

**ANGELS AND SUB-DIVINE SUPERNATURAL BEINGS: THEIR
CHARACTERISTICS, FUNCTION, AND RELATIONSHIP TO
GOD AND HUMANITY IN DEUTERONOMY-KINGS**

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This research analyzes selected passages in Deuteronomy-Kings in order to determine the characteristics and roles of supernatural sub-divine beings within these books. Then this data is compared with the angelology of the Second Temple period in order to identify the similarities and the extent of the differences between them.

Deuteronomy contains references to supernatural sub-divine beings, such as “demons” and “holy one(s)”. While Deuteronomy affirms the existence of sub-divine beings, it forbids the Israelites to worship them.

In the books of Joshua and Judges, there is awareness of supernatural beings and their roles as warriors, messengers, and tormentors. However, in Joshua 5:13–15 and Exodus 3:2–6, appearances of the Prince of the Host (of YHWH) should be interpreted as theophanies (cf. Daniel 8:10–11). Some “angel of the LORD” passages, such as Judges 6, can also be classified as theophanies.

The books of Samuel contain many references to supernatural sub-divine beings, including angels, cherubim, and spirits, providing a fuller picture of the supernatural world. The angelic messengers and evil spirits found in the books of Samuel bear strong similarities to those in the New Testament.

The books of Kings present a full pre-exilic picture of the supernatural world and humanity’s awareness of it. The “Divine Council” motif, the ministering angel, and chariots and horses of fire are found in these books. These books also portray a lying spirit and cherubim.

Exilic and post-exilic angelology have many interesting, pronounced features. Some beings are named, further roles (i.e. vision-interpreter) are assigned, and the Accuser/Satan’s role in the cosmos becomes clearer. However, the differences between exilic/post-exilic and pre-exilic angelology have been overstated. Many of the New Testament and intertestamental conceptions about the supernatural world have roots in the pre-exilic period. Angels function in similar ways, as messengers, punishers, and ministers; spirits can cause havoc, and the concept of a spiritual battle (worshipping YHWH instead of demons) is present. The building blocks for the Second Temple period concepts about angels and other sub-divine beings have their basis in Deut-Kings, and one does not need to search for foreign (i.e. Mesopotamian, Persian, or Greek) origins of these ideas.