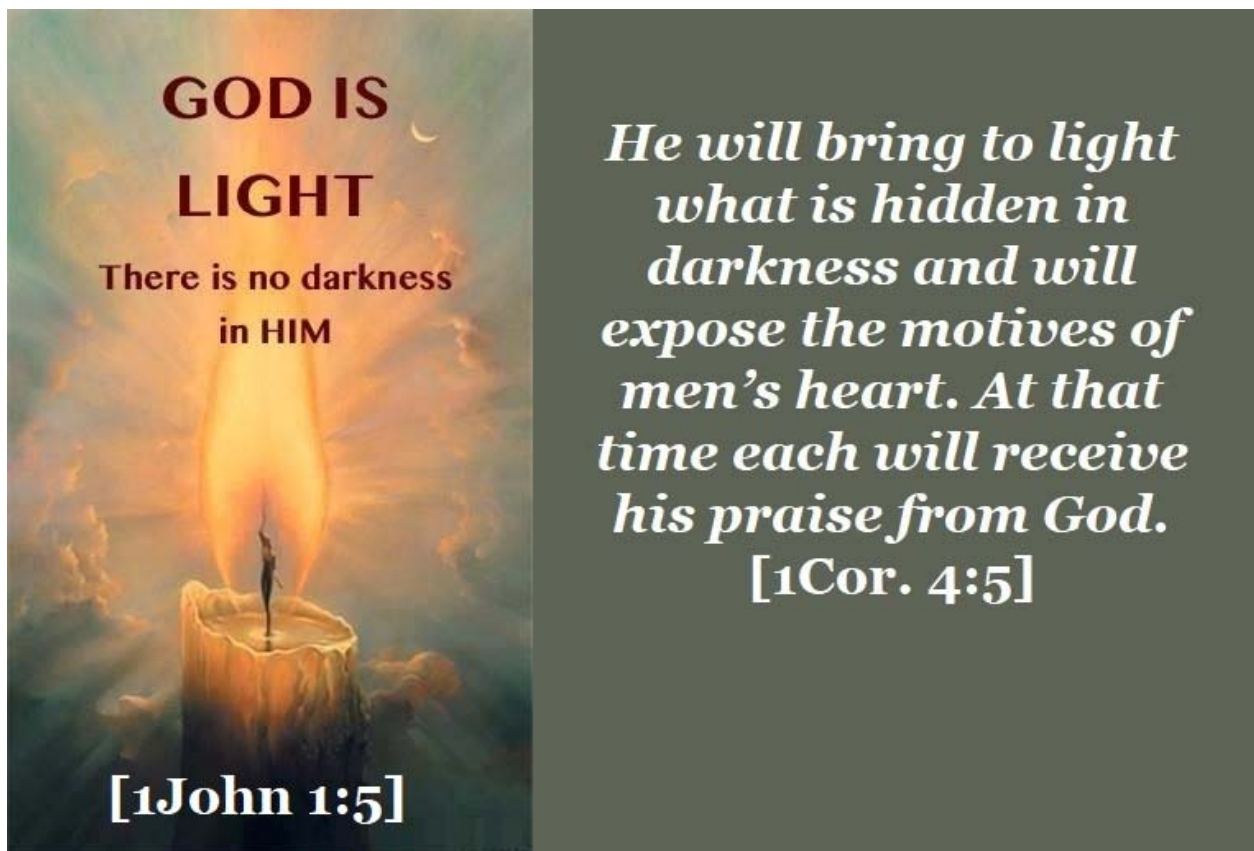
[Rom. 5:12,14,21]

The Bible presents salvation in the form of a story that describes the outworking of God's eternal plan to deal with the problem of human sin. The story is set against the background of the history of God's people and reaches its climax in the person and work of Christ. The Old Testament part of the story shows that people are sinners by nature, and it describes a series of covenants by which God sets people free and makes promises to them. His plan includes the promise of blessing for all nations through Abraham and the redemption of Israel from every form of bondage. God shows his saving power throughout Israel's history, but he also speaks about a Messianic figure who will save all people from the power, guilt, and penalty of sin. This role was fulfilled by Jesus, who will ultimately destroy all the devil's work, including suffering, pain, and death

God's plan for the salvation of mankind was purposed before the world began. He planned for the redemption and deliverance of all who would willfully come to him in faith and repentance. God determined that those who align themselves with his light and spirit are destined for salvation, while those who reject his light remain in darkness, leading to moral deprivation and spiritual separation. We have the freewill prerogative to believe in God's wisdom, confessing Christ as our personal savior. The heavenly Father graciously offers salvation through faith, and it is our prerogative to accept and embrace this gift.

Christianity's primary premise is that the incarnation and death of Jesus Christ formed the climax of God's divine plan for humanity's salvation. This plan was conceived by God consequent on the Fall of Adam, the progenitor of the human race, and it would be completed at the Last Judgment, when the Second Coming of Christ would mark the final transformation of the world. For Christianity, salvation is only possible through Jesus Christ. Christians believe that Jesus' death on the cross was the once-for-all sacrifice that atoned for the sin of humanity.

According to Christian belief, sin as the human predicament is considered to be universal. In Romans 1:18-3:20, the Apostle Paul declares everyone to be under sin - Jew and Gentile alike. Salvation is made possible by the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus, which in the context of salvation is referred to as the "atonement". While some of the differences are as widespread as Christianity itself, the overwhelming majority agrees that salvation is made possible by the work of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, dying on the cross. Salvation is a gift of God, given by grace through faith in Jesus Christ. Upon repentance and baptism, God forgives us from our past sins. We then begin a lifelong process of repentance and growing in grace and the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.



For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

[Romans 6:23]

So I find this law at work: Although I want to do good, evil is right there with me. For in my inner being I delight in God's law; but I see another law at work in me, waging war against the law of my mind and making me a prisoner of the law of sin at work within me.

[Romans 7:21-23]

My dear children, I write this to you so that you will not sin. But if anybody does sin, we have an advocate with the Father—Jesus Christ, the Righteous One. He is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not only for ours but also for the sins of the whole world.

[1John 2:1,2]

Everyone who sins breaks the law; in fact, sin is lawlessness. But you know that he appeared so that he might take away our sins. And in him is no sin. No one who lives in him keeps on sinning. No one who continues to sin has either seen him or known him.

[1John 3:4-6]

By his death he might destroy him who holds the power of death – that is, the devil.

[Heb. 2:14]

CHAPTER FIVE

SACRIFICE AND WORSHIP

Sacrificial Ritual

Israel's Sacrifices and Offerings

Mosaic Tribal Sacrifice

Jerusalem Temple Ritual

Redemption through Jesus Christ

SACRIFICIAL RITUAL:

Sacrifice was not unique among the nations of the Ancient Near East in their use of sacrificial ritual and offerings as a means of religious expression. Some type of sacrificial system characterized the many religious methodologies that the nations employed in their attempts to honor their gods. The presence of sacrifices and offerings in Israel, therefore, was a reflection of the larger extended culture of which this nation was a part. Many references to the offering of sacrifices exist in extrabiblical literature. The primary approach to the gods was through the sacrificial system. In Babylon, part of the ritual of purifying the temple of Bel for the new year's festival involved the slaughter of a ram. The animal was decapitated and the priest, in turn, used the body in the purification ceremony.

While these types of sacrifices were performed on special occasions, a variety of rams, bulls, and birds were offered as meals to the idols on a daily basis. Barley beer, mixed beer, milk, and wine also were placed before the deities, as well as loaves of bread. The sacrifices and offerings were designed to serve the gods by meeting any physical need that they may have had. The sacrifices were the food and drink of the gods. Faithfulness to the preparation and presentation of them was an act of worshipful devotion.

The sacrificial system in the Old Testament was practiced from the earliest times of these Biblical records. Cain and Abel brought offerings to the Lord from the produce of the land and from the first born of the flock (Gen. 4:1). Abel had kept flocks and Cain worked the soil; Cain brought fruits of the soil as an offering to the Lord and Abel brought fat portions from some of the firstborn of his flock.



***The Lord looked with favor on Abel and his offering, but on Cain and his offering he did not look with favor.
[Gen. 4:4,5]***

Upon embarking from the ark after the great flood, Noah immediately built an altar and offered burnt sacrifices. These were a soothing aroma to the Lord (Gen. 8:1). Noah built an altar to the Lord and sacrificed burnt offerings of some of his clean animals and clean birds on it.



***The Lord smelled the pleasant aroma and said in his heart: “Never again will I curse the ground because of man.”
[Gen. 8:21]***

Other Ancient Near Eastern flood stories have parallels to this act by Noah. The patriarchal stories in Genesis 12-50 are filled with instances of sacrifice to God. The most famous is

that of Abraham and Isaac (Genesis 22:1). In his travels through the land of Canaan, Abraham built and left altars to the Lord, places where God had called upon his name. At God's bidding, Abraham left for Mount Moriah, the place intended to prepare his son Isaac as a burnt offering to God as requested. God tested Abraham's faith by asking him to offer his son Isaac as a sacrifice. Bolstered by his faith in the Lord, Abraham was willing to sacrifice his one and only son of inheritance, even though God promised him, "It is through Isaac that your offspring will be reckoned." [Gen. 21:12]

In the evolution of sacrificial ritual, everything must be cleansed with blood, for without the shedding of blood, there can be no forgiveness from an offended God: "For the life of a creature is in the blood, and I have given it to you to make atonement for yourselves on the altar; it is the blood that makes atonement for one's life." [Lev. 17:11] Human sacrifice was a common practice in the ancient world. The firstborn was attributed to be God's own begotten. Moses told his people upon their exodus from Egypt that the Lord required the consecration of the firstborn male of every womb among the Israelites, both man and animal. By right, all firstborn males are the Lord's. Under the privileged leadership of Moses, these firstborn males of man became redeemed from the Lord by replacement with a suitable "sacrificial lamb". Human sacrifice eventually gave way to the substitutional sacrifice of a clean and unblemished animal whose blood is sprinkled on a holy altar to allow once again for the sinner to approach his venerated God because some living creature had given its lifeblood (been redeemed) in his place.

The atonement sacrifice of an animal was a symbolic act of appeasement which substituted the victim's life for the life of the offeror who thus acknowledges that he deserves God's punishment for his sins. The only animals which could be used as sacrificial victims were either of the bovine class (bulls, cows and calves) or the ovine class (sheep and lambs, goats and kids). Excluded, therefor, were not only wild animals, but also such "unclean" domestic animals as the camel, the pig and the ass. The distinction between edible and inedible meat was probably based on traditional ideas of hygiene.



When a period of fasting had run its course, Job would send and have them purified. Early in the morning he would sacrifice a burnt offering for each of them, thinking, "Perhaps my children have sinned and cursed God in their hearts." This was Job's regular custom.
[Job 1:5]

The word atonement is a theological term that is used to describe some act that pays for or erases one's sins and transgressions. The word often is used in the Old Testament to translate the Hebrew words kipper and kip Purim, which mean 'propitiation' or 'expiation'. Since Adam's fall, sin has separated man and God, and mediation has been required to help the people find forgiveness. The sacrificial offering is dedicated to the effective removal of collective guilt from the community and to purify the people for atonement with the Lord.

An organized system of sacrifice does not appear in the Old Testament until after the Exodus of Israel from Egypt. In the instructions given for the building of the tabernacle and the establishment of a priestly organization, sacrifices were to be used in the consecration or ordination of the priests (Ex. 29:1). A bull was slaughtered as a sin offering. Other sacrifices provided Aaron and his sons a holy meal. These sacrifices were repeated each day for a week as a part of the "ordination" of the priests. The altar itself was consecrated through the offering of two lambs and a grain offering and a libation of wine. This sacrifice also was carried out each day for a week.

The sacrifices that constituted much of the worship of Israel at this time were burned on an altar that was made from acacia wood and overlaid with copper (Ex. 27:1). In addition to the sacrifices offered on this altar, incense was burned on a smaller altar (Ex. 30:1). While the sacrificial altar was placed in the courtyard, just before the door of the tabernacle, the incense altar was positioned inside the tabernacle, just before the ark of the covenant. Leviticus 1-7 gives the most detailed description of Israel's sacrificial system, including five types of sacrifices. The sacrifices and offerings that were brought by the people were to be the physical expression of their inward devotion.

ISRAEL'S SACRIFICES AND OFFERINGS:

Sacrifices have been classified in a variety of ways, chiefly the following: (1) Those on behalf of the whole congregation and those on behalf of the individual. (2) Animal or bleeding sacrifices and bloodless offerings. (3) Sacrifices assuming an undisturbed covenant relationship and those intended to restore a relationship that has been disturbed. (4) Animal sacrifices, vegetable sacrifices, liquid and incense offerings. (5) Sacrifices made without the help of a priest, those made by a priest alone, and those made by a layman with the help of a priest. (6) Sacrifices that express homage to the deity; those designed to make atonement for sin; and peace offerings, to express or promote peaceful relations with the deity. (7) Self-dedicatory sacrifices, eucharistic sacrifices, and expiatory sacrifices. (8) Sacrifices in which the offering was wholly devoted to God, and sacrifices in which God received a portion and the worshiper feasted on the remainder.

1. Burnt offering: The burnt offering was offered both in the morning and in the evening, as well as on special days such as the Sabbath, the new moon, and the yearly feasts (Num. 28-29; 2Kings 16:15; 2Chron. 2:4; 2Chron. 31:3; Ezra 3:3-6) Rituals performed after childbirth (Lev. 12:6-8)], for an unclean discharge (Lev. 15:14-15) or hemorrhage (Lev. 15:29-30), or after a person who was keeping a Nazirite vow was defiled (Num. 6:10-11) required a burnt offering, as well as a sin offering.

The animal for this sacrifice could be a young bull, lamb, goat, turtledove, or young pigeon; but it had to be a perfect and complete specimen. The type of animal chosen for this sacrifice seems to be dependent on the offeror's financial ability. The one bringing the offering was to lay a hand upon the animal so as to identify that the animal was taking the person's place, and then to kill it. The priest then collected the blood and sprinkled it around the altar and the sanctuary, and the worshiper cut up and skinned the animal. If a bird was brought, the priest killed it. After the priest arranged the various parts on the altar, the entire animal was burned as a sacrifice. The only portion that remained was the hide, and the priest received it (Lev. 7:8). The one who made this sacrifice did so to restore the relationship with God and to atone for some sin. When Araunah offered to David his threshing floor, oxen, and wood without cost so that David could sacrifice, David refused. His explanation was that he could not offer burnt offerings that cost him nothing (2Sam. 24:18-25).

Make an altar of earth for me and sacrifice on it your burnt offerings and fellowship offerings, your sheep and goats and your cattle.

[Ex. 20:24]

It is a burnt offering to the Lord, a pleasing aroma, a food offering presented to the Lord.

[Ex. 29:18]

If the offering is a burnt offering from the herd, he is to offer a male without defect....It is a burnt offering made by fire, an aroma pleasing to the Lord.

[Lev. 1:3,9]

Because they present the food offerings to the Lord, the food of their God, they [the priests] are to be holy.

[Lev. 21:6]

2. Grain offering: An offering from the harvest of the land is the only type that required no bloodshed. It was composed of fine flour mixed with oil and frankincense. Sometimes, this offering was cooked into cakes prior to taking it to the priest. These cakes, however, had to be made without leaven. Every grain offering had to have salt in it (Lev. 2:13), perhaps as a symbol of the covenant – since salt is a preservative, it would easily become symbolic of an

enduring covenant. Only a portion of this offering was burned on the altar, with the remainder going to the priests. While no reason is given for the grain offering, it may have symbolized the recognition of God's blessing in the harvest by a society based to a large degree on agriculture. The bringing of a representative portion of the grain harvest was another outward expression of devotion.

3. Peace offering: This consisted of the sacrifice of a bull, cow, lamb, or goat that had no defect. As with the burnt offering, the individual laid a hand on the animal and killed it. The priests, in turn, sprinkled the blood around the altar. Only certain parts of the internal organs were burned. The priest received the breast and the right thigh (Lev. 7:28-36), but the offeror was given much of the meat to have a meal of celebration (Lev. 7:11-21). As part of the meal, various kinds of bread were offered (and ultimately kept by the priest). The idea of thanksgiving was associated with the peace offering. It often accompanied other sacrifices in celebration of events such as the dedication of the Temple (1Kings 8:63) or spiritual renewal (2Chron. 29:31-36).

4. Sin offering: This was designed to deal with sin that was committed unintentionally. The sacrifice varied according to who committed the sin. If the priest or the congregation of Israel sinned, then a bull was required. A leader of the people had to bring a male goat, while anyone else sacrificed a female goat or a lamb. The poor were allowed to bring two turtledoves or two young pigeons. The one bringing the offering placed a hand on the animal and then slaughtered it. When the priest or the congregation sinned, the blood was sprinkled seven times before the veil in the sanctuary, and some of it was placed on the horns of the incense altar. The rest of the blood was poured out at the base of the sacrificial altar. For others who sinned, the sprinkling of the blood before the veil was omitted. The same internal organs that were designated for burning in the peace offering were likewise designated in this sacrifice. The rest of the animal was taken outside of the camp to the place where the ashes of the sacrifices were disposed, and there it was burned. These disposal procedures were not followed when the sin offering was made on behalf of a non-priestly person (Lev. 6:24-30). In this case, the priest was allowed to eat some of the meat.

5. Guilt offering: This is hard to distinguish from the sin offering (Lev. 4-5). In Leviticus 5:6-7, the guilt offering is called the sin offering. Both offerings also were made for similar types of sin. The guilt offering was concerned supremely with restitution. Someone who took something illegally was expected to repay it in full plus 20 percent of the value and then bring a ram for the guilt offering. Other instances in which the guilt offering was prescribed included the cleansing of a leper (Lev. 14:1), having sexual relations with the female slave of another person (Lev. 19:20-22), and for the renewing of a Nazirite vow that had been broken (Num. 6:11-12).

The burnt, grain, peace, sin, and guilt offerings comprised the basic sacrificial system of Israel. These sacrifices were commonly used in conjunction with each other and were carried out on both an individual and a corporate basis. The sacrificial system taught the necessity of dealing with sin and, at the same time, demonstrated that God had provided a way for dealing with sin.

MOSAIC TRIBAL SACRIFICE:

As commanded by the Lord, Moses built a makeshift altar at the foot of Mount Sinai, setting up twelve stone pillars representing the twelve tribes of the Israelites. The people then offered burnt offerings and they sacrificed young bulls as fellowship offerings to their God. Moses sprinkled the blood on them, saying, “This is the blood of the covenant that the Lord has made with you.” [Ex. 24:8] For Moses and the wandering Israelites, the blood of a sacrificial animal was sprinkled on the people at Mount Sinai to pay the penalty for their sin so that they could be reunited with their God. The blood of goats and bulls and the ashes of the heifer are sprinkled on those who are unclean to sanctify them and make them outwardly clean.

With time, as the Israelites made their way from Mount Sinai into the desert wilderness, Moses and the people set up a Tent of Meeting for the Lord that could accompany them in their travels. As their offering for the Lord, a bull and two rams are taken from the herd or the flock, all being male without blemish or defect, and these are presented at the front of the Tent of Meeting. The first ram is burned on the altar. The sprinkling of blood from the second of the two rams is used to sanctify Aaron, his sons, and their garments. The bull is sacrificed by Aaron and his sons for atonement with the Lord God. The animal is slaughtered before the presence of the Lord, and its blood is sprinkled the horns of the front altar, the rest being poured at the base of the altar. The sons of Aaron prepare a wood fire on the altar, and the parts of the sacrificed animal are placed on the fire so that a pleasing aroma is emanated. Part of this offering is designated for the serving priests to care for their own nutritional needs. Moses’ brother Aaron and Aaron’s sons are to serve God as priests of the tabernacle. Aaron wears sacred garments “to give him dignity and honor.” [Ex. 28:2]

The priesthood is theirs by a lasting ordinance. Then you shall ordain Aaron and his sons.
[Ex.29:9]

So I will consecrate the Tent of Meeting and the altar and will consecrate Aaron and his sons to serve me as priests. Then I will dwell among the Israelites and be their God. They will know that I am the Lord their God, who brought them out of Egypt so that I might dwell among them. I am the Lord their God.
[Ex. 29:44-46]

When Moses himself would enter the Tent of Meeting, a pillar of cloud would descend to the entrance of the tent and Moses would commune with God whose glory would fill the tabernacle. The Lord would appear in the cloud over the atonement cover of the Ark.

