

**JESUS AS THE MESSIAH:
THE ANALYSIS OF THE DEMONIC REALM AND JESUS' AUTHORITY OVER
DEMONS**

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MESS7350 Life Of Messiah Part I
August 27, 2019

Introduction

Jesus of Nazareth is the promised Messiah that Old Testament prophets point to in Scripture. The earthly ministry of the Messiah displayed His authority over various areas of creation. This authority proved that Jesus was of a different class than the thing subject to His authority. Jesus' authority evidenced His role as Creator rather than creation. One of the powerful depictions of the Messiah's authority shows in His casting out of spirits, with command over them. Looking at the origins of angels and specific instances where exorcism occurred, one is to conclude that Jesus really was who He claimed to be: The Messiah of Israel.

I. ANGELIC CREATION

Angels are mentioned at least 108 times in the Old Testament and 165 times in the New Testament. (Chafer pg. 3) Even with a fair amount of material to work from, the actual creation of angels is not detailed but only vaguely mentioned. Psalm 148:5, for example, in speaking of angels, designates them as created beings, making them distinct from the Creator God, as well as similar in respect to man and animal kind. Despite similarity of being as a creation of God, angels were present the day God created the heavens and the earth and are yet distinct from the rest of creation (cf. Job 38:6-7). New Testament revelation spoke of angels as creations of Christ Himself and were made "for Him" (cf. Col. 1:16). Much like everything in God's creation angels, therefore, have a purpose for which they were created.

The purpose for which angels were created can be seen by the activities they involve themselves in. Their various acts of service show through in the pages of Scripture. They are seen in Scripture as servants of God and are seen executing judgment on sinful man. In the case of Sodom and Gomorrah, God sends angels to "see whether they have done altogether according to the outcry against it" (cf. Gen. 18:21). After confirming the atrocious sins of Sodom and

Gomorrah, the angels are designated to destroy it (cf. Gen. 19:13). Also in the situation where David numbered the armies of Israel, the scene angered the LORD, and the designated punishment was plague in the land of Israel. An angel is seen as the one stretching out its hand to destroy, and thus is used of God in executing judgment (cf. 2 Sam. 24:16).

Angels are involved in interpreting visions from the LORD. In the book of Zechariah, God gives the prophet a series of 8 visions (C.I. Schofield study Bible pg.1267). Angels are then seen aiding Zechariah in the interpretation of the visions (Cf. Zech. 1-6).

God also uses angels to reveal key parts of His divine program. This is seen in a broad aspect when the angel Gabriel reveals to Daniel the important prophecy of the “seventy-sevens” which encompasses God’s eschatological plan for Israel (cf. Dan. 9:20-27). The same angel Gabriel appeared to the priest Zacharias to declare to him that his son John would be the forerunner to the Messiah (cf. Lk. 1:11-19). Following the proclamation of the Messiah’s forerunner, Gabriel also informs the virgin Mary, that she will be the one to give birth to the Son of God (cf. Lk. 1:26-35).

Angels aren’t limited to serving God alone, but the New Testament reveals that they minister to Church age saints (Heb. 1:14). An example of their service to the apostles, shows them delivering them from imprisonment at the hands of the religious leaders (cf. Acts 5:19). A similar example takes place with the Apostle Peter when an angel helps him escape prison after the church was in constant prayer for him (cf. Acts. 12:5-11).

Not all angels are servants of God, but many serve Satan and do his bidding. Satan found himself in opposition to God when he sinned, and God cast him from his position in heaven. The prophet Ezekiel describes the fall of Satan in chapter 28 verse 11-17. The context is Ezekiel

