

DOCTRINE OF ANGELS

February 16, 1986

I. Preliminary considerations.

- A. That there is an order of beings quite distinct from humanity and from the Godhead, who occupy an exalted state, is the teaching of much of Scripture.
 - 1. They are referred to at least 108X in the Old Testament and 165X in the New Testament.
 - 2. It is from this body of Scripture that we construct the Doctrine of Angels.
- B. The designation "angel", whether מַלְאָכִים (mal-ak) of the Old Testament, or ἄγγελος (aggelos) of the New Testament, means "messenger".
 - 1. The holy angels carry out the purpose of the One they serve.
 - 2. The fallen angels are messengers of Satan whom they have chosen to serve.
- C. Angels as created beings more closely resemble God in their make up than man. Angels combine the material with the immaterial.
 - 1. Angels are thus designated "spirits".
 - 2. These generally unseen creatures not only observe the activities of men, but the good angels minister to man (Heb.1:14).
 - 3. The evil angels wage war against man (Eph.6:12).

II. The creation of angels.

- A. The Son of God, the Father's agent in creation, created the angels (Col.1:16,17; Neh.9:6; Ps.148:2,5).
 - 1. All angels were created simultaneously in eternity past.
 - 2. None will be added to their number.
 - 3. They do not procreate and are not subject to death (Mt.22:28-30).
- B. The angels were created before the universe. They were worshipping spectators when the world was founded (Job.38:4-7).
- C. As to the number of the angels, it is unstated, but it is a multitude (Heb.12:22; 1Kgs.22:19; Ps.68:17; Dan.7:10; Rev.5:11).

III. The nature of angels.

- A. They are incorporeal beings (i.e., having no material body; Ps.104:4 "*He makes the winds His messengers*"; Eph.6:12).
- B. However, they can reveal themselves in bodily form (Gen.18-219; Mt.1:20; Jn.20:12; Heb.13:2).
- C. They are greater than man in knowledge, but are not omniscient (2Sam.14:20; Mt.24:36; 1Pet.1:12).
- D. They are stronger than man, but are not omnipotent (Ps.103:20; 2Pet.2:11; 2Thess.1:7).
- E. Angels possess volition, as seen in the fall of Satan.

IV. The fall of angels.

- A. The fact of their fall.
 - 1. Angels were all created perfect and sinless, as the case with Satan makes apparent (Ezek.28:15).
 - 2. Satan's fall is described in Ezek.28:15-17 (cp. Isa.14:12).
 - 3. Satan took with him one-third of all angels (Rev.12:4).
 - 4. Scripture represents some of the angels as evil (Mt.25:41).
- B. The time of their fall was before man's creation and sometime after original creation. Gen.1:2 speaks of the pre-restoration chaos of planet earth, and Gen.3 speaks of man's temptation and fall under Satan.
- C. The cause of their fall.
 - 1. Angels, being created perfect but with volition, individually chose to follow Satan's lead and revolt against God (Ezek.28:15-17; Rev.12:4).

2. God is not the cause of their fall, as that would make Him the author of evil in the universe (Jam.1:13; 1Jn.1:5).
3. God created the angels with volition knowing some would fall and bring evil into the universe, but God is not responsible for their sin (note the five "*I will*'s" of Satan in Isa.14:13,14).

D. The result of their fall.

1. They lost their original holiness and became corrupt in nature and conduct (Mt.10:1; Eph.6:11,12).
2. They were sentenced to hell but were not immediately sent there (Mt.25:41; cp. Rev.20:10).
3. They were left free to engage in opposition to:
 - a. God (Isa.14:12-14).
 - b. The work of the good angels (Dan.10:12,13,20,21; Jd.9).
 - c. The people of God (1Chr.21:1; 1Pet.5:8; Eph.6:11; 2Tim.2:26).
 - d. The nations (Isa.14:12).
 - e. The unbeliever (Lk.8:12; 2Cor.4:3,4).
4. Satan, through the serpent in Eden, caused Adam's fall and has the power over death to mankind (Gen.3; Heb.2:14; 1Jn.3:8).
5. Satan and his angels continue to have an audience in heaven, during which they malign believers (Zech.3:1; Lk.22:31; Rev.12:10). Satan insinuated that God hired men like Job to love Him by making them rich (Job.1:6-12).
6. In the Tribulation they will be cast to the earth (Rev.12:8,9). Following their judgment by believers (1Cor.6:3), they will be cast into the Lake of Fire (Rev.20:10).

