

The Verdict Is In

II Peter 2:4

Take your Bibles and turn to our passage this morning in II Peter 2:4. We discovered this last week that false teachers will be among believers in an effort to deceive them from following the truth about Christ. We looked briefly at their character.

Through several analogies or illustrations, Peter will depict what will happen to false teachers, the kind of judgment they will receive for deceiving others. He also provides hope by illustrating examples from Scripture people who were rescued from judgment.

This morning the example given to us is about the judgment of angels, particularly fallen angels.

The Bible refers to angels some 250 times yet not much is really known about them because they are generally mentioned in passing as secondary to the main thrust of the passage where they appear. Much of what we know about angels is implicit rather than explicit. As a matter of fact, in my study on what we will discuss about our verse and the judgment of fallen angels not even conservative scholars agree. So there is a bit of speculation.

Our focus this morning will be an overview of angels. We will look at a basic discussion about heaven's angels and then look at a basic discussion about hell's angels. It is the latter that is the focus of this passage as the first illustration of what will happen to false teachers. Keep in mind that Peter's goal is to show what will happen to false teachers.

I. A BASIC DISCUSSION ABOUT HEAVEN'S ANGELS

So, what exactly does the Bible say about angels? To answer that let's first look at their presence.

A. Their Presence

In his book on *Basic Theology*, Dallas Seminary professor, Charles Ryrie, provides a helpful chart. At the top are all angels. Then it's divided into two

categories – unfallen and fallen or rebellious angels. Those who rebelled and fell are divided into two groups and those who are confined are divided into two groups. We'll talk about the fallen angels later.

The focus of our discussion here about angles is to consider all angels before some fell. We need to first of all understand that angels are created beings. When that occurred is uncertain. The Bible doesn't say specifically, although some scholars believe that it occurred during the creation week when it says in Genesis 1:1 that "in the beginning God created the heavens and the earth". Since God created the heavens it must have also included the angels. They further hold that since God declared everything He created "very good", angels must have been created during the creation week. The angels who rebelled must have done so between creation and before Adam and Eve fell.

They couldn't have been created before the heavens and the earth and fall before the beginning of creation since there would have been sin stating that God's statement of everything being very good was not true. How could everything be declared very good if some angels rebelled? They also say that since there was darkness on the face of the deep that must have been when the angels fell, siding with the gap theory that there was a long time between verse 1 and 2 when God then actually began to create everything else.

I don't hold this view because I don't believe angels were created to occupy the earth or the heavens as we know them. I believe this passage is referring to the sky and the galaxies and well, the universe, not the heavens occupied by God and angels.

I hope that makes sense.

Let's not get bogged down in the when of their creation. Let's just agree that they were created, how many we don't know, but I believe the heavenly host of angels were all created at the same time, unlike humans in which we know there were two created in the beginning given the task of

populating the earth. What we also know from Scripture is that a certain number of them rebelled. The word angel means ambassador or messenger. They are personal beings not impersonal influences such as thoughts or ideas. They are also spiritual beings. Scripture provides some insight.

They have intelligence.

Matthew 8:29; II Corinthians 11:3; I Peter 1:12

They have emotions.

Luke 2:13; James 2:19; Revelation 12:17

They have a will.

Luke 8:28-31; II Timothy 2:26; Jude 6

And yes, even the fallen angels possess these traits.

We read in Hebrews 1:14 that angels are without physical bodies so are spirit beings and yet still have personalities and can take on human form.

Hebrews 13:2 tells us that when we show hospitality to a stranger it may in fact be an angel.

Although powerful, Angels aren't all powerful and neither are the all-knowing or appear everywhere at the same time. They are not God and neither are they divine. They are ageless, but that does not mean that they have always existed. They were created. They do not die and since the time of their creation they have experienced all of human history.

Angels are real and their presence is an unseen force in our world as they either seek to obey and serve or rebel and destroy.

They are created beings just as are humans. Angels are not humans who have died and gone to heaven. When people die they do not become angels. Little cherubs are not babies who have died. Unlike humans, nowhere does the Bible state that they were created in God's image as it says about us. They possess a will but must obey God's will and we see that they do so immediately, even fallen angels are subject to God's will.

From Scripture we not only understand their presence and existence, we also see their purpose.

B. Their Purpose

We learn from Scripture that they praise God.