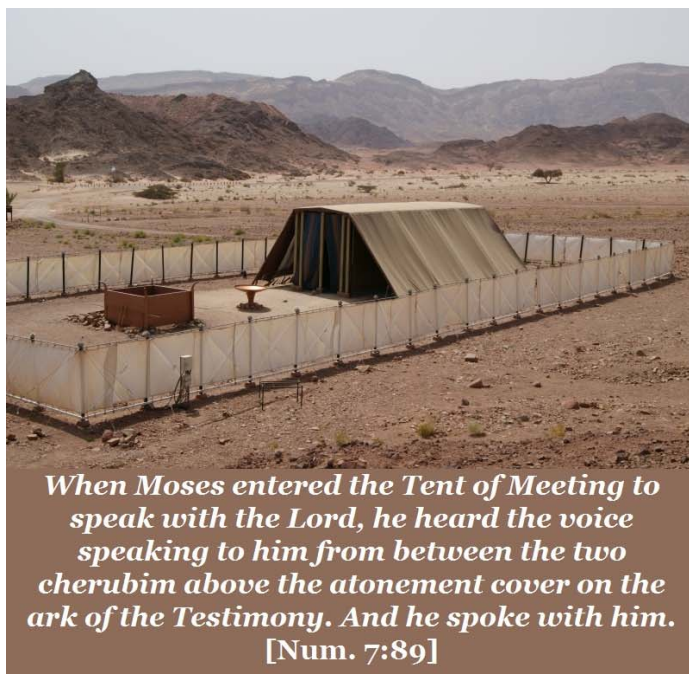
In all the travels of the Israelites, whenever the cloud lifted from above the tabernacle, they would set out; but if the cloud did not lift, they did not set out –until the day it lifted.
[Ex. 40:36,37]

In the manner of Aaron and his sons, and by right of descendancy, the tribe of the Levites was given charge of the tabernacle of the Testimony and all its furnishings. When all the combined tribes of Israel were on the move, the Levites were responsible for dismantling and reassembling the tabernacle: “I have taken the Levites from among the Israelites in place of the first male offspring of every Israelite woman. The Levites are mine.” [Num. 3:11] The Levites were taken by the Lord as redemption for the firstborn of the Israelites. These mediating priests, these sons of Aaron, were the spiritual leaders of the people and the overseers of the offering.

The tabernacle containing the sacrificial altar provides a place where the God of the Israelites might dwell among his people as they wandered through the wilderness. A curtain separates the two sacred rooms in the tabernacle – the Holy Place and the Most Holy Place. The first room of the tabernacle is called the Holy Place. The priests carry out their regular ministries in the outer room, the Holy Place, while the High Priest is the only one allowed to enter the inner room, the Most Holy Place, and then he does this only once a year. The priests of the tabernacle offer gifts and sacrifices as prescribed by the Law.

A priest enters the Holy Place each day to commune with God and to tend to the incense altar, the lampstand, and the table with the consecrated Bread of the Presence. A lampstand of pure gold is prepared with all its flower-like cups, buds and blossoms. The altar of burnt offering is first visible in the tabernacle courtyard – this is where the sacrifices were carried out. The Bread of the Presence along with pure gold plates and dishes are placed on the table for the administering of the offerings. The holy fire on the altar had to remain burning because it represented God’s presence in this sacrificial system.

A curtain hanging on gold hooks separates the Holy Place from the Most Holy Place. Behind the curtain is to be found the Most Holy Place which contains a golden altar of incense and the gold-covered Ark of the Covenant. Within the Ark are located a gold jar of manna, the budded staff of Aaron, and the stone tablets of the Covenant on which are written the Ten Commandments. Overshadowing the Ark are the cherubim of the Glory. These cherubim face each other and have their wings spread upward over the Ark. The Most Holy Place is where God himself dwells, resting on the atonement cover over the Ark of the Covenant enthroned between the cherubim.



Behind the curtain, burning coals are taken from the altar before the presence of the Lord and finely ground incense is added to the fire. The smoke of the incense conceals the atonement cover above the Testimony so that the High Priest will not die by being in direct view with the Lord's presence: "You cannot see my face, for no one may see me and live." [Ex. 33:20] Then the High Priest sprinkles some atonement blood in front of the Ark with his finger.

But God struck down some of the men of Beth Shemesh, putting seventy of them to death because they had looked into the ark of the Lord.
[1Sam. 6:19]

The Lord's first covenant with Moses' people provided guidelines for worship and the rituals of sacrifice, and for the building of an earthly tabernacle. The tabernacle of the Testimony was set up by Moses' people in the desert based on the heavenly pattern given Moses by God. This is where Moses is to place stone tablets representing the Ark of the Testimony which God gave him at Mount Sinai. This sanctuary of the tabernacle on earth is but a shadowy copy of that which is eternally established in heaven: "This is why Moses was warned when he was about to build the tabernacle: "They serve at a sanctuary that is a copy and shadow of what is in heaven. This is why Moses was warned when he was about to build the tabernacle: 'See to it that you make everything according to the pattern shown you on the mountain.'" [Heb. 8:5] God tells Moses to have the people build this sanctuary for him to dwell in. He provides the precise pattern by which to build it with all its furnishings so that it accurately portrays his heavenly abode, and so that he may dwell with his beloved people

Tribal Offerings for Building the Tabernacle:

- Gold, silver and bronze.
- Colored yarns and fine linen.
- Goat hair.
- Dyed ram skins.
- Cowhides.
- Acacia wood.
- Olive oil for the lamps.
- Spices, oil, and fragrant incense.
- Onyx stones and gems.

Moses' successor Joshua brought the tabernacle with him into Canaan as the Israelites drove out the nations before them.

Then Joshua built on Mount Ebal an altar to the Lord, the God of Israel, as Moses the servant of the Lord had commanded the Israelites. He built it according to what is written in the Book of the Law of Moses – an altar of uncut stones, on which no iron tool had been used. On it they offered to the Lord burnt offerings and sacrificed fellowship offerings.
[Joshua 8:30,31]

The tabernacle began as God's home on earth where he dwelt with the prophet Moses and the chosen people. After its long sojourn with the Israelites in the wilderness after the exodus from Egypt, the tabernacle of the ark was established in Shiloh where it remained throughout the period of the Judges (about 300 years). At a time during the internal disintegration of the nation of Israel, the Ark of the Covenant was captured by the Philistines.

When they learned that the ark of the Lord had come into the camp, the Philistines were afraid. "A god has come into the camp," they said. "Oh no! Nothing like this has happened before. We're doomed!"
[1Sam. 4:6-8]

The glory has departed from Israel, for the ark of the Lord has been captured.
[1Sam. 4:22]

In the days of the Judges of Israel, Gideon responded to the angel of the Lord by preparing unleavened bread and meat and broth from a young goat. He then placed the meat and bread on a rock specified by the angel, pouring out the broth over them: "Fire flared from the rock, consuming the meat and the bread." [Judges 6:21] Gideon then prepared a proper altar to the Lord using materials from his Father's altar to the god Baal, and he sacrificed as a burnt offering a bull from his father's herd on the altar using the wood from his father's Asherah pole.

The Ark was recaptured and eventually King Solomon built his magnificent temple in Jerusalem, the city of his father King David. Jerusalem was and has been the holy city of

the Jews. Jewish history centers on this city from the times of Abraham's meetings with the high priest Melchizedek, King of Salem, to the times when Solomon built the glorious temple, and continues throughout the long procession of Jewish kings. Jerusalem represents Jewish national identity, and it was blessed with God's special presence in the temple.

JERUSALEM TEMPLE RITUAL:

Solomon's temple replaces the tabernacle of the wandering Israelites as the centralized place of worship. This temple for the name of the Lord was originally intended to be built during the reign of Solomon's father King David, but because of David's numerous moral lapses and corrupt deeds, it wasn't until the reign of his son Solomon that it could be completed.

Go and tell my servant David, 'This is what the Lord says: Are you the one to build me a house to dwell in? I haven't dwelt in a house from the day I brought the Israelites up out of Egypt to this day. I have been moving from place to place with a tent as my dwelling.

[2Sam. 7:5,6]

He [Solomon] is the one who will build a house for my Name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever.

[2Sam. 7:13]

As for the temple you are building, if you follow my decrees, carry out my regulations and keep all my commands and obey them, I will fill through you the promise I gave to David your father. And I will live among the Israelites and will not abandon my people Israel.

[1Kings 6:11-14]

So, Solomon built the temple and completed it. Solomon's temple consisted of three square areas ending in a cube-shaped room called the Holy of Holies to contain the Ark of the Covenant. Like the portable altar, the tabernacle of the Testimony, which served the Israelites during their long sojourn in the desert wilderness, this temple was a replica of Yahweh's heavenly court. The ark was brought into the temple at Jerusalem containing only the two stone tablets that Moses had placed into it at Mount Sinai. After the Levite priests left the Holy Place, fire came down from heaven and consumed the burnt offering and the sacrifices, and a cloud enshrouding the Glory of the Lord filled the temple. (1Kings 8:10,11)



Solomon's Prayer of Dedication

But will God really dwell on earth? The heavens, even the highest heaven, cannot contain you. How much less this temple I have built!...Hear the supplication of your servant and of your people Israel when they pray toward this place. Hear from heaven, your dwelling place, and when you hear, forgive.

[1Kings 8:27,30]

The priests and the Levites stood to bless the people, and God heard them, for their prayer reached heaven, his dwelling place.

[2Chron. 30:27]

The Lord is in his holy temple; the Lord is on his heavenly throne.

[Ps. 11:4]

When the nation of Israel irretrievably turned away from its God, the Lord's glory and presence departed from this temple and it was destroyed by invading armies. A new temple was rebuilt in 515 B.C. Another 500 years into the future and Jesus Christ, the Son of God, will be born and eventually crucified. According to the Christian faith, after Jesus' resurrection back into the presence of the heavenly Father, God will no longer require a

temple as dwelling place. God's temple will be permanently replaced by his living church, his spiritual body of the Christian faithful.

The sacrificial rite of Moses' time was the method for his people to ask forgiveness for their sins and to restore their relationship with God as a holy act of atonement. Because all mankind is sinful in nature, and this path of sin leads to death, the sacrificial animal symbolically took the sinner's place for a just restitution, paying the ultimate price for sin. The animal's death redeems the worshiper from sharing the same fate. Looking ahead, we have found that the death of Jesus Christ, the "sacrificial lamb of God", became the last and final sacrifice for all those who live in his name. Animal sacrifice will no longer be relevant or effective to propitiate an angry and offended God. By belief in Jesus as savior and acceptance of his life-sacrifice, all mankind becomes freed from the penalty of sin.

The prophets spoke harshly about the people's concept of sacrifice. The people tended to ignore faith, confession, and devotion, thinking the mere act of sacrifice ensured forgiveness. Isaiah contended that the sacrifices were worthless when they were not accompanied by repentance and an obedient life [Isaiah 1:10-17]. Micah reflected the same sentiments when he proclaimed that God was not interested in the physical act of sacrifice by itself but in the life and heart of the one making the sacrifice [Micah 6:4-6]. Jeremiah condemned the belief that as long as the Temple was in Jerusalem and the people were faithful to perform the sacrifices, then God would protect them. The symbol of the sacrifice must be reflected in the individual's life [Jeremiah 7:1-26]. Malachi chastised the people for offering the lame and sick animals to God instead of the best, as the Levitical law required. In doing this, the people were defiling the altar and despising God [Malachi 1:7-14].



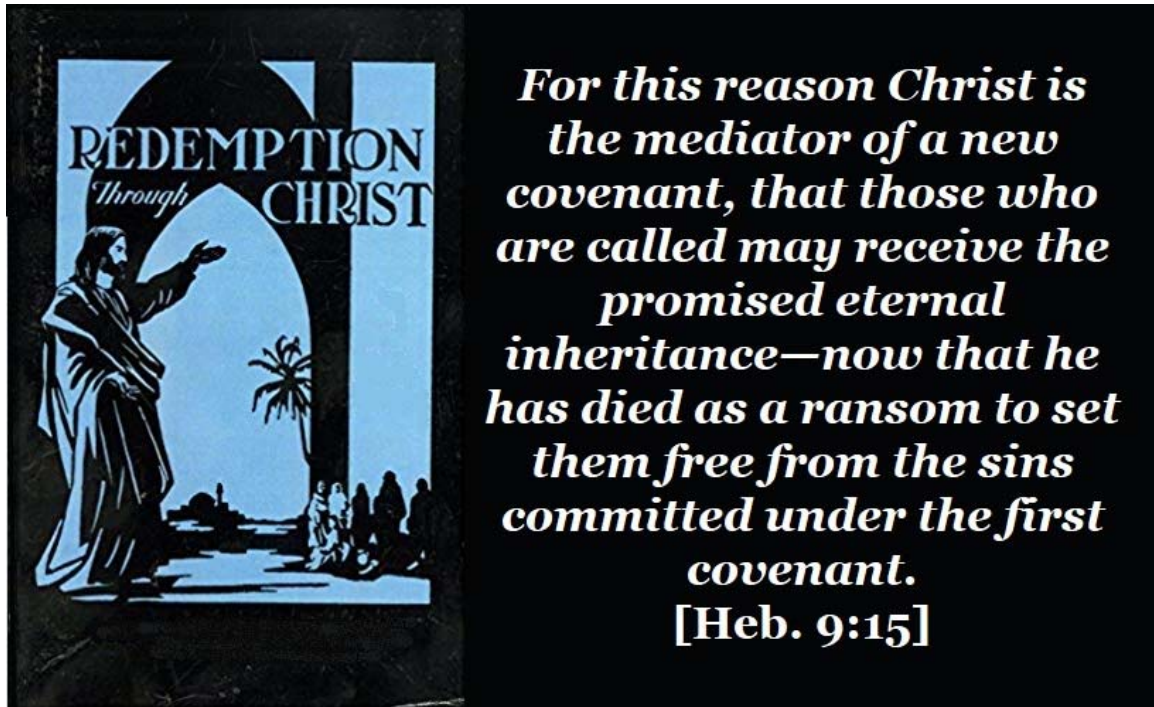
The prophets did not want to abolish the sacrificial system. Instead, they denounced the people's misuse of it. God wanted more than the physical performance of meaningless sacrifices. He desired the offerings to exemplify the heart of the worshiper.

Sacrifice and offering you did not desire, but my ears you have pierced; burnt offerings and sin sacrifices you did not require.
[Ps. 40:6]

I have no need for a bull from your stall or of goats from your pens, for every animal of the forest is mine, and the cattle on a thousand hills. I know every bird in the mountains, and the creatures of the field are mine. If I were hungry I would tell you, for the world is mine, and all that is in it. Do I eat the flesh of bulls or drink the blood of goats? Sacrifice thank offerings to God, fulfill your vows to the Most High.
[Ps. 50:9-14]

The people come near to me with their mouth and honor me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me. Their worship of me is made up only of rules taught by men
[Is. 29:13]

REDEMPTION THROUGH JESUS CHRIST:



Christian doctrine holds that the divine Jesus chose to suffer crucifixion at Calvary as a sign of his full obedience to the will of his divine Father, as an agent and servant of God. In Christian theology, the “Lamb of God” is viewed as foundational and integral to the message of Christianity

During the time of the New Testament, the people sacrificed according to the guidelines as delineated in the Old Testament. In keeping with the Levitical law (Lev. 12:1), Mary brought the baby Jesus to the Temple and offered a sacrifice for her purification. She sacrificed turtledoves or pigeons, indicating the family's low financial status. When Jesus healed the leper (Luke 5:12-14), he told him to go to the priest and make a sacrifice (compare Leviticus 14:1). The cleansing of the Temple (John 2:1) came about because people were selling animals and birds for the various sacrifices within the Temple precincts. These people had allowed the “business” of sacrifice to overwhelm the spiritual nature of the offerings.

With what shall I come before the Lord and bow down before the exalted God? Shall I come before him with burnt offerings, with calves a year old? Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams, with ten thousand rivers of oil? Shall I offer my firstborn for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul? He has showed you, O man what is good. And what does the Lord

require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God.
[Micah 6:6-8]

The New Testament consistently describes Christ's death in sacrificial terms. The book of Hebrews portrays Christ as the sinless high priest who offered himself up as a sacrifice for sinners (Lev. 7:27). The superiority of Christ's sacrifice over the Levitical sacrificial system is seen in that his sacrifice had to be offered only once. The book ends with an encouragement to offer sacrifices of praise to God through Christ. This thought is reflected in 1 Peter 2:1 where believers are called a holy and royal priesthood who offer up spiritual sacrifices.

Paul used the terminology of the Old Testament sacrifices in teaching about the death of Jesus. His death was an offering and sacrifice to God and, as such, a fragrant aroma (Eph. 5:2). He associated Jesus with the Passover sacrifice (1Cor. 5:7). Paul also spoke of himself as a libation poured out (Phil. 2:18). He called the Philippians' gift a fragrant aroma and an acceptable sacrifice to God (Phil. 4:18).

The first-century church lived in a culture that sacrificed to their gods. Paul and Barnabas at Lystra were thought to be the gods Zeus and Hermes. The priest of Zeus sought to offer sacrifices to them (Acts 14:1). The church at Corinth was embroiled in a controversy over whether or not it was permissible for Christians to eat meat offered to idols (1Cor. 8-10). Paul's preaching of the gospel at Ephesus disrupted the business and worship of the goddess Artemis (Acts 19:1).

When the Temple in Jerusalem was destroyed in 70 AD, the Jews' sacrificial system ceased. By this time, however, the Church had begun to distance itself from Judaism. The biblical view of sacrifice changed as well. In the Old Testament and in the beginning years of the New Testament, sacrifice was the accepted mode of worship. With the death of Christ, however, physical sacrifice became unnecessary. As the temple and priest of God, the believer now has the responsibility for offering acceptable spiritual sacrifices.

The God who made the world and everything in it is the Lord of heaven and earth and does not live in temples built by hands. And he is not served by human hands, as if he needed anything, because he himself gives men life and breath and everything else.
[Acts 17:24,25]

CHAPTER SIX

HEAVENLY HOST, GODS AND GODDESSES, IDOLS AND EVIL PRACTICES

Heavenly Host:

- **Angels**
- **Seraphim**
- **Cherubim**
- **Archangel Michael**
- **Gabriel**
- **Raphael**
- **Angel of the Lord**
- **Commander of the Army of the Lord**
- **Ancient of Days**
- **Melchizedek (“My King is Righteous”)**
- **Prince of the Air (Prince of the World)**
- **Lucifer (“Morning Star”) – Satan – The Devil**
- **Demons and Deceiving Spirits**
- **The “sons of God” and the Nephilim**

Gods and Goddesses

Idols and Evil Practices

HEAVENLY HOST:



Micaiah continued, “Therefore hear the word of the Lord: I saw the Lord sitting on his throne with all the multitudes of heaven standing on his right and on his left.”
[2Chron. 18:18]

Most of the religions of the world teach us about some celestial divine beings. The term celestial being means a creature from the heavens and it usually refers to angels. God created them as beings of spirit and light. Their main purpose is to help God to create and maintain the created world. They are often very powerful angels who are helping and guiding humanity. A celestial being is a servant of God; his responsibilities are differentiated, and his abilities differ from one angel to another. There is an interesting hierarchy with strict responsibilities for every celestial being. But the two main types all of us heard about are the angels and the archangels.

In the Old Testament, angels or celestial beings are known as “the messengers of the Lord” or “the upper ones. In Judaism, angels are not a something to worship. They are only messengers or performers of God’s assigned tasks. In Christianity, angels became more and more popular, becoming a means of connecting to the Lord; the concept of guardian angel took life. In Christianity, people don’t worship angels as they do worship God, but people do pray for their help and guidance.

The Son is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. For in him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things have been created through him and for him.

[Colossians 1:16]

Angels



The Son is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. For in him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things have been created through him and for him.
[Colossians 1:16]

Angels sealed off the earthly paradise of Eden, protected Lot, saved Hagar and her child Ishmael, stayed Abraham's hand, communicated the law through their ministry, led the people of God, announced births and callings, and assisted the prophets. From Jesus' birth through to his ascension, the life of the incarnated Word has been surrounded by the adoration and service of the angels. They protected Jesus in his infancy, served him in the desert, and strengthened him in his agonies in the garden of Gethsemane. They evangelized by proclaiming the good news of Christ's incarnation and resurrection. They will be present to announce Christ's return and to serve him at his judgment.

