

GRACE BIBLE CHURCH
Robert R. McLaughlin Bible Ministries

The Tree of Life is a weekly teaching summary.
The Tree of Life from the week ending 11/20/05
The Angelic Conflict. Part 1.
Introduction and Definition.

We have been noting seven reasons for the world's hostility and hatred toward the believer. 1) Because the *kosmos system* hates Christ. 2) Because once a person is in the plan of God, as a believer priest, they no longer belong to the world. 3) Because of the principle: the slave is not greater than his master (Joh 15:20). 4) Because the *kosmos* is ignorant of the plan of God (Joh 15:21). 5) Because their (those in the *kosmos*) old sin nature is exposed. 6) Because the world hates God the Son and therefore they hate God the Father Who sent Him. By the way, the world does not hate God the Holy Spirit, because they really know nothing about Him. That's why 1Co 2:14 says, *But a natural man does not accept the things of the Spirit of God; for they are foolishness to him, and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually appraised.* Finally, in Joh 15:23-24, we read, *"He who hates Me hates My Father also. If I had not done among them the works which no one else did, they would not have sin; but now they have both seen and hated Me and My Father as well."* This leads us to the seventh reason the *kosmos* hates the believer found in Joh 15:25, *"But {they have done this} in order that the word may be fulfilled that is written in their Law, 'They hated Me without a cause.'"*

In spite of the seven reasons why the world hates us today in the intensified stage of the angelic conflict, God's plan will continue on the earth. The plan now comes from two sources, in Joh 15:26, the ministry of the Holy Spirit and in verse 27, the ministry of every believer. Every believer is in full time Christian service. Joh 15:26-27 *"When the Helper comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, {that is} the Spirit of truth, who proceeds from the Father, He will bear witness of Me, and you {will} bear witness also, because you have been with Me from the beginning."*

This is addressing God the Holy Spirit, as the first witness, who would begin the Church-age on the day of Pentecost in 30 A.D. One of His primary functions is the communication of doctrine, so that an edification structure, built from residual doctrine, will enable us to stand-up against the pressure and antagonism of the cosmos. The second witness is the believer himself (Joh 15:27) in his ambassadorship, which we have recently studied. Every believer is a witness for Christ. Verse 27 is a reference to the disciples. They have been with Him from the beginning of His earthly ministry, and when the Church-age begins, they will bear witness, and this witnessing principle will be perpetuated to all generations, right down to us today. These two witnesses counteract and counterattack the devil's world.

John chapter 16 is a continuation of the Gethsemane discourse and an extension of the angelic conflict from the standpoint of the ministry of the Holy Spirit in verses 1-15, and the ministry of God the Son in verses 16-33. In this chapter, TLJC is anticipating the coming of the Church-age, the dispensation in which He is glorified at the right hand of God the Father. This dispensation is where the intensification of the angelic conflict begins. Therefore, we have begun a study of **the doctrine of the Angelic Conflict.**

Point 1 is a definition: the angelic conflict is the result of pre-historic creatures being in *opposition* to God, which began with the fall of Satan, and continued until all angelic creatures had made a decision for or against God. It refers to two trials of Satan and the fallen angels, one in pre-historic times, the other during human history. Mat 25:41, *"Then He will also say to those on His left, Depart from Me, accursed ones, into the eternal fire which has been prepared for the devil and his angels;"* This verse is a reference to angels who are under a curse from eternity past. This is why 1Ti 5:21 calls certain angels *His chosen* or *His elect angels*. The angelic conflict is the result of the fall of

all angelic creatures with more than one third ending up in *opposition* to God, which began with the fall of Satan and continued until all angelic creatures had made a decision for or against God.

The question which needs to be answered is: “Did more than one-third of the angels fall or did they **ALL** fall and nearly two-thirds came back to Christ through a salvation provided by Him, which is why they are said to be **ELECT**?” The information we have on the pre-historic past is very vague. However, this should not lead us into thinking that we cannot draw conclusions by comparing scripture with scripture. We can see the results of the restoration of planet earth, the creation of mankind, and the continuing angelic conflict, and we can see their causes. We know that before the creation of mankind Satan had fallen (Isa 14:12; Eze 28:15). We also know that there was a category of angelic creation that was fallen and a category that was called elect and holy angels.