Psalm 148:1-2; Isaiah 6:3

They worship God.

Hebrews 1:6; Revelation 5:8-13

They serve God.

Psalm 103:20; Revelation 22:9

They appear before God to give an account of their activity.

Job 1:6; 2:1

They enact God's judgment.

Revelation 7:1; 8:2

They don't answer prayer but they bring answers to prayer.

Acts 12:5-10; Daniel 9:22-23

They assist believers in winning people to Christ.

Acts 8:26; 10:3

They observe mankind.

I Corinthians 4:9; 11:10; I Peter 1:12

They encourage when we go through trials.

Acts 27:23-24

They assist the believer at death.

Luke 16:22

They were created for a purpose to praise and serve God.

When they were created is not clear, but what is understood is that when God creates something it is good because God in His holiness can't create something that is evil. Because they were created with a will there was a time they could choose to rebel. So when Lucifer, who was created as the highest angel rebelled against God, the Bible says that 1/3 of the angelic host followed Him in His rebellion.

C. Their Position

The Bible isn't about angels. It is about man's creation, fall and redemption through the central theme of Jesus Christ. Angels are a part of that purpose and plan both in being an instrument of salvation and a part of God's plan for judgment so they are included in man's story of redemption and judgment. At some time in their history, again unknown from what Scripture tells us, some of the

angels rebelled. They chose to defy their purpose of praising God and one in particular, Lucifer, wanted to usurp God's throne (Isaiah 14; Ezekiel 28). One third of the angelic host followed him in rebellion and subsequent expulsion from heaven (Revelation 12:3-4, 9). Not only have they been expelled, judgment has already been set and their sentence will be carried out sometime in the future and the destination will be hell (Matthew 25:41).

Now, some scholars believe that demons aren't angels but are the spirits of evil man left to roam the earth and wreak havoc on the living. I don't believe that for two reasons. The first is the illustration Jesus gives of the rich man and Lazarus. After the rich man died his spirit went to hades (NT, Sheol OT), a place reserved as a temporary holding cell, if you will, until final judgment. They experience severe punishment until they are cast into the lake of fire at the great white throne judgment. That's the second reason I don't believe demons are disembodied spirits of evil man. In Revelation 20:11-14 we see the Great White Throne judgment where it says that the dead were judged. The sea, death and Hades gave up the dead to stand before God's judgment seat to receive their eternal sentence where those not written in the Lambs book of life will spend eternity along with Satan and his angels. This is the judgment of man not angels.

My opinion is that demons are fallen angels. Some reject this because they cite our passage along with Jude 6 which states that fallen angels are bound awaiting judgment. But in I Peter 5:8 we read that Satan is still roaming around free trying to devour anyone he can. Matthew 4:1-11 says that Satan was tempting Jesus and in John 13:2 the devil prompted Judas Iscariot to betray Jesus. The gospels also refer on different occasions that demons were cast out of people. So our passage can't mean that all fallen angels are bound till judgment day. Only certain fallen angels are held there. That is a broad brushstroke look at fallen and unfallen angels.

With that, let's look at a basic discussion about hell's angels.

II. A BASIC DISCUSSION ABOUT HELL'S ANGELS

We shift from talking about angels in general and the purpose for their creation and the fact that they all originally occupied heaven to worship and obey God, to a discussion about those angels who are fallen.

Looking back at Ryrie's chart we see again that the fallen angels are broken down into two groups: confined and unconfined. Scripture shows us that some fallen angels are free and roam around and in fact are bent on doing everything they can to keep people from following God or once they do to render them ineffective in spiritual growth. It may not be tempting them to engage in some sinful activity, it may be as simple as getting them involved in something that distracts them from really committing their life to Christ, something that keeps them from pursuing a growing relationship with the Lord. It may be a career, a hobby, even your family. They are all good things, but they can be used to keep us from pursuing a godly life.

Our passage is not dealing with those who are roaming around. Peter's purpose in referring to those who are bound awaiting judgment is to show us that false teachers will receive the same punishment as these incarcerated angels. They too, will be judged. They too, will end up in hell. Fallen angels and false teachers alike will be judged. So as we look at our verse let's consider first the purpose of their judgment. Let's understand that the reason for their judgment is the same reason for the judgment of mankind. It has to do with sin.

A. The Purpose For Their Judgment – Sin

“For if God did not spare angels when they sinned.”