giving a pronouncement of judgment on many of Israel's enemies.¹ Tyre, a considerable enemy of Israel, is dealt with at length in the pronouncements of judgment. The reason for their judgment is described, and the divine retribution that the land and the people will receive is mentioned (Ch. 26-27). Beginning in chapter 28, the leader of Tyre is addressed, and judgment is pronounced on him. But, the audience shifts to someone identified as the "king of Tyre" (cf. Ezek. 28:11). The descriptions in verses 11-19 do not fit any human king and most likely depict the one who influences earthly kings, Satan. Evidence of the king of Tyre being otherworldly is observed with four points. First of all, they are said to have been in Eden "the garden of God" (v. 13). This could not be speaking of any human since the only man present was Adam and the other descriptions do not fit Adam. The second observation is the description of the king's appearance being of precious stone coverings on the day of his creation (v. 13). The third and unmistakable observation is the description of verse 14 as the "anointed Cherub" (an obvious reference to an angelic being). The fourth and last observation shows the location of this anointed Cherub before its fall. It is said to be "on the holy mountain of God". It is from this holy mountain that the Cherub is cast and laid before kings of the earth (vv. 16-18). The result of the Cherub sinning against God leads to corruption and defilement that spreads. This being a mark of Satan is evidenced in the activity of Satan on the earth historically, and in modern times. This passage teaches that fallen men of the world are controlled and swayed by Satan the evil one (cf. 1 Jn. 5:19). The fall and sin of Satan is also depicted in Isaiah chapter 14. Comparing Isaiah 14:12-17 with the passage in Ezekiel, it seems apparent that Satan was the Cherub who was identified as the "king of Tyre".

¹ Pentecost "Your Adversary The Devil" (pg. 11)

Now Satan is not in defiance against God alone, and his fall led to the fall of more angelic beings. These angelic beings are the antagonists in many passages of the gospel accounts to Jesus' earthly ministry. Some of these passages are discussed below. However, an insightful passage in Revelation 12 reveals facts about the angelic rebellion. As the apostle John is receiving the revelation of Jesus Christ, he witnesses the fall of Satan and the accompanying angels. The "fiery red dragon" is identified as "the serpent of old, called the Devil and Satan" (v. 9). This passage also mentions the fall of Satan from heaven but includes details the other passages exclude. John writes that a third of the stars of heaven were drawn by the tail of the dragon (v. 4). This indicates that a third of the angels joined Satan's ungodly rebellion. The passage also reveals that an angelic war was fought in heaven that consisted of Michael and the unfallen angels, warring against the dragon and his fallen angels (v. 7). The result of this angelic war is that Satan and his fallen angels are cast from heaven to earth (vv. 8-9). Thus we see a divide between the angelic servants of God and the demonic agents of Satan. Rather than serving God, fallen angels are seen serving Satan. Their activity consists of shaping the world's thinking (cf. Js. 3:15). They are also observed accomplishing the objective of destroying the work of God and persecuting His children (cf. 1 Pet. 5:8; Eph. 6:11; 1 Tim. 3:6-7; 2 Tim. 2:26).

II. ANGELIC RANK:

In demonic service to their leader Satan, the Biblical witness depicts demons serving in different roles. The book of Daniel offers insight into the goings-on of the angelic realm. In Daniel 10:10-14, we get a glimpse into angelic warfare that relates to human governments. A heavenly messenger speaks to Daniel. Some scholars view the messenger as a pre-incarnate form

of Christ.² Other commentators see it as an angelic being, possibly Gabriel, who had already had dealings with Daniel.³ The angel comes bearing a message for Daniel that concerns Daniel's people Israel in the latter days (Dan. 10:14). The angel was delayed in coming to Daniel and explains the cause as "the prince of the kingdom of Persia withstood me." Angelic reinforcements arrived in the form of Michael "one of the chief princes" (v. 13). The implication in this passage is that the prince of Persia is a fallen angel. The implication is seen in two ways. First off, the messenger to Daniel, and Michael the chief prince, are angelic beings. This indicates that the one who opposes them is also an angelic being. A human that fights with angels in any effective manner is highly unlikely. Secondly, the angel is fighting the messenger to Daniel, as well as the prince Michael. This is indication that it is an angel who rebelled against God with the adversary Satan. The fact that Michael is a "chief prince" and the opposing angel is the "prince of Persia" indicates angelic territorial influence. If this is the case, evidence suggests an angelic rank. Though lacking in detail, angelic rank is apparently a reality in the angelic realm.

There are two passages in the New Testament that speak of angels having a different rank or order. The first passage shows the angelic forces created by God in Colossians 1:16. This passage says "*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**. All things were created through Him and from Him.*" In speaking of the creation of God a list is given of distinct angelic categories. Chafer notes a distinction to these areas when he says "The term thrones refers to those who sit upon them, dominions to those who rule, principalities to those who govern, power to those who exercise supremacy, and authorities to those invested with imperial

² Renald Showers "The Most High God" (pg. 141)

