

DOCTRINE OF ANGELS

- I. Introduction.
 - A. While there exists a tremendous amount of extra-biblical information regarding angels, only the Bible provides us accurate and objective information with respect to this subject.
 - B. While the study of angels is one of the ten major categories of theology in standard systematic theological works, it is viewed as a difficult subject and has often been neglected.
 - C. Charles Ryrie has suggested that the disregard for this area of biblical teaching may simply be neglect, or it may indicate a tacit rejection of the doctrine due to its supernatural nature.
 - 1. It is a fact that many neo-orthodox theologians deny the existence of angels and demons, but much of the modern rhetoric against the existence of these creatures stems from their denial of anything that is supernatural.
 - D. Generally speaking, every reference to angels is incidental to some other topic; when they are mentioned it is for the purpose of informing us about God, His plan, or the execution of that plan rather than providing information about angels.
 - E. Like the existence of God, the Bible does not argue for the existence of angels; it merely assumes it.
 - F. However, it is evident that the Word of God refers to a distinct order of created beings that are clearly different from the Godhead and dissimilar to mankind.
 - 1. The New American Standard translation references angels 196 time, 103 time in the Old Testament and 93 times in the New Testament.
 - 2. Angels are mentioned in 34 different books, from the very earliest books of Job and Genesis to the last book of Revelation, and not confined to one section of Scripture.
 - 3. Jesus Christ made numerous references to angels during His earthly ministry, both in parables and in direct teaching. Matt. 13:39,41, 22:30, 25:31,41
 - G. In recent years we have been bombarded by what may be referred to as *angelmania*, with bookstore shelves abounding with titles on this subject.
 - H. Angels have been the subject of articles in *Time*, *Newsweek*, *Redbook*, and the *Ladies' Home Journal*; they have also been the subjects of documentaries, television shows, and movies.
 - I. In a 1990 book *Angels: An Endangered Species*, Malcolm Godwin estimates that over the last 30 years one in every ten pop songs mentions angels, which are currently being called by the group *Train*.
 - J. Some are now advocating principles derived from the Essene community and the Archives of the Vatican on how to contact and converse with angels, which is thoroughly non-biblical. Col. 2:18
 - K. Since we are awash in subjective speculation that is passed off as scholarship, we will limit our study, as we do all doctrines, to what the Bible has to say.
- II. Vocabulary.
 - A. Hebrew vocabulary.
 - 1. מַלְאָכִים (mal'akh), 213X, messenger, representative, used of both human and Divine messengers.
 - 2. רוּחַ (ruach), breath, wind, spirit, Holy Spirit, human spirit, or angel.
 - B. Greek vocabulary.
 - 1. ἄγγελος (aggelos), 175X, messenger, envoy, used of both human and Divine messengers.
 - 2. πνεῦμα (pneuma), spirit, Holy Spirit, angels, human spirit, breath.

- C. Both the Hebrew and Greek terms for **messenger** are used to describe one who executes the purpose and will of the one whom he serves.
- D. However, all the Hebrew and Greek terms used of angels are also used in a number of different ways, are not technical, and must be translated according to context.
- E. It can be documented that all terms are used to refer to both human and divine messengers.
 - 1. Human messengers. IISam. 11:19,22; Matt. 11:10
 - 2. Angelic messengers, both elect angels and fallen angels.
 - a. Elect angels. Gen. 24:7; Zech 1:9; Matt. 1:20
 - b. Fallen angels, demons. ISam. 16:14-16; Matt. 8:16, 10:1
- F. There are some other terms to describe classes or categories of angels that we will note later in this doctrine

