

# Eye-Opener Studies

*Open my eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of your law. (Ps. 119:18)*

## 9: The Spirit World

The study of angels, and by association the study of Satan, is increasing in popularity today in both Christian and quasi-religious circles. When I was at university, a lassie at a midweek Bible study I was attending said, "I don't believe in angels. I can't see why God created them or what they're for." So the group did a study on them and at the end she admitted, "Well I have to believe in them because the Bible tells me they are there, but I still can't see any point in them. God could do all the looking after us Himself without using angels to do it for Him." She had a point, but the fact of the matter is that God did create them and does use them to carry out many of His wishes in His dealings with mankind. Maybe we'll never know why but certainly He had/has His reasons.

Now, though we can easily study the types of angels God created and note that they fall into ranks of angels, archangels, cherubim and seraphim, in ascending order (though the two latter may well have equal status), there is a good deal of erroneous thinking about them which I want us to explore. They do indeed have a wonderful ministry throughout the Bible, and some may never have studied this in any detail. However I want to look at a different

aspect of the subject here, specifically from a Creation starting point, and possibly say a lot of things which are new to you. A good Bible dictionary will guide you through the sorts of ministry angels performed, and still perform, for the Lord. You will marvel and give thanks for what they do, as a result of such a study, but here I want to try to take you beyond that more simplistic, descriptive approach into areas of analysis you may never ever have considered before! That doesn't mean to say that this study will be so deep you can't fathom it. On the contrary it will not be overly deep but probably will be very different for most of you. Maybe it will stretch all our minds in useful directions.



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The Archangel Michael

### Angels are created beings with free will

The fact that angels are created beings and have free will are the key points being made in this study. Grasp these two notions and hang on to them for they are essential.

As created beings angels were not eternally existent, though they cannot die, and will therefore certainly live on for ever. Colossians 1:15-16 is as good a passage as any to start making the point: '*He [Jesus] is the image of the invisible God, the*

*firstborn of all creation. For by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities — all things were created through him and for him.*' Thrones, dominions, rulers and authorities refers to angels. Christ was the creator of all things in both heaven and on Earth, and so angels were definitely created.

On the question of their immortality, Jesus once was responding to a tricky question from the Sadducees about the status of the saved in the resurrection. They did not believe in the resurrection of the saints but Jesus told them: "*The sons of this age marry and are given in marriage, but those who are considered worthy to attain to that age and to the resurrection from the dead neither marry nor are given in marriage, for they cannot die anymore, because they are equal to angels and are sons of God, being sons of the resurrection.*"' (Luke 20:34-36, emphasis added). When the worthy attain to life in the resurrection they cannot die because they are equal to angels. Obviously then, angels too cannot die, though, like us, they are created beings.

Consequently they did not exist from all eternity. Had they done so, their nature would have been akin to God's nature. However, as created beings their nature is akin to ours because we too are created beings. We will see that they are, in fact, very like us in their basic creation, more so than we might have suspected on a superficial level of understanding about them.

### **When were they created?**

Here is where we are about to depart from the more conventional views about angels. We know that they were witnesses to the creation of the world. In Job 38:4-7, the Lord is castigating poor old Job for his ignorance. He asks him: "*Where were you when I laid the foundation of the earth? Tell me, if you have understanding. Who determined its measurements — surely you know! Or who stretched the line upon it? On what were its bases sunk, or who laid its cornerstone, when the morning stars sang together and all the sons of God shouted for joy?*"'. The terms 'morning stars' and 'sons of God' are both metaphors for angels in this passage. They witnessed the laying of the foundations of the Earth and the whole of the magnificence of the creation of the physical universe. They were so excited about it



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**The angelic Host**

that they sang for joy. Quite clearly they were created before the world was created.

This has led many to believe that they were created in 'eternity past' before God began to create on Day 1 of Creation Week. Indeed the most popular scenario is that not only were they created well in advance of the creation of the world but that, by the time God began to create the physical world, Satan and his angels had already rebelled against God and were fallen. This concept is linguistically wrong, spiritually wrong, and is totally unsupported by Scripture.