Rev 12:3-4, *And another sign appeared in heaven: and behold, a great red dragon [Satan] having seven heads and ten horns [or control of seven heads and ten horns, which is the revived Roman empire of the Tribulation plus ecumenical religion], and on his heads were seven diadems or crowns. And his tail [Satan's power] swept away a third of the stars of heaven, and He [God] threw them to the earth [this will happen in the middle of the Tribulation]. And the dragon [Satan] stood or who had stood before the woman [the virgin Mary] who was about to give birth [This was what Satan tried so hard to stop, anticipating the virgin birth of Christ], so that when she gave birth he [Satan] might devour or destroy her child [destroy the humanity of Christ]. In Mar 8:38, and Luk 9:26, we read, “For whoever is ashamed of Me and My words, of him will the Son of Man be ashamed when He comes in His glory, and {the glory} of the Father and of the holy angels.”*

In Rev 14:10, notice what it says for those who receive a mark upon their forehead, “*he also will drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is mixed in full strength in the cup of His anger; and he will be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels and in the presence of the Lamb.*” We may conclude that the only reason why the angels are called holy angels is because God made them holy by providing for them some non-meritorious way to receive His righteousness. This view is further strengthened by the Word of God which states that Jesus Christ **ALONE** is the holy One. Rev 15:4 *Who will not fear, O Lord, and glorify Thy name? For Thou **alone** art holy; For all the nations will come and worship before Thee, For Thy righteous acts have been revealed.* Rev 16:5, *And I heard the angel of the waters saying, “Righteous art Thou, who art and who was, **O Holy One**, because Thou didst judge these things;*

Since Jesus Christ is called the only Holy One, meaning that He alone is the only One who remains experientially holy, how can it be that the elect angels are called holy? This is a seeming contradiction unless the angels were made holy after they were found to be unholy. In Rev 7:10-12, resurrected believers praise the Lord for salvation, and the angels join in by twice saying *Amen*. *Amen* means that they concur, agree, and express that they believe it. That is, they personally believe and understand salvation. Rev 7:10-12, *and they cry out with a loud voice, saying, “Salvation to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb.” And all the angels were standing around the throne and around the elders and the four living creatures; and they fell on their faces before the throne and worshiped God, saying, “Amen, blessing and glory and wisdom and thanksgiving and honor and power and might, be to our God forever and ever. Amen.”*

In the Tribulation, while angels bring divine judgment upon the earth, no angel is allowed to execute this judgment apart from Jesus Christ because He alone is worthy, Rev 5:2-5, *And I saw a strong angel proclaiming with a loud voice, “Who is worthy to open the book and to break its seals?” And no one in heaven, or on the earth, or under the earth, was able to open the book, or to look into it. And I began to weep greatly, because no one was found worthy to open the book, or to look into it; and one of the elders said to me, “Stop weeping; behold, the Lion that is from the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has overcome so as to open the book and its seven seals.”* In Job we find the statement that God charges error against His angels and this is used to argue that no man can be just before God. The argument would lack logic if only some angels were charged with error. Job 4:17-18, *Can mankind be just before God? Can a man be pure before his Maker? He puts no trust even in His servants; And against His angels He charges error.*

It is very interesting, and important to note, that at the fall Satan had offered man a counterfeit salvation (operation fig leaf) prior to God offering man the true salvation. True salvation looked ahead

to Christ, Gen 3:21, *And the LORD God made garments of skin for Adam and his wife, and clothed them.* Satan's counterfeit was fig leaves, Gen 3:7, *Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves loin coverings.* A counterfeit pre-supposes understanding of the real. Therefore, Satan would have had to have some prior knowledge of salvation in order to offer a counterfeit plan for covering sinfulness and disobedience.