III. Definition and description.

- A. Angels are supernatural, spiritual beings that were created by God to serve Him; they act as God's messengers to men and as agents that carry out His will.
- B. Unlike God, they are not eternal and the time of their creation predated the physical beginning of the material universe, at which event they are viewed as worshipping spectators. Job 38:7
- C. All angels came into existence at the same time in eternity past when they were created by God the Son, and none will be added to their number. Neh. 9:6; Ps. 148:5; Col. 1:16
- D. At the time of their origin all angels were created in a state of holiness as evidenced by the fact that Lucifer, an angel of the cherub class, was created perfect. Ezek. 28:14-135
 - 1. Further, the essence of God cannot be the source or agent of evil. Deut; 32:4; IIChron. 19:7; Ps. 92:15
 - 2. The angels that did not fall are still referred to as **holy angels**. Mk. 8:38; Rev. 14:10
- E. While angels are not eternal, as God is, once they were created, they cannot grow old, die, or cease to exist. Lk. 20:36; Rev. 20:10
- F. Based on the fact that they are often compared to stars and that both angels and stars are called **the host of heaven**, we conclude that there is an innumerable, but finite, company of angels that only God can count. Deut. 4:19; IKings 22:19; Ps. 147:4; Heb. 12:22
- G. A distinction must be made between the created angels and the manifestations of the pre-incarnate Christ, who is seen only in the Old Testament and designated by the title **the Angel of the Lord**, which occurs some 57 times in the Old Testament. Gen. 16:7,9,10,11
 - 1. A careful study of the passages in which the Angel of the Lord appears makes it clear that the Angel of the Lord is the Lord. Gen. 22:11,15; Jud. 2:1

IV. The nature of angels.

- A. Angels are a category of created beings that are superior to mankind and inferior to the God that created them.
- B. Their make-up more closely resembles that of God in that they are incorporeal (immaterial, not having a material body or form), but have the ability to take a physical form. Ps. 104:4
 - 1. Angels, like God, are generally invisible, but observe the activities of mankind. Dan. 4:13,17
 - 2. For this reason they are often referred to as **spirits**. Heb. 1:14
 - 3. However, they can manifest themselves in a physical form if the occasion demands it, and often appear as ordinary men. Gen. 18:1-2; Jn. 20:12; Heb. 13:2
- C. Angels were created to provide a revelation of the Invisible God; each angel was designed to express or articulate some quality or attribute of the Eternal spirit that is our God. Rev. 4:8

- D. The distinction between men and angels is one that is eternal and will be a reality in Ph₃; men do not become angels and angels do not become human. ICor. 6:3; Heb. 2:7,16, 12:22-23
 - 1. Angels are not glorified human beings; a person does not die, go to Heaven, and become an angel.
 - E. All angels are masculine; there are no female angels, they do not marry, do not procreate, and there is no increase in their numbers. Matt. 22:30
 - 1. It would be an error to state that angels are sexless, since all manifestations of angels are male, and they did procreate at one time with women in the human race. Gen.6:1ff
 - 2. Angels were created to be celibate and in Ph₃ we will be like them in that we will retain our gender but will be celibate also. Matt. 22:30
 - F. Angels are personal beings and not simply spiritual forces, transient or permanent emanations from God, or anything less than we would expect from anyone that is possessed of personality.
 - 1. They possess volition. Lk. 11:24; Jude 6
 - 2. They have intellect. Matt. 28:5; Eph. 3:10; IPet. 1:12
 - 3. They have emotions. Job 38:7; Lk. 15:7,10
 - 4. They have individual names and different ranks or stations. Dan. 8:16, 10:13; Jude 9
 - G. Angels are greater in knowledge, power, and other abilities than men, yet they come short of the attributes of omniscience, omnipotence, omnipresence, etc.
 - 1. While angels have superior knowledge than that of mankind, they are not omniscient and learn by observation. IISam. 14:20; Matt. 24:36; IPet. 1:12
 - 2. Angels have much more power than men do, but are subject to God's authority and not omnipotent. IICChron. 32:21; Ps. 103:20; IIPet. 2:11
 - 3. Although angels are capable of great speeds, traversing the vast expanses of the material universe to perform God's will, they are not omnipresent and are confined to a particular place at a particular time. Ezek. 1:14; Dan. 9:20-23
 - H. In all passages where angels appear in human form, they never appear as women, children, or old men; they always appeared as young men. Gen. 18:1-2, 19:1ff; Mk. 16:5
 - I. Angels were originally designed to inhabit Heaven, and some still do, but now the location of any angel depends on his choice or God's assignment. Mk. 13:32
 - 1. Fallen angels spend the vast majority of their time on and around planet earth, attacking various aspects of God's plan by terrorizing mankind. Job 1:6; Eph. 6:12
 - 2. The elect angels are often found in Heaven but can be dispatched by the will of God to any location in the universe. IIThess. 1:7; Rev. 12:7; Dan. 10:13; Heb. 1:14
- V. The test of angelic volition and its result: the course of the angelic conflict.
- A. All angels were created perfect and sinless after the order of Lucifer (the highest ranking cherub), yet they were provided with the volitional ability to choose for or against God.
 - B. When Satan manufactured the first sin of pride, based on his perfect beauty, one-third of the angels opted for his viewpoint and became enemies of God; these are known as fallen angels or demons. Ezek. 28:12-17; Isa. 14:12-14; Rev. 12:3-4
 - C. At their fall from perfection they were corrupted like their leader, lost their positions in God's government, but retained their relative wisdom, strength, power, etc.
 - D. This fact is deduced from the explanation that was offered to Daniel with respect to why there had been a delay in answering his prayer. Dan. 10:13
 - E. The timing of their fall must be placed after the original creation of the heavens and the earth and before the formation of man since Satan was there to act as a tempter. Gen. 3:1ff
 - 1. The Hebrew of Genesis 1:1 details the original creation, which was spoken into existence by God in a moment of time. Ps. 148:1-5; Eph. 3:9; Rev. 4:11