- Angels came to Sodom and warned Lot [Genesis 19].
- An angel stopped Abraham before he killed his son, Isaac [Genesis 22:12].
- An angel "wrestled" with Jacob [Genesis 32].
- An angel appeared to Moses out of the midst of the burning bush [Exodus 3:2].
- An angel "passed over" Egypt, allowing for Moses and the Jews to escape [Exodus 12:11-27].
- An angel called Gideon to form an army [Judges 6].
- An angel brought miraculous news to the soon-to-be mother of Samson [Judges 13].
- An angel announced God's hope and plan to the Virgin Mary [Luke 1:26-38].
- An angel calmed Joseph's fears about taking Mary as his wife [Matthew 1:18-25].
- An angel was at the empty tomb, announcing Jesus' resurrection [Matthew 28:2-7].
- Angels were responsible for Peter's divinely-inspired "jailbreaks" [Acts 5, 12].
- Archangel Michael and his army are waging war for your soul [Revelation 12:7-9].

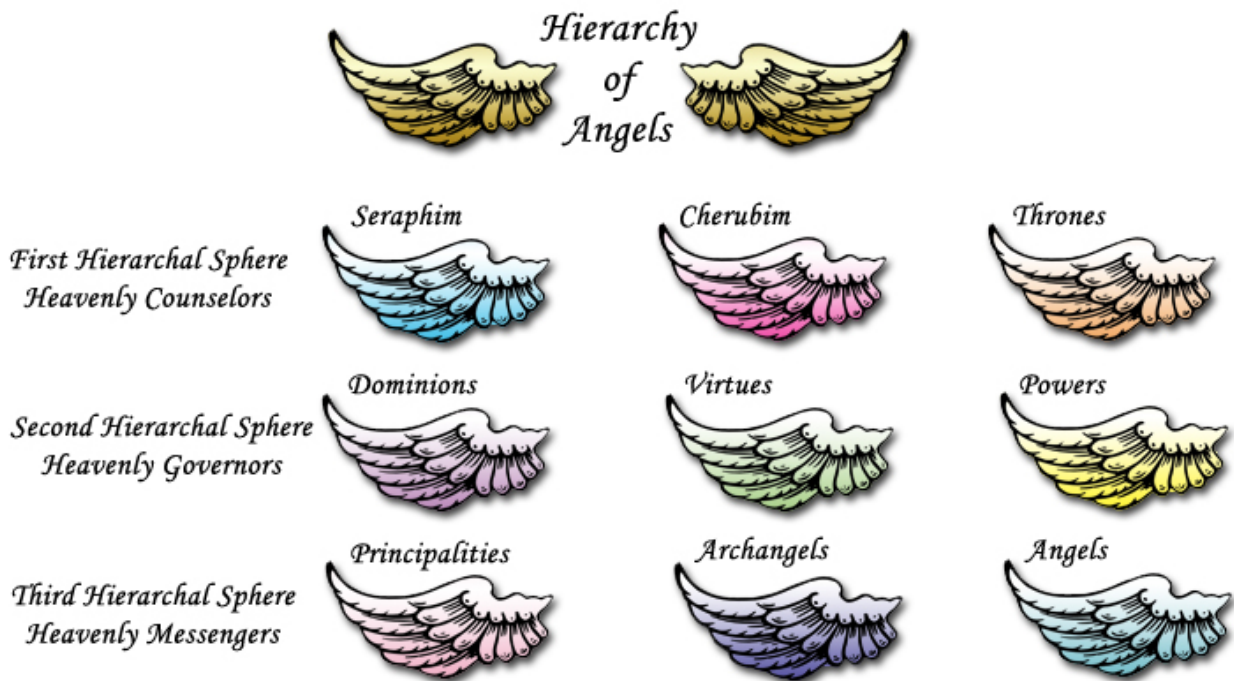
It was about the fifth century or so that the early Christian Church speculated as to the different "ranks" of angels or "choirs" within the established heavenly angelic hierarchy. They derived the choirs of angels as follows:

- Seraphim

- Cherubim
- Thrones
- Dominions
- Virtues
- Powers
- Principalities
- Archangels
- Angels

Of the nine choirs, each has different functions:

- **FIRST SPHERE** - Seraphim, Cherubim, and Thrones are dedicated to the contemplation of God.
- **SECOND SPHERE** - Dominions, Virtues, and Powers govern the universe in its totality.
- **THIRD SPHERE** - Principalities, archangels, and Angels are dedicated as God's messengers.



The "Thrones" are a class of celestial beings in the First Sphere mentioned by Paul the Apostle in Colossians 1:16. According to the New Testament, these high celestial beings are among those Orders at the Christ's service. They are the carriers of the Throne of God, hence the name. Thrones are sometimes equated with Ophanim (Wheels), since the Throne of God is usually depicted as being moved by wheels, as in the vision of Daniel 7:9. The cherubim carry, by moving the Ophanim, the throne of God. They are said to be great

wheels covered in eyes. However, the Thrones, are a distinct form of celestial spiritual being, usually portrayed as adoring elder men in Christian scripture.

Angels of the Second Sphere work as heavenly governors of the creation by subjecting matter and guiding and ruling the spirits. The "Dominions" (Eph. 1:21; Col. 1:16) or "Dominations" are presented as the hierarchy of celestial beings "Lordships" in some English translations of the *De Coelesti Hierarchia*. The Dominions regulate the duties of lower angels. It is only with extreme rarity that these angelic lords make themselves physically known to humans. The Dominions are believed to look like divinely beautiful humans with a pair of feathered wings, much like the common representation of angels, but they may be distinguished from other groups by wielding orbs of light fastened to the heads of their scepters or on the pommel of their swords.

"Virtues" (or Strongholds) are angels through which signs and miracles are made in the world. The term appears to be linked to the attribute "might", from the Greek root *dynamis* in Ephesians 1:21, which is also translated as "Virtue" or "Power". They are presented as the celestial Choir "Virtues", in the *Summa Theologica* (the best-known work of Thomas Aquinas; although unfinished, the *Summa* is one of the classics of the history of philosophy and one of the most influential works of Western literature): "The name of the holy Virtues signifies a certain powerful and unshakable virility welling forth into all their Godlike energies."

The primary duty of the "Powers" (or Authorities) is to supervise the movements of the heavenly bodies in order to ensure that the cosmos remains in order. Being warrior angels, they also oppose evil spirits, especially those that make use of the matter in the universe, and they often cast evil spirits to detention places. These angels are usually represented as soldiers wearing full armor and helmet, and also having defensive and offensive weapons such as shields and spears or chains respectively.

Angels of the Third Sphere function as heavenly guides, protectors, and messengers to human beings. "Principalities" (or Rulers) are the angels that guide and protect nations, or groups of peoples, and institutions such as the Church. The Principalities preside over the bands of angels and charge them with fulfilling the divine ministry. There are some who administer and some who assist. The Principalities are shown wearing a crown and carrying a scepter. Their duty also is said to be to carry out the orders given to them by the upper sphere angels and to bequeath blessings to the material world. They are the educators and guardians of the realm of earth. Like beings related to the world of the germinal ideas, they are said to inspire living things to many things such as art or science.

The word "Archangel" means chief angel, regarded to be first in rank or power. The word "Archangel" itself is usually associated with the Abrahamic religions, but beings that are very similar to Archangels are found in a number of religious traditions. The New Testament makes several references to angels, but uses the word "archangel" only twice, at 1 Thessalonians 4:16 ("For the Lord himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first.") and Jude 1:9 ("But even the archangel Michael, when he was disputing

with the devil about the body of Moses, did not himself dare to condemn him for slander but said, 'The Lord rebuke you!").

Only the Archangel Michael is mentioned by name in the New Testament. In many Christian traditions, Gabriel is also considered an Archangel, but there is no direct literary support for this assumption. Michael and Gabriel are recognized as archangels in Judaism, Islam, the Baha'i Faith, and by most Christians. The name of the Archangel Raphael appears only in the Book of Tobit (Tobias), considered Deuterocanonical by Roman Catholics (both Eastern and Western Rites), Eastern Orthodox Christians, and Anglicans. The Book of Tobit is not, however, acknowledged by most Protestant denominations, such as Reformed Christians or Baptists. Raphael said to Tobias that he was "one of the seven who stand before the Lord", and it is generally believed that Michael and Gabriel are two of the other six.

A fourth Archangel is Uriel whose name literally means "Light of God." Uriel's name is the only one not mentioned in the Western Christian Bible, but it plays a prominent role in an Apocrypha read by Anglican and Russian Orthodox Christians: The second Book of Esdras (fourth Books of Esdras in the Latin Vulgate). In the book, he unveils seven prophecies to the prophet Ezra, after whom the book is named. He also plays a role in the apocryphal Book of Enoch, which is considered canonical by both the Ethiopian Orthodox and Eritrean Orthodox Church. The Catholic Church does not regard Uriel as an angel just as the Book of Enoch is not part of the Catholic Bible either. The Seven Archangels are said to be the guardian angels of nations and countries, and they are concerned with the issues and events surrounding these, including politics, military matters, commerce and trade: for example, Archangel Michael is traditionally seen as the protector of "Israel" and of the Church, the forerunner of the spiritual New Israel.

The "Angels" are the lowest order of celestial beings, and the most recognized. They are the ones most concerned with the affairs of living things. Within the category of the angels, there are many different kinds, with different functions. The angels are sent as messengers to humanity. Personal guardian angels come from this class. The Old Testament attests to guardian angels repeatedly [Genesis 48:16, Psalms 34:7 and 91:11]. These guardian angels enjoy constant and intimate communion with our heavenly Father. Jesus, gave us tremendous insight into our guardian angels in Matthew 18:10, saying, "See that you do not despise one of these little ones. For I tell you that their angels in heaven always see the face of my Father in heaven." From its inception to its death, human life is surrounded by their watchful care and intercession, the angels acting as protectors and shepherds leading men to spiritual life.

***For he will command his angels concerning you to guard you in all your ways; they will lift you up in their hands so that you will not strike your foot against a stone.
[Ps. 91:11,12]***



At this I fell at his feet to worship him. But he said to me, “Don’t do that! I am a fellow servant with you and with your brothers and sisters who hold to the testimony of Jesus. Worship God! For it is the Spirit of prophecy who bears testimony to Jesus.”

[Rev. 19:10]

Jesus said to him, “Away from me, Satan! For it is written: ‘Worship the Lord your God, and serve him only.’” Then the devil left him, and angels came and attended him.

[Mat. 4:10,11]

An angel from heaven appeared to him and strengthened him.

[Luke 22:43]

In speaking of the angels he says, “He makes his angels spirits, and his servants flames of fire.”

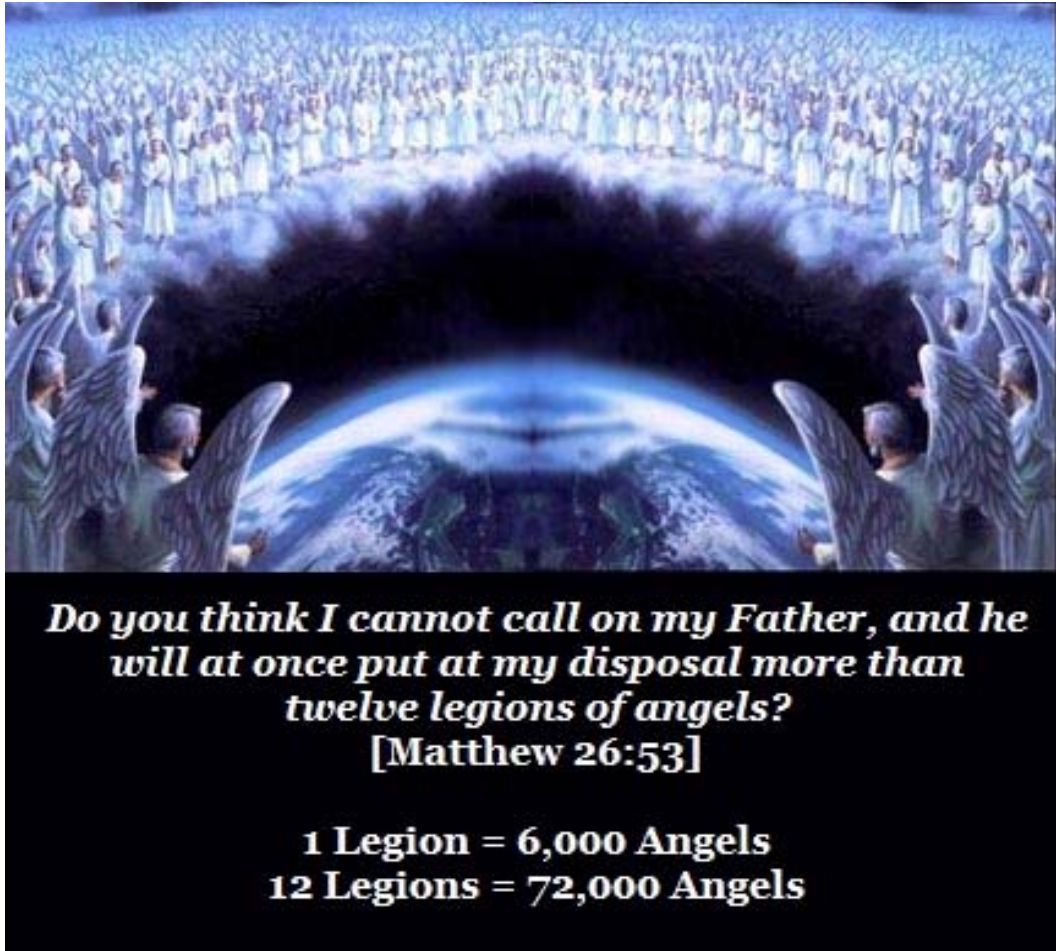
[Heb. 1:7]

Are not angels ministering spirits sent to serve those who will inherit salvation?

[Heb. 1:14]

Do not forget to show hospitality to strangers, for by so doing some people have shown hospitality to angels without knowing it.

[Heb. 13:2]



Seraphim

Tradition places seraphim in the highest rank in Christian angelology and in the fifth rank of ten in the Jewish angelic hierarchy. A seminal passage in the Book of Isaiah (Isaiah 6:1-8) used the term to describe six-winged beings that fly around the Throne of God crying "holy, holy, holy". This throne scene, with its triple invocation of holiness (a formula that came to be known as the Trisagion), profoundly influenced subsequent theology, literature and art. Its influence is frequently seen in works depicting angels, heaven and apotheosis. Seraphim are mentioned as celestial beings in an influential Hellenistic work, the Book of Enoch, and the Book of Revelation.

The seraphim ("fiery, burning ones") are angelic beings revealed in the prophet Isaiah's vision of God in the Temple when God called him to his prophetic ministry [Isaiah 6:1-7]. Each seraph had six wings. They use two to fly, two to cover their feet, and two to cover their faces. The seraphim fly about the throne on which God is seated, singing his praises as they call special attention to God's glory and majesty. These beings apparently serve as agents of purification for Isaiah as he began his prophetic ministry. One places a hot coal

against Isaiah's lips with the words, "With it he touched my mouth and said, 'See, this has touched your lips; your guilt is taken away and your sin atoned for.'" [Isaiah 6:7]



I saw the Lord seated on a throne, high and exalted, and the train of his robe filled the temple. Above him were seraphs, each with six wings: with two wings they covered their faces, with two they covered their feet, and with two they were flying.
[Is. 6:1,2]

I looked, and I saw a figure like that of a man. From what appeared to be his waist down he was like fire, and from there up his appearance was as bright as glowing metal. He stretched out what looked like a hand and took me by the hair of my head. The Spirit lifted me up between earth and heaven and in visions of God he took me to Jerusalem.

[Ez. 8:2,3]

I looked up and there before me was a man dressed in linen, with a belt of fine gold from Uphaz around his waist. His body was like topaz, his face like lightning, his eyes like flaming torches, his arms and legs like the gleam of burnished bronze, and his voice like the sound of a multitude.

[Dan. 10:5,6]

Cherubim

Cherubim have been depicted as accompanying God's chariot-throne which is usually interpreted as guarding the throne of God. [Ex. 25:18-22, Ps. 80:1] They were also placed at the entrance to the Garden of Eden to prevent the expelled Adam and Eve access to the tree of life.



After he drove the man out, he placed on the east side of the Garden of Eden cherubim and a flaming sword flashing back and forth to guard the way to the tree of life.
[Gen. 3:24]

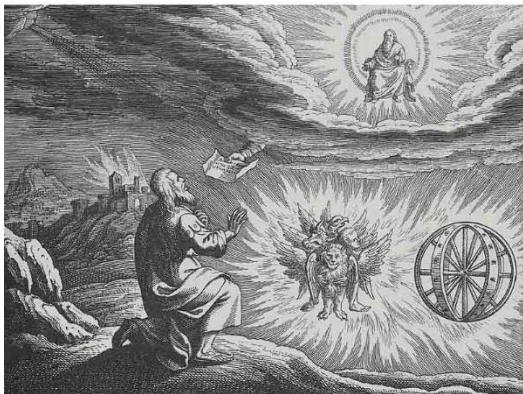
Genesis 3:24 suggests that God stations Cherubim outside the garden of Eden to prevent Adam and Eve from trying to re-enter. He drove the man out, and stationed east of the garden of Eden the cherubim and the fiery ever-turning sword, to guard the way to the tree of life. From this, it appears that cherubim are a kind of divine guard; the cherubim guard the sacred things of God. This fits in with the description of the cherubim in Solomon's Temple as well (1 Kings 6:23-28), which were ten cubits (approximately twenty-two feet) high. Unlike the cherubim of the Ark, they were gigantic in size and instead of facing each other they both faced the door. The effect of such a display would be to intimidate people, forcing those who enter the room to be somber and frightening off unauthorized people who might be curious.



Then put in the ark the tablets of the covenant law, which I will give you. Make an atonement cover of pure gold—two and a half cubits long and a cubit and a half wide. And make two cherubim out of hammered gold at the ends of the cover. Make one cherub on one end and the second cherub on the other; make the cherubim of one piece with the cover, at the two ends. The cherubim are to have their wings spread upward, overshadowing the cover with them. The cherubim are to face each other, looking toward the cover.
[Exodus 25:16-20]

Ezekiel's vision of the four living creatures in Ezekiel chapter 1 are identified as cherubim in chapter 10 who are God's throne bearers. Cherubim, as minor guardian deities of temple or palace thresholds, are known all over the Ancient East. Each of Ezekiel's cherubim have four faces, that of a man, a lion, a cherub, and an eagle. In their ability to move, Ezekiel's cherubim do not need to turn, as they front all directional points of the compass. This description of movement differs from the seraphim in Isaiah's vision (Isaiah 6:2) who have an extra set of wings for their ability to fly. These "living beings" are considered angels of fire, who hold up the throne of God and the earth itself.

EZEKIEL'S VISION



THE FOUR LIVING CREATURES

I looked, and I saw a windstorm coming out of the north—an immense cloud with flashing lightning and surrounded by brilliant light. The center of the fire looked like glowing metal, and in the fire was what looked like four living creatures. In appearance their form was human, but each of them had four faces and four wings. Their legs were straight; their feet were like those of a calf and gleamed like burnished bronze. Under their wings on their four sides they had human hands. All four of them had faces and wings, and the wings of one touched the wings of another. Each one went straight ahead; they did not turn as they moved. Their faces looked like this: Each of the four had the face of a human being, and on the right side each had the face of a lion, and on the left the face of an ox; each also had the face of an eagle. Such were their faces. They each had two wings spreading out upward, each wing touching that of the creature on either side; and each had two other wings covering its body... Spread out above the heads of the living creatures was what looked something like a vault, sparkling like crystal, and awesome. Under the vault their wings were stretched out one toward the other, and each had two wings covering its body. When the creatures moved, I heard the sound of their wings, like the roar of rushing waters, like the voice of the Almighty, like the tumult of an army. When they stood still, they lowered their wings.

