



Provided by the Church of the Lutheran Confession - Board of Missions

A Systematic Study of Bible Teachings (Dogmatics)

Chapter 3 The Doctrine of Creation



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A Systematic Study of Bible Teachings (Dogmatics) Lesson 3.1 – The Doctrine of Creation

The Triune God Is the Creator

The Bible begins with the account of God's creation of the universe and everything that is in it. **"In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth"** (Genesis 1:1). The following verses (Genesis 1:1 – 2:3) describe the events of the first week of human history: the six days in which God did His work of creating and the seventh day in which He rested from the work of creation.

All of God's people in the Old and New Testaments accepted the teaching of creation as an undisputed truth. They addressed their prayers to the God who created the world. King Hezekiah of Judah prayed to God in a time of great peril, saying: **"O LORD God of Israel...You are God, You alone, of all the kingdoms of the earth. You have made heaven and earth...Now therefore, O LORD our God, I pray, save us from his (Sennacherib of Assyria) hand, that all the kingdoms of the earth may know that You are the LORD God, You alone"** (2 Kings 19:15-19). In the days of Nehemiah, the Levites praised the world's Creator: **"You alone are the LORD; You have made heaven, the heaven of heavens with all their host, the earth and everything on it, the seas and all that is in them"** (Nehemiah 9:6). The apostle John heard voices in heaven praising the Creator: **"You are worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honor and power; for You created all things, and by Your will they exist and were created"** (Revelation 4:11).

God Himself appeared to Job and claimed to be the Creator: **"Where were you when I laid the foundations of the earth?"** (Job 38:4). God went on to point out to Job some of the details of that creation. Many of the psalms and proverbs refer to God's act of creation. For example: **"You laid the foundation of the earth, and the heavens are the work of Your hands"** (Psalm 102:25). **The LORD by wisdom founded the earth; by understanding He established the heavens"** (Proverbs 3:19).

All three persons of the Triune God participated in the work of creation. The apostle Paul told the Corinthian Christians: **"For us there is one God, the Father, of whom are all things, and we for Him; and one Lord Jesus Christ, through whom are all things, and through whom we live"** (1 Corinthians 8:6). Paul wrote to the Colossians about Jesus: **"By Him (Christ) all things were created that are in heaven and that are on earth, visible and invisible"** (Colossians 1:16). Elihu, Job's young friend, declared: **"The Spirit of God has made me, and the breath of the Almighty gives me life"** (Job 33:4).

Before God created the universe, nothing existed anywhere except God alone. Thus, God created everything out of nothing. **"By faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that the things which are seen were not made of things which are visible"** (Hebrews 11:3). Notice that God created everything simply by speaking: **"God said, 'Let there be light'; and there was light"** (Genesis 1:3).

Our Lord Jesus clearly accepted the Genesis account of creation as the truth. When the Pharisees asked Him about divorce, Jesus responded: **"Have you not read that He who made them at the beginning made them male and female...?"** (Matthew 19:4).

The world itself shows us that there is Creator God, and the Bible tells us that God created the universe. Nevertheless, many today reject this obvious fact. They propose other explanations for the origin of our world. Pantheists do not distinguish between the Creator and His creation. They say that God is all and all is God. Others claim that God and creation are both eternal. Today most people

who reject God's creation of the universe propose a theory of evolution as the explanation for the world. The theory of evolution claims that our present world is the result of a process of gradual development caused by natural forces in the world. The theory of evolution is popular because it eliminates God and eliminates God's laws and God's judgment. The apostle Paul wrote that, by nature, human beings "**suppress the truth in unrighteousness**" (Romans 1:18).

Most evolutionists are atheists. They believe that there is no God at all. Others claim to be theistic evolutionists. They propose that God created the universe by means of evolution. Both atheistic evolution and theistic evolution contradict God's account of creation in Genesis. Most scientists are evolutionists who claim that creation is unscientific. But there are a number of scientists who accept God's account of creation. Some of them are able to explain how all the fossil and geographic evidence agrees with the Bible's teaching. They show that the evidence does not support evolution. Believing that all things just developed by themselves by chance really requires much more faith than believing that God created the world: "**For every house is built by someone, but He who built all things is God**" (Hebrews 3:4).

It is a sad fact that most American churches, including Lutheran churches, have rejected Genesis as a factual account of creation. Most have given in, at least partially, to the claims of evolutionists. But the acceptance of evolution generally leads to a denial not only of Genesis but of the rest of the Scripture as well.