Angels are created beings, as we have already emphasized, and you can't have a created being being created before creation began! Scripture tells us exactly when they were created. '*In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth*' (Gen. 1:1). What was the first thing God created? The heavens. So what were the heavens He created? Well they were not the things we normally think of as the heavens because in them, up there, we find the sun, moon and stars. He did not create those bodies until Day 4, so whatever is meant by the creation of 'the heavens' it was not the creation of stars and galaxies, or planets and moons. Nor was it the creation of the atmosphere for that came on Day 2. When God separated the waters, He called the upper 'waters', or atmosphere, 'Heaven' (Gen.1:8), thereby creating our notion of heaven itself as being 'up there'. This was after His initial creation. So whatever we understand 'the heavens' of Genesis 1:1 to mean, it must have included the creation of the created beings whose normal dwelling place is in the heavens: namely the angelic hosts. These included Satan, who then also 'sang for joy', as he too witnessed the worlds being created. He was definitely not fallen in Creation Week (see below: 'Perfection at the end of

the first week').

### Angels and time

Therefore, when God decided to create the universe, the very first thing He did was create the angels. Let's be sort of silly and say that in the very first minute of Day 1 God called into being all of the heavenly host. Time had just begun and angels are as much a part of time as we are. It defines their boundaries as it does ours.

Angels, therefore, are not time-less. They have to operate with time in mind just as much as we do. If you doubt this, ask yourself what will happen to them at the end of time? Like us, they await the consummation of the ages, when there will be a Day of Judgement. The faithful angels will go on to an eternity with God, just as faithful human beings will, and the wicked angels will be cast into hell along with their master Satan. Hell was actually prepared for the devil and his angels (Mt. 25:41).

Some fallen angels are currently being held in the prison of *Tartarus* in the Hadean world awaiting judgement (2 Peter 2:4, Jude 6). It is my understanding that these are 'the sons of God' (Gen. 6:1-4) who saw 'the daughters of men', wed them and so corrupted the Earth that God had to initiate the Flood.\* (Not all brethren accept this explanation; you make up your own mind.) The rest have been thrown out of their place in the heavens and have come down to earth to join Satan doing his worst '*because he knows his time is short*' (Rev. 12:7-12). This ejection took place at the time of the Cross, and the triumph over death of the resurrection, because they were defeated by '*the blood of the Lamb*' (Rev. 12:11). When did the Lamb shed His blood? At Calvary. Approaching Calvary, Jesus predicted that, "*Now is the judgement of this world; now will the ruler of this world be cast out,*" (John 12:31). It is Satan who is called 'the ruler of this world' in the context here. Jesus knew what the Cross, and His shed blood, was going to do to the devil; it was a big part of '*the joy that was set before Him*' (Heb. 12:2) for '*the reason [He] ap-*

*peared was to destroy the works of the devil'* (1 John 3:8). In His revelation to John, Jesus told him that '*the devil has come down to you in great wrath, because he knows his time is short!*' (Rev. 12:12). What is short for the devil? His time. Satan is tied inextricably to our world, and therefore to time, just as we are, and so is the rest of the angelic host.

### Instant shouting for joy

So God called all the angels into being in an instant, in one magnificent burst of creative energy at the very beginning of Day 1 - but nobody witnessed it. There were no other created beings to witness it. This was the only time that such a thing occurred. Thereafter none of God's acts of Creation went unappreciated. How could they appreciate the Creation?

Everything God created during that amazing first week of time was up and running perfectly



**Adam names the animals**

Photo Graham Fisher at the Creation Museum, Kentucky, USA

from the instance of its creation. Nothing had to grow, or learn, or mature. Adam was fully functional and able to name the animals even before Eve was created. He had all his faculties and all the understanding he needed from the second he took his first breath. The angels were no different. They did not have to think about singing and shouting for joy. They did not have to learn to appreciate what God was doing as He created the world. They praised Him and sang for joy fully knowing why and what they were doing despite only being, as we

\* See [www.greatbarrechurchofchrist.org](http://www.greatbarrechurchofchrist.org) under *Genesis Accepted* number 6, 'Sons of God'.

suggested, one minute old! Both they and Adam shared an instantaneous ‘knowledge and understanding’ faculty.