2. Genesis 1:2 indicates that the situation had dramatically changed and the **earth became a wasteland and void of inhabitants.**
 3. However, Isaiah 45:18 clearly indicates that God did not create the earth in the form in which we find it in Genesis 1:2.
 4. Therefore, something happened that caused His judgment to fall on His own creation; this was the fall of Satan and his angels, which introduced evil into the universe.
- F. The cause of their fall must be related to the individual volition of each angel and the choice he made with respect to the conflicting viewpoints of God and Satan.
1. Any view that God was the author of their evil, either directly or indirectly, must be rejected based on the attribute of perfect righteousness. James 1:13
 2. Like Satan, they willingly chose to revolt against God, superimpose their wills over the will of God, and must take responsibility for that action.
 3. Although they were tempted externally by Satan (this being the remote cause of their fall), they ultimately decided for themselves and their own negative volition was the final cause of their fall.
 4. Any other solution to this obvious problem in the angelic conflict imputes evil to God and must be rejected.
 - a. God created evil in Satan and some of the angels, thereby making God the author of evil
 - b. To suggest that He allowed some to be tested with evil and did not allow the others makes God a respecter of persons, which is completely at odds with the scriptural revelation. Rom. 2:11; Eph. 6:9; James 2:9
- G. As a result of their fall, these angels lost their original holiness, were corrupted in their thinking processes, and became corrupt in their conduct. Acts 8:7
- H. They were judged, sentenced to the lake of fire, but were not immediately incarcerated. Matt. 25:41; Rev. 20:10
- I. They were left free to engage in active opposition to God (Isa. 14:12-14), the work of the elect angels (Dan. 10:12ff), the people of God (IChron 21:1; Job 1-2; Eph. 6:11ff; IPet 5:8), the nations (Rev. 16:13), and to abuse unbelievers. Lk. 8:12; IICor. 4:3-4
1. One segment of the fallen angels engaged in the sexual infiltration of the human race in Genesis 6 and is currently imprisoned in a section of the earth known as Tartarus. Gen. 6:1ff; IIPet. 2:4; Jude 6
- J. Satan and his angels continue to have access to Heaven, which they use to malign believers, insult God, and accuse us in that court. Zech. 3:1; Job 1-2; Rev. 12:10
- K. At the middle of Daniel's 70th week Satan and his followers will have this access withdrawn and they will be confined to planet earth until they are confined to the lake of fire. Rev. 12:8-9; Rev. 20:10

VI. The ministry of elect angels.

- A. While all angels were created to express something of the Eternal God, only the elect angels continue to fulfill that function properly.
- B. Part of their function involves the ongoing worship of the Eternal One that created all things. Isa. 6:3; Rev. 4:8, 5:11
- C. God appears to use angels as a physical means of transport in spite of the fact that He is omnipresent. Ps. 18:10; Ezek.
- D. They have a ministry toward believers and are often dispatched to protect or deliver God's people. Ps. 91:11-12; Dan. 6:22; Acts 12:11
- E. On certain occasions they provide guidance and encouragement to believers. Matt. 28:5-7; Acts 8:26, 27:23-24