Questions

1. Where in the Bible do we find God's own account of creation?
2. What passages show that Old Testament believers accepted God as Creator?
3. How would you answer God's question to Job in Job 38:4?
4. What passages prove that it was the Triune God that created the universe?
5. How did God create the universe?
6. Why do we believe that God created the universe?
7. How do we know that Jesus Himself accepted God's account of creation?
8. What is the most common view of the origin of the world where you live?
9. What is the difference between atheistic and theistic evolution?
10. Is there any conflict between true science and the Bible? Why or why not?
11. Why is the theory of evolution so popular in our world today?



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A Systematic Study of Bible Teachings (Dogmatics) Lesson 3.2 – The Doctrine of Creation

The Six Days of Creation

Time did not exist before creation. It was **“in the beginning”** (Genesis 1:1) that God created the universe. Only the Triune God was there before creation. Jesus said: **“O Father, glorify Me together with Yourself, with the glory which I had with You before the world was...You loved Me before the foundation of the world”** (John 17:5, 24). God the Father loved the Son before the beginning of time and He also chose us from all eternity: **“He (God) chose us in Him (Christ) before the foundation of the world”** (Ephesians 1:4).

Genesis tells us in clear language that God created the universe in six days. There is no reason to believe that these days were anything other than six normal 24-hour days. The Bible, the Word of God, says: **“So the evening and the morning were the first (also the second, third, fourth, fifth, and sixth) day”** (Genesis 1:5). This sentence could be translated more literally: “It became evening; it became morning – one day.” When God spoke His commandments at Mt. Sinai, He said: **“In six days the LORD made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them”** (Exodus 20:11). The context clearly shows that God was referring to six normal days because God told the Israelites: **“Six days you shall labor and do all your work”** (Exodus 20:9).

All evolutionists and even many who believe that God created the universe reject the idea that God created everything in six normal days. Some early Christians, like Augustine and Hilary, thought that was more time than God needed to create everything. They said that God created everything instantaneously in a matter of seconds. Many Christian teachers today say these six days are a myth, or poetry, or they say it was a way of teaching creation to a primitive people. Some teachers claim that each of the six days was actually a very long period of time. The theory of evolution requires very long periods of time for the gradual evolution of one kind of plant or animal into another. Many people have so much respect for scientific theories about the origins of the earth that they place these theories above the clear Word of God. Among creationists there are “old earth” creationists and “young earth” creationists. “Young earth” creationists are more likely to understand the six days as six twenty-four-hour days. Those who know the Hebrew language well know that when the Hebrew word for day (*yom*) is used with a definite number, as in Genesis 1 and Exodus 20, it always refers to a twenty-four-hour day.

Some teachers want to accept the six-day creation account in Genesis, but they also want to accept the idea that the world is millions of years old. They teach that Genesis 1:1 tells us that God created the world a long time ago. They say there was a gap of many hundreds or even thousands of years between Genesis 1:1 and Genesis 1:2. During that gap people and animals lived and died, and many things happened. Then, after that world was destroyed, God started in again and put all things in order in a period of six days.

But there is nothing in Genesis to indicate that there is a huge gap of time between Genesis 1:1 and Genesis 1:2. In fact, God Himself declared: **“For in six days the LORD made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them”** (Exodus 20:11). What God created in Genesis 1:1 falls within the six-day period. It is not a separate creation. God first made all the raw material for creation on that first day, and then in the days that followed, God put in order what was at first **“without form, and void”** (Genesis 1:2). The Bible is clear that there was no death in the universe before Genesis 3, because

death is the result of sin.

There is simply no way to accept both the creation account in Genesis and the theory of evolution. There is no way to accept the idea of a gradual development over a period of millions of years and the teaching of the Bible that the earth is much younger. The Bible does not tell us exactly how old this world is, but the numbers given in the Bible indicate that God created the world approximately four thousand years before Christ (BC). This number could possibly be extended a thousand years or two, but anything beyond that does not fit into the Bible's chronology. There are no truly scientific facts that make it necessary to teach that the world is millions or billions of years old. It is only man's theories that require such a long time.

The Church of the Lutheran Confession (CLC) subscribes to the Brief Statement of 1932, which says about creation: *"We teach that God has created heaven and earth, and that in the manner and in the space of time recorded in the Holy Scriptures, especially Gen. 1 and 2, namely, by His almighty creative word, and in six days. We reject every doctrine which denies or limits the work of creation as taught in Scripture. In our days it is denied or limited by those who assert, ostensibly in deference to science, that the world came into existence through a process of evolution; that it has, in immense periods of time, developed more or less of itself. Since no man was present when it pleased God to create the world, we must look for a reliable account of creation to God's own record, found in God's own book, the Bible."*

Questions

1. How long did God take to create the universe?
2. How long was each day of creation?
3. How does the Bible itself explain the length of these creation days?
4. Why do many people today, even those calling themselves Christians, reject the teaching that God created the world in six days?
5. Why did some early Christians say that six days was too long for God to create the world?
6. What is the gap theory that some false teachers propose?
7. Why do so many people try to explain away the six days of Genesis?
8. What is taught in the schools of your nation about the origin of the world?
9. Why can we be sure that what Genesis tells us about creation is the truth?