### Perfection at the end of the first week

By the end of the first week, in fact on Day 6, ‘*God saw everything that he had made, and behold, it was very good*’ (Gen. 1:31, emphasis added). God

some sort of eternal existence, they would have been almost God-like, and their natures would be akin to His, as we have already said. But they are, in fact, exactly like us in so many ways - some more of which we are going to consider further on - that we are forced to conclude that they are actually far more like us than they are like God!

Once we grasp the notion that Creation was one unified act ensuring that both the heavens and the Earth were part of the same picture, and neither is complete without the other, we can move forward in our analysis and understanding of angels.

I must confess that I used to think of them as almost two separate creations. I have long believed that angels were created as the first act of Creation on Day 1, as outlined above, but that the angels did their thing in the heavens, and we do our thing on Earth, and that the two realms only mixed on rare occasions when God sent, and sends, His angels on special commissions down to us.

### Perfection in Eden

Photo Graham Fisher at the Creation Museum, Kentucky, USA

looked at the heavens and the Earth, which He created in the beginning, and every other thing He created on each of those special Days, and pronounced them to be ‘very good’. He could not have done so had His heavens already been corrupted. Satan, created on Day 1, was still living in a perfect state, as were all of the angelic host. The whole of Creation was perfect, both in heaven and on Earth. It was not half-and-half with the Earth being ‘very good’ but the heavens already being fallen.

So when did Satan fall? I am going to suggest that the Fall, so graphically pictured in Genesis Chapter 3, was when both Satan and Adam and Eve fell. It was one single act of rebellion in the heavens and on Earth. There were not two separate rebellions: a heavenly one before Adam’s transgression and then the earthly one. To think this is the fault of the notion of a split Creation. I want to maintain this point by considering the whole of Creation as a single event and not as two separate events.

### The Unity of Creation

Had angels not been created beings but rather had

I am now going to suggest that the evidence actually strongly points to an entirely different scenario. The heavens and the Earth are wonderfully intertwined. Just as Paul used the analogy of the parts of the body to designate different functions in the church, and that not all have the same gifts or functions within it (1 Cor. 12:12-27), so I am going to suggest that this analogy applies equally well to Creation. Just as the body has many members, which do not all have the same function yet all are equally members of it, so Creation has many members. Some are called to be cherubim and seraphim, some archangels, some angels, and some humans, yet each form part of the unity of the Creation. Creation was not a bitty, unplanned thing where God made some angels, then He thought it was such a good idea that He would make the Earth and put people on it. No, it was all part of a united master plan of Creation, beautifully interlinked and serving a united purpose. On realising this fact, I realised that so much of the nature and function of angels made amazing sense, and the pieces began to drop into place like a jigsaw when you find the linking pieces to join up the separate bits you have been working on. Once you see the links, you begin to grasp the meaning of the whole and the picture

starts to make sense as never before.

### The nature of angels and men

Angels, like men, have free will. They choose to remain faithful or they can rebel, just as we can and do. For example, Jesus went into the Hadean realm between His death and resurrection to proclaim something to certain '*spirits in prison [who] formerly did not obey.*' (1 Peter 3:19, 2 Peter 2:4, Jude 6.) (Again, see *Genesis Accepted* Number 6 for further analysis of this particular disobedience). What are the implications of this?

For there to be freedom of the will there has to be a definition of choices which can be made. For Adam and Eve it was very simple. '*Do not eat of the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil*' (Gen. 2:16). Obviously they could do it but they mustn't. They must freely exercise their wills to choose to do as God told them. Angels do the same. God must have given them a set of instructions - call them 'Angel Commandments' - which they had to obey. They most certainly could disobey them but, like their human counterparts, they were not to. Some apparently did, led by Satan, so they disobeyed and fell.