[Ez. 1:4-11, 22-24]

In Revelation 4:6–8, four living beings are seen in John's vision. These appear as a lion, an ox, a man, and an eagle, much as in Ezekiel but in a different order. They have six wings, whereas Ezekiel's four living creatures are described as only having four. In verse 6, they are said to have "eyes all over, front and back", suggesting that they are alert and knowledgeable, that nothing escapes their notice. The description parallels the wheels that are beside the living creatures in Ezekiel 1.18; 10.12, which are said to be "full of eyes all around".

A number of biblical texts describe the cherubim as beings that haul God's chariot. This concept seems related to the idea of the divine chariot, which God is said to ride. Psalms 18:10,11 and 2 Samuel 22:11 both describe God as riding on cherubim: "He parted the heavens and came down; dark clouds were under his feet. He mounted the cherubim and flew; he soared on the wings of the wind." But the most famous description of God riding a chariot is in Ezekiel. In truth, the term chariot doesn't actually appear in the chapters where the cherubim appear, but since God is described as riding the cherubim, with the cherubim apparently carrying God up into the sky, it seems clear that they are carrying or functioning as God's chariot.

While I watched, the cherubim spread their wings and rose from the ground, and as they went, the wheels went with them. They stopped at the entrance of the east gate of the Lord's house, and the glory of the God of Israel was above them. These were the living creatures I had seen beneath the God of Israel by the Kebar River, and I realized that they were cherubim. Each had four faces and four wings, and under their wings was what looked like human hands. Their faces had the same appearance as those I had seen by the Kebar River. Each one went straight ahead.
[Ez. 10:19-22]

In a number of places (1 Sam. 4:4, 2 Sam. 6:2, 2 Kings 19:15, Isa. 37:16), we find that God is referred to as "the one who sits upon cherubim". We do read that God is said to dwell in the midst of the Tabernacle, and to speak from above cherubim. Accordingly, many scholars understand that the cherubim are likely part of the divine throne, a kind of platform upon which God will sit or stand and from which God will speak:

So the people sent men to Shiloh, and they brought back the ark of the covenant of the Lord Almighty, who is enthroned between the cherubim.
[1Sam. 4:4]

He and all his men went to Baalah in Judah to bring up from there the ark of God, which is called by the Name, the name of the Lord Almighty, who is enthroned between the cherubim on the ark.
[2Sam. 6:2]

Lord, the God of Israel, enthroned between the cherubim, you alone are God over all the kingdoms of the earth.
[2Kings 19:15]

Lord Almighty, the God of Israel, enthroned between the cherubim, you alone are God over all the kingdoms of the earth.
[Is. 37:16]

Archangel Michael

Michael is an archangel in Jewish, Christian, and Islamic tradition. He has sometimes been viewed as the field commander of the Army of God. He is mentioned by name in the Book of Daniel, the Book of Jude, and the Book of Revelation, in which he leads God's armies against Satan's forces during his uprising. Archangel Michael is mentioned three times in the Book of Daniel. The idea that Michael was the advocate of the Jews became so prevalent that, in spite of the rabbinical prohibition against appealing to angels as intermediaries between God and his people, Michael came to occupy a certain place in the Jewish liturgy. In the New Testament, Michael leads God's armies against Satan's forces in the Book of Revelation, where during the war in heaven he defeats Satan. In the Epistle of Jude, Michael is specifically referred to as "the archangel Michael".

In the book of Daniel, Michael appears as "one of the chief princes" who in Daniel's vision comes to Gabriel's aid in his contest with the angel of Persia (Dobiel). The prophet Daniel experiences a vision after having undergone a period of fasting. In the vision, an angel identifies Michael as the protector of Israel [Daniel 10:13, 21]. Later in the vision [Daniel 12:1, Daniel is informed that Michael will stand for Israel during the time of the End. Michael is also described there as the advocate of the children of Israel and as a "great prince who stands up for the children of your [Daniel's] people". There is no further mention of Michael in the Hebrew Bible.

Some believe the numinous "captain of the host of the Lord" encountered by Joshua in the early days of his campaigns in the Promised Land [Joshua 5:13-15] is Michael the Archangel. This unnamed heavenly messenger is of supernatural and holy origin. Michael is said to first appear in the Old Testament in the book of Joshua's account of the fall of Jericho. Though Michael is not mentioned by name in the text, it is said that Joshua "looked up and saw a man standing in front of him with a drawn sword in his hand." When the still unaware Joshua asks which side of the fight the Archangel is on, Michael responds, "neither...but as commander of the army of the Lord I have now come." [Joshua 5:13-14]



***At that time Michael, the great prince who protects your people, will arise. There will be a time of distress such as has not happened from the beginning of nations until then. But at that time your people—everyone whose name is found written in the book—will be delivered. Multitudes who sleep in the dust of the earth will awake: some to everlasting life, others to shame and everlasting contempt.
[Daniel 12:1,2]***

Michael is the chief of the angelic host. No other celestial being is equal to him. The word "Michael" means "one who is like God". Scripture suggests that Michael the Archangel, and the Angel of the Lord as well, are the same person as Jesus Christ: "All authority in heaven

and on earth has been given to me." [Matthew 28:18] Jesus displayed the same attribute of the Angel of the Lord to forgive sin: "So that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins." This authority was also given to the Angel of the Lord on Mount Sinai by the Father who said "See, I am sending an angel ahead of you to guard you along the way and to bring you to the place I have prepared. Pay attention to him and listen to what he says. Do not rebel against him; he will not forgive your rebellion, since my Name is in him." [Ex. 23:21]

Then Michael, one of the chief princes, came to help me, because I was detained there with the king of Persia.

[Dan. 10:13]

In the Epistle of Jude 1:9, Michael is referred to as an "archangel" when he again confronts Satan.

But even the archangel Michael, when he was disputing with the devil about the body of Moses, did not himself dare to condemn him for slander but said,

"The Lord rebuke you!"

[Jude 9]

The Book of Revelation (12:7-9) describes a war in heaven in which Michael, being stronger, defeats Satan. After the conflict, Satan is thrown to earth along with the fallen angels, where he ("that ancient serpent called the devil") still tries to "lead the whole world astray".

Then war broke out in heaven. Michael and his angels fought against the dragon, and the dragon and his angels fought back.

[Rev. 12:7]

A reference to an "archangel" also appears in the First Epistle to the Thessalonians 4:16. This archangel who heralds the second coming of Christ is not named but is often associated with Michael (among others).

For the Lord himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first.

[1Thess. 4:16]

Gabriel

In the Abrahamic religions, Gabriel is an archangel. Gabriel is one of only two angels named in the Bible. His name means "strong man of God" or "God is my strength." He appears by name four times: twice to Daniel to interpret the meaning of his visions (Daniel 8-9), once to announce John the Baptist's birth to his father Zacharias (Luke 1:11-20), and once to announce the birth of Jesus to Mary (Luke 1:26-38). Gabriel the archangel is also a

presence in other ancient Jewish writings such as the Book of Enoch. Alongside archangel Michael, Gabriel is described as the guardian angel of Israel, defending this people against the angels of the other nations.

In Daniel 8, Gabriel explains Daniel's vision of the horned ram as portending the destruction of the Persian Empire by the Macedonian Alexander the Great, after whose death the kingdom will be divided up among his generals, from one of whom will spring Antiochus Epiphanes. In chapter 9, after Daniel had prayed for Israel, we read that "the man Gabriel... flying swiftly touched me" and he communicated to him the mysterious prophecy of the "seventy weeks" of years which should elapse before the coming of Christ. In chapter 10, it is not clear whether the angel is Gabriel or not, but at any rate we might apply to him the marvelous description in verses 5 and 6.

I looked up and there before me was a man dressed in linen, with a belt of fine gold from Uphaz around his waist. His body was like topaz, his face like lightning, his eyes like flaming torches, his arms and legs like the gleam of burnished bronze, and his voice like the sound of a multitude.

[Dan. 10:5,6]

Thus, Gabriel is throughout the angel of the Incarnation and of Consolation, and so in Christian tradition Gabriel is ever the angel of mercy while archangel Michael is rather the angel of judgment. At the same time, even in the Bible, Gabriel is, in accordance with his name, the angel of the Power of God, and it is worth while noting the frequency with which such words as "great", "might", "power", and "strength" occur in the passages referred to above. The Jews seem to have dwelt particularly upon this feature in Gabriel's character, and he is regarded by them as the angel of judgment, while Michael is called the angel of mercy. They attribute to Gabriel the destruction of Sodom and of the host of Sennacherib, though they also regard him as the angel who buried Moses, and as the man deputed to mark the figure Tau on the foreheads of the elect (Ezekiel 9:4). In the New Testament, the angel Gabriel appears to Zechariah and the Virgin Mary, foretelling the births of John the Baptist and Jesus, respectively (Luke 1:11–38).

Then an angel of the Lord appeared to him, standing at the right side of the altar of incense. When Zechariah saw him, he was startled and was gripped with fear. But the angel said to him: "Do not be afraid, Zechariah; your prayer has been heard. Your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you are to call him John"... he angel said to him, "I am Gabriel. I stand in the presence of God, and I have been sent to speak to you and to tell you this good news."

[Luke 1:11-13,19]



In the sixth month of Elizabeth's pregnancy, God sent the angel Gabriel to Nazareth, a town in Galilee, to a virgin pledged to be married to a man named Joseph, a descendant of David. The virgin's name was Mary. The angel went to her and said, "Greetings, you who are highly favored! The Lord is with you." Mary was greatly troubled at his words and wondered what kind of greeting this might be. But the angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary; you have found favor with God. You will conceive and give birth to a son, and you are to call him Jesus."

[Luke 1:26-31]

Raphael

Raphael, "God Heals", is an archangel in Judaism, Christianity and Islam. Raphael performs all manners of healing according to all Abrahamic religions. Medieval French rabbi commentator Rashi views Raphael as being one of the three angels that appeared to Abraham in the oak grove of Mamre in the Book of Genesis. Michael, as the greatest, walked in the middle, with Gabriel to his right and Raphael to his left. All three angels were commanded to carry out a specific mission. Gabriel's mission was to destroy Sodom; Michael's mission was to inform Sarah that she would give birth to Isaac in a year's time; Raphael's mission was to heal Abraham (from his recent circumcision) and save Lot. Rashi writes, "Although Raphael's mission included two tasks, they were considered a single mission since they were both acts that saved people."

Raphael is also mentioned in the Book of Enoch alongside archangels Michael, Gabriel and Uriel. Enoch makes reference to "Raphael, one of the holy angels, who is over the spirits of men." (1Enoch 20:7) Enoch asks who the four figures were that he had seen: "And he said to me: 'This first is Michael, the merciful and long-suffering: and the second, who is set over all the diseases and all the wounds of the children of men, is Raphael: and the third, who is set over all the powers, is Gabriel: and the fourth, who is set over the repentance unto hope of those who inherit eternal life, is named Phanuel.' And these are the four angels of the Lord of Spirits and the four voices I heard in those days." (Enoch 40:9)

Raphael was generally associated with the angel mentioned in the Gospel of John as stirring the water at the healing pool of Bethesda. Raphael is a venerated angel within the Roman Catholic, Eastern Orthodox, Anglican, and Lutheran traditions, and he is often given the title "Saint Raphael". Raphael is also mentioned in the apocryphal Book of Tobit, which is accepted as canonical by Catholics, Orthodox, and some Anglicans.

I am Raphael, one of the seven holy angels, which present the prayers of the saints, and which go in and out before the glory of the Holy One.

[Tobit 12:15]

Regarding the healing powers attributed to Raphael, there is his declaration to Tobit (Tobit, 12) that he was sent by the Lord to heal him of his blindness and to deliver Sarah, his future daughter-in-law, from the demon Asmodeus, who kills every man she marries on their wedding night before the marriage can be consummated.

Angel of the Lord

The angel of the Lord is a celestial entity appearing many times in the Old Testament on behalf of God. The New Testament uses the term "angel of the Lord" several times, once [Luke 1:11–19] identified as Gabriel. A closely related term is "angel of God". Some early Fathers of the Church, such as Justin Martyr, identify the angel of the Lord as the pre-incarnate Christ whose appearance (i.e. Christophany) as recorded in the Old Testament.



Then an angel of the Lord appeared to him, standing at the right side of the altar of incense. When Zechariah saw him, he was startled and was gripped with fear. But the angel said to him: "Do not be afraid, Zechariah; your prayer has been heard. Your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you are to call him John." ... Zechariah asked the angel, "How can I be sure of this? I am an old man and my wife is well along in years." The angel said to him, "I am Gabriel. I stand in the presence of God, and I have been sent to speak to you and to tell you this good news."

[Luke 1:11-13,18,19]

Sometimes, appearances of the "angel of the Lord" appears as a theophany (when God makes himself visible). In Genesis 31:11–13 the angel of God says, "I am the God of Beth-el". The angel of the Lord is said to have power to give life (Genesis 16:10); the angel of the Lord is called the "Judge of all the earth" (Genesis 18:25); the angel of the Lord had authority to forgive sins (Exodus 23:21); the angel of the Lord was worshipped by Moses and Joshua. At other times, the angel of the Lord differentiates himself from God.

The angel of the Lord replied, "Even though you detain me, I will not eat any of your food. But if you prepare a burnt offering, offer it to the Lord."

(Manoah did not realize that it was the angel of the Lord.) Then Manoah inquired of the angel of the Lord, "What is your name, so that we may honor you when your word comes true?" He replied, "Why do you ask my name? It is beyond understanding."

[Judges 13:16-18]

As to the question whether it was an angel or Deity who had just appeared, one approach would be that of Deity as manifesting to humans indirectly through the intermediary of an angel. In Exodus 23:21, God says of his angel that his "Name is in him."

God heard the boy crying, and the angel of God called to Hagar from heaven and said to her, "What is the matter, Hagar? Do not be afraid; God has heard the boy crying as he lies there. Lift the boy up and take him by the hand, for I [angel of God] will make him into a great nation."

[Gen. 21:17,18]

There the angel of the Lord appeared to him in flames of fire from within the bush. Moses saw that though the bush was on fire it did not burn up.

[Ex. 3:2]

Then the angel of God, who had been travelling in front of Israel's army, withdrew and went behind them.

[Ex. 14:19]

See, I am sending an angel ahead of you to guard you along the way and to bring you to the place I have prepared. Pay attention to him and listen to what he says. Do not rebel against him; he will not forgive your rebellion, since my Name is in him. If you listen carefully to what he says and do all that I say, I will be an enemy to your enemies and will oppose those who oppose you. My angel will go ahead of you and bring you into the land of the Amorites, Hittites, Perizzites, Canaanites, Hivites and Jebusites, and I will wipe them out.

[Ex. 23:20-23]

The angel of the Lord went up from Gilgal to Bokim and said, "I brought you up out of Egypt and led you into the land that I swore to give to your forefathers."

[Judges 2:1]



David looked up and saw the angel of the Lord standing between heaven and earth, with a drawn sword in his hand extended over Jerusalem. Then David and the elders, clothed in sackcloth, fell facedown. David said to God, “Was it not I who ordered the fighting men to be counted? I, the shepherd, have sinned and done wrong. These are but sheep. What have they done? Lord my God, let your hand fall on me and my family, but do not let this plague remain on your people.” Then the angel of the Lord ordered Gad to tell David to go up and build an altar to the Lord on the threshing floor of Araunah the Jebusite. So David went up in obedience to the word that Gad had spoken in the name of the Lord.

[1Chron. 21:16-19]

Commander of the Army of the Lord

In Joshua 5:13–15, we read of Joshua's conversation with the "commander of the army of the Lord." This commander appeared to Joshua near Jericho, before a fateful battle. After Moses' death, he led the people into Canaan. He brought them to the edge of the rain-swollen Jordan River, and with great courage and trust, he commanded the priests and the people to move forward. God dried up that flooded river and they crossed over on dry ground. Joshua was a man of faith! Then, after the river was crossed, he ensures that all the men are circumcised and that the Passover is celebrated. These are signs of God's covenant with Israel, but they had been neglected during the years of wandering in the wilderness. Before they could move on, they had to put right what had been wrong. Joshua was obedient. Unquestionably Joshua was a great leader; the people knew it, Joshua knew it.

Joshua was about to learn a powerful lesson about leadership. He had gone out alone to scout out the challenge of conquering the great walled city of Jericho. He had to be asking himself: "How will my army overcome these massive defenses? Can I be a good enough commander?" At that moment, Joshua rounds a bend, and right in front of him is a fierce warrior with sword already drawn. Joshua could instantly have drawn his own sword, but he asks if the warrior is "for us or for our enemies." In other words, whose side is he on? The answer is one Joshua could never have expected - "Neither," he replies, "but as commander of the army of the Lord I have now come." This warrior wasn't about declaring 'sides.' He was there to command the army of the Lord. The personage holds a sword and tells Joshua that the place where he stood was holy ground. The person who appeared to Joshua was clearly a powerful being. We are told Joshua fell on his face and gave him reverence. Then, Joshua addresses the man as "master" or "lord." Joshua clearly had much respect for this being. Finally, the man tells Joshua to remove his sandals, "for the place where you are standing is holy."

Based on this information, there are only two possible identities for this person. First, this commander could be an example of a theophany, a visible appearance of God himself, or a Christophany, a visible appearance of the pre-existent Jesus as the Son of God. Supporting this view is the fact that Joshua was to take off his sandals similar to how Moses did at the burning bush when he met God (Exodus 3:5). The other possible identity of this commander is that he was an angel. This theory notes that the being identifies himself as the "commander" of the Lord's army, not as the Lord himself. In this view, Joshua's bowing is seen as an act of reverence rather than worship. Joshua's address of the commander as "lord" could be a general term of respect. Those who favor the view that Joshua met an angel appeal to the fact that no one can see God and live (Exodus 33:20). Those who favor the view that Joshua met God suggest that this was God the Son, a pre-incarnate appearance of Jesus Christ. Whether the commander of the Lord's army was angelic or divine, it was God who communicated an important message to Joshua to prepare him for the upcoming battle.



Now when Joshua was near Jericho, he looked up and saw a man standing in front of him with a drawn sword in his hand. Joshua went up to him and asked, "Are you for us or for our enemies?" "Neither," he replied, "but as commander of the army of the Lord I have now come." Then Joshua fell down to the ground in reverence, and asked him, "What message does my Lord have for his servant?" The commander of the Lord's army replied, "Take off your sandals, for the place where you are standing is holy." And Joshua did so.

[Joshua 5:13-15]

Ancient of Days

In Isaiah 43:12,13, we find that God refers to himself existing from ancient of days (literally, "before days were"): "I am God. Yes, and from ancient days I am he". That means God existed before days were even created. We read in Genesis 1 that God created time, days and nights, so God existed from before the beginning of time. God is often represented as ancient, as he that is "from everlasting to everlasting" (Psalm 90:2) and as "the first and the last" in Isaiah 44:6. In Eastern Orthodox Christian hymns and icons, the Ancient of Days is sometimes identified with God the Father or occasionally as the Holy Spirit; but most properly, in accordance with Orthodox theology, he is identified with God the Son, or Jesus. Most of the eastern church fathers who comment on the passage in Daniel (7:9-10, 13-14) interpreted the elderly figure as a prophetic revelation of the Son before his physical incarnation. As such, Eastern Christian art will sometimes portray Jesus Christ as an old man, the Ancient of Days, to show symbolically that he existed from all eternity, and sometimes as a young man, or wise baby, to portray him as he was incarnate. This

iconography emerged in the sixth century, mostly in the Eastern Empire with elderly images, although usually not properly or specifically identified as "the Ancient of Days."

The first images of the Ancient of Days, so named with an inscription, were developed by iconographers in different manuscripts, the earliest of which are dated to the eleventh century. The images in these manuscripts included the inscription "Jesus Christ, Ancient of Days," confirming that this was a way to identify Christ as pre-eternal with the God the Father. Later, it was declared by the Russian Orthodox Church at the Great Synod of Moscow in 1667 that the Ancient of Days was the Son and not the Father. In the Western Church similar figures usually represent only God the Father. Building his argument upon the Daniel passage, Thomas Aquinas recalls that some bring forward the objection that the Ancient of Days matches the person of the Father, without necessarily agreeing with this statement himself. In the hymn "Immortal, Invisible, God only Wise", the last two lines of the first verse read: "Most blessed, most glorious, the Ancient of Days, Almighty, victorious, Thy great Name we praise."