V. Classification of the angels.

A. The good angels, called "*elect*" and "*holy*", are classified as (1Tim.5:21; Mk.8:38):

1. Angels, of which there are gradations, as indicated by Col.1:16.
2. Cherubim (meaning uncertain), which are angels chosen by God to guard and cover as seen in:
 - a. Lucifer's pre-fall ministry as the cherub that covers (Ezek.28:14).
 - b. The two cherubs sent to guard the entrance to Eden (Gen.3:24).
 - c. The two cherubs on the top of the Ark of the Covenant in the tabernacle and temple, symbolizing support for God's throne.
 - d. Seraphim, mentioned by name only in Isa.6:2,6 and stand above God and lead heaven in the worship of God.
 - e. The "living creatures" of Rev.4 and 5 share aspects of both the cherubim of Ezek.1,10 and the seraphim of Isa.6.

B. The evil angels are called "*unclean*" (Rev.16:13) and "*evil*" (Lk.8:2), and are classified as:

1. The angels who are kept in prison for their role in the Gen.6 infiltration, mentioned in 2Pet.2:4 and Jd.6, and are the same as those released to torment men in the Tribulation for five months (Rev.9:1-11).
2. The angels who remain free, usually mentioned in connection with Satan (Mt.25:41; Rev.12:7-9; cp. Rom.8:38).
3. The demons, a term used to describe all fallen angels (including Satan) and means a "lesser god" (Mt.12:24-28; 17:18; 1Cor.10:20,21; 1Tim.4:1; Jam.2:19; Rev.9:20; 18:2; Mk.1:32).
4. Having different ranks and functions under Satan (Eph.6:12).

C. Some individually named angels include:

1. Lucifer, son of the morning (pre-fall title), known as:
 - a. Satan (adversary; 1Chr.21:1; Job.1:6; 2:1; Ps.109:6; Zech.3:1,2; Mt.4:10, et al.).
 - b. The devil (slanderer or accuser; Mt.4:1).

- c. Serpent (which implies his guile; Rev.12:9).
 - d. Dragon (which implies his power).
 - e. Apollyon (meaning "destroyer"; Rev.9:11).
 - f. The prince of this world.
 - g. The prince of the power of the air.
 - h. The god of this world.
 - i. Beelzebub (which implies that he is prince of the demons; Mt.12:24).
 - j. the evil one (Jn.17:15; 2.Thess.3:3; 1Jn.5:19).
 - k. the tempter (1Thess.3:5).
2. Michael (meaning "who is like God?") is given the title archangel (Jd.9), and is seen as Israel's protector (Dan.10:11,21). He disputed with Satan over Moses' body and, with his angels, engages Satan and his angels midway through the Tribulation in a great "star wars", forcing Satan out of the heavens (Rev.12:7-12).
 3. Gabriel (meaning "the mighty one") is always seen in the Bible as a messenger or revealer of God's purposes, as to Daniel (Dan.8:15-27; cp. 9:20-27) and to Zacharias and to the virgin Mary (Lk.1:26-3).

D. Some other occurrences.

1. Angels of judgment (Gen.19:13; 2Sam.24:16; 2Kgs.19:35; Ps.78:49; Act.12:23).
2. Watchers (Dan.4:13,23).
3. Angel over fire (Rev.14:18).
4. Angel over waters (Rev.16:5).
5. Seven angels of the apocalypse (Rev.8:2).
6. Sons of the Most High (Ps.82:6); sons of God (in the OT only; Gen.6:24; Job.1:6; 38:7).
7. Gods (elohim; Ps.82:1 rulers; Ps.82:6 gods; Heb.2:7 elect angels).

