

# Ordered Beings

The Bible is clear on something: We do not exist alone in the universe with God. From Adam and Eve's deception (Genesis 3), to the gods of the nations (Deuteronomy 32:8-9), to angels proclaiming Jesus birth (Luke 2), and demons whom Jesus cast out (Matthew 8:28-34), we are not alone.

However, the Bible is relatively vague on these mentions. While it's clear these beings interact with our world in various ways, they are not the focus of the Biblical story. But that doesn't mean we can't glean information theologically about God and His creation order from their mention.

## Created Beings

In the Scriptures, the act of creation typically includes two things: separation with purpose and naming.

### **Genesis 1:3-5**

And God said, "Let there be light," and there was light. And God saw that the light was good. And God separated the light from the darkness. God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night. And there was evening and there was morning, the first day.

After God creates Adam, he gives him dominion over the earth. He then invites Adam to participate in creation in a very specific way: naming.

### **Genesis 2:19**

Now out of the ground the LORD God had formed every beast of the field and every bird of the heavens and brought them to the man to see what he would call them. And whatever the man called every living creature, that was its name.

Naming is something done through authority. God names the things he creates, but as he gave Adam authority over the Earth, he lets Adam name the creatures on it. Adam even names Eve, again a picture of ordered authority. But it's God who assigns us the role of image-bearers.

When heavenly beings are mentioned in the Bible, the same kind of pattern is used. We rarely see their personal names, but rather, we identify them by their **role**.

**Genesis 19:1a**

The two angels (**malakim**) came to Sodom in the evening, and Lot was sitting in the gate of Sodom.

What are the malakim?

**Genesis 3:24**

He drove out the man, and at the east of the garden of Eden he placed the **cherubim** and a flaming sword that turned every way to guard the way to the tree of life.

What are the cherubim?

**Isaiah 6:2-3**

Above him stood the **seraphim**. Each had six wings: with two he covered his face, and with two he covered his feet, and with two he flew. And one called to another and said:

“Holy, holy, holy is the LORD of hosts;  
the whole earth is full of his glory!”

What are the seraphim?

**Daniel 4:13**

I saw in the visions of my head as I lay in bed, and behold, a watcher (**irin**), a holy one, came down from heaven.

What are the irin?

**Psalm 78:24-25**

and he rained down on them manna to eat  
and gave them the grain of heaven.  
Man ate of the bread of the angels (**abbirim**);  
he sent them food in abundance.

What are the abbirim?

These are not an exhaustive list, but the point is there. The pattern in the Bible is to identify spiritual beings by their **function**, or **role**. With a few exceptions (Michael, Gabriel), when we see spiritual beings working for God, they are personally unnamed. More often, when we see *personally named* spiritual beings in the Old Testament, we are talking about fallen beings or false gods.

**1 Kings 11:33**

because they have forsaken me and worshiped Ashtoreth the goddess of the Sidonians, Chemosh the god of Moab, and Milcom the god of the Ammonites

**2 Kings 17:29-31**

But every nation still made gods of its own and put them in the shrines of the high places that the Samaritans had made, every nation in the cities in which they lived. The men of Babylon made Succoth-benoth, the men of Cuth made Nergal, the men of Hamath made Ashima, and the Avvites made Nibhaz and Tartak; and the Sepharvites burned their children in the fire to Adrammelech and Anammelech, the gods of Sepharvaim.

What does this imply about personal names of spiritual beings in the Biblical context?

Consider how that makes light of this tower of Babel passage:

**Genesis 11:4**

Come, let us build ourselves a city and a tower with its top in the heavens, and let us make a name for ourselves

To make a name for ourselves is to rebel against God's authority in naming us and giving us our role. This is further emphasized positively in the stories of Abraham and Jacob.

**Genesis 17:5**

No longer shall your name be called Abram, but your name shall be Abraham, for I have made you the father of a multitude of nations.

**Genesis 32:27-28**

And he said to him, “What is your name?” And he said, “Jacob.” Then he said, “Your name shall no longer be called Jacob, but Israel, for you have striven with God and with men, and have prevailed.”

God symbolizes recreation by calling these men to a purpose, blessing them, and renaming them. When God creates, He does so with purpose and order. When we abandon that purpose and order, we are in rebellion. But we are not alone in this capability to rebel against God’s order. In fact, we see three distinct divine rebellions described in the Bible.

**Genesis 3:14a**

Because you have done this,  
cursed are you above all livestock  
and above all beasts of the field;

**Genesis 6:1-2, 4**

When man began to multiply on the face of the land and daughters were born to them, the sons of God saw that the daughters of man were attractive. And they took as their wives any they chose. [...] The Nephilim were on the earth in those days, and also afterward, when the sons of God came in to the daughters of man and they bore children to them.

**Psalms 82:6-7**

I said, “You are gods,  
sons of the Most High, all of you;  
nevertheless, like men you shall die,  
and fall like any prince.”

These are all examples of spiritual beings who have abandoned their God-ordered roles. Jude says this very explicitly.

**Jude 1:6**

And the angels who did not stay within their own position of authority, but left their proper dwelling, he has kept in eternal chains under gloomy darkness until the judgment of the great day

Another result of rebellion is displacement.

- Adam and Eve sin → Exiled from Eden (Genesis 3:23-24)
- Cain kills his brother → Exiled to the east (Genesis 4:12, 16)
- Satan rebels → Cast down like lightning (Luke 10:18)
- Angels abandon their position → Imprisoned (Jude 1:6)
- Gods of the nations rebel → Fall and die like men (Psalm 82:6-7)
- Israel rebels against God → Exiled from their land (2 Kings 25:21)

But even as rebellion displaces humans from God, God pursues us.

- God walks with humans in Eden (Genesis 1-3)
- God dwells among Israel in the tabernacle (Exodus 40:34-38)
- God establishes His presence in the temple (1 Kings 8:10-13)
- God embodies His presence in Jesus (John 1:14)
- God dwells within His people through the Spirit (1 Corinthians 3:16; 6:19)

God continues to move toward humanity as part of his plan for redemption. And while we are told angels do not receive redemption (at least from Jesus' death), heaven is not unmarred from the disorder that has existed in both realms.

#### **Colossians 1:19-20**

For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of his cross.

#### **Revelation 21:1, 3**

Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. [...] And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God.

Redemption is about restoring the **order** of God's creation. God created humans to dwell with Him, and that will be restored with the new earth. But while we have this promise, we are not there yet. Instead, we are in this halfway space, set aside as a people of God, but existing in a contested world marked by rebellion and disorder.

## This Week's Takeaway

What patterns does Scripture use to describe spiritual beings?

How does role differ from identity or species?

What does rebellion consistently look like across human and spiritual beings?

How does this understanding of good vs. evil help prepare us to discuss and act in Spiritual Warfare responsibly?

## Preparing for Next Week

To prepare for class next week, read the following passages and write down a few observations for each passage about the **demons**. This isn't about right answers or deep insight, just jot down what you notice and what stands out in each passage, or what questions you may have. What do the demons in each passage do? How does Jesus interact with them?

**Luke 4:41; Mark 5:1-16; Luke 10:17-20; Luke 11:14-23; Acts 16:16-18; James 2:19; Revelation 16:14;**