As I looked, thrones were set in place, and the Ancient of Days took his seat. His clothing was as white as snow; the hair of his head was white like wool. His throne was flaming with fire, and its wheels were all ablaze. A river of fire was flowing, coming out from before him. Thousands upon thousands attended him; ten thousand times ten thousand stood before him. The court was seated, and the books were opened.

[Dan. 7:9,10]

Daniel 7:13-14 describes the Ancient of Days bestowing rulership upon the Son of Man, a separate entity. Among ancient Christian pseudepigrapha, one Book of Enoch states that he who is called "Son of man," who existed before the worlds were, is seen by Enoch in company with the "Ancient of Days".

In my vision at night I looked, and there before me was one like a son of man coming with the clouds of heaven. He approached the Ancient of Days and was led into his presence. He was given authority, glory and sovereign power; all nations and peoples of every language worshiped him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion that will not pass away, and his kingdom is one that will never be destroyed.

[Dan. 7:13,14]

The Ancient of Days came and pronounced judgment in favor of the holy people of the Most High, and the time came when they possessed the kingdom.

[Dan. 7:22]

Melchizedek ("My King is Righteous")



This Melchizedek was king of Salem and priest of God Most High. He met Abraham returning from the defeat of the kings and blessed him....without father or mother, without genealogy, without beginning of days or end of life, like the Son of God he remains a priest forever.

[Heb. 7:1-3]

Melchizedek is the king of Salem (Jerusalem) and the priest of the Most High appearing in the Book of Genesis. The name means "King of Righteousness", one made righteous by God's power - a name echoing kingly and priestly functions. He is the first individual to be given the title of priest in the Hebrew Bible. Melchizedek was the priest of the Most High, a term expressing God's power over the nations of the earth. He appeared in Canaan from nowhere, without mention of parents or background. The land of Canaan from ancient time, before the days of Moses, was known among the Gentiles as "the divine land" the Holy land", the land of the place of worship. Some Christians hold that Melchizedek was a type of Christ, and some other Christians hold that Melchizedek indeed was Christ. Reasons

provided include that Melchizedek's name means "king of righteousness" according to the author of Hebrews, and that being king of Salem makes Melchizedek the "king of peace." Heb. 7:3 states, "Without father or mother, without genealogy, without beginning of days or end of life, like the Son of God he (Melchizedek) remains a priest forever." Melchizedek gave Abraham bread and wine, which some Christians consider symbols of the body and blood of Jesus Christ, the sacrifice to confirm a covenant.

In a fragmentary Dead Sea scroll from Qumran that was published in 1965, there is mention of Melchizedek (11QMelch) where he appears at the end of days as a heavenly angelic warrior, judge, and high priest. He atones for the "Sons of Light" at the great Day of Atonement which introduces the redemption of the final jubilee of history, and he defeats "Belial and his lot," executing judgment on behalf of God. Here we can see non-canonical evidence that Melchizedek was seen as a heavenly high priest. Another non-canonical source, outside mainstream Christian tradition, is the Gnostic gospel "Pistis Sophia". In Book 1, chapter 25, Melchizedek is the heavenly 'Receiver of the Light'. Pistis Sophia was written at least a century or two later than Hebrews but it supports the view that some in the Judeo-Christian tradition saw Melchizedek as a heavenly priest, with no father or mother and everlasting. Hebrews itself portrays Jesus, post-resurrection, as a heavenly priest in the order of Melchizedek, so this all makes sense from a particular theological perspective.



Then Melchizedek king of Salem brought out bread and wine. He was priest of God Most High, and he blessed Abram, saying, "Blessed be Abram by God Most High, creator of heaven and earth."
[Gen. 14:18-20]

The Book of Psalms names Melchizedek as representative of the priestly line through which a future king of Israel's Davidic line was ordained. The priesthood held by Melchizedek, who pre-dated the patriarch Levi by five generations (Melchizedek pre-dates Aaron by six generations; Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Levi, Kehoth, Amram, Aaron) was given in his stead to Abraham who, in turn, passed it on to his patrilineal descendants, Isaac and then to Jacob. At the time of the erection of the Tabernacle, God commanded Moses to appoint Aaron and his sons to the Jewish priestly service as a precondition to God revealing his divine dwelling amongst the nation of Israel:

So I will consecrate the tent of meeting and the altar and will consecrate Aaron and his sons to serve me as priests. Then I will dwell among the Israelites and be their God. They will know that I am the Lord their God, who brought them out of Egypt so that I might dwell among them. I am the Lord their God.

[Ex. 29:44-46]

Christians believe that Jesus is the Messiah spoken of as "a priest forever in the order of Melchizedek" (Ps. 110:4), and so Jesus plays the role of the king-priest once and for all. According to the writer of Hebrews (7:13-17) Jesus is considered a priest in the order of Melchizedek because, like Melchizedek, Jesus was not a descendant of Aaron, and thus would not qualify for the Jewish priesthood under the Law of Moses. Melchizedek is referred to again in Hebrews 5:6-10; Hebrews 6:20; Hebrews 7:1-21; and Hebrews 8:1. The order of Christ's Priesthood is named after Melchizedek. Jesus' priesthood was after the pattern of one who did not die, which means that his priesthood is forever and as such he will always be able to intercede on our behalf:

The Lord says to my Lord: "Sit at my right hand until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet.... You are a priest forever, in the order of Melchizedek."

[Ps. 110:1,4]

If perfection could have been attained through the Levitical priesthood—and indeed the law given to the people established that priesthood—why was there still need for another priest to come, one in the order of Melchizedek, not in the order of Aaron? For when the priesthood is changed, the law must be changed also.

[Heb. 7:11,12]

Another priest like Melchizedek [Jesus Christ] appears, one who has become a priest not on the basis of a regulation as to his ancestry [Levitic priesthood] but on the basis of the power of an indestructible life.

[Heb. 7:15,16]

Abraham gave the priest Melchizedek a tenth of his wealth ("tithe"). This set a precedent throughout the Old Testament for what was considered an appropriate portion of one's wealth to give to the Lord. According to the Law, Israelites were to set aside a tenth of their annual produce for God, and this was to be used to support the ministry of the priests and the Levites.

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[Heb. 7:5,6]

The author of the Epistle to the Hebrews in the New Testament discusses this subject of Melchizedek considerably, listing the following reasons for why the priesthood of Melchizedek is superior to the Aaronic priesthood:

- Abraham paid tithes to Melchizedek; later, the Levites would receive tithes from their countrymen. Since Aaron was in Abraham's loins then, it was as if the Aaronic priesthood were paying tithes to Melchizedek. (Heb. 7:4-10)
- The one who blesses is always greater than the one being blessed. Thus, Melchizedek was greater than Abraham. As Levi was yet in the loins of Abraham, it follows that Melchizedek is greater than Levi. (Heb. 7:7-10)
- If the priesthood of Aaron were effective, God would not have called a new priest in a different order in Psalm 110. (Heb. 7:11)
- The basis of the Aaronic priesthood was ancestry; the basis of the priesthood of Melchizedek is everlasting life. That is, there is no interruption due to a priest's death. (Heb. 7:8,15-16,23-25)
- Christ, being sinless, does not need a sacrifice for his own sins. (Heb. 7:26-27)
- The priesthood of Melchizedek is more effective because it required a single sacrifice once and for all (Jesus), while the Levitical priesthood made endless sacrifices. (Heb. 7:27)
- The Aaronic priests serve (or, rather, served) in an earthly copy and shadow of the heavenly Temple, which Jesus now serves in. (Heb. 8:5)

The epistle goes on to say that the covenant of Jesus is superior to the covenant that created the Levitical priesthood.

Prince of the Air (Prince of the World)

The apostle Paul refers to “the ruler of the kingdom of the air”; this ruler has also been called a prince possessing power to manifest evil in the world through influencing people and commanding demons. The title “prince” generally applies as a general term for a person with power or authority. The prince of the power of the air is often said to be the devil, who is a spirit making people disobedient to God. The Church Father Athanasius argued that the death of Jesus cleansed the air wherein the demons and fallen angels now live, and therefore he physically opened up a way for mortal souls to find a way into heaven.

A farmer went out to sow his seed. As he was scattering the seed, some fell along the path; it was trampled on, and the birds ate it up... This is the meaning of the parable: The seed is the word of God. Those along the path are the ones who hear, and then the devil comes and takes away the word from their hearts, so that they may not believe and be saved.

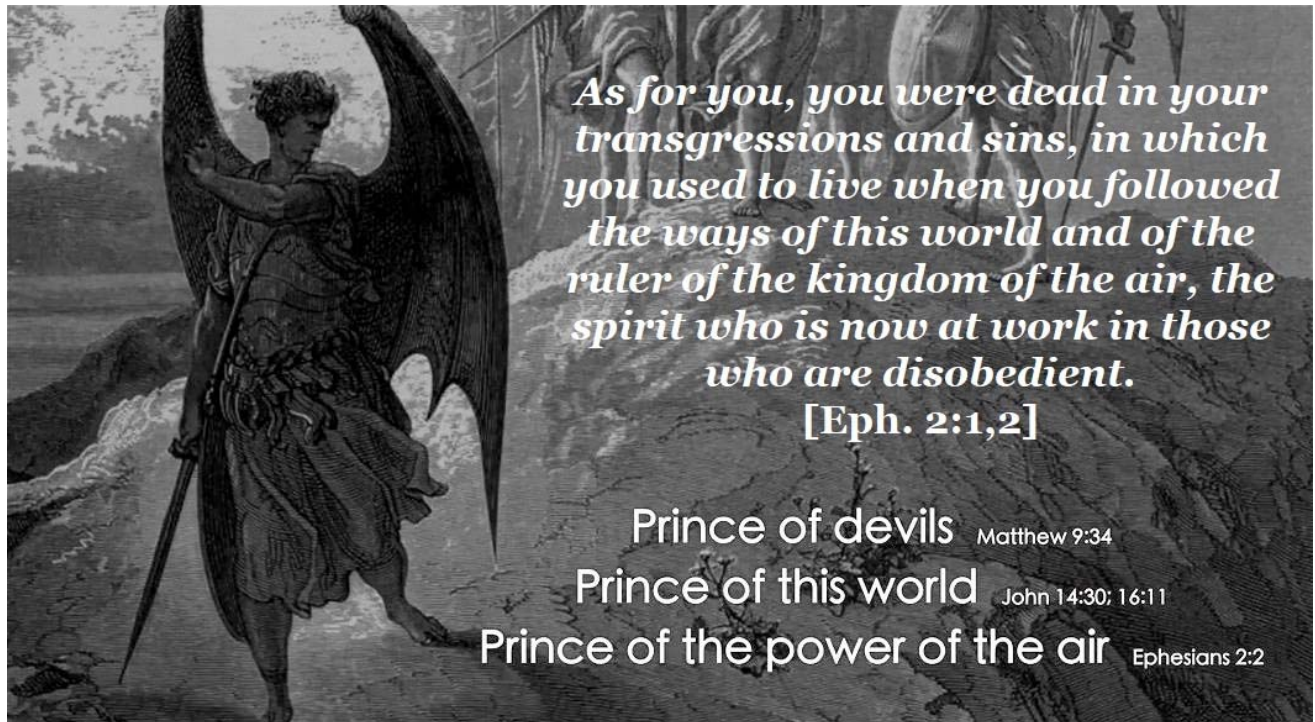
[Luke 8:5,11,12]

Now is the time for judgment on this world; now the prince of this world will be driven out.

[John 12:31]

I will not say much more to you, for the prince of this world is coming. He has no hold over me, but he comes so that the world may learn that I love the Father and do exactly what my Father has commanded me.
[John 14:30,31]

The prince of this world now stands condemned.
[John 16:11]



The lusts of the flesh which “the children of disobedience” fulfil are acts of uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence, and covetousness, which is idolatry. These are the acts which unleash the wrath of God on the children of disobedience. These things are “the works of the flesh” mentioned in Galatians 5:19: “The acts of the flesh are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery; idolatry and witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions and envy; drunkenness, orgies, and the like.” Therefore, the prince of the power of the air encourages these things which embody our evil desires. The “power of the air” is a phrase which figuratively refers to a power which has influence over the people of the whole earth - and the power of sin, the fleshly mind, is worldwide.

For everything in the world—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life—comes not from the Father but from the world.
[1John 2:16]

We know that we are children of God, and that the whole world is under the control of the evil one.

[1John 5:19]

“Fallen! Fallen is Babylon the Great!” She has become a dwelling for demons and a haunt for every impure spirit, a haunt for every unclean bird.

[Rev. 18:2]

The prince of the power of the air conveys his evil, his rebellious attitudes to all humanity, and except for the few whom God has called out of his deceptions, the whole world lives under his potential influence. Every human being who has ever lived (except Jesus) has been tempted to a way of thinking generated by the prince of the power of the air. Because of this, we fulfill the desires of our flesh and mind; sin is generated through the inspiration and persuasion of this living and malignant "prince of the power of the air."

For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.

[Eph. 6:12]

For he has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.

[Col. 1:13,14]

Prior to the rebellion, God gave the devil and his demon assistants substantial authority over everything from the earth's atmosphere on down to the earth itself, which includes us, its inhabitants. We must never forget that, in large part as Paul terms it, our wrestling is with these spirits. We inhabit the same "air" they do. These evil spirits indeed use deceived people to carry out their plans to destroy those in whom God lives. These people are likely under the strong influence of those spirit authorities, and because they are deceived, they are unaware that they are being used. They are not necessarily possessed, as the Bible shows some have been, but they may be influenced by demons to act against our best interests. The Prince of the world is always moving about the air and working in the hearts of men to commit sinful things. The "air" itself is permeated with sins created by the works of this Prince of the air. This evidence takes many forms, and not just in obvious ways such as violence, wars, genocide, widespread injustice, and sexual immorality, but also in not-so-obvious ways, as in godless ideologies and worldviews, corrupt and repressive governments, and much more.

But your iniquities have separated you from your God.

[Is. 59:2]

The mind governed by the flesh is death.

[Rom. 8:6]

A factor God wants us to realize more completely and fully is that we are not alone in this world under the influence of the air. Even as vicious sharks and barracuda prowl the water, their demonic counterparts, symbolized as foul and unclean raptors and carrion-eaters, inhabit the ocean of air right along with us. It is essential to our spiritual well-being to heed Paul's warning in Ephesians 6:12 that our battles are against these creatures.

Lucifer (“Morning Star”) - Satan – The Devil

There is a good deal of confusion regarding the identities of Lucifer, Satan, and the Devil throughout the Bible. Some Christian writers have applied the name "Lucifer" as used in the Book of Isaiah, and the Book of Revelation motif of a heavenly being cast down to the earth, to Satan or sometimes the Devil. All three names have been considered by many scholars as embodying one individual being. Most Christians accept the fact that Lucifer and Satan are one and the same supernatural being commonly referred to as the Devil. As a result, Lucifer has become a byword for Satan or the Devil in the church and in popular literature. Traditionally, Christians have understood Lucifer as onetime renown amongst all the angels created by God, Satan as the adversary of God, and the Devil to be the author of lies and promoter of evil.

The great dragon was hurled down—that ancient serpent called the devil, or Satan, who leads the whole world astray. He was hurled to the earth, and his angels with him.

[Rev. 12:9]

And I saw an angel coming down out of heaven, having the key to the Abyss and holding in his hand a great chain. He seized the dragon, that ancient serpent, who is the devil, or Satan, and bound him for a thousand years.

[Rev. 20:1,2]

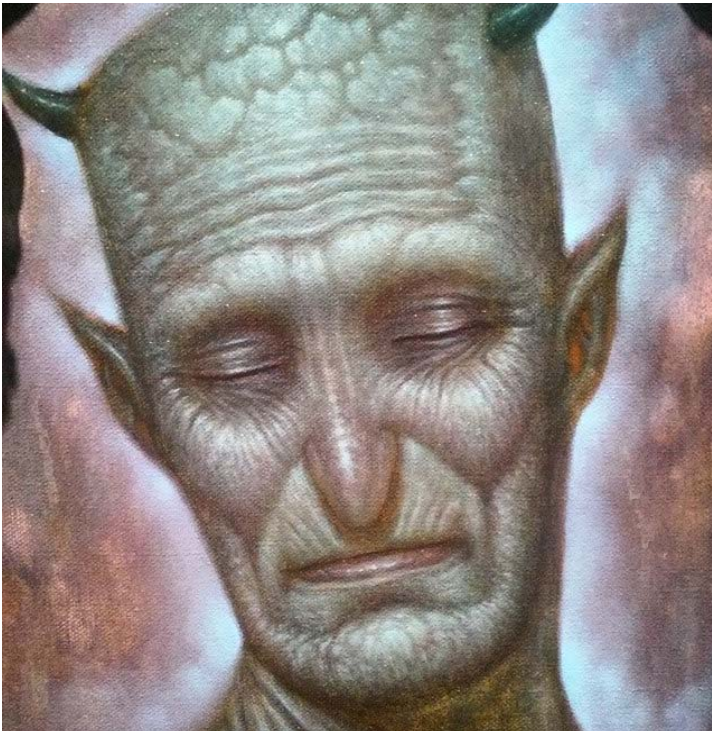
Lucifer

Lucifer was renown amongst all the angels, created by God, who challenged his Creator's right to exercise supreme authority over the universe and all on and in it, yet he is mentioned only once in the Scriptures. Isaiah 14:12 (“Lucifer” in the King James Version). Lucifer's beauty, wisdom and might – all the good things created in him by God - led him to pride. His pride led to his rebellion and fall, but he still retains much of his power and traits. He is leading a cosmic revolt against his Creator to see who has sovereign authority. His strategy is to enlist mankind to join him by tempting them to succumb to the same choice that he made – to love themselves, become autonomous from God, and defy him.

The Book of Enoch mentions fallen angels who left their heavenly position after the original fall from heaven of Lucifer. Lucifer had been placed to watch over the garden of Eden and he transgressed the commandments that God had set before him. The account of Enoch

points out that these angels, having left their heavenly position, went after "strange flesh" as described in Jude to produce a race of human/angel hybrids (the "Nephilim").

Luciferianism is a belief system that venerates the essential characteristics that are affixed to Lucifer. The tradition, influenced by Gnosticism, usually reveres Lucifer not as the devil, but as a liberator, a guardian or guiding spirit, or even the true god as opposed to Jehovah. Those who have directed the so-called Luciferian Conspiracy upon this earth have been very definite in pronouncing the doctrine that Lucifer is God, and Satan his "Prince of the World." There is expressed belief that there are five or more other worlds over which Lucifer placed "Princes," and several others, in addition to claiming that Satan is the eldest son of God (Adonay), and the older brother of Jesus Christ, they also claim that Jesus Christ is one and the same person as St. Michael the Archangel. They claim that when God decided to inhabit this earth, Lucifer made Satan "Prince of this world." This claim is inferred partially by the Scriptures which has been used to identify Satan as Prince of this world. John 14:30,16:11, Eph. 2:2. Those who worship Satan as "Prince of the World," and Lucifer as God of the celestial world, claim that Christ failed in his earthly mission. They claim that when Christ refused to accept the overtures of Satan, his betrayal and death were arranged in such a manner that the Romans acted as judge and executioners, while the High Priests used mob psychology to make the Jews reject Christ as the Messiah and then to assume the guilt for his crucifixion.



***How you have
fallen from
heaven,
morning star,
son of the dawn!
[Is. 14:12]***

Satan

The original Hebrew term “satan” is a generic noun meaning “accuser” or “adversary”. In Christianity, Satan has sometimes been identified as the “Devil” and, although the Book of Genesis does not mention him by name, he has traditionally been identified as the serpent in the Garden of Eden who entices Adam, through Eve, into breaking their Covenant with God. Some Christians believe Satan was once a beautiful angel named Lucifer (“Morning Star”) who defied God and fell from grace.

Satan makes his predominant appearance in the Book of Job, a poetic dialogue set within a prose framework, which may have been committed to writing around the time of the Babylonian captivity. In the text, Job is a righteous man favored by God. Job 1:6-8 describes the “sons of God” presenting themselves before God. God asks one of them where he has been, to which he replies that he has been patrolling the earth. God asks, “Have you considered my servant Job?” Satan replies by urging God to let him torture Job, promising that Job will abandon his faith at the first tribulation. God consents; Satan destroys Job's servants and flocks, yet Job refuses to condemn God. God points out Job's continued faithfulness, to which Satan insists that more testing is necessary; God once again gives him permission to test Job. In the end, Job remains faithful and righteous, and it is implied that Satan is shamed in his defeat.