VI. The ministry of the elect angels.

- A. They continually, night and day, offer praise and worship God in heaven (Isa.6:3; Ps.148:1,2; Rev.4:8; 5:11).
- B. They protect and deliver God's people (Heb.1:14; Dan.6:22; Ps.91:11; Gen.19:11; Act.12:11; Mt.18:10).
- C. They guide and encourage believers (Mt.28:5-7; Act.8:26; 27:23,24).
- D. They interpret God's Word to men (no longer an issue with the closing of the canon; Dan.7:16; 10:5,11; Zech.1:9,19; 4:1,5; 5:5-11; 6:4,5; the teaching angel of Revelation, Rev.1:1; 17:7; 22:16).
- E. Angels mediated the Law to Moses (Act.7:53; Gal.3:19).
- F. Angels carry the saved home when they die (Lk.16:22).
- G. They execute judgment on individuals and societies (Act.12:23; Gen.19:12,13; Ezek.9:1,5,7; note the active role they play in the judgments of the Tribulation, Rev.16).
- H. Angels were active in the life and ministry of Jesus.
 1. Angels informed Mary, Joseph, and the shepherds of Christ's birth (Lk.1:26-38; Mt.1:20; Lk.2:8-15).
 2. Angels ministered to Christ after His temptation (Mt.4:11).
 3. An angel strengthened Him in Gethsemane (Lk.22:43).
 4. Angels were poised to deliver Him from His enemies (Mt.26:53).
 5. An angel rolled the stone from the empty tomb (Mt.28:2-7).
 6. Angels ascended with Him into heaven (Act.1:11).
- I. Angels as spectators.
 1. They rejoice when even one sinner is saved (Lk.15:10).
 2. They actually learn Bible Doctrine from the local church, taking a keen interest in our assembly (Eph.3:10; 1Pet.1:12).
 3. They observe all the affairs of men, and are pleased or offended, as the passage on hair

suggests (1Cor.11:10).

4. They took great interest in the incarnation (1Tim.3:16).

J. Angels have future ministries.

1. They will make important announcements during the Tribulation (Rev.14:6-11; 18:2,21).

2. They will protect (seal) God's servants and carry out the prescribed judgments of that time (Rev.7:1-3; 8:2-13; 9:1,2,13; 12:7-9; 14:14-16; 15:1;16).

3. They will be associated with the Second Advent (Mt.13:37-39,49,50; 2Thess.1:7; Heb.1:6; Dan.7:9,10).

4. They will stand before the gates of the New Jerusalem as a kind of honorary body of sentinels, as if to guarantee that nothing that is unclean will ever enter that city (Rev.21:12).

VII. The relationship of men and angels.

A. Angels were created superior to man in both position and inherent qualities (Ps.8:4,5; Heb.2:6,7).

B. Christ was made lower than angels for a little while by assuming a human form so as to redeem fallen man (Heb.2:5-13).

C. The very fact that He did not partake of the nature of angels (becoming a "God-Angel"), but did partake of human nature (becoming God-Man), has led the author of Hebrews to conclude that salvation was not provided for fallen angels, but only for man (Heb.2:15-18). Put another way, if He had to partake of humanity to be a high priest to man, would He not have had to partake of angelic nature to do likewise for angels?

D. Furthermore, we are not to worship angels (Col.2:18; Rev.22:8,9), but to view them as our servants (Heb.1:14).

E. Our final position will constitute us superior to angels in every way, for as He is so shall we be (Heb.1,2; Phil.3:21). At present, we are positionally superior to angels, being His Body and Bride.

Ps.103:20 "*Bless the Lord, you His angels, Mighty in strength, who perform His word, Obeying the voice of His word!*"

Ps.104:4 "*He makes the winds His messengers, Flaming fire His ministers.*"

Heb.1:6 "*And when He again brings the first born into the world, He says, 'and let all the Angels of God worship Him.'*"

Heb.1:14 "*Are they not all ministering spirits, sent out to render service for the sake of those who will inherit salvation?*"

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