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A Systematic Study of Bible Teachings (Dogmatics) Lesson 3.3 – The Doctrine of Creation

The Perfection of God's Original Creation

“In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth” (Genesis 1:1). God created absolutely everything there is in the whole universe, everything out in space and everything under the earth and everything in the seas. God created all those things that man has not yet discovered or uncovered, such as what is in the core of the earth or what galaxies there may be beyond the reach of the most powerful instruments invented. There is always more to learn about God's creation.

It is clear that God created the world as a home for mankind. God did not create the man or the woman until He had created everything else in preparation for them. The man and the woman are the only created beings that He created in His own image. The prophet Isaiah declared: **“Thus says the LORD, who created the heavens, who is God, who formed the earth and made it, who has established it, who did not create it in vain, who formed it to be inhabited”** (Isaiah 45:18).

When God created human beings, both male and female, He said: **“Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth”** (Genesis 1:26). After God made the human beings, God blessed them and told them: **“Be fruitful and multiply; fill the earth and subdue it; have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over every living thing that moves on the earth”** (Genesis 1:28). It is clear then that in God's view, the universe is earth-centered, and the earth is man-centered. Therefore, we must reject any idea that nature and man are equal or that man and animals are equal. God Himself put human beings over the animals and over everything that He created.

The Genesis account of creation emphasizes that God's original creation was good. The word **“good”** appears seven times in Genesis 1. When God finished creation, we read: **“Then God saw everything that He had made, and indeed it was very good”** (Genesis 1:31). Sin, pain, suffering, sickness, and death are not good. For this reason, we can be sure that there was no sin or evil or imperfections of any kind in God's original creation. The theory of evolution requires death and the survival of the fittest, but there was no death in the world until after the first man and woman were created and they then fell into sin. The Garden of Eden (Genesis 2:8) must have been the most beautiful home. It is beyond all human imagination. Moses, the author God chose to give us the creation account, wrote a song with these words: **“Ascribe greatness to our God. He is the Rock, His work is perfect; for all His ways are justice, a God of truth and without injustice; righteous and upright is He”** (Deuteronomy 32:3-4).

We today should join the 24 elders in praising the God of creation: **“You are worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honor and power; for You created all things, and by Your will they exist and were created”** (Revelation 4:11).

As good as creation was, the creation is not God. Materialists make physical matter their god. Today nothing is as good as it was when God first made it. Gnostics, on the other hand, claim that physical matter is evil. They say that a good God would not have anything to do with creating physical matter. They believed an evil being must have created the physical world.

When sin entered the world, as recorded in Genesis 3, the whole universe was affected in a negative way. God's creation was no longer perfect. As a result of his sin, God told Adam: **"Cursed is the ground for your sake; in toil you shall eat of it all the days of your life. Both thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you, and you shall eat the herb of the field. In the sweat of your face you shall eat bread till you return to the ground, for out of it you were taken; for dust you are, and to dust you shall return"** (Genesis 3:17-19).

Even in this corrupted world **"the heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament shows His handiwork,"** (Psalm 19:1), but the world is not now as it once was. When man fell into sin, God changed the world so that it was no longer a perfect world intended for perfect human beings. It became a very imperfect world fit for imperfect human beings. The apostle Paul explains it like this: **"For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of Him who subjected it in hope; because the creation itself also will be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God. For we know that the whole creation groans and labors with birth pangs together until now"** (Romans 8:20-22).

Just as there is a hope for glorious liberty for the children of God in the future world, so also there is hope for creation. In some way all created things will be **"delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God."** Peter compares this to the flood in Noah's time. He tells us that even as **"the world that then existed perished, being flooded with water,"** so also **"the heavens and the earth which now exist are...reserved for fire until the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men"** (2 Peter 3:6-7). The world as we now know it will be destroyed, but **"nevertheless we, according to His promise, look for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells"** (2 Peter 3:13). This will be like the perfect righteousness that was present in God's original creation.

Questions

1. What is all included in the heavens and the earth that God created?
2. For what purpose did God create the universe?
3. What difference is there between human beings and all other created things?
4. Why do we say that the universe is earth-centered and the earth is man-centered?
5. How do we know that the original world was without sin or death?
6. What did God have to say about His creation after He finished it?
7. Why is the world today no longer perfect?
8. Why did God subject all of His creation to futility?
9. When will creation be delivered from this futility?
10. What did God use to destroy His original creation?
11. What will God use to destroy our present universe?