- F. Before the completion of the canon angels were employed to interpret God's word to mankind. Dan. 7:15ff; Zech. 1:9,19, 4:4-5, 5:5ff, 6:4ff; Rev. 1:1
- G. Angels were involved in the mediation of the Mosaic Law. Acts 7:53; Gal. 3:19
- H. The elect angels are dispatched to planet earth to carry the believer to Heaven at the time of his physical death. Lk. 16:22
- I. They are used by God to execute judgment on individuals and societies, a fact that will be very evident in Daniel's 70th week. Gen. 19:12-13; Ezek. 9; Acts 12:23; Rev. 16
- J. Angels were highly involved in all aspects of the First Advent.
 - 1. The angel Gabriel announced the birth of John the Baptist to Zacharias, and the birth of Christ to Mary. Lk. 1:11ff, 1:26
 - 2. An angel instructed Joseph not to break off his engagement with Mary and told him what to name the coming baby. Matt. 1:20-21
 - 3. An angel appeared to the shepherds in the field to announce the birth of the Messiah; following that announcement an army of angels appeared. Lk. 2:8ff
 - 4. An angel directed Joseph to flee to Egypt to protect the young boy. Matt. 2:13
 - 5. Angels ministered to Jesus Christ following His temptation by Satan. Matt. 4:11
 - 6. An angel appeared to strengthen Him in Gethsemene. Lk. 22:43
 - 7. While they were not visible, Jesus Christ made it plain that angels were poised to deliver Him from His enemies. Matt. 26:53
 - 8. An angel rolled the stone away from the empty tomb and instructed the women to go to Galilee. Matt. 28:2-7
 - 9. Angels were present at the ascension. Acts 1:11
 - 10. The elect angels will be present at the Second Advent. Mk. 14:62; Rev. 1:7
- K. Angels express an emotional response when positive volition accepts the gospel. Lk. 15:10
- L. They observe the affairs of men and react with pleasure or are offended as men adjust or maladjust to the Divine viewpoint. ICor. 11:10
- M. They take a keen interest in Bible doctrine and learn about the plan of God as the truth is taught in Bible class. IPet. 1:12
- N. Angels will be quite active and involved in the events of Daniel's 70th week and beyond.
 - 1. They will make important announcements. Rev. 14:6,8,9, 18:1,21
 - 2. They will protect believers. Rev. 7:1-3
 - 3. They will be involved in many of the judgments. Rev. 8:2ff; 9:2,13-14, 15:1, 16:1ff
 - 4. They will expel Satan and his demons from Heaven. Rev. 12:7-9
 - 5. They will be present at the Second Advent. Matt. 25:31; Rev. 19:14
 - 6. They will stand before the gates of the New Jerusalem as an honorary body of sentinels to exclude all that are unworthy. Rev. 21:12

VII. Classification of angels.

- A. Angels may be classified in a number of ways, which is designed to provide insight into their nature and function.
- B. They may be classified according to their relationship with God.
 - 1. Those angels that did not fall are called:
 - a. Elect, which emphasizes God's foreknowledge of their positive volition. ITim. 5:21
 - b. Holy, which denotes their separation from sin to God. Mk. 8:38
 - c. Angels of God, a genitive of relationship/ownership, God's angels. Gen. 28:12
 - 2. The fallen angels are called:
 - a. Demons, which means a *lesser god*. Matt. 8:31, 12:24
 - b. Unclean spirits, indicating their spiritual filth before God. Matt. 10:1