### Angelic Commandments

We have absolutely no idea exactly what God's commandments to His angels were. However, by looking at the nature of the ones given to mankind and seeing just how some of the angels and Satan behave, we can possibly draw up a few. I tried to get to ten, just to establish a parallel pattern, but I couldn't. Nevertheless here are those which I think might be possibilities:

1. 'You shall have no other gods before me.'
2. 'You must honour the name of the Lord your God.'
3. 'You shall not murder.'
4. 'You shall keep your proper station and not desire to be as humans.'
5. 'You shall not steal.'
6. 'You shall not bear false witness.'
7. 'You shall not covet.'

Seven is a biblical number associated with angels so maybe my seven are not too far out! It should not be too difficult to see how most of them would apply to angels. In Isaiah 14:12-15, we see a

picture of some of the thinking of Satan ('Lucifer', AV) applied to the King of Babylon:

*"How you are fallen from heaven,  
O Day Star, son of Dawn!  
How you are cut down to the ground,  
you who laid the nations low!  
You said in your heart,  
'I will ascend to heaven;  
above the stars of God  
I will set my throne on high;  
I will sit on the mount of assembly  
in the far reaches of the north;  
I will ascend above the heights of the clouds;  
I will make myself like the Most High.'  
But you are brought down to Sheol,  
to the far reaches of the pit."*

Satan, in pride, wanted to make himself 'like the Most High'. In other words, he wanted to be a god and set himself up as one. That was a form of blasphemy ('commandment' number 2), and many angels decided to have him as their god (number 1). Satan was a '*murderer from the beginning and has nothing to do with the truth*' (John 8:44) and thus he broke 'commandments' numbers 3 and 6, He stole the affection of Adam and Eve from God by lying to them after coveting their allegiance (numbers 5 and 7).

My 'commandment' number 4, might not be so obvious, or acceptable to many because I apply it biblically to the actions of angels as 'the sons of God' in Genesis 6:1-4, fully covered in *Genesis Accepted* Number 6. The commandment, as I might articulate it from the Ten Commandments, would be 'You shall not commit adultery.'

That angels can and do interact with people, appearing frequently as normal people themselves, is perfectly well understood in the Scriptures. For example, two angels came to visit Abraham, along with the Lord Himself (Genesis 18), prior to the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah. They seemed to be normal men and the men of Sodom wanted to treat them as such by inflicting their abnormal practices on to their bodies. Hebrews tells us that we might have entertained angels unaware, not realising that they were heavenly messengers (13:2). However, there were obviously heavenly 'rules' about how this contact should be made and sustained. It had to be done according to God's laws or not at all. If my assessment of Genesis 6:1-4 is cor-



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#### Abraham meets the Lord and two angels (Gen. 18)

rect, these ‘sons of God’ broke the rules by lustng after women and God locked them away in the Hadean prison called *Tartarus* to await the Judgement Day. Since angels are immortal He couldn’t kill them, so permanent imprisonment was the only instant and effective punishment they could be given.

This works the other way. Humans can contact the spirit world but must abide by God’s rules if we do. The only way we are allowed by Him to do so is by prayer through the mediation of the Lord (1 Tim. 2:5). That we can contact the spirit world via mediums and wizards, i.e. by necromancy, is asserted in the Bible, as is the fact that we mustn’t. The punishment God demanded for such action in the Old Testament was excommunication from His presence for the client and instant death by stoning for the medium (Lev. 19:31, 20:6, 27). There will be no place in heaven for those who disobey in this regard, just as there was no possible escape from punishment for the angels who disregarded their ‘commandment’ in this area of their ministry.

Whatever the details might be, there is no logical doubting that God had to give His angels some sort of commandments to obey in order that they might remain faithful and obedient to Him as they exercised their free will. It can be no other way for we know that some angels did not obey. They had to be disobeying something to be disobedient.

#### The puzzle of Satan’s sin

Realizing and accepting the logic of the paragraph

immediately above helped me to puzzle out something which had perplexed me for many years, namely how Satan, a perfect being before he fell, could indeed rebel and fall. What gave him the idea to rebel? Why did he do it? How could he possibly become proud?

#### The nature of angels and humans Angels

In order to try to come to some sort of understanding of the problem of Satan’s sin, it will be helpful to consider the differences between the basic natures of angels and men, for I believe that herein lies the answer to the problem. It only becomes a relevant way of thinking once we accept the basic premise that both creatures were part of the same creation, as a unified whole, and not two separate creations, one before Day 1 of Creation Week and one after.