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A Systematic Study of Bible Teachings (Dogmatics) Lesson 3.4 – The Doctrine of Creation

The Invisible World of Spirit Beings or Angels

The word “angel” as used in the Bible may refer to several different beings. The original word in the Hebrew and Greek languages means “messenger.” Generally, it is translated as “angel” or “messenger”. Sometimes in the Old Testament the word refers to the Son of God (the pre-incarnate Jesus), such as **“the Angel of the LORD”** (Exodus 3:2) who appeared to Moses at the burning bush. When this is the case, our English translations generally capitalize the word. At other times the word “angel” refers to invisible spirit beings, whom God uses to bring messages to His people on earth. In such cases these angels usually appear on earth as young men, often dressed in white clothing. Sometimes the word “angel” refers to human beings with whom God has entrusted messages which He wants conveyed to men. There are some instances when it cannot be determined absolutely from the context whether the word “angel” or “messenger” refers to the Son of God, a spirit being, or a human messenger. In this section we shall be examining what the Bible says about those angels that are invisible spirit beings.

Because they are invisible, there are many who deny the very existence of such spirit beings. For example, the sect of the Sadducees in New Testament times denied the existence of angels, for it is written in Acts 23:8: **“For the Sadducees say that there is no resurrection – and no angel or spirit; but the Pharisees confess both.”** No doubt there are many in our modern world who also deny their existence. But there are others who not only believe in their existence but believe and teach all kinds of things about the spirit world that have no basis either in experience or in the Bible. Since most of us have never seen an angel that we could identify as an angel, it is difficult for us to believe in their presence. But since the Bible is God’s Word, it is necessary that we do believe what God tells us about the angels.

Sometimes these invisible spirit beings are called **“sons of God**, as in the book of Job. Job 1:6: **“Now there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the LORD.”** Sometimes these spirit beings are called **“holy ones”** or **“saints.”** When Moses blessed the children of Israel before his death, he referred to the giving of the Ten Commandments in these words: **“The LORD came from Sinai, and dawned on them from Seir; He shone forth from Mount Paran, and He came with ten thousands of saints; from His right hand came a fiery law for them”** (Deuteronomy 33:2).

The Bible clearly teaches that God created the angels during the six days of creation, since God created all things during those six days. But the Bible does not reveal on which of the six days the angels were created. The apostle Paul wrote to the Christians in Colossi: **“He (Christ) is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. For by Him all things were created that are in heaven and that are on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers”** (Colossians 1:15-16). It was especially important that Paul referred to the angels as creatures of God in Colossi, because there were some in that community that were involved in **“the worship of angels”** (Colossians 2:18).

The letter to the Hebrews devotes a whole chapter to establishing the difference between created angels and the Son of God, who is Himself God. Jesus is **“so much better than the angels, as He has by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than they”** (Hebrews 1:4). Jesus is God, but the angels are **“ministering spirits sent forth to minister for those who will inherit salvation”** (Hebrews 1:14).

When the apostle John was about ready to worship an angel whom God had sent to reveal a vision to him, the angel said to John: **“See that you do not do that. For I am your fellow servant, and of your brethren the prophets, and of those who keep the words of this book. Worship God”** (Revelation 22:9).

Jesus Himself teaches us that angels have no permanent human bodies. On the evening of His resurrection, He said to His disciples **“who supposed they had seen a spirit”**: **“Behold My hands and My feet, that it is I Myself. Handle Me and see, for a spirit does not have flesh and bones as you see I have”** (Luke 24:37-39). Of course, when these angels brought a message down from God, they assumed a temporary visible form. Abraham was once visited by what appeared to be **“three men”** (Genesis 18:2), but later we realize that one of these three men was the Angel of the LORD, who is the Son of God, and two angels. The women who went to Jesus’ tomb on Easter Sunday morning were greeted by **“two men...in shining garments”** (Luke 24:4). When Jesus’ disciples were looking up into the sky as Jesus ascended to heaven, **“two men stood by them in white apparel”** (Acts 1:10) who then informed them that Jesus would one day return as He had gone up.

Each angel is an individual personal being with feelings and emotions, but only two angels are given names in Scripture: Michael, called an archangel (Jude 9), and Gabriel (Daniel 9:21), whom God sent to Mary of Nazareth to inform her that God had chosen her to be the mother of the Son of God.