There is some guessing on the part of scholars about

the type of sin these angels committed and just when that was. Some scholars point to Genesis 6 as the reference point of this sin. They believe that there was an original fall of the angels who rebelled and were kicked out of heaven. Some of these fallen angels then came to earth and cohabitated with human women. They believe that the “sons of God” were actually fallen angels who left their ordered state to marry human women which was considered their sin. From this physical union came the Nephilim who were giants and super heroes since the Bible says they were men of renown. They were half angel and half human. So some scholars believe the sin referred to in our passage is this cohabitation between angels and humans. In God’s eyes this was more egregious than the original fall and the reason for their being held for judgment. They also believe the purpose of these angels was to put an end to God’s plan of bringing the redeemer through the ancestry of Seth.

Others believe that when the Nephilim died in the flood, their disembodied spirits became the demons who attempted to embody humans through possession and God put an end to it by locking them up until the final judgment. But we have to ask why God would destroy them in the flood only to let their spirits roam free to create more evil.

What Jesus taught seems to give a clue about the fallacy of this view. When asked by the Sadducees about marriage in heaven Jesus responded by saying that didn’t understand heaven. People don’t get married or stay married in heaven. Angels don’t marry either. It appears in Scripture that angels do not possess a gender. Because they are spirits who at times appear to take on a human form, does not mean that they become human. What I believe is that fallen angels coerced or even possessed ungodly people to marry godly people for the purpose as I stated earlier to disrupt the godly line through whom the Messiah would be born. I can’t say that definitively so I won’t be emphatic but that’s my position.

What is clear is that some angels committed a sin by which God placed them in confinement until the day of final judgment. What is unclear is the kind of sin that rendered these angels incarcerated until judgment while others, especially the ring leader of it all, Satan, were left to remain free. Regardless of whether free for the time being or not, they all rebelled and will receive the same eternal judgment. None of them have maintained their holiness.

My position, and I hold this loosely, so until some another view with Scriptural support causes me to change my mind is that angels at their creation were created sinless and in a sort of probationary period very similar in nature to that of Adam and Eve when they were put in the Garden of Eden. I think it was a singular moment in time where 2/3’s chose to remain loyal to God and became the elect angels spoken of in I Timothy 5:21 and the remaining 1/3 chose in that moment to follow Lucifer in his rebellion. Both the unfallen and fallen angels were then forever sealed, if you will, in that state or condition. An angel who chose to follow God will never sin. Mark 8:38 and Psalm 89:5 refer to them as holy angels.

On the other hand, an angel who chose to rebel and follow Satan will always and only sin. They are confirmed in that state forever. They can never repent nor can they be saved because no atonement was made for their salvation as there was for us.

Jude 6 underscores the free will to choose their path. But even though they have been confirmed in that state, that doesn’t mean they have lost their free will. It means that in the matter of choice unfallen angels will always choose not to sin and fallen angels will always choose to sin. Although holy angels are not divine, like Jesus, their purpose is to please God and to worship and obey Him all the time. Free will may give them the capacity to sin, but they will not. Those angels who chose to rebel will always choose to rebel.

Why is that the case you might ask, especially if

they also have free will like we do? One author explains it this way: “Humans have free will, but they struggle with sin because the human nature has been corrupted by sin. This is why all humans sin (Romans 5:12) and find it much more difficult to “be good” than to “be bad.” The holy angels are without a sinful nature. They are not inclined toward sin but rather toward righteousness, doing everything that pleases God.”

Specifically in regard to the angels in II Peter 2:4, the purpose for their incarceration is because of some sin they chose to commit, a sin that Scripture is silent about. So what is the destination of their punishment?

Let’s consider the place of their judgement, hell.

B. The Place Of Their Judgement – Hell

“For if God did not spare angels when they sinned, but sent them to hell”

Peter chose a term that many of his Greek readers would have understood. He used the term Tartarus which Greeks believed to be the place where the most rebellious gods and human evil spirits were sent for punishment. Peter says that’s where these fallen angels are being kept. This was the place where they would be held until their final judgment.