We believe that angels were called instantly into being by God’s Word and were complete in their numbers, this being determined by God. They cannot reproduce their kind and thereby take responsibility for offspring. Consequently they are not invited to have a relationship of love, angel to angel, and it is a truism that angels nowhere express, give or receive love. Magnificent and powerful as they are, their task is one of service. They are God’s messengers: this is what the name ‘angel’ means. In order to be messengers they have to have a field in which to operate. That field is provided by the world and the people God placed on it. We remember that Hebrews reminds us: ‘*Are they not all ministering spirits sent out to serve for the sake of those who are to inherit salvation?*’ (Heb 1:14). Thus one of the main things they do is minister to the elect, i.e. serve mankind, or a certain segment of mankind. To put it simply, they are servants.

They also praise and worship God, of course, but they do so by sight and not by faith. Consequently, faithful, obedient angels are already in the state of a heavenly relationship with the Father; all they can do is lose it. If they do sin and lose it, there is no way back for them. Thus at the Judgement, faithful angels simply continue as normal and move smoothly into the totally heavenly situation with God and the saved humans. The fallen angels, however, are punished by going into hell, the place prepared for them, there to be joined by all the lost hu-

man beings. Then every lost being is finally separated from God forever.

Both humans and angels have two responsibilities towards their Creator: they worship Him and they serve His creatures, especially human beings. We think of it for us as being a horizontal relationship towards others and a vertical relationship towards God. Angels have the reverse: a horizontal relationship towards God and a vertical relationship towards humans! In their service they are totally bound up in this world. They rejoice when a sinner repents and is baptized. They play a part in carrying the souls of the dead to Paradise (Luke 16:22). Indeed the more you consider what they do for us you realize that their service is inextricably intertwined with our world. They don't occasionally flit into it, it is their permanent occupation when they are not directly praising God.

### Humans

Humans, on the other hand, were not called into being at all. They are the only creatures whom God made deliberately, and carefully. As the Psalmist said, '*[we were] fearfully and wonderfully made.*' (Ps. 139:14). God almost stopped and took His time fashioning this, His last creation. Eve too, of course, was as much a part of this fashioning since she was taken from man and fashioned to complement him. She also was not called into existence by God's Word. It is safe to say that the greatest complexity to be found in any of God's created creatures is to be found in human beings. Magnificent though angels are, they are probably nowhere near as complicated in their make-up as we are.

There obviously was a reason for this care and special treatment. When it came to making mankind, God said, "*Let us make man in our image, after our likeness.*" (Gen. 1:26). No other creatures, not even angels, were made in the image and likeness of God. Whereas God filled the heavens with His angels, He only placed two humans on His Earth. They were then commanded to reproduce and do the filling over time.

Now, we can probably speculate for a long time on precisely what is meant by the 'image and likeness' of God. However, several significant points can be made about some of the meaning. God took such care over us because He had a very different

intention for the functioning of humans in His creation. Whereas angels were intended to be servants and messengers, people were made for love: to love and be loved. '*God is love*' (1 John 4:8, 16) and we were created to glorify Him reflecting in our creation this aspect of His nature. Angels reflect God's power and might, but we show His love. We were to learn to love and give love by marrying and producing children. Nurturing through dependency, first on parents, then through a loving marriage, was vitally important to how we are to learn to love our heavenly Father. Angels, we know, don't nurture, marry or reproduce.

God is also a Creator, and so are we. Angels do not have any creative ability. They work as commanded within their boundaries but though they have freedom of will and choice, they do not create anything. They do not act under their own initiative and make decisions beyond their decision to obey God's will and do His bidding. Humans, though not nearly as magnificent in their external appearance as angels, nor remotely as powerful and knowledgeable, nevertheless have dimensions to their nature which go way beyond anything given to any other creature. We have the divine within us as no other creatures do.