In connection with His teaching concerning the resurrection of the dead, Jesus pointed out: **“The sons of this age marry and are given in marriage. But those who are counted worthy to attain that age, and the resurrection from the dead, neither marry nor are given in marriage; nor can they die anymore, for they are equal to the angels and are sons of God, being sons of the resurrection”** (Luke 20:34-36). Therefore, we conclude that angels do not get married or reproduce, and that they do not die. Nevertheless, there are many thousands of them, for John on the island of Patmos **“heard the voice of many angels around the throne, the living creatures, and the elders; and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands”** (Revelation 5:11).

Questions

1. What are the three ways in which the word “angel” is used in the Bible?
2. Why are there many people who deny the existence of angels?
3. What other terms are sometimes used in the Bible to refer to angels?
4. In what ways is Jesus different from the angels?
5. How did Jesus describe angels on the evening of His resurrection day?
6. In what form did the angels generally appear on earth to human beings?
7. What two angels are mentioned by name in the Bible?
8. In what ways are angels different from human beings?
9. What do the common people in your locale believe about angels or spirit beings?



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A Systematic Study of Bible Teachings (Dogmatics) Lesson 3.4.1 – The Doctrine of Creation

The Work of the Holy Angels

In the beginning God created all the angels as sinless spirit beings. In order to carry out the work God has assigned for them, God gave His angels the ability to move swiftly. He also gave them power beyond all human ability and superior intelligence. Moreover, God's angels are holy. They are therefore willing and eager to carry out faithfully all assignments given to them. The Bible tells us that while Daniel was praying for his people, God immediately answered his prayer by sending the angel Gabriel with a message for Daniel: **"While I was speaking in prayer, the man Gabriel, whom I had seen in the vision at the beginning, being caused to fly swiftly, reached me about the time of the evening offering"** (Daniel 9:21). Apparently, angels are able to move swiftly to wherever God wants to send them.

David tells us about the angels' strength and their desire to please their Lord. He says: **"Bless the LORD, you His angels, who excel in strength, who do His word, heeding the voice of His word. Bless the LORD, all you His hosts, you ministers of His, who do His pleasure"** (Psalm 103:20-21). In his second letter to the Thessalonians, the apostle Paul calls the angels **"mighty"** (2 Thessalonians 1:7).

Angels have extensive knowledge, but there are limits to what they know. Jesus said that the angels do not know when the Last Day will come. He told His disciples: **"But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, but My Father only"** (Matthew 24:36). In speaking of God's wondrous plan of salvation, the apostle Peter says that these are **"things angels desire to look into"** (1 Peter 1:12).

In the beginning all angels were sinless, for God pronounced all His creation **"very good"** (Genesis 1:31). But today there are two kinds of angels: evil angels and holy angels. The holy angels serve God without fail. That is why they are called **"holy"** in Mark 8:38: **"He comes in the glory of His Father with the holy angels."** Since Paul calls the angels **"elect angels"** (1 Timothy 5:21), there is no possibility now that any of God's holy angels will disobey or betray Him.

God employs the angels in various ways. He has used them to convey messages to people on earth, as in the case of the prophet Daniel, the priest Zacharias, the virgin Mary, and the apostles Paul and Peter and John. His angels provide special protection at times for God's people, as when two angels saved Lot from the angry citizens of Sodom (Genesis 19), or when an angel brought the prophet Elijah food in the wilderness (1 Kings 19). God also protected His prophet Elisha from the army of Syria by sending angels. It was on this last occasion that God opened the eyes of Elisha's servant, so that he could see God's invisible army of protection. We read in 2 Kings 6:17: **"Then the LORD opened the eyes of the young man, and he saw. And behold, the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire all around Elisha."** The servant of Elisha understood what the prophet had meant when he said to him: **"Do not fear, for those who are with us are more than those who are with them"** (2 Kings 6:16). God promises this protection also to us today in Psalm 91:10-12: **"No evil shall befall you, nor shall any plague come near your dwelling; for He shall give His angels charge over you, to keep you in all your ways. In their hands they shall bear you up, lest you dash your foot against a stone."**

We have similar examples and promises in the New Testament. Jesus once warned His disciples: **“Take heed that you do not despise one of these little ones, for I say to you that in heaven their angels always see the face of My Father who is in heaven”** (Matthew 18:10). This saying of Jesus has led some Christians to suppose that each one of us has a specific guardian angel watching over him or her. But this idea goes beyond what Jesus actually said. It is sufficient to know that the angels watch over us. God sent an angel to rescue Peter from a Jerusalem prison. Afterwards Peter declared: **“Now I know for certain that the Lord has sent His angel, and has delivered me from the hand of Herod and from all the expectation of the Jewish people”** (Acts 12:11). And in His story of the rich man and the beggar Lazarus, Jesus said that the angels carried Lazarus to heaven. The letter to the Hebrews summarizes the activity of the angels in the service of God’s people by asking: **“Are they not all ministering spirits sent forth to minister for those who will inherit salvation?”** (Hebrews 1:14). The answer to this question is of course yes; the angels are ministers or servants, not only of God, but also of all of God’s people who will inherit salvation.