The key word in all of these passages is the word *HOLY*, *hosios* in the Greek, which is used to express the uniqueness of the Lord Jesus Christ. The word is used eight times in the Scriptures for TLJC, and only looks at the absolute uniqueness of Him. *Hosios* is used of His person in Act 2:27 and Act 13:35, as the grantor of blessings for the believer in Act 13:34, and as His qualification to be High Priest in Heb 7:26. *Hosios* is also a pre-requisite for prayer in 1Ti 2:8. *Hosios* is that which should become a believer's testimony in 1Th 2:10. *Hosios* is the believer's goal in Luk 1:75, and a characteristic of the new self or new man in Eph 4:24. Therefore, only the Lord Jesus Christ remains experientially holy, and the four verses where this word is used as an adjective for angelic beings shows us that all angels were once unholy and those who accepted God's plan for salvation became holy.

There is a syllogism to this: A. Christ is the ONLY Holy One. B. Since men, angels, and things (animal sacrifices etc.) are called holy and His unique holiness is a perpetual holiness, the holiness of others is passed down as a gift and not inherent. C. Angels are called holy and therefore must have been made holy from a status of not being holy, much like the Christian.

Another principle to consider is that no one is perfect but Jesus Christ. Psa 89:5-8, *And the heavens will praise Thy wonders, O Lord; Thy faithfulness also in the assembly of the holy ones. For who in the skies is comparable to the Lord? Who among the sons of the mighty is like the Lord, A God greatly feared in the council of the holy ones, And awesome above all those who are around Him? O Lord God of hosts, who is like Thee, O mighty Lord? Thy faithfulness also surrounds Thee.*

In Col 1:19-20 Jesus Christ is said to reconcile all things to Himself, *For it was the Father's good pleasure for all the fullness to dwell in Him, and through Him to reconcile all things to Himself, having made peace through the blood of His cross; through Him, I say, whether things on earth or things in heaven.* Reconciliation is the making of peace between those who are enemies. In these verses the Lord is said to accomplish this for things on earth and in heaven.

The condemnation against Satan in Isaiah 14 and Ezekiel 28 is very specifically against him and him alone. However, after his sin and fall, God allowed him to tempt all the other angels to follow him. God did not interfere with this evil scheme because in His omniscience He knew they would buy the lie and He had something far better for them, salvation. Suppose that all the angels fell and at that moment, God stepped in with judgment. Upon being judged, found guilty and condemned, Satan objected and accused God of not being a just God, of violating His essence, His love, His fairness, His omniscience, etc. As Satan stood condemned, all the angels stood condemned, but condemnation only sets up the divine provision of reconciliation. God offered to the angels a way for their sin to be forgiven in which His divine attributes would in no way be compromised. We only have one vague reference to angelic salvation in the Scripture, Heb 2:2-4, *For if the word spoken through angels proved unalterable, and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompense, how shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation? After it was at the first spoken through the Lord, it was confirmed to us by those who heard, God also bearing witness with them, both by signs and wonders and by various miracles and by gifts of the Holy Spirit according to His own will.* This verse tell us that there is some kind of parallel being drawn between angelic salvation and human salvation.

We can see in the initial fall of man, the subsequent attempt at deception by Satan, and the subsequent salvation offered by God a possible parallel to angelic salvation. Satan fell due to his own initiative and then deceived other angels. In the same way Satan as the serpent deceived the woman (Gen 3:5). Adam, however, fell without deception; he chose to disobey God just as Satan did. At the fall then we have one who disobeyed out of his own initiative and one who was deceived. This pattern reflects what may have happened in the angelic realm. Satan disobeyed by his own initiative and the other angels were deceived.

There are also additional evidences that these things are true: 1) The Ark of the Covenant illustrates that angels benefit from the work of Christ. 2) The Veil of Exodus 26:31-35 in the Temple was a reminder of the humanity of Christ. Part of it was made of fine white linen which looks at experiential +R. This veil was to be made with cherubim on it. The curtain speaks of Christ and His work and the angels were on the curtain themselves, Exo 26:31, *And you shall make a veil of blue and purple and scarlet material and fine twisted linen; it shall be made with cherubim, the work of a skillful workman.* 3) The linen curtains of Exodus 26:1-6 were also of the same color scheme as the veil and looked ahead to the person and work of Christ in salvation. These also had angels embroidered on them. The angels partake of Christ's place of origin, heaven, and of his royalty, in the presence of God. They partake of His work in salvation, which is represented by the scarlet color. 4) Angels also are often pictured as wearing white garments. In Mar 16:5, the two angels at the tomb are said to be in white garments, *And entering the tomb, they saw a young man sitting at the right, wearing a white robe; and they were amazed.* In Revelation 19:8 the church, the bride of Christ, is also clothed in white linen garments. This white garment represents the righteousness of God that He imputed to us and therefore represents the same for the angels who accepted angelic salvation.