Satan has often been identified as the leader of the “fallen angels” from heaven. The New Testament mentions Satan 36 times in 33 verses, and the Book of Revelation tells of “that ancient serpent, who is called the devil and Satan, the deceiver of the whole world”, being thrown down to the Earth together with his angels. Further, the Book of Revelation speaks of Satan as a great red dragon whose “tail swept a third part of the stars of heaven and cast them to the earth”. Satan is defeated in the “war in Heaven” against Michael and his angels: “the great dragon was thrown down, that ancient serpent, who is called the devil and Satan, the deceiver of the whole world - he was thrown down to the earth, and his angels were thrown down with him”. In Luke 10:18, Jesus says: “I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven.” While the New Testament thus mentions Satan falling from heaven, it does not say that he was an angel, only that he masquerades as one (2 Corinthians 11:14).

The gospel of Luke attributes more power to Satan than both Matthew and Mark. In Luke 22:31, Jesus grants Satan the authority to test Peter and the other apostles. Luke 22:3-6 states that Judas Iscariot betrayed Jesus because “Satan entered” him, and, in Acts 5:3, Peter describes Satan as “filling” Ananias's heart and causing him to sin. In the canonical gospels of Matthew, Mark, and Luke, the Parable of the Strong Man forms part of the Beelzebul controversy, where Jesus's opponents accuse him of gaining his power to exorcise demons by being in league with Satan. Interpreted in this context, the strong man represents Satan, and the attacker represents Jesus. Jesus thus says that he could not perform exorcisms (represented by stealing the strong man's possessions) unless he was opposed to - and had defeated - Satan (represented by tying up the strong man):



***How can Satan drive out Satan? If a kingdom is divided against itself, that kingdom cannot stand. If a house is divided against itself, that house cannot stand. And if Satan opposes himself and is divided, he cannot stand; his end has come.
[Mark 3:23-26]***

In Revelation 2:9, as part of the letter to the church at Smyrna, John of Patmos refers to the Jews of Smyrna as "a synagogue of Satan." In Revelation 2:13-14, in his letter to the church of Pergamum, John warns that Satan lives among the members of the congregation and declares that "Satan's throne" is in their midst. In Revelation 20:1-3, Satan is bound with a chain and hurled into the Abyss, where he is imprisoned for one thousand years. In Revelation 20:7-10, he is set free and gathers his armies along with Gog and Magog to wage war against the righteous, but he is defeated with fire from heaven, and cast into the lake of fire.

The Devil

In many traditions, the Devil is the personification and archetype of evil in various cultures. In Christianity, the manifestation of the Devil is usually the Hebrew Satan, the primary opponent of God. The Devil's main task is to tempt man to reject the way towards eternal life and redemption, and to entice him to accept the way that leads to eventual destruction, death and destruction.

The three Synoptic Gospels all describe the temptation of Christ by the Devil in the desert (Matthew 4:1-11, Mark 1:12-13, and Luke 4:1-13): "Then Jesus was led by the Spirit into the desert to be tempted by the devil. [Mat. 4:1] The Devil first shows Jesus a stone and tells him to turn it into bread. He also takes him to the pinnacle of the Temple in Jerusalem and commands Jesus to throw himself down so that the angels will catch him: "Then the devil took him to the holy city and had him stand on the highest point of the temple." [Mat. 4:5] The Devil takes Jesus to the top of a tall mountain as well; there, he shows him the

kingdoms of the earth and promises to give them all to him if he will bow down and worship him: “Again, the devil took him to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their splendor.” [Mat. 4:8] Each time Jesus rebukes him and, after the third temptation, he is administered by the angels. The Devil’s promise in Matthew 4:8-9 and Luke 4:6-7 to give Jesus all the kingdoms of the earth implies that all those kingdoms belong to him.



*Since the children
have flesh and blood,
he too shared in their
humanity so that by
his death he might
break the power of
him who holds the
power of death—that
is, the devil.
[Hebrews 2:14]*

The Devil plays a role in some of the parables of Jesus, namely the Parable of the Sower, the Parable of the Weeds, and the Parable of the Sheep and the Goats. According to the Parable of the Sower, the “evil one” profoundly influences those who fail to understand the gospel. In the Parable of the Weeds, the Devil’s followers will be punished on Judgement Day:

The one who sowed the good seed is the Son of Man. The field is the world, and the good seed stands for the people of the kingdom. The weeds are the people of the evil one, and the enemy who sows them is the devil. The harvest is the end of the age, and the harvesters are angels.

[Mat. 13:37-39]

The Parable of the Sheep and the Goats explains that the Devil, his angels, and the people who follow him will be consigned to “eternal fire”:

Depart from me, you who are cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels.

[Mat. 25:41]

John 8:44 describes the Devil as "a murderer from the beginning, not holding to the truth, for there is no truth in him." He is "a liar and the father of lies." The epistle to the Hebrews describes the Devil as "him who holds the power of death" (Hebrews 2:14). In Revelation 2:10, John warns "Do not be afraid of what you are about to suffer. I tell you, the devil will put some of you in prison to test you, and you will suffer persecution for ten days."

Demons and Deceiving Spirits

The term demon refers a "supernatural being" or "spirit"; it has commonly been associated with an evil or malevolent spirit. It has been taught that the Devil and the demons were once spiritual beings created by God in an initial state of spiritual purity, but because of their own freewill loss of this innocence, they became self-identified with evil by their own volition.

The Bible tells us that demons as well as angels are both real. The Bible gives some examples of people possessed or influenced by demons. From these examples we can find some symptoms of demonic influence and gain insight as to how a demon possesses someone [Matthew 9:32-33; 12:22; 17:18; Mark 5:1-20; 7:26-30; Luke 4:33-36; Luke 22:3; Acts 16:16-18]. In some of these passages, the demon possession causes physical ailments such as inability to speak, epileptic symptoms, blindness, and others. In other cases, it causes the individual to do evil, Judas being the main example. In Acts 16:16-18, the spirit apparently gives a slave girl some ability to know things beyond her own learning. The demon-possessed man of the Gadarenes, who was possessed by a multitude of demons ("Legion"), had superhuman strength and lived naked among the tombstones. King Saul, after rebelling against the Lord, was troubled by an evil spirit [1 Samuel 16:14-15; 18:10-11; 19:9-10] with the apparent effect of a depressed mood and an increased desire to kill David.

Most early Christians firmly believed that Satan and his demons have the power to possess humans and exorcisms were widely practiced by Jews, Christians, and pagans alike. Most Christian theologians believe that, starting with Pentecost, a Christian believer cannot be possessed because he has the full manifestation of the Spirit of God abiding within [2Corinthians 1:22; 5:5; 1Corinthians 6:19], and this Spirit would not share residence with a demon.



***The demons begged Jesus to let them go into the pigs, and he gave them permission. When the demons came out of the man, they went into the pigs, and the herd rushed down the steep bank into the lake and was drowned.
[Luke 8:32,33]***

***Now the Spirit of the Lord had departed from Saul, and an evil spirit from the Lord tormented him.
[1Sam. 16:14[]***

***For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.
[Ephesians 6:12]***

***You believe that there is one God. Good! Even the demons believe that—and shudder.
[James 2:19]***

The nature of demons indicates that;

- They are powerful and can exert supernatural strength in their victims (Matthew 8:28).
- They have some knowledge of the future as they are aware of their destiny (Matthew 8:29).
- They are spirits, having no material form, but they seem to desire physical contact, perhaps to give them greater means for expressing themselves (Matthew 12:43, Matthew 8:31).
- They exhibit degrees of wickedness, since some are described as more wicked than others (Matthew 12:45).
- They are personal and have names (Mark 5:9).
- They can be exorcised by the power of God; however, some are more difficult to expel than others (Mark 9:28).

- They believe in God, but show no repentance, and they also recognize the deity of Christ (James 2:19, Luke 4:34).
- They are intelligent and possess powers of thought, speech and action, and they can distinguish between true and false (Acts 19:15).
- They can voluntarily leave a possessed person and later return (Luke 11:24).
- They can afflict both physical and mental disabilities on their victims (Matthew 12:22, Acts 16:16).
- They can influence people without possessing them (1John 4:1).
- They are able to enter human beings and animals, but the mode of access is unknown.

The Gospel records present a very clear exposure of the activity of demons, with many references to the healing of those possessed by demons. The effect of demon possession is manifested in different ways as the victims variously exhibit insanity and mental disorders (Matthew 8:28), or blindness, dumbness, epilepsy and other physical afflictions (Matthew 17:15). Some victims appear to recognize that they were possessed, but they were in fact only acting as instruments of the demonic spirit. Sometimes the evil spirits overrule the whole personality to produce complete mental confusion, as in the case of the Gadarene, who said "my name is Legion; for we are many". The Legion represented a considerable number of spirits, who changed the man into a maniac, but when they were expelled by Christ, the man became completely normal; while the spirits in requesting entry to the swine seem to have vainly hoped to escape their coming judgement (Mark 5:1-20). It is most important to realize that not all sufferings were due to demons, for we are told that the Lord cast out demons as well as performed cures (Luke 13:32).

Then Jesus asked him, "What is your name?" "My name is Legion," he replied, "for we are many." And he begged Jesus again and again not to send them out of the area.

[Mark 5:9,10]

"What do you want with us, Son of God?" they shouted. "Have you come here to torture us before the appointed time?"

[Mat. 8:29]

In the synagogue there was a man possessed by a demon, an impure spirit. He cried out at the top of his voice, "Go away! What do you want with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are—the Holy One of God!"

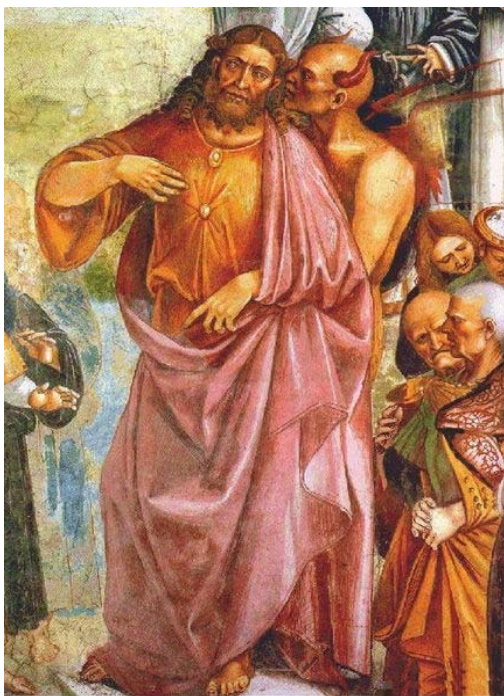
[Luke 4:33,34]

Once when we were going to the place of prayer, we were met by a female slave who had a spirit by which she predicted the future. She earned a great deal of money for her owners by fortune-telling.

[Acts 16:16]

They would say, “In the name of the Jesus whom Paul preaches, I command you to come out.” Seven sons of Sceva, a Jewish chief priest, were doing this. One day the evil spirit answered them, “Jesus I know, and Paul I know about, but who are you?”
[Acts 19:13-15]

King Saul, who had previously removed those with familiar spirits and wizards from the land, turned in desperation to the witch of Endor when pressed by the army of the Philistines, after Samuel was dead and Saul had lost contact with God. The woman, under pressure from Saul, sought her familiar spirit, but she was terrified when instead the spirit of Samuel appeared. This clearly shows that the spirit of a deceased person does not normally appear at a séance, even though this may be claimed to take place. The sentence on Saul is a solemn warning to those who would indulge in the occult. (1 Chronicles 10:13). Evil spirits were sometimes used by God for his own purposes, which demonstrates his overall power; for instance, God sent an evil spirit between Abimelech and the men of Shechem (Judges 9:23), and a lying spirit was used to punish king Ahab (1 Kings 22:23). All departure from God led inevitably to idolatry, as shown by Jeroboam, who ordained priests for high places and for demons (2 Chronicles 11:15). Evil spirits were much in evidence in the occult practices of the wicked king Manasseh (2 Kings 21:6). The continuation of these practices led some of the prophets to give specific warnings against spiritism, as they looked forward to the future cleansing of the people and the day when all evil would be banished from the land (Isaiah 8:19, Jeremiah 27:9).



Micaiah continued, “Therefore hear the word of the Lord: I saw the Lord sitting on his throne with all the multitudes of heaven standing around him on his right and on his left. And the Lord said, ‘Who will entice Ahab into attacking Ramoth Gilead and going to his death there?’ “One suggested this, and another that. Finally, a spirit came forward, stood before the Lord and said, ‘I will entice him.’ “By what means?’ the Lord asked. “I will go out and be a deceiving spirit in the mouths of all his prophets,’ he said. “You will succeed in enticing him,’ said the Lord. ‘Go and do it.’
[1Kings 22:19-22]

He [Manasseh] sacrificed his own son in the fire, practiced divination, sought omens, and consulted mediums and spiritists. He did much evil in the eyes of the Lord, arousing his anger.

[2Kings 21:6]

Saul died because he was unfaithful to the Lord; he did not keep the word of the Lord and even consulted a medium for guidance, and did not inquire of the Lord. So the Lord put him to death and turned the kingdom over to David son of Jesse.

[1Chron. 10:13,14]

We are told that "in later times some will abandon the faith and follow deceiving spirits and things taught by demons." (1Tim. 4:1) As Satan can disguise himself as an angel of light, so his minions can appear as servants of righteousness (2Cor. 11:14), to corrupt the truth and produce most palatable teachings, which are in reality doctrines of demons. For believers, possession by demons is impossible, as regenerated persons are sealed with the Holy Spirit (Eph. 1:13). Though we are not immune from the attacks of the evil one, who is ever seeking to bring discredit on the work of God. God has provided us with a defense; Paul could write "we are not ignorant of his devices" (2Cor. 2:11), and we would pray that we all might be the same.

The sacrifices of pagans are offered to demons, not to God, and I do not want you to be participants with demons. You cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of demons too; you cannot have a part in both the Lord's table and the table of demons.

[1Cor. 10:21]

The “sons of God” and the Nephilim



When human beings began to increase in number on the earth and daughters were born to them, the sons of God saw that the daughters of humans were beautiful, and they married any of them they chose... The Nephilim were on the earth in those days—and also afterward—when the sons of God went to the daughters of humans and had children by them. They were the heroes of old, men of renown. [Gen. 6:1,2,4]

The Nephilim were the giant offspring of the "sons of God" and the "daughters of men" before the Deluge, according to Genesis 6:1–4. According to Numbers 13:31–33, their descendants inhabited Canaan at the time of the Israelite conquest of Canaan:

But the men who had gone up with him said, “We can’t attack those people; they are stronger than we are.” And they spread among the Israelites a bad report about the land they had explored. They said, “The land we explored devours those living in it. All the people we saw there are of great size. We saw the Nephilim there (the descendants of Anak come from the Nephilim). We seemed like grasshoppers in our own eyes, and we looked the same to them.”

[Num. 13:31–33]

The story of the Nephilim is further elaborated in the Book of Enoch (regarded as canonical by the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church and Eritrean Orthodox Tewahedo Church, but not by any other Christian group): “And it came to pass when the children of men had

multiplied that in those days were born unto them beautiful and comely daughters. And the angels, the children of the heaven, saw and lusted after them, and said to one another: 'Come, let us choose us wives from among the children of men and beget us children.'"

In addition to Enoch, the Book of Jubilees (7:21–25) also states that ridding the Earth of these Nephilim was one of God's purposes for flooding the Earth in Noah's time. These works describe the Nephilim as being evil giants. References to the offspring of Seth rebelling from God and mingling with the daughters of Cain are found from the second century AD onwards in both Christian and Jewish sources. A long-held view among some Christians is that the "sons of God" were the formerly righteous descendants of Seth who rebelled, while the "daughters of men" were the unrighteous descendants of Cain, and the Nephilim the offspring of their union. This view, dating to at least the 1st century AD in Jewish literature as described above, is also found in Christian sources from the third century, if not earlier. The sons of God were the godly line from Adam to Seth down to Noah, and the Nephilim were fallen children who sought after false gods.

The Sethite approach appeals to the context of Genesis 5, just before the mention of the sons of God and Nephilim where one variant is that the sons of God were demi-gods as well. It is assumed that there was a godly lineage from Adam to Seth and followed down the line to Noah:

Adam–Seth–Enosh–Kenan–Mahalalel–Jared–Enoch–Methuselah–Lamech–Noah

Of all of Adam's children, only Seth was deemed worthy to replace Abel, who was righteous, and with him, people began to call on the name of Lord (Genesis 4:26). Enoch was indeed godly. God intends that there be some godly heritage passed along for Noah to have any teachings to remain righteous when others weren't. Considering the great ages of these patriarchs (Noah lived 950, Seth lived 912 years, and Methuselah lived 969 years [Genesis 5]). a godly heritage could have been passed from Seth directly to one of his descendants, such as Enoch and Methuselah, and then directly to Noah. In the genealogy listed in Genesis 5, Enoch is singled out with honors unlike any other from Adam to Noah. Enoch walked with God; then he was no more, because God took him away.



After he became the father of Methuselah, Enoch walked faithfully with God 300 years and had other sons and daughters. Altogether, Enoch lived a total of 365 years. Enoch walked faithfully with God; then he was no more, because God took him away. [Gen. 5:22-24]

In this godly lineage of Sethites, they were called sons of God. These sons of God or their children married or began marrying ungodly women (daughters of men), and their children followed after false gods and rejected the one true God. In other words, they fell away from God - recall the word Nephilim is related to the verb series "to fall" in Hebrew. In this view, offspring from these unions had fallen from God and were termed Nephilim. If some nations are a combination of celestial blood and Adamic blood, as the Anakites would have been in this view as well as the Nephilim pre-Flood, then there is a residual genetic strain in the gene pool of humanity that is a remnant of Adam's vital blood. The Anakites were still living and breeding with many other people groups during Paul's time.

GODS AND GODDESSES:

The idea that there are other "gods" who exist as real supernatural beings, albeit infinitely inferior to the only "God of gods", pervades the Bible. The Psalms are filled with such references: "Among the gods there is none like you, Lord" (86:8); "For great is the Lord and most worthy of praise; he is to be feared above all gods" (96:4); "Worship him, all you gods!" (97:7); "For the Lord is the great God, the great King above all gods" (95:3), "I know that the Lord is great, that our Lord is greater than all gods" (135:5); and so on:

***God presides in the great assembly; he renders judgment among the “gods”...
“The ‘gods’ know nothing, they understand nothing. Among the gods there is
none like you, Lord; no deeds can compare with yours. All the nations you
have made will come and worship before you, Lord; they will bring glory to
your name. For you are great and do marvelous deeds; you alone are God.
[Ps. 86:8-10]***

***For you, Lord, are the Most High over all the earth; you are exalted far above
all gods.
[Ps. 97:9]***

***Give thanks to the God of gods. His love endures forever. Give thanks to the
Lord of lords: His love endures forever.
[Ps. 136:2,3]***

But it's not just the Psalms that references other “gods”. In Exodus, Yahweh declares that “I will bring judgment on all the gods of Egypt” (12:12). The author of Numbers then declares that that is indeed what happened: “For the Lord had brought judgment on their gods” (33:4). There is no hint that Yahweh is the only God. Instead, it is clearly implied that Egypt had her own gods, and Yahweh defeated them. When Yahweh gives his people the Ten Commandments, the first commandment implies the existence of other gods: “You shall have no other gods before me” (Exod. 20:3; see also Deut. 5:7). In Exodus 23:32–33, Israel is told not to covenant with or worship other gods; there is no suggestion that the gods of Israel's neighbors do not exist.

In Deuteronomy 4:19, the Israelites are forbidden from worshipping “the sun, the moon and the stars—all the heavenly array—do not be enticed into bowing down to them and worshiping things the Lord your God has apportioned to all the nations under heaven.” In other words, they were told not to worship other gods, not because those gods did not exist, but because they were supposed to rule other peoples, not Israel.