Sometimes God uses angels as instruments of judgment. The two angels who visited Lot in Sodom said to him: **“We will destroy this place...The LORD has sent us to destroy it”** (Genesis 19:13). God also used an angel to wipe out the Assyrian army that was besieging Jerusalem in the days of King Hezekiah. The Bible says: **“It came to pass on a certain night that the angel of the LORD went out, and killed in the camp of the Assyrians one hundred and eighty-five thousand; and when people arose early in the morning, there were the corpses – all dead”** (2 Kings 19:35). When King Herod allowed the people to call him a god, we are told: **“Immediately an angel of the Lord struck him, because he did not give glory to God. And he was eaten by worms and died”** (Acts 12:23).

The angels played an important role in the giving of the law on Mt. Sinai. The first martyr, Stephen, told the Jews who were about to murder him that they **“have received the law by the direction of angels and have not kept it”** (Acts 7:53). The apostle Paul made the same claim, saying: The law **“was appointed through angels by the hand of a mediator”** (Galatians 3:19).

As the angels serve God’s people on earth, so they also served Jesus, the Son of God, when He was a man on earth. Angels informing Zacharias and Mary of Jesus’ coming into the world. Angels announced to the Bethlehem shepherds that He had arrived. And the Bible tells us that **“angels came and ministered to Him”** (Matthew 4:11) after His temptation by Satan. After Jesus prayed His agonizing prayer in Gethsemane, **“an angel appeared to Him from heaven, strengthening Him”** (Luke 22:43). The angels will also serve the Lord Jesus on the Last Day, **“when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with His mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance on those who do not know God”** (2 Thessalonians 1:7-8). See also Matthieu 13:39-43, 24:31.

Since some angels are called archangels or chief angels, it seems that there may be different ranks among them. But God has not told us exactly what these different ranks mean. All He tells us is that the angels are given different names. These names may indicate a different rank or duty. The Bible talks about thrones, archangels, seraphim, cherubim, dominions, rulers, powers, principalities, and simply angels. Much of what people today believe and teach about angels is pure speculation. We want to be careful not to go beyond what God actually reveals to us in His word.

Questions

1. How do we know that angels are strong, swift, and intelligent?
2. What were the angels like when God first made them?
3. What two kinds of angels or spirit beings exist today?
4. What did God allow Elisha's servant to see which we usually cannot see?
5. What does it mean that those with us are more than those with them?
6. How did God rescue Peter from prison?
7. Name some instances when God used His angels to send judgments on man.
8. How did the angels serve Jesus during His lifetime on earth?
9. What are the angels going to do on the Last Day?
10. Why can't we determine the various ranks among the angels?



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A Systematic Study of Bible Teachings (Dogmatics) Lesson 3.4.2 – The Doctrine of Creation

Evil Angels, Evil Spirits, Demons, and the Devil

Since God is the Creator of all things, visible and invisible, it is obvious that He is also the Creator of the evil angels (devils, demons, evil spirits). God created them originally as good angels, but they fell into sin. We learn this from apostle Peter and Jude, the brother of Jesus and James: **“God did not spare the angels who sinned, but cast them down to hell and delivered them into chains of darkness, to be reserved for judgment”** (2 Peter 2:4). **“The angels who did not keep their proper domain, but left their own abode, He has reserved in everlasting chains under darkness for the judgment of the great day”** (Jude 6).

At the end of the six days of creation God saw that everything was **“very good”** but there was at least one evil spirit who led Adam and Eve into sin (Genesis 3) therefore, it is clear that the fall of the angels took place sometime between the six days of creation and the fall of man into sin. Jesus said of one evil angel, the devil: **“He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own resources, for he is a liar and the father of it”** (John 8:44). This shows that the devil, known also as Satan, the serpent, and the dragon, was the first good angel to become an evil angel. He apparently led a number of other angels to rebel with him. Jesus spoke of **“the devil and his angels”** (Matthew 25:41). This indicates that the devil is the leader of the other evil angels. The apostle Paul taught the Christians in Ephesus that the devil and his angels are a formidable force of evil in the world. He said: **“Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places”** (Ephesians 6:11-12).

Jesus’ apostles were well aware of the power and the craftiness of the devil and his angels. The apostle Paul was concerned about the reaction of the Christians in Corinth to the repentance of the man whom they had excommunicated. He said they needed to forgive the repentant sinner, **“lest Satan should take advantage of us, for we are not ignorant of his devices”** (2 Corinthians 2:11). Later in the same letter Paul warned his readers against the wiles of the devil, saying: **“I fear, lest somehow, as the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness, so your minds may be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ”** (2 Corinthians 11:3).