SUMMARY: 1) Satan counterfeited salvation to Adam and the Woman prior to God's offer of salvation to them which would indicate a prior knowledge of salvation. 2) Any position regarding what happened in the fall of angels, their salvation, etc, is an argument from silence and with that, the only value of one argument over another is its consistency with the character of God and the parallel to other known events. 3) God is a God of mercy and the greatest expression of mercy is to offer peace or reconciliation to one's enemies. 4) God is absolutely just and fair and could not have offered salvation to man and not offered it to another creation, angels, who had also fallen. 5) Only Christ is forever holy and pure and blameless. For another creature to have these characteristics inherent in them and maintained in them by freewill would have meant that they could have died for the sins of creation. Therefore, no angel was qualified to go to the Cross. 6) Angels are very much a part of the tabernacle, the ark, the veil, the curtains which all look ahead to Christ and His salvation work. 7) Hebrews 2:9-10 indicate that Christ would taste death for all creation, *But we do see Him who has been made for a little while lower than the angels, namely, Jesus, because of the suffering of death crowned with glory and honor, that by the grace of God He might taste death for everyone [pas-all] For it was fitting for Him, for whom are all things, and through whom are all things, in bringing many sons to glory, to perfect the author of their salvation through sufferings.* 8) The garments of angels are the same garments given to saved mankind in eternity. 9) In 1Ti 5:21 angels are called chosen or elect which would indicate that there was a time when they were not chosen and not elect. 10) Col 1:20 indicates that Christ reconciled all things to Himself, things on earth and things in heaven, *and through Him to reconcile all things to Himself, having made peace through the blood of His cross; through Him, I say, whether things on earth or things in heaven.*

Therefore, the angelic conflict refers to the two trials of Satan and the fallen angels, one in pre-historic times, the other during human history. In our subject, the trial phase begins with the fall of man in the garden and continues until the beginning of the dispensation of the Hypostatic Union. Mankind was created and human history began in order to duplicate the conditions of the pre-historic angelic conflict. This provided both evidence and precedence for Satan's appeal trial during human history. The fall of man in the garden of Eden actually duplicates the fall of Satan in the garden of God. Both falls occurred during perfect environment.

The trial phase in the court of appeals is essentially Old Testament history. It began in Gen 3. God created man as a rational creature lower than angels, duplicating on a reduced scale, the conditions of the pre-historic angelic conflict. Man was given the opportunity to choose for or against God with one command from God, only one thing was forbidden. God entered His evidence by creating man just as the angels were created: innocent (or perfect) with the potential to love and worship God through *right decisions* and the potential to become imperfect by *wrong decisions*. Human history provides similar circumstances and options which belonged to angelic history before man's creation. For example, Satan had been created in perfect innocence; Adam was created in perfect innocence. The angels have free will; man has free will. Adam freely and deliberately chose to

follow the pattern of arrogance which characterized Satan's original revolution, Isa 14:12-14. So the fall of Adam duplicates the fall of Satan.

In angelic history, God had provided a decision making process by which angels could express non-meritorious positive volition. Likewise, God provided salvation for all mankind so that man can express non-meritorious positive volition through faith in Christ (Joh 3:16). Here is another similarity: through the exercise of their free will, angelic creatures are divided into two categories: elect and fallen angels (Rev 12:7, 1Ti 5:21, Mat 25:41, Mar 8:38). Through the exercise of their free will mankind is divided into two categories, believers and unbelievers (Joh 3:36). Human history is not only coterminous with the appeal trial of Satan and his fallen angels, but human history is the *actual courtroom for that trial*, and mankind was created to be a part of that trial.