³ Paul Benware "Daniel: God's Man With God's Message" (pg. 241)

responsibility. Though there is seeming similarity in these denominations, it may be assumed that representation is made by these titles to incomprehensible dignity and varying degrees of rank.”⁴ The second passage that speaks of angels having a different rank or order is Ephesians 6:12. Dwight Pentecost identifies this text as corresponding to Colossians 1:16. He says “You will notice that Paul points out four different ranks in Ephesians 6:12 that are under the authority of Satan, and those four ranks that Satan has instituted correspond to the ranks mentioned in Colossians 1:16 that God had instituted in arranging the affairs of His universe.”⁵

While fallen angels are seen to have remarkable power, and influence over the affairs of the world, it must be remembered that all angels including those in open rebellion to God, remain subject to God in heaven (cf. Job 1:6-2:13). This creates the unmistakable witness of the Messiahship of Jesus when He displays His authority over demon’s in His earthly ministry.

III. THE MESSIAH’S AUTHORITY OVER DEMONS:

The gospel of Mark lists many of the Messiah’s miracles and acts of service. Mark’s account of the Messiah’s earthly ministry shows Him casting out demons on six occasions. Each occasion depicts the Messiah’s authority over the demonic realm.

1- Mk. 1:23-27

The first occasion where the Messiah cast out a demon in the gospel of Mark occurs at a synagogue service. After a teaching session where Jesus astonished his audience because of His authoritative teaching (Mk. 1:22), Mark introduces a man in attendance with an “unclean spirit” (v. 23). The demon responding to the authoritative teaching of the Messiah cries out with a

⁴ Chafer (pg. 17)

⁵ Pentecost (pg. 36)

typical Hebrew Idiom “let us alone! What have we to do with You, Jesus of Nazareth?”⁶ The demon continues his outcry “Did you come to destroy us? I know who You are – the Holy One of God!” (Mk. 1:24). There are three major observations in the demon’s outburst in verse 24. The first, is the demons use of the Hebrew Idiom which is usually found in conflict scenarios (cf. Mk. 5:7; Josh. 22:24; Judg. 11:12; 2 Sam. 16:10; 19:22).⁷ The demon presents itself in conflict to the righteous Son of God, showing the clear distinction between the Messiah, and the unrighteous demon. The second observation is the demon’s fearful question of destruction. The question implies that Jesus’ authority carries the right to judge demons as well as His ability to do destroy demons. The third observation is the demon knowing Jesus’ identity. By calling Him the “Holy One of God!” the demon is acknowledging the divine nature of Jesus. “The title “Holy One” was a popular designation of God in the Old Testament. Isaiah called God the Holy One about 30 times”.⁸ An interesting additional remark concerning the response of the demon being cast out is the convulsing, and the crying out. This indicates that the demon was resistant but ultimately could not resist the will of the Messiah.⁹

2- Mk. 1:32-34, 39

Shortly after the synagogue demon is cast out, Jesus enters the home of Simon and Andrew. Simon’s mother in law is healed from her sickness and begins to serve them (Mk. 1:29-30). Later that evening, people brought the sick and demon-possessed to be healed by the Messiah. An important insight observed in verse 34 is where the demons are not allowed to speak, and the passage says, “because they knew Him.” Jesus’ fame immediately spread from His synagogue exorcism, (Mk. 1:28) and this is the likely cause for the crowds gathering to Him

⁶ Constable (Mk.1:23-27)

⁷ Ibid

⁸ Ibid

⁹ J.D. Pentecost “The Words and Works of Jesus Christ” (pg. 146)

now. A likely reason Jesus forbid the demons to speak was so He was not made known by the testimony of demons. (Arnold Fruchtenbaum)

3- Mk. 3:11-12

Later in Mark's gospel, Jesus withdraws with His disciples and is followed by a great multitude from many of the surrounding areas (Mk. 3:7). As the multitude follow Jesus many are healed, and those having affliction seek to touch Him and also receive healing (v.10). Jesus again warns the demons not to make Him known, as they were crying out "You are the Son of God" whenever they saw Him (v. 11). An important fact concerning Jesus proving His Messiahship authority is shown in His giving the disciples the power to cast out demons from the multitudes and heal the sick (vv. 13-19). The word for "power" (v. 15) is elsewhere translated "authority" (cf. Mk. 1:22, 27) indicating the very authority Jesus possessed to cast out demons is permitted to His disciples.