In his second letter to the Thessalonian Christians the apostle Paul foretold the coming of the Antichrist, whom he called **“the man of sin”** and **“the son of perdition.”** Where would this Antichrist derive his power and his deceiving tricks? **“The coming of the lawless one is according to the working of Satan, with all power, signs, and lying wonders, and with all unrighteous deception among those who perish”** (2 Thessalonians 2:9-10). In studying the activities of the Antichrist (the Roman papacy) throughout history, we see how this prophecy is being fulfilled even to the present day.

The apostle Peter emphasized the viciousness of Satan and his desire to deceive Christians and to turn them away from eternal life in Jesus Christ: **“Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour”** (1 Peter 5:8).

Nevertheless, the activity of Satan is controlled and limited by God. The Old Testament book of Job shows how God limited what Satan could do in his attempt to turn Job away from God. At first God

said to Satan: **“Behold, all that he has is in your power; only do not lay a hand on his person”** (Job 1:12). After Satan went as far as he could under this limitation, God permitted him to go even further. **“The LORD said to Satan, ‘Behold, he is in your hand, but spare his life’”** (Job 2:6). Likewise, Jesus gave the evil spirits dwelling in the maniac who lived in the tombs permission to enter a herd of pigs. **“And suddenly the whole herd of swine ran violently down the steep place into the sea, and perished in the water”** (Luke 8:33).

Questions

1. Why can we be sure that the evil angels were good angels at first?
2. Where did evil come from?
3. Why did Jesus speak of some angels as being the devil’s angels?
4. Why must Christians be on guard against the devil and evil spirits?
5. What is Satan able to accomplish through the Antichrist?
6. What was Satan attempting to do to the excommunicated man in Corinth?
7. How does the devil devour Christians?
8. How do we know that God limits the activities of the devil?
9. Do the residents of your locale believe that there is a devil or demons?
10. What can we say to someone who denies that the devil exists?
11. Why must we be careful to believe only what the Bible says about demons?



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A Systematic Study of Bible Teachings (Dogmatics) Lesson 3.4.3 – The Doctrine of Creation

The Kingdom of Darkness

There are two mistakes we can make with regard to the devil and demons. One is that we can deny their existence altogether. This is the mistake that many have made in our modern age. The other mistake we can make is to exaggerate the devil's presence and power to the point that we are afraid of him and believe that there is no way for us to withstand him and his evil ways.

The devil certainly does exist, as do the evil spirits, even though we cannot see them. The devil is a formidable foe having a well-organized kingdom with vast power and influence. The apostle Paul called him **"the prince of the power of the air, the spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience"** (Ephesians 2:2). He also called him **"the god of this age"** (2 Corinthians 4:4). The book of Revelation calls him **"the great dragon," "that serpent of old, called the Devil and Satan, who deceives the whole world"** (Revelation 12:9). The apostle John wrote: **"The whole world lies under the sway of the wicked one"** (1 John 5:19). Jesus Himself called the devil **"the ruler of this world"** (John 12:31; John 14:30; John 16:11). His name Satan emphasizes that he is the adversary of God and our adversary or enemy as well. His name devil emphasizes that he loves to accuse us of sin and slander us. His name Beelzebub describes him as a god of flies and filth. His name Belial means that he is worthless.

There is no time of grace for the devil and his angels. There is no indication in the Bible anywhere that it is possible for the fallen angels to repent. They are confirmed in their sin, and all that remains for them is the eternal judgment. As Jesus said, **"the everlasting fire" is "prepared for the devil and his angels"** (Matthew 25:41). In John's vision of the judgment, he saw that **"the devil...was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone where the beast and the false prophet are. And they will be tormented day and night forever and ever"** (Revelation 20:10).

Since the devil is at work in the sons of disobedience, we can say that all unbelievers are spiritually possessed by the devil. **"Satan entered Judas...So he went his way and conferred with the chief priests and captains, how he might betray Him (Jesus) to them"** (Luke 22:3). On the very night of the betrayal we are again informed that **"Satan entered him"** (John 13:27) and Judas then went out into the dark night to carry out his wicked plan. Peter attributed Ananias' scheme of holding back part of the money from a sale, while pretending to give it all, a work of the devil. He said to him: **"Ananias, why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit and keep back part of the price of the land for yourself?"** (Acts 5:3). Paul attributed the unbelief of those who rejected Christ's Gospel to the devil: **"But even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing, whose minds the god of this age has blinded, who do not believe, lest the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine on them"** (2 Corinthians 4:3-4).