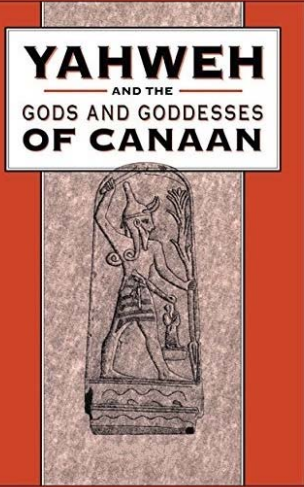
***To the Lord your God belong the heavens, even the highest heavens, the earth
and everything in it... For the Lord your God is God of gods and Lord of lords,
the great God, mighty and awesome.
[Deut. 10:14,17]***

Yahweh himself, who created and rules the other gods, would rule Israel directly. He would rule the other nations indirectly through the delegated authority of other gods. This, apparently, was the original intent behind the strange passage regarding the “prince of Persia” in Daniel 10:13, “But the prince of the Persian kingdom resisted me [Gabriel] twenty-one days. Then Michael, one of the chief princes, came to help me.” Psalm 82 describes how the “gods” of assignment to rule the nations justly had failed to perform their caretaking responsibilities. They were supposed to rule with justice, executing judgments on behalf of the poor, the widows and the rest of the nations. But because they did not judge properly, Yahweh would judge them with fierce punishment:

***God presides in the great assembly; he renders judgment among the “gods”:
“How long will you defend the unjust and show partiality to the wicked?... “I
said, ‘You are “gods”; you are all sons of the Most High.’ But you will die like
mere mortals; you will fall like every other ruler.” Rise up, O God, judge the
earth, for all the nations are your inheritance.
[Ps. 82:1,2,6-8]***

Late in the Paleolithic era (Old Stone Age, a period of prehistory from about 2.6 million years ago to around 10,000 years ago), agriculture was developing, and the cult of the mother goddess was forming as a response to the desire for cultivating a fertile earth. The fertility cults were common to Mesopotamia, Egypt, and Canaan, but they exerted their strongest influence on the Israelites in Canaan. The chief Canaanite deities were El, the creator of the earth and controller of storms, and Baal (both symbolized by the bull as indicative of their procreative powers), and the fertility goddess Astarte (Biblical Ashtarothe). She was immensely popular at the temples, and prostitution was a legalized part of the cult. The consort of El was Asherah, the mother goddess (the symbol of fruitfulness). There were many other Canaanite deities, such as Melkart, Koshar (the Vulcan of the Canaanites), and Hauron, the shepherd god. Mot was the god of death and sterility.

God early and clearly commanded the descendants of Abraham not to have any other gods besides him (Ex. 20:3). This strict, undivided loyalty was the basis of the covenant relationship God established between himself and the people of Israel. Sadly, the whole of biblical history is punctuated by the numerous times the people of God turned away from him to engage in the worship of a strange god or goddess. People in the lands surrounding Israel had deities that continually tempted the Israelites to turn from their own God.



Adramelech and Anammelech: Gods to whom the Sepharvites worshiped through human sacrifice. [2Kings 17:31; 19:36-38]]

Artemis: Archaic pre-Hellenic Greek goddess revered in Ephesus. [Acts 19:23-27]

Ashtoreth: Fertility goddess of love and war. [Judges 2:13] (see also Asherah [Ex. 34:13], Queen of heaven [Jer. 44:17])

Baal: God of storms and rain, son of El, chief deity of the Canaanites. [Num. 25:3] [Judges 2:13] [Judges 3:7].

Baal-Berith: [Judges 8:33]

Baal-Zebub (Beelzebub): The god of Ekron. [2Kings 1:2]

Bel: Babylonian god. [Is. 46:1] [Jer. 50:2]

Chemosh: God of storm and fertility, god of Moab and Ammon. [1Kings 11:7] [Judges 11:24] [Jer. 48:7,13]

Chiun: Star-god identified with Saturn. [Amos 5:26]

Dagon: Chief god of the Philistines, controlling weather and fertility of the land. [Judges 16:23] [1Sam. 5:2-7]

Ishtar: Goddess of war and fertility, worshipped with explicit sexual activity.

Marduk (Merodak): War-god, patron deity of Babylon. [Jer. 50:2]

Molech: The detestable god of the ammonites (child sacrifice). [1Kings 11:5]

Nebo: Son of Marduk, Babylonian god of wisdom and the arts. [Is. 46:1]

Rimmon: Syrian god of rain. [2Kings 5:18]

Sikkuth: Pagan deity. [Amos 5:26]

Tammuz: Fertility god of Babylon. [Ez. 8:14]

Artemis was the Greek goddess (sometimes referenced as the Roman goddess Diana) of fertility worshiped at Ephesus and elsewhere during the New Testament era. Her worship combined Greek, Roman, and Anatolian elements and dates back to c. 1000 BC. In Ephesus, a temple was built in the third century BC to replace an earlier one that burned down, becoming known as one of the seven wonders of the ancient world. A well-known statue of Artemis emphasizes fertility. Paul's preaching directly challenged her worship and precipitated a riot that only official interaction could quell (Acts 19:23-41). In the end, the worship of Christ prevailed, and the cult of Artemis disappeared from history:



About that time there arose a great disturbance about the Way. A silversmith named Demetrius, who made silver shrines of Artemis, brought in a lot of business for the craftsmen there... “You see and hear how this fellow Paul has convinced and led astray large numbers of people here in Ephesus and in practically the whole province of Asia. He says that gods made by human hands are no gods at all... the temple of the great goddess Artemis will be discredited; and the goddess herself, who is worshiped throughout the province of Asia and the world, will be robbed of her divine majesty.”

[Acts 19: 23-27]

The people of Israel had been settled in the promised land for only a brief time before their attention turned to the deities of the Canaanites. The Book of Judges chronicles this apostasy. The people forsook the Lord God to serve Asherah and her husband Baal - Ashteroth is an alternative name for Asherah (Judges 2:13; 3:7). The name "Asherah" and its variant spellings occur thirty-nine times in the Old Testament. In a number of these instances, Baal is mentioned along with Asherah. Evidence from Ugaritic mythologies and other texts suggests that the term refers to both the Canaanite goddess and cultic objects facilitating her worship. That Baal and Asherah are mentioned together in several Old Testament passages suggests that the Canaanites and other peoples considered Asherah to be an important "high deity" along with Baal. The most explicit passage disclosing the close relationship between the two comes from the narrative about Ahab and Jezebel's confrontation with Elijah (1 Kings 18:1-19:18). Their endorsement of and participation in the worship of these Canaanite deities is the most extreme of any incidents related in Scripture concerning Israelite rulers who adopted the worship of these gods. In fact, Jezebel went so far as to insist that Ahab provide for the worship of her Phoenician deities.

Again the Israelites did evil in the eyes of the Lord. They served the Baals and the Ashtoreths, and the gods of Aram, the gods of Sidon, the gods of Moab, the gods of the Ammonites and the gods of the Philistines. And because the Israelites forsook the Lord and no longer served him.

[Judges 10:6]

Baal was the god of storms and rain, influencing vegetation and agriculture and harvest. He was the most popular god in Canaan, being represented by a bull, the symbol of strength and fertility. Ashtoreth was his female consort, the mother goddess of the sea, the goddess of love, war, and fertility. She was worshipped by means of sacred wooden pillars (Ashtoreth poles). The sexual union of Baal and Ashtoreth rejuvenated the earth and made it fertile. Temple prostitution (and sometimes child sacrifice) was a part of the worship ritual of these regional gods. These gods appealed to the sensual, carnal, and immoral sensitivities of human nature. Yahweh, The national God of the Israelites, on the other hand, is characterized with a holy spiritual and morally righteous nature.

According to Canaanite religious beliefs, prolonged drought was a signal that the storm god Baal had been temporarily defeated by Mot, the god of death, and was imprisoned in the underworld. Baal's worshipers would mourn his death in the hopes that their tears might facilitate his resurrection and the renewal of plentiful crops. As a fertility god, Baal was also the provider of children. Having the power elements of the storm at his disposal, he could defeat the enemies of his people. Baal was also the king of the divine realm under the ultimate authority of the high god El. Baal's favor among the Canaanites was gained through sympathetic enchantment in the form of ritual prostitution.

The Canaanite religion was particularly dangerous for the Israelites because of its appeal to carnal human desires, especially sexual. Baal and Astarte were associated with fornication and drunkenness. Sacred prostitution and various orgiastic rites characterized the religion. Amos charged that Hebrew participation in these rites profaned the name of God (Amos 2:7). Canaanite religion was a debasing form of paganism. Deuteronomy 7:4 and 20:18 warn against the dangers of Canaanite influence. Moses instructed the Israelites to destroy all the inhabitants of the land so that they would not be tempted to follow their gods (Deut 7:1-5]). They were also instructed to destroy the high places, the wooden asherim, pillars, and graven images (Deut. 12:2,3), which were associated with the sexual aspects of Canaanite worship practices.

Asherah was one of the three chief consort-goddesses within the Canaanite pantheon, along with Astarte (or Ashtaroth) and Anath. These three goddesses were jealous rivals. In the mythology, Asherah is portrayed as the consort of both El and Baal. In the Ugaritic myths, she clearly emerges as the consort of El, the chief high god of the west Semitic pantheon. The Canaanite myths associated El with the source of fresh water, located in the distant west or north. On this basis El's consort was identified mainly as a sea-goddess. During the kingdom period of Israel's history, she was the goddess at the side of Baal. On some occasions, however, she comes across as a fierce opponent of Baal - particularly when she thought she would lose her authority or influence among other members of the pantheon or when Baal preferred Anath instead of Asherah as his sexual intimate. The

conflict and enmity between Baal and Asherah provided an explanation for the alternating two-climate season each year in the Mediterranean region.

The most shocking endorsement of Israel's buying into Canaanite religion was the construction of a temple for the worship of Baal at Samaria. This, as mentioned above, was promoted by Ahab (869-850 b.c.) and Jezebel, his wife, who was the daughter of the Tyrian king Ethbaal (1 Kings 16:29-34). This temple was constructed with the help of Tyrian artisans, along with an altar on which to offer sacrifices and a "sacred pole" or "wooden image". Because of this apostasy, judgment was poured out on Ahab and Jezebel. Jehu later destroyed this temple (2 Kings 10:18-31). During the reign of Manasseh (687-642 BC), Canaanite religion was appropriated by the people of Judah from Geba to Beer-sheba (2 Kings 16:4-14). Manasseh added various aspects of Canaanite (a carved image of Asherah, 2 Kings 21:7) and other religions to the city of Jerusalem. He even offered his own son as burnt offering (2 Kings 21:6). Josiah later cleansed Jerusalem of the excesses of Canaanite worship (2 Kings 23).

The Israelites had been warned before settling the land of Canaan about established religious worship sites, particularly the "high places" taken over intact during the conquest. These sites were often furnished with basic cultic objects and resident sacred personnel. Cultic features included the following: small clay figurines (Judges 3:7; Micah 5:13); "sacred pillars" (1 Kings 14:23); an "incense altar" (2Ch 30:14); an altar for offering the whole burnt offering (2 Kings 21:5) and "priests" and "priestesses." Several Canaanite high places were appropriated by Israel's religious leaders early in the settlement, including Bethel (Judges 1:22-26), Shiloh (1 Sam 1:1-18), and Gibeah (1Sam 13:1-4). Both Solomon (1Kings 11:1-4) and Manasseh (2Kings 21:1-17) encouraged worship at high places. Asherah and Baal worship caused the downfall of the northern and southern kingdoms of Israel. Ashtoreth. Ashtoreth was a popular goddess in several cultures. Her worship attracted the Israelites shortly after their settlement in Canaan.

Baal-zebub (Beelzebub, Beel-zebul) was a Phoenician god worshiped at Ekron in Old Testament times (2Kings 1:2-16). The Old Testament form, Baal-zebub, means "Lord of the flies"; in Jesus' day, this god is derisively called Beelzebub, "lord of dung, " and associated with Satan, the ruler of demons (Matt 12:24). Jesus' enemies accused him of casting out demons by invoking Beelzebub (Mark 3:22) and even of being his embodiment (Matt 10:25). Jesus, rejecting this calumny, pointed out that the expulsion of demons was Satan's defeat, heralding the arrival of God's kingdom (Luke 11:20-22).

Chemosh was the primary national god of the Moabites and Ammonites. The Moabites are called the "people of Chemosh" in the passage of Scripture that details the travels of the Israelites through Edom, Moab, and Ammon, (Num. 21:21-32). During the reign of Solomon, worship of Chemosh, along with that of other pagan gods, was established and promoted in the city of Jerusalem. Jeremiah specifically condemns the worship of Chemosh (chap. 38). The prophet focuses on the god's impotence by showing him going into captivity with his priests and people.

Dagon was the highly venerated national deity of the Philistines. Each city of the Philistine pentapolis had its temple for the worship of this god. The temple statuary portraying Dagon was characterized by an upper human torso, with the lower torso of a fish. The major cultic rite in Dagon's worship was human sacrifice. When the Philistines captured and overcame Samson, the five Philistine cities planned a great celebration. Dagon had delivered their enemy into their hands (Judges 16:23-24)! The Philistines called for a sacrifice to their god. Presumably they intended to offer Samson as a human offering. Dagon was, however, defeated by Yahweh.

Dagon haunted the reigns of both Saul and David. The Israelites relied on their theological understanding that Yahweh was mightier than Dagon but, unfortunately, with an inexcusable naivete. When they brought the ark of the covenant from Shiloh and took it into battle against the Philistines, it did not result in their victory. However, the presence of the ark in Philistine hands led to the challenge to their god, Dagon, and the return of the ark to the Israelites. Throughout the narratives relating the encounters between the people of Israel and the Philistines, there persists an underlying theological dilemma. Which deity is greater and therefore the one to worship and serve: the Lord God or Dagon?

Hadad was a prominent god among the Arameans, Syrians, and other west Semitic peoples. The name appears especially in the Edomite genealogy of Genesis 36 and in the history of the two Israelite kingdoms to the downfall of the northern kingdom in 722 BC. Hadad was the deification of natural forces and war. He was viewed as the god of the storm, who displayed his power in thunder, lightning, and rain. He was credited with both the good (desirable) and bad (undesirable) sides of storms. He was regarded as the origin and regulator of the beneficial rains, making him the principle of life and fertility. The Assyrians saw him as a mighty warrior-god. He was portrayed as standing on the back of a bull, wearing the horns of the bull on his helmet and wielding a mace and thunderbolt. The name "Hadad" was used in reference to a human individual to indicate the essence or being of the patron deity, the power bestowed on that person, and bestowal of favor or help against an enemy or opponent. The name is used of a number of important persons in the scriptural record. Several rulers of the Edomites contemporary with David and Solomon had the name "Hadad."

Leviathan can be identified with Lotan, sea-monster of the Ugaritic Texts mythology. The Ugaritic myth recounts how Lotan and Baal were locked in mortal combat, until Baal killed the sea-monster. Leviathan is also mentioned in the Epic of Gilgamesh. The references to Leviathan in Scripture occur almost exclusively in poetic or semipoetic passages, emphasizing the might and control of the Lord God over the forces of nature. Marduk was the chief deity of Babylon. He became the supreme god among the older Sumerian gods as creator and ruler. Enlil was the original chief god until the Code of Hammurabi and the Creation Epic focused on Marduk instead. Jeremiah prophesied that Marduk would be put to shame (Jer. 50:2). Milcom, called the "abomination" of the Ammonites, was apparently the chief deity of the Ammonites or Moabites. The "abomination" label seems to convey both the detestable aspect of origin and of the worship of Lot's descendants. Solomon built a worship facility for this foreign deity (see 1Kings 11:5 1Kings 11:7 1Kings 11:33). Milcom is sometimes identified with Molech, but this is incorrect since the two gods were worshiped

individually. Molech or Moloch was another "abomination" of the Ammonites. Solomon also built a high place for this god in Jerusalem. The worship of this god was particularly odious, as it required human sacrifice.

Jeremiah was directed by God to speak out the Lord's disapproval of Israel's worship of the "Queen of Heaven" (7:18; 44:17-19). This female astral deity was particularly worshiped by the women in Judah and Egypt during the time of Jeremiah. Children were gathering firewood; women were busily kneading dough for cakes to be offered to this queen. The details and activity suggest that the Canaanite goddess Astarte was the deity motivating the people in Jerusalem to such frenzied worship activity. Tammuz was a Syrian and Phoenician god of fertility, venerated in the worship of idols and elaborate, extreme rituals. The Greeks adopted Tammuz as one of their prominent deities, changing his name to Adonis. Ezekiel lists the worship of Tammuz as one of the abominations in God's sight (8:1-18) that was being practiced in the temple precincts in Jerusalem. The chanting of a litany of woes (or, singing a song, of lamentation see Ez. 8:14) shows that the cult of Tammuz was active in Jerusalem.

Ancient Egyptian religion was polytheistic and complex. Though the chief gods were represented in human form, most of the numerous deities were depicted in animal form, such as the crocodile god Sobek and Anubis with the head of a jackal. There were cosmic deities, such as Re, the sun-god. Osiris (the patron of agriculture) and Isis (counterpart of Astarte) were associated with regeneration. There were triads of gods such as Osiris, Isis, and their son Horus. Hieroglyphic inscriptions on obelisks and tombs give the impression that the Egyptians had thousands of deities. Every aspect of nature, animate and inanimate, was thought to be inhabited by a deity.

The various gods of Mesopotamia, Egypt, and Canaan were known to the Israelites. It is not inconceivable that Abraham himself was a worshiper of the Babylonian deities before God called him to leave his home and land for the promised land. The ancient Sumerians believed that the universe was directed by a pantheon of gods, the chief ones being An, Ki, Enlil, and Enki, who controlled, respectively, heaven, earth, air, and water. The Mesopotamian pantheon was composed of more than 1,500 gods, some of the better-known being Shamash, Marduk, Sin, and Ishtar; the fertility gods were especially honored. Ishtar, goddess of love, descended to the underworld to seek her husband Tammuz. Nabu was the patron of science and learning. Nergal was the god of war and hunting.

IDOLS AND EVIL PRACTICES:

So Jacob said to his household and to all who were with him, "Get rid of the foreign gods you have with you, and purify yourselves."

[Gen. 35:2]

The images of their gods you are to burn in the fire. Do not covet the silver and gold in them, and do not take it for yourselves or you will be ensnared by

it, for it is detestable to the Lord your God. Do not bring a detestable thing into your house or you, like it, will be set apart for destruction. Utterly abhor and detest it, for it is set apart for destruction.

[Deut. 8:25,26]

The evil practices of the Canaanites were fostered by the rebellious celestial powers, and no doubt Satan specially directed his forces to corrupt the Israelites as they came to possess their promised land. There were severe warnings in the Mosaic Law against evil practices and also making sacrifices to idols, which were effectively offered to demons (Deuteronomy 32:17, Psalms 106:36). For though the idols were nothing in themselves and completely powerless, they became potent through the demons. Later, Paul confirmed that offerings to idols are sacrifices to demons (1 Corinthians 10:20). The corruption was very extensive involving human sacrifices, soothsaying, sorcery, spiritualism, divination and necromancy; those who practiced these things were to be cut off from the people, and sometimes condemned to death (Leviticus 19:1-37, Leviticus 20:1-27).



They abandoned the God who made them and rejected the Rock their Savior. They made him jealous with their foreign gods and angered him with their detestable idols. They sacrificed to false gods, which are not God - gods they had not known, gods that recently appeared, gods your ancestors did not fear.

[Deut. 32:15-17]

They worshiped their idols, which became a snare to them.

[Ps. 106:36]

No, but the sacrifices of pagans are offered to demons, not to God, and I do not want you to be participants with demons.

[1Cor. 10:20]

Idolatry entails the worship of a cult image known as an "idol" in the form of a physical image such as a statue or icon. In Abrahamic religions such as Christianity, Islam and Judaism, idolatry leads to the worship of something or someone other than God. This is considered as the worship of false gods, and as such is forbidden. The earliest historic records confirming cult images are from the ancient Egyptian civilization followed by the emergence of the Greek civilization. By the 2nd millennium BC, two broad manifestations of cult image appear; in the first, images are zoomorphic (god in the image of animal or

animal-human fusion) and in the other, anthropomorphic (god in the image of man). Symbols of nature, useful animals or feared animals may also be included by both. The Canaanites incorporated a golden calf in their pantheon. The Ancient Egyptian religion was polytheistic, with large cult images that were either animals or included animal parts. Ancient Greek civilization preferred human forms, with idealized proportions, for divine representation. The ancient philosophy and practices of the Greeks, and thereafter the Romans, were imbued with polytheistic idolatry.