For around 40 years or so my Dad served in various capacities with the Oscoda County Sheriff’s Department. One of his responsibilities was prisoner transport. The jail in Oscoda County is the only county jail in the Lower Peninsula that can only hold prisoners for a certain period of time. I think it’s only 48 hours. If they were being held in another jail Dad would drive to pick up the prisoner for trial and then after the sentencing take the prisoner back to the prison where they would serve their time. Sometimes it was back to that facility, sometimes it was to Jackson.

Tartarus is like that holding cell. It’s just a temporary place where they will await the final judgment and permanent punishment. This is not

the hell we think often think of. J. Vernon McGee says that hell isn’t open for business yet. This is just like that holding cell. It’s still punishment in every respect, just not the permanent location following their sentencing.

Jesus illustrated the kind of punishment they receive in this holding cell by using the term Hades in Luke 16:19-31 in the story of the rich man and Lazarus. In this illustration Jesus uses the term Hades. This is considered the place of the dead, some believe it is in the core of the earth divided into two compartments – Abraham’s bosom was for the good who had died and Gehenna for the bad. One place is paradise and the other is punishment.

In both places there is conscious awareness and the experience of either pleasure or pain depending on where the soul is at. Hades is described as a place of torment and agony, lacking all basic necessities for comfort or care. The torment is real the rich man asks for pity and for relief. He receives nothing to lessen his agony. But when reading it we notice there is something that he doesn’t ask for. He doesn’t ask to be released, he only asks for relief. He doesn’t plead or presume that his lot is unfair. He understands that this is what he deserves. He understands there is no help and no hope for him other than asking for some relief. Torment will be his constant companion, his eternal demise. He expresses no remorse and offers no repentance. But it wouldn’t do any good because of the great gap cannot be bridged.

Make no mistake about it, Tartarus or hell is a place of punishment where these sinning angels are being held. The word “delivered” implies punishment, a place where they are held for judgment. So while this place is temporary, it does infer permanency.

C. The Punishment Because Of Their Judgment – Gloomy Darkness and Hell

“For if God did not spare angels when they sinned, but sent them to hell, putting them into

gloomy dungeons to be held for judgment.”

Your translation may differ a bit here.

The NIV describes this temporary destination as “gloomy darkness”.

The KJV describes it as a place where they are in “chains of darkness”.

The NLT describes it as “gloomy pits of darkness”.

There are two words in the Greek that are very similar. One means gloomy and the other means chains. Some of the best manuscripts use the term gloomy, but it could be either. Whichever it is the point is clear, there is no getting out. It is a place, as one author defined it, as deepest darkness. Think of it for a moment. Once these angels had been standing in the blazing glory of God’s presence offering Him praise, but their rebellion cast them into utter darkness. It is in this place that they are being held. That’s the final point of this verse. We see the permanency in their punishment. They are held for judgment.

D. The Permanency In Their Judgment – Held for Judgment

“For if God did not spare angels when they sinned, but sent them to hell...to be held for judgment.”

They have been found guilty and their judgment is sealed. All that remains is the final sentencing to be delivered. That is yet future.

The KJV word “cast” or the NIV word “held” or the NASB word “committed” essentially refers to the place where they are bound over for punishment. It’s used in Acts 12:4 where it says Peter was put in prison held over to await trial. It basically means these angels have been turned over for punishment.

There will be no appeal, no repentance, no second chance, no stay of execution. They are committed to this place waiting until the final judgment. Again we read in Matthew 25:41 that hell has been reserved for the devil and his angels. That is the designated place for final judgment.

Its purpose is punishment.

Its punishment is painful.

Its pain is permanent.

The point of Peter’s illustration is clear. Just as fallen angels are judged, false teachers will receive the same judgment.

In Genesis 18 we find Abraham pleading for the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah. Will you spare the two cities if there are at least 10 righteous people in them? Then He asked this rhetorical question: “Will not the Judge of all the earth do right?” (Genesis 18:25)

The righteous Judge has already determined the fate of fallen angels and of false teachers and yes, the Judge of all the earth will do right. He is just in His decision and holy in His actions.

As we conclude the message today, it has been about the judgment that waits false teachers illustrated by the punishment handed down to angels as an example. But you don’t have to be a false teacher or a fallen angel to receive God’s punishment. The Bible is clear, if you have the Son you have life, if you don’t have the Son you don’t have life. Have you placed your faith in Jesus Christ, repented of your sin and received His gift of eternal life?

Their verdict is in. Yours is not. Know for sure today that Christ is your Savior.