The unbelievers are already under the devil's control, and so he concentrates his attacks on believers. In particular he attacks the leaders of believers, so that many will be brought down through the influence of a few. The devil even tried to tempt Jesus to sin without success, using the Word of God in his vicious attack (Matthew 3:4-11). Consider the way Satan went after Job's possessions and family and even Job's own body as soon as God gave him permission. He murders and lies in order to accomplish his purpose. Paul called his **"thorn in the flesh" "a messenger of Satan to buffet"** him (2 Corinthians 12:7).

In Jesus' parable of the sower and his seed, the birds who devoured the seeds by the roadside are a picture of the way **"the wicked one comes and snatches away what was sown"** (Matthew 13:19) in the heart of one listening to God's Word. In His parable of the weeds among the wheat, the enemy who sowed the weeds in the field represents **"the devil"** (Matthew 13:39). On the evening of His arrest Jesus warned Peter: **"Satan has asked for you, that he may sift you as wheat"** (Luke 22:31).

The devil and his evil spirits entered the bodies of many persons in the days of Jesus and His apostles. The troubled persons who were possessed bodily in this way by evil spirits had no control over their own actions. When Jesus and His apostles were confronted by those who were possessed by evil spirits, they drove them out and restored the victims to their normal selves. For example, we read in Matthew 9:32-33: **"Behold, they brought to Him (Jesus) a man, mute and demon-possessed. And when the demon was cast out, the mute spoke."** A more extreme case involved the son of a man who said to Jesus: **"Lord, have mercy on my son, for he is an epileptic and suffers severely; for he often falls into the fire and often into the water. So I brought him to Your disciples, but they could not cure him."** We are then told that **"Jesus rebuked the demon, and it came out of him; and the child was cured from that very hour"** (Matthew 17:15-18).

Perhaps the most extreme case was that of **"a man (actually there were two men, as we learn from Matthew 8:28) with an unclean spirit, who had his dwelling among the tombs; and no one could bind him, not even with chains, because he had often been bound with shackles and chains. And the chains had been pulled apart by him, and the shackles broken in pieces; neither could anyone tame him. And always, night and day, he was in the mountains and in the tombs, crying out and cutting himself with stones"** (Mark 5:2-5). This man had a legion of demons controlling him, but after Jesus drove out his demons, they **"saw the one who had been demon-possessed and had the legion, sitting and clothed and in his right mind"** (Mark 5:15).

The presence of evil spirits and belief in evil spirits have terrified many persons through the years in many countries of the world. The second mistake one can make with regard to the devil and his kingdom of darkness is to be so overwhelmed by his apparent power and influence that one sees no way of escape. We need to realize that Jesus always won, always wins, and always will win any contest He has with the kingdom of darkness. **"For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that He might destroy the works of the devil"** (1 John 3:8). Not only did Jesus drive out evil spirits, but He overcame the spiritual hold Satan has over sinners by suffering and dying for the sin of the world. **"Inasmuch then as the children have partaken of flesh and blood, He Himself likewise shared in the same, that through death He might destroy him who had the power of death, that is, the devil, and release those who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage"** (Hebrews 2:14-15).

Now we can follow the instruction of James, the brother of our Lord: **"Resist the devil, and he will flee from you"** (James 4:7). Peter likewise instructs us: **"Resist him, steadfast in the faith"** (1 Peter 5:9). How do we overcome the devil and his temptations? The book of Revelation tells us: **"The accuser of our brethren, who accused them before our God day and night, has been cast down. And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony"** (Revelation 12:10-11). When the devil tempts us to despair by accusing us of sin and telling us we must therefore be punished, we can respond by saying that Jesus has already been punished for our sins on the cross. This is how we overcome him.

We may wonder why our Lord allows the devil to have any power at all in this world, since he has been defeated and awaits eternal judgment. We do not know all the answers, but it is clear that the devil's presence gives us opportunity to use **"the shield of faith with which you will be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one"** (Ephesians 6:16) and **"the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God"** (Ephesians 6:17). We walk in the certain hope that total and permanent victory will come soon. **"The God of peace will crush Satan under your feet shortly"** (Romans 16:20).

Questions

1. What are the two mistakes we can make regarding the devil and his demons?
2. What are some of the names and descriptions given to the devil?
3. What is the eternal destiny of the devil and all his evil spirits?
4. What is the difference between spiritual possession and bodily possession?
5. Give some Bible examples of both types of possession.
6. How did Jesus finally overcome all the power of the devil?
7. How are we to resist the devil and his evil forces today?
8. What is generally believed about evil spirits in your locale?
9. What is the difference between ordinary disease and bodily possession?
10. Give some examples of the devil's activity in our world today.