The worship of idols was an abomination to the protagonists of Hebraic monotheism. They condemned as “idolatry” the tendency of the people to adopt the local Canaanite cults. The Old Testament emphasizes that the worst sin was to acknowledge other gods besides Jehovah and to make an image or likeness of the deity. The ban on images was a new concept in the ancient East, even producing a great struggle among the people of Israel, who continually returned to image worship. A recurring theme in the Old Testament is the ridicule heaped upon those who would make an idol with their hands and then bow down and worship it (Is. 44:9-20; Jer. 10:2-10; Hos. 8:5; 13:2). The Old Testament also emphasizes the powerlessness of idols and the gods of the Canaanites. Gideon destroys the altar of Baal, and his father mocks the irate worshipers (Judges 6:25-32). The image of Dagon fell on the ground before the ark of God (1Sam. 5). Elijah mocked the priests of Baal in the contest on Mount Carmel (1Kings 18:27).

The extent to which the Hebrews participated in the grosser religious practices in pre-Mosaic times can only be a matter of conjecture. It is a safe assumption that the influence of other religions upon them was great. Judaism prohibits any form of idolatry. According to its commandments, the worship of foreign gods in any form or through icons strictly forbidden, and idolatrous worship of even the God of Israel is taboo. The commandments in the Hebrew Bible against idolatry forbade the practices and gods of ancient Akkad, Mesopotamia, and Egypt. Hebrew theology states that God has no shape or form, is utterly incomparable, is everywhere and cannot be represented in a physical form of an idol. Warnings on idolatry in Judaism and Christianity are inspired by the first of Ten Commandments: “You shall have no other gods before me.” This is expressed throughout the Bible in Exodus 20:3, Matt 4:10, Luke 4:8 and elsewhere.

Do not make idols or set up an image or a sacred stone for yourselves, and do not place a carved stone in your land to bow down before it. I am the Lord your God.
[Lev. 26:1]

There is no period in Hebrew history when the people were free from the attraction of idols. Rachel took the teraphim (“household gods” represented by clay figurines) with her when Jacob and his family fled from Laban (Gen 31:34). The Israelites worshiped the idols of Egypt during their sojourn there and did not give them up even when led by Moses out of bondage (Joshua 24:14; Ez. 20:8-18; 23:3-8). They made a molten calf to worship when Moses tarried in the mountain receiving the law from God (Ex. 32). God would have destroyed them for their idolatries had not Moses interceded for them. Even as they neared the end of the wilderness wanderings, they joined with the Moabites in the worship of Baal

(Num 25:1-3; 31:16). Just before they entered the “promised land”, Moses warned them not to make any images or to worship other gods (Deut. 4:15-19; 7:1-5), or they would perish (Deut. 8:19). The one who would entice his fellow Hebrews to worship other gods was to be put to death (Deut. 13:6-16). Deuteronomy 17:2-5 required the stoning of the person who worshiped other gods.

There you will worship man-made gods of wood and stone, which cannot see or hear or eat or smell.
[Deut. 4:28]

They did not destroy the peoples as the Lord commanded them, but they mingled with the nations and adopted their customs. They worshiped their idols, which became a snare to them.
[Ps. 106:34-36]

They built high places for Baal in the Valley of Ben Hinnom to sacrifice their sons and daughters to Molech.
[Jer. 32:35]

The sacrifices of pagans are offered to demons, not to God, and I do not want you to be participants with demons. You cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of demons too; you cannot have a part in both the Lord’s table and the table of demons.
[1Cor. 10:20,21]

Along with the many detestable rituals involving the worship of gods, goddesses and idols, God strictly forbids such practices as divination, sorcery, witchcraft, and the use of mediums, spiritists, or anyone who consults the dead: “A man or woman who is a medium or spiritist among you must be put to death. You are to stone them; their blood will be on their own heads.” [Lev. 20:27]



Let no one be found among you who sacrifices his son or daughter in the fire, who practices divination or sorcery, interprets omens, engages in witchcraft, or casts spells, or who is a medium or spiritist or consults the dead. Anyone who does these things is detestable to the Lord.

[Deut. 18:10-12]

Casting sacred lots meant using the Urim and Thummim to determine God's guidance. The Urim and Thummim are believed to have been precious stones or flat objects kept within the pockets of a priest's breastpiece that could determine God's will by the casting out of these objects. Observation would indicate a "yes" or a "no" to a question, or possibly a neutral response.

Also put the Urim and Thummim in the breastpiece, so they may be over Aaron's heart whenever he enters the presence of the Lord. Thus Aaron will always bear the means of making decisions for the Israelites over his heart before the Lord.

[Ex. 28:30]

Then Joseph said unto them, "Do not interpretations belong to God? Tell me your dreams."

[Gen. 40:8]

Joseph said to them, "What is this you have done? Don't you know that a man like me can find things out by divination?"

[Gen. 44:15]

When Israelite men were indulging in sexual immorality with Moabite women and they were paying obeisance to their gods, the Lord told Moses to "kill them and expose them in broad daylight." [Num. 25:4]

The Israelites did not obey the injunctions given by Moses to thoroughly destroy the local indigent peoples, but rather they settled down among them. They also continued to worship the foreign gods they had brought with them from Egypt (Joshua 24:14, 15, 23). They

became enticed by the gods of the Canaanites once they finally settled in the land [Judges 2:11-13; 6:25-32]. The ephod (an ancient Hebrew vestment of priestly divination worn in Hebrew rites by the high priest) made by Gideon became an object of worship (Judges 8:24-27).

After having initially established their presence in Canaan, many of these Israelites completely lost sight of the commandments and warnings given them by their Lord their God. Bible history rationalizes this loss of direction and focus as an unfortunate repercussion from Israel's splintering into multiple disjointed tribes and their subsequent loss of central leadership: "In those days Israel had no king; everyone did as they saw fit." [Judges 17:6] For example, the mother of a man named Micah donated her silver to him to make a carved image and a cast idol. With these in hand, he made an ephod (a priestly garment, an elaborately embroidered apron) and a shrine, and he installed his son as priest. Later, Micah took a wandering Levite from Bethlehem in Judah and installed him as priest to please the Lord. One day, 600 men from the clan of the Danites petitioned this young Levite to become their own tribal priest:

Then the priest was glad. He took the ephod, the other household gods and the carved image and went along with the people.
[Judges 18:20]

The Danites then proceeded to destroy the peaceful and unsuspecting people of Laish and burned down their city. The Israelite tribe of Dan rebuilt the city and renamed it Dan. This is where they could come into their portion of inheritance from among the tribes of Israel.

There the Danites set up for themselves the idols.
[Judges 18:30]

The Israelites initiated evil in the eyes of the Lord because they were establishing worship of the Baals and Asherahs, the local gods of the Aramites. God delivered them for eight years into the hands of the King of Aram Naharaim in northwest Mesopotamia. The Israelites cried out to the Lord, and God sent them a deliverer – the Spirit of the Lord came upon Othniel so that he became Israel's judge and leader.

The Spirit of the Lord came on him, so that he became Israel's judge and went to war. The Lord gave Cushan-Rishathaim king of Aram into the hands of Othniel, who overpowered him. So the land had peace for forty years, until Othniel son of Kenaz died.
[Judges 3:10,11]

The Israelites once again did evil in the eyes of the Lord and reinitiated their worship of the gods of the Amorites in whose land they lived. So, the Lord gave them this time into the hands of the Midianites for seven years. Again, the people cried out to the Lord for help, and he relented, sending them the prophet Gideon. The Spirit of the Lord came upon Gideon, and he summoned his peoples, and they subsequently defeated the Midianites.

Inevitably, the unity and strength of Israel began to deteriorate, and the local peoples throughout the region began to exert their own overwhelming presence and aggression. The Philistines were one of these peoples who exerted a major threat to the peoples of Israel. They were the descendants of Noah's son Ham, and they had settled along the southeastern Mediterranean coast between Egypt and Gaza. They had originally been a people of the sea who had migrated to the Middle East in ships from Greece and Crete.

Samuel the prophet said the subjugation of the people to the Philistines was due to their idolatry and promised that they would be delivered if they would put away their false gods (Samuel 7:3,4). The Old Testament says little about idolatry during the reign of David, but it must have flourished during the reign of Solomon, for he permitted his foreign wives to worship their gods and was, in his old age, enticed to worship even such abominable gods as Chemosh and Molech (1Kings 11:1-8). His sin prompted God to divide the kingdom upon his death (1Kings 11:9-13).



And Samuel said to the whole house of Israel, "If you are returning to the Lord with all your hearts, then rid yourselves of the foreign gods and the Ashtoreths and commit yourselves to the Lord and serve him only, and he will deliver you out of the hands of the Philistines." So the Israelites put away their Baals and Ashtoreths, and served the Lord only.

[1Sam. 7:3,4]

In their growing spiritual blindness, the Israelites had looked upon the Lord God as being in competition with the foreign gods of Canaan.

"Is it not wheat harvest now? I will call upon the Lord to send thunder and rain"....Then Samuel called upon the Lord and that same day the Lord sent thunder and rain. So all the people stood in awe of the Lord and Samuel.

[1Sam. 12:17]

After the eventual death of Samuel, King Saul sought information and direction in a growing crisis of his affairs involving confrontations with the Philistines who were pitched in Shunem. Having collected Saul's forces for a last grand effort, they marched up from the seacoast

and encamped in the "valley of Jezreel." The spot on which their encampment was fixed was Shunem (Joshua 19:18), now Sulem, a village which still exists on the slope of a range called "Little Hermon." On the opposite side, on the rise of Mount Gilboa, hard by "the spring of Jezreel," was Saul's army- - the Israelites, according to their wont, keeping to the heights, while their enemies clung to the plain.

Overwhelmed in perplexity and fear, the loss of his advisor Samuel left Saul without a reliable and legitimate channel of communication with heaven. And so, under the impulse of that dark, distempered, superstitious spirit which had overmastered him, he resolved, in desperation, to seek the aid of one of those fortune telling practitioners whom, in accordance with the divine command (Leviticus 19:31, Leviticus 20:6, Leviticus 20:27, Deuteronomy 18:11), he had set himself formerly to exterminate from his kingdom. Saul seeks a witch, who, being encouraged by him, would raise up Samuel. Saul told his servants to seek me a woman who has a "familiar spirit". Anxious inquiries led to the discovery of a woman living very secluded in the neighborhood of Endor, who had the credit of possessing the desired forbidden powers. To her house Saul repaired by night in disguise, accompanied by two faithful servants. This witch was united to the arts of divination and claimed to be a necromancer, a practitioner of communicating with the dead, especially in order to predict the future. (Deuteronomy 18:11) It was her supposed power in calling back the dead of which Saul was desirous to avail himself.

Though she at first refused to listen to his request, she accepted his pledge that no risk would be incurred by her compliance. The apparition of Samuel came to her and she herself was surprised and alarmed; Then came the confident prediction of Saul's own death and the defeat of his forces - the voice of the prophet's ghost at first frightens the witch of Endor, and after complaining of being disturbed, berates Saul for disobeying God, and predicts Saul's downfall. The spirit reiterates a pre-mortem prophecy by Samuel, adding that Saul will perish with his whole army in battle the next day. Saul is terrified. The next day, his army is defeated as prophesied, and Saul commits suicide.



When Saul saw the Philistine army, he was afraid; terror filled his heart. He inquired of the Lord, but the Lord did not answer by dreams, or Urim prophets. Saul then said to his attendants, "Find me a woman who is a medium so I may inquire of her"....at night he and two men went to the woman. "Consult a spirit for me," he said, "and bring up for me the one I name"....Then the woman asked, "Whom shall I bring up for you?" 'Bring up Samuel," he said....The woman said, "I see a spirit coming up out of the ground"....Samuel said to Saul, "Why have you disturbed me by bringing me up?"

[1Sam. 28:7-15]

During the time of Solomon, Israel's third king in the tenth century BC, polytheism began to rear its ugly head through the opportunity afforded his many wives and concubines who turned his heart after other gods. Things had gotten so bad that the Jerusalem temple that was built by Solomon became a home to other gods such as Baal and Ashteroth. At one point, Israel was housing 450 prophets of Baal and 400 prophets of Ashteroth. Even though the Lord warned his people not to intermarry with the foreign women of Canaan (Moabites, Ammonites, Edomites, Sidonians and Hittites), for they will turn their hearts to worship their own gods, King Solomon took for himself seven hundred wives and three hundred concubines. Despite the Lord's warnings, King Solomon began following Ashtoreth the goddess of the Sidonians and Molech the 'detestable god' of the Ammonites. He built a high place for Chemosh the "detestable god" of Moab, and for Molech of the Ammonites. Because of these acts that Solomon committed, the Lord rebuked him:

"So the Lord said to Solomon, "Since this is your attitude and you have not kept my covenant and my decrees, which I commanded you, I will most certainly tear the kingdom away from you and give it to one of your subordinates. Nevertheless, for the sake of David your father, I will not do it during your lifetime. I will tear it out of the hand of your son. Yet I will not tear the whole kingdom from him, but will give him one tribe for the sake of David my servant and for the sake of Jerusalem, which I have chosen."

[1Kings 11:11-13]

I will give one tribe to his son so that David my servant may always have a lamp before me in Jerusalem, the city where I chose to put my name.

[1Kings 11:36]

Jeroboam, who became ruler of the Northern tribes that seceded upon the death of Solomon, placed golden calves at Dan and Bethel so that the people would not desire to

return to Jerusalem to worship (1Kings 12:25-33). These calves were either images of the Canaanite deities or pedestals symbolizing their presence, as the Ark was the symbol of the presence of God. This act brought God's wrath upon the house of Jeroboam (1Kings 14:7-11). Matters were no better in Judah at this time. Idolatrous practices flourished in the Southern kingdom of Judah also during the reign of Rehoboam, Solomon's son (1Kings 14:21-24). During the reign of Solomon's grandson Asa, an "abominable image" which had been set up by the queen mother Maacah for Asherah was destroyed, (1Kings 15:13).

A hundred years later, following a succession of kings who "walked in the way of Jeroboam," Ahab came to the throne of Israel and established the cult of Baal of Sidon at Samaria under the influence of his Phoenician wife Jezebel (1Kings 16:32). Elijah denounced Ahab and challenged the power of Baal (1Kings 18). The principal struggle in which Elijah and Elisha were engaged was to see whether God or Baal would be acknowledged as God. Jehu, who succeeded the Omride dynasty, made an attempt to uproot Baalism by the wholesale destruction of the temple, priests, and worshipers of Baal (2 Kings 10:18-28), but he was not wholly successful in stamping out idolatry, for he did not "turn from the sins of Jeroboam" (2Kings 10:29-31).

In the days of King Ahab, great evils were being performed throughout Israel. Ahab began worshiping Baal, the god of the Sidonians, and built the temple of Baal in Samaria. The prophet Elijah challenged Ahab and challenged the worship of Baal against the Lord God of Abraham, Isaac and Israel on Mount Carmel. The continued sacrifices to Baal brought no response. Then Elijah prayed to the Lord to show himself as truly the God of Israel, upon which the Lord's fire descended and incinerated the sacrifice, the wood, the surrounding stones and soil, and licked up the water in the trench (1Kings 18:16-39).

Yet I reserve seven thousand in Israel [a remnant] – all whose knees have not bowed down to Baal and all whose mouths have not kissed him.
[1Kings 19:18]

Beginning with the prophets of the eighth century BC, there was an emphatic rejection of any material representations of God. Amos protested against the Canaanite high places and the images of their gods (Amos 5:26). Hosea denounced the stubborn harlotry of Israel (Hosea 2:16,17; 8:4-6; 13:2). Isaiah, looking upon the appalling apostasy of the age, grieved over the golden images, the work of men's own hands, and the sins of the new-moon festivals (Is. 2:8; 40:18-20; 41:6, 7; 44:9-20; 45:20; 46:1,2,5-7). 1Kings 17:7-18 contains a stinging indictment against Israel as justification for God's destruction of the Northern kingdom in 722 BC. Among the charges made were that they built high places and pillars, served idols, burned their children as offerings, and refused to obey the commandments of God. Conditions were not much better in Judah as evidenced by the idolatrous practices when Hezekiah came to the throne. The people were worshiping the bronze serpent that Moses had made, so Hezekiah destroyed it (2Kings 18:4). All the great reforms of Hezekiah were undone, however, by his successor Manasseh, whose idolatries are among the most shocking in all the Old Testament (2Kings 21:1-18). He revived Baal worship and built altars to astrological gods within the very Temple at Jerusalem. He offered his own son as a human sacrifice.

In the period before the end of the kingdom of Judah, the prophets struggled against the widespread idolatry that filled the land. Zephaniah warned against the worship of astral deities, against Milcom, and against pagan superstitions (Zeph. 1:2-9). Habakkuk pronounced woes upon those who would worship a god made with their own hands (Hab. 2:18,19). No prophet fought the apostasies of Judah more vehemently than Jeremiah. He inveighed against the sacrifices to Molech, the worship of the Baalim, the offering of cakes to the queen of heaven, and against the gods that were as many as their cities (Jer 2:23-25; 8:1, 2; 10:2-10; 11:13; 23:13, 14). Even the sweeping reforms of Josiah, which included the destruction of a sanctuary of Chemosh and Milcom built by Solomon (1Kings 11:7; 2Kings 23:13) could not save the nation that was so polluted by her idolatries (2Kings 23:4-20), for the people immediately returned to their old ways under his successors. Ezekiel revealed that worship of animals, of the vegetation god Tammuz, and of the sun were taking place within the temple area itself in the final years before the destruction of Jerusalem (Ez. 8:7-16). He also denounced the sacrifice of children to the gods (Ez. 16:20,21).

During the period of the Babylonian captivity, Nebuchadnezzar built a great image and demanded that the people worship it. The refusal of Daniel's three friends to worship the image would have cost them their lives except for divine intervention (Dan 3). In the postexilic period, Malachi, Ezra, and Nehemiah violently opposed marriages with foreigners that were taking place. They undoubtedly remembered that such alliances had been denounced in the past and had contributed to the introduction of idolatrous practices that eventually caused God to destroy the nation. In the second century BC, the Seleucid rulers of Palestine attempted to revive the worship of local fertility gods and the Hellenistic deities. Antiochus IV Epiphanes (175-164 BC) issued an edict establishing one religion for all his subjects. He erected an altar to Zeus over the altar of burnt offering in the Temple at Jerusalem. He required the Jews to take part in the heathen festivals or be slain. His oppressive measures brought about the Maccabean revolt that resulted in a brief period of religious and political freedom for the Jews.

Early Christian Church members who lived in heathen communities had to be careful not to compromise themselves with idolatry (Acts 15:29). One problem for early Christians was the eating of meat that had been offered to idols. Paul said that idols had no real existence, so eating meat offered to them would not be wrong, but he added that a Christian should do nothing that would cause a weaker brother to stumble (1Cor. 8:1-13; 10:14-33). Paul warned that one may abhor idols but commit other sins (Rom. 2:22). He emphatically denied that idols have any real existence (1Cor. 12:2; Gal. 4:8; 1 Thess. 1:9). His protest against idolatry was so effective in Ephesus that it hurt the business of those engaged in making silver images of Diana (Acts 19:23-27). Idolatry is used figuratively by Paul to include covetousness (Eph. 5:5; Col. 3:5) and gluttony (Phil. 3:19).

Mystery religions, where the individual or the community sought to appropriate the experiences of dying or rising nature gods such as Osiris, were widespread in the Greco-Roman world of Paul's time. Emperor worship was an accepted practice. Herod the Great established the cult of Augustus at Samaria. Caligula (37-41 AD) ordered his image to be set up in the Temple at Jerusalem. Christians suffered severely at the hands of Domitian

(81-96) who insisted that he be worshiped as “God” and “Lord.” The Book of Revelation appeared at such a time with its warning against the danger of idolatry (Rev. 2:14,20). It affirms the powerlessness of idols (Rev. 9:20) and warns against worshiping an image of the beast (Rev. 13:14,15; 14:9-11), and promises the exaltation of those who refuse to worship the beast or its image (Rev. 20:4).