Satan (fact and fiction)  
The caricature image      An angel of light - true image

### **So back to Satan and his rebellion**

Let us begin to suggest an explanation by looking at the kind of created being he was. In Ezekiel 28 there is a lament over the King of Tyre. However, there is absolutely no way at all that this lament could refer literally to him. It is carefully couched in terms

which can only hark back to Satan and how God lamented over him when he corrupted himself and fell. The lament over the King of Tyre is an echo of that sad occasion in Eden at the beginning of the world. Here it is:

*'You were the signet of perfection, full of wisdom and perfect in beauty. You were in Eden, the garden of God; every precious stone was your covering, ruby, topaz, and diamond, beryl, onyx, and jasper, sapphire, emerald, and carbuncle; and crafted in gold were your settings and your engravings. On the day that you were created they were prepared. You were an anointed guardian cherub. I placed you; you were on the holy mountain of God; in the midst of the stones of fire you walked. You were blameless in your ways from the day you were created, till unrighteousness was found in you. In the abundance of your trade you were filled with violence in your midst, and you sinned; so I cast you as a profane thing from the mountain of God, and I destroyed you, O guardian cherub, from the midst of the stones of fire. Your heart was proud because of your beauty; you corrupted your wisdom for the sake of your splendour.'* (Ezek 28:12-17).

We notice several pointers here. There is the amazing bejewelled splendour of this being, who was 'created', not born, and was in Eden as a 'guardian cherub'. He was perfection itself, in beauty and wisdom. He was blameless from the day he was created until his heart became 'proud because of [his] beauty; so [he] corrupted [his] wisdom for the sake of [his] splendour.'

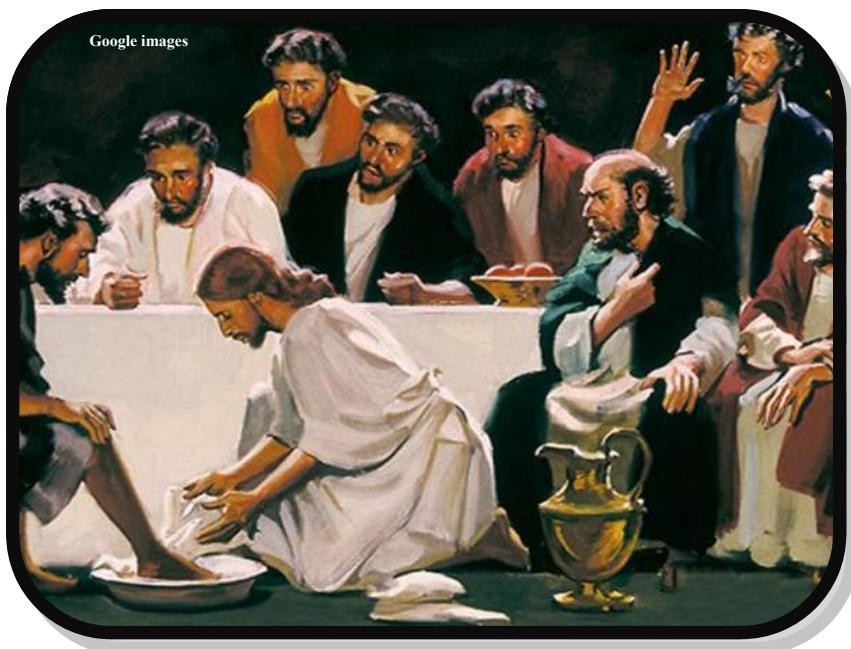
So Satan was a 'guardian cherub' who, through pride in his beauty and splendour corrupted his wisdom. He was therefore of the highest rank of angelic beings and the most magnificent of the lot. Now can we see why he might have corrupted his wisdom and sinned?

There is absolutely nothing in the Scriptures to support this view beyond the clues mentioned above but just imagine a scenario something like this. The angels were dazzled by both the splendour and wisdom of this most splendid cherub, and they admired him for his beauty and wisdom. He was the top

ranking angelic being of all. Nevertheless he was, like all of the angels, a servant, a guardian cherub, and where was his guardianship placed? In Eden. So what, or who, was he guardian of? Adam and Eve!