- c. His angels, a reference to their relationship with Satan and the fact that they share his destiny. Matt. 25:41; Rev. 12:10
- C. They may be classified by rank.
1. Most people would recognize that there are distinct categories of angels mentioned in the Bible; however, we are not told how the various ranks are organized.
 2. It is clear that there is an organization among the angels and that some are more powerful than others based on the following:
 - a. Michael is called **one of the chief princes** and an **archangel**, both of which appear to mean the same thing in different languages. Dan. 10:13; Jude 9
 - b. Out of the category of angels known as the כְּרֻבִּים (kerubhiym—cherubs/cherubim) Lucifer is singled out as having a more exalted position. Ezek. 28:14
 - c. This has caused some to speculate that there were three archangels, who were of the cherub class (Lucifer, Michael, and Gabriel), each of whom had authority over one-third of the angelic host.
 - d. The Scriptures speak of the **assembly** and **council** of the angels (Ps. 89:5,7), of their organization for battle (Rev. 12:7), and of a king over the demon-locusts. Rev. 9:11
 - e. They are also given governmental classifications, which indicate organization and ranking. Eph. 3:10, 6:12
 3. While it is not wise to attempt to provide a dogmatic hierarchy among the angels, it is evident that the following classes are mentioned; also bear in mind that some of these may be designations for the same class of angels.
 - a. **Cherubim**. Gen. 3:24; also called **living beings**. Ezek. 1:5, 10:2
 - b. **Seraphim**. Isa. 6:2ff
 - c. **Watchers**. Dan. 4:13,17
 - d. **Prince, Chief princes, Great prince**. Dan. 10:13,20-21, 12:1; Eph.2:2
 - e. **Archangels**. Jude 9
 - f. **Rulers and authorities**. Eph. 3:10, 6:10
 - g. **World forces**. Eph. 6:10
 - h. **Thrones and dominions**. Col. 1:16
 - i. **Four living creatures**. Rev. 4:6-8
 4. The general term **angels** is the common New Testament designation, while the Old Testament often used the term **hosts/armies** as a designation for fallen and elect angels.
 - a. The general term **sons of God** is used of both fallen and elect angels. Gen. 6:2; Job 1:6
- D. They may be classed by name, three of which are revealed in the Word of God.
1. **Lucifer**, whose pre-fall title means **son of the morning**. Isa. 14:12
 - a. He is also known as **Satan**, which means the adversary. IChron. 21:1; Matt. 4:10
 - b. **The Devil**, meaning slanderer or accuser. Matt. 4:1; Jude 9
 - c. **The Serpent**, which emphasizes his guile, cunning, and hostility toward mankind. Gen. 3:1; Rev. 20:2
 - d. **The Evil One**, indicating that he is the source of evil in the universe. Jn. 17:15; IJn. 5:19
 - e. **Beelzebul/Beelzebub**, a term that means **lord of the flies**, denoting his position as ruler of the demons. Matt. 12:24
 - f. **The tempter**, emphasizing his work of enticing men to sin. Matt. 4:3; IThess. 3:5
 - g. **Ruler/god of this world**, which indicates that at present the world is under his control. Jn. 12:31; IICor. 4:4
 2. **Michael**, whose name means **Who is like God?**.
 - a. Is called a **chief prince** and an **archangel**. Dan. 10:13; Jude 9

- b. This angel disputed with Satan over the disposition of the body of Moses. Jude 9
- c. Is apparently the patron and protector of Israel. Dan. 10:21, 12:1
- d. Will engage Satan in open warfare and will eject him and his angels from the third heaven at the middle of Daniel's 70th week. Rev. 12:7-9
- 3. **Gabriel**, whose name means **the mighty one of God**.
 - a. This angel is always seen in the Bible as a messenger, a revealer of God's plans or purposes. Dan. 8:15-17, 9:20ff; Lk. 1:11-19, 26ff
- E. They may be classified by their area of responsibility or their function.
 - 1. Teaching. Dan. 7:16; Zech. 1:9,19,21; Rev. 21:9
 - 2. Executing judgments. Acts 12:23; Rev. 8,9
 - 3. Evangelizing. Rev. 14:6
 - 4. Praising God. Isa. 6:2ff; Rev. 4:8
 - 5. Controlling the environment or elements. Rev. 7:1, 14:18, 16:5
 - 6. Sentries. Gen. 3:24; Rev. 21:12
 - 7. Transporting. Matt. 13:49-50; Lk. 16:22
 - 8. Guardian angels. Matt. 18:10
 - 9. Watching. Dan. 4:13,17

VIII. The relationship of angels to men.

- A. Angels were created superior to man in every way, both in their estate and inherent qualities. Heb. 2:6-7
- B. God condescended to become man and was made lower than the angels during the incarnation by assuming a human body in order to redeem fallen man. Heb. 2:9-10
- C. The very fact that He did not partake of the nature of angels (He did not become a God/angel) but did partake of human nature (He became the God/man) has led the author of Hebrews to conclude that salvation was not provided for fallen angels as it was for mankind. Heb. 2:14-17
- D. Those that believe in Messiah for salvation will share His glorious destiny and will be exalted above the angels in his final estate. ICor. 6:3; Phil. 3:21; Heb. 2:8-9
- E. Therefore, men are not to worship angels but to view them as the servants of God sent forth to offer service toward positive volition. Col. 2:18; Heb. 1:14; Rev. 22:8-9
- F. It certainly appears that each believer has an angel assigned to him for protection; this does not mean that nothing bad can happen to believers, but that nothing can happen outside the will of God. Ps. 34:7, 91:11