

The Certificate of Debt and the charges of Fallen Angels

1. Consult a Bible dictionary on the book of Colossians. What is happening here in Colosse?

Epaphras, who brought the Gospel to the merchant city Colossae, went to Rome to visit his mentor the apostle Paul regarding some Colossian heresy that was encroaching into the Gentile church in Colosse. The Bible does not specify the doctrinal heresy affecting the Colossian church; however, from the apostle Paul's letter, the problem appears to fall into several categories:

Judaism

Advocating the observance of Jewish rules toward food, religious festivals, and circumcision.

Gnosticism

Promoting angel worship.

Mysticism

Promoting the existence of secret knowledge.

Proclaiming that Jesus was not God but a higher being.

2. What is the "certificate of debt", and how did fallen angels use it? Study Colossians 2:13-15.

Among biblical scholars, there are two interpretations of the term "certificate of debt", which is derived from the Greek term "ceirografon".

1. It is a debt recorded privately between two parties in contrast to a public record of debt. Jewish apocalyptic literature uses the term to refer to a record of sin for the purpose of condemning man.

2. It is the Mosaic Law, an obligation that man has been placed under, and which man has failed to meet.

Within the context of the passage, the best interpretation seems to be in reference to a personal record of debt or sin. It fits well with "forgiven us all our transgressions" (v.13), and "disarmed the rulers and authorities" (v.14).

The term "rulers and authorities" is in reference to fallen angels who were disarmed with the cancellation of this certificate of debt. The best interpretation of this passage is based on what is known about Satan. Described by other names he is known by, Accuser of Our Brethren (Rev 12:10) and Father of Lies (John 8:44), Satan's objective is, in part, to condemn man by pointing out their sins. And these accusations are directed towards none other but God (Zech 3:1-2, Job 1:5-12).

3. What did Christ do, and how did He disgrace fallen angels?

In His crucifixion, just as Jesus Christ took and paid for all the sins of human beings upon Himself, mankind's certificate of debt was symbolically "nailed" upon the cross and paid in full.

This list of sins, the "debt consisting of decrees" which is "hostile" to man for its basis of condemnation before God, is eliminated from all accounts of human beings who believe in the sovereignty of Christ. Thus in canceling the certificate of debt, fallen angels are "disarmed"; they no longer have a basis from which they could impeach a Christian before God.

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While it was not initially understood as it occurred, the crucifixion and atonement of mankind's certificate of debt was the "public display" and "triumph" over the malicious efforts of fallen angels. The Greek terms for "public display" and "triumph" were in reference to a victorious military general who displayed his captured enemy and weaponry in a triumphant processional return home. In this seeming contradiction, Christ's death was the "public display" and "triumph" that mocked the efforts of fallen angels, and, it was after the resurrection that we learn that Christ's suffering ended in glory.

The apostle Peter, in 1 Peter 1:10-12, reveals that both prophets of the Old Testament and angels wondered about "this salvation". In the case of the prophets, they wanted to know when this salvation and its coming period of grace were going to occur. Angels, on the other hand, were amazed and marveled at this salvation.

In his efforts to defeat God and kill Jesus Christ (Luke 22:1-6), Satan unwittingly was a pawn in the service of God's will and simultaneously lost his most important weapon: the certificate of debt.

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