

# ANGELS – THEIR NATURE & WORK

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March 9, 2008

**INTRODUCTION:** (Sermon requested by Bob Mitchell – Similar one preached in June of 2005)

- A. Many people throughout the world have a great fascination with angels and an attraction to them... Sometimes even those who don't even profess to be Christians are drawn to them:
- B. What are angels? Where did they come from? What do they do? Do we have guardian angels today? These are all common questions that people ask... Hopefully this lesson will answer some of them

## I. WHAT ARE ANGELS? THEIR NATURE...

- A. Let's form a Biblical view of angels by looking at the Bible's descriptions of them:
  - 1. The term "angel" isn't a overly significant term... it simply means, "A Messenger"
    - a. Angel (Malak): "To dispatch as a deputy; a messenger; specifically an angel of God (also a prophet, priest, or teacher); ambassador... also used of a guardian or representative
    - b. The same terms translated angel were also used to describe prophets, John the baptizer, Jesus, or the preachers of the seven churches of Asia → They all were messengers!
    - c. So when speaking of the Heavenly beings, we know angels were either messengers who carried out God's will for Him or a messenger who revealed God's will for Him
  - 2. Angels do not share the same nature as deity, therefore, they are not to be worshipped:
    - a. Angels have not always existed – They are beings created by God. While they may exist for eternity, this means that angels are not "eternal" beings like God is: **(Nehemiah 9:6)**
    - b. Angels are also not omnipresent – They do not appear to be all present **(Dan 10:12-14)**
    - c. Angels are furthermore omnipotent – Their knowledge is limited **(I Peter 1:12)**
    - c. Note: There are some references to an angel in the Old Testament who spoke as if He was God & did not reject the worship of men... This was obviously not a normal angel. It is almost necessary to conclude this was a member of the Godhead taking this form
  - 3. Angels are spiritual, or heavenly beings, therefore they have a spiritual appearance; however, they sometimes took the form of a man when dealing with men: **(Matt 28:2-4; Heb 1:14; 13:2)**
  