4- Mk. 5:1-20

The fourth occasion of Jesus casting out demons is one of the more well-known examples from the gospels. Jesus crosses to the other side of the sea with His disciples. Immediately, a man with an unclean spirit met Jesus. This man is described as being "out of the tombs," and "dwelling among the tombs" (cf. Mk. 5:2-3). No one could bind this man and chains were also not able to bind him. The demon-possessed man was uncommonly strong and driven to self-harm because of the unclean spirit controlling him (vv. 4-5). Mark gives account of this man with a powerful spirit coming before Jesus and he "worshiped Him" (v. 6). Similar to the other occasions the demon identifies Jesus as "Son of the Most High God" and acknowledges Jesus' ability and right to judge ("torment" v. 7) spirit beings. Jesus, asks the spirit its name to which the answer is "Legion; for we are many." The unclean spirits beg Jesus not to be driven out of

the country, but rather to be permitted to enter the herd of pigs. The herd runs into the sea and is drowned (v.13). The work of the Messiah on this occasion is witnessed by those who tended the pigs, and they testify in the city and country. The people come to see for themselves, and find the formerly demon-possessed man “clothed and in his right mind.” Mark describes their finding of the man as a cause of fear. Their fear is likely due to the extraordinary power that would have been necessary to cast out such a powerful spirit. It is clear that Jesus possesses power and authority, that is above not only Man, but also demonic spirits.

5- Mk. 7:25-30

The fifth occasion of Jesus encountering demon-possession takes place in Mark chapter 7. Talk of Jesus’ ministry of casting out demons was broadcast to the surrounding areas. Even when Jesus seeks to enter a house privately, Mark informs the reader that “He could not be hidden” (Mk. 7:24). Not only does this indicate that testimony of Jesus was reaching far and wide, but the person who approaches Jesus in this text indicates that Jesus’ testimony was crossing religious and cultural boundaries.

Mark identifies the woman in this passage as a Greek, specifically a Syro-Phoenician (v. 26). The words “kept asking” imply the continual action of request. This Gentile woman was asking the Jewish Messiah to work on her child’s behalf. As the Jewish Messiah, Jesus maintains His strict focus of offering the Kingdom to Israel. In light of this, He answers the woman with the statement “Let the children (Israel) be filled first, for it is not good to take the children’s bread and throw it to the little dogs (Gentiles).” In such a statement, Jesus did not deny working with and for Gentiles, but that they take a secondary focus to the Messiah’s ministry and the nation of Israel takes top priority. The woman shows her faith by replying “Yes, Lord, yet even the little dogs under the table eat from the children’s crumbs.” Now the result of this statement

led to Jesus healing the Gentile woman's daughter (Mk. 7:29). Interestingly, the woman's statement could be her recognition of the Jewish Messiah, and her desire to partake in the blessing of Israel, despite being of Gentile birth. The context of the gospels showcases a growing rejection of the Messiah from Israel's religious leaders. This would cause there to be more "crumbs" that fall to the Gentiles and foreshadows God's work with the nations besides Israel. An additional observation concerning Jesus' authority is seen in the fact that Jesus need not be present to cast out demons and can apparently do so from afar (cf. Mk. 7:29-30).

6- Mk. 9:17-29

The final occasion of Jesus interacting with the demon-possessed is in Mark chapter 9. A man brings his demon-possessed son before Jesus and requests an exorcism. The man informs Jesus that His disciples failed to cast the demon out of the boy (Mk. 9:17-18). The demon-possessed boy immediately falls to the ground convulsing when brought into the presence of Jesus (v. 20). This likely indicates the spirit's reluctance to deal with the "Son of the Most High God," a reluctance shared with other demons. With the father of the boy's struggling faith, Jesus commands the spirit to come out and to not enter again (v. 25). Mark describes the casting out of the demon as distressing, with the spirit convulsing him greatly and causing the boy to appear dead (v. 26). Despite the boy's appearance or possible reality of death; by the hand of the Messiah, the boy rose from the ground. Jesus yet again shows his power and authority to cast out demons., even one that the disciples had not the power or authority to cast out.

Conclusion:

Angelic beings, though powerful, are still created beings. Created beings are subject to the Creator, even if they defy Him in rebellion. Within the rank and order of the angelic realm,

there are angels who influence governments, and there are lesser angels who influence individuals. Jesus exhibited His authority as the Messiah by casting out spirits in a commanding fashion. In following the testimony laid out in Scripture of the angelic realm, as well as the earthly ministry of Jesus, it is proper to conclude that He was who He claimed to be.

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