Now Adam and Eve were wonderfully made but they could not match his splendour, nor indeed his wisdom, yet here was he, the most magnificent angel of all, who received admiration from his fellow creatures in the heavens, having to serve these puny creatures. Furthermore God was paying them all the attention in Eden and was concerned only that they both behaved themselves and were looked after. And God gave His top angel the meanest job of all. Pride turned into jealousy, and jealousy turned into hatred, and hatred is akin to murder. Why shouldn't they serve him?

Many years later, the true Lord and Master was awaiting His capture, trial and death, in an upper room. He took a towel and wiped the feet of His servants, doing the task for them which was the most menial one of all in their social structure. He told them that the greatest must be the servant of all.



He was not too proud to do it, but Satan resented it and preferred to elevate himself, above the humble state of serving, to that of being worshipped.

We have already made reference to, and fully quoted, the vignette in Isaiah 14 where we read about the King of Babylon being castigated in terms which could only literally apply to Satan. The sin

described here was one of wanting to ‘make myself like the Most High’. He wanted to be God. This, of course, was blasphemy, which was our second ‘commandment’ for angels. However, he had so dazzled many of the angels that when he decided to make a bid for power by corrupting the world, they followed him. They failed to keep our first ‘commandment’ and adopted another god.

### The Fall

It is now possible to catch a glimpse of the full nature of the Fall and see its significance. Here was the guardian cherub of Eden corrupting the very ones he had charge of. This was the ultimate betrayal of trust. He could only do this once there was in place something, somebody who could also use their free will to disobey and give themselves to him. Satan had great wisdom and he appeared to offer it to Adam and Eve, and in his tempting them, both he and they fell. He, of course, rebelled from what he knew; they rebelled from ignorance. There is no way back for Satan and his angels but God graciously granted a way back for mankind, if they will choose it freely. There was only one Fall and it took place in Eden. It affected both the heavens and the Earth, indeed the whole universe, or creation (Rom. 8:20). God had created the heavens and the Earth as one and they fell as one.

### Mankind in God’s plan

On looking at the creation of angels and men, and what they were created for, it is clear to see that the apex was definitely the human beings not the angelic ones. That mankind was so precious to God can be seen in the trouble He went to to provide us with a way of escape from the clutches of sin and death. Just as His focus was on the first Adam in creation so He sent the second Adam to the rescue. The nature of man as a tripartite being of soul, body and spirit (2 Thess. 5:23), and his confinement to the limitations of the physical world, made him lower than the angels. Once sin came in, and death through sin, this position was confirmed. But this was never God’s ultimate plan for us. Our obedience and love was to be given through faith, not sight, but once we had passed the test of faith our status was to be

raised far above the angels in the heavens. After all, the servants are not greater than those they are sent to serve, a fact which probably also irked Satan.

It is in Romans that we see this spelled out. Let us let Scripture speak the wonder for us:

*‘So then, brothers, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh. For if you live according to the flesh you will die, but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live. For all who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God. For you did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received the Spirit of adoption as sons, by whom we cry, “Abba! Father!” The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs — heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, provided we suffer with him in order that we may also be glorified with him. For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us.’* (Rom 8:12-18).

We, who are faithful, are going to be heirs with Christ by adoption. We will be equal to Christ and that is a status far above the angels. No, we won’t be ‘God’ in any sense at all, of course. Just as in our human families we have true sons, begotten of their fathers, and nobody else can ever hold to that relationship, yet we can adopt sons into the family and they can be granted equal status by the father with his other son, or sons. God intended, and intends, us to be heirs with Christ, sons by adoption. We will judge angels, whatever that means! (1 Cor. 6:3).

It is love which defines us and makes all of this possible. ‘God is love’ and it is we who were made to love Him in return, not angels. It is we who were intended to show God’s love in creation. That is why, unlovely though we now are through sin, God loves us and sent His Son to die for us. His plan in Creation was to create beings who would freely choose to love Him, and who then would spend eternity praising Him and loving Him because He is indeed a great and wonderful God.

### Tasks

Access and read the ‘Sons of God’ article in *Genesis Accepted* No 6 at: [www.greatbarrchurchofchrist.org](http://www.greatbarrchurchofchrist.org)  
What types of angelic beings are there and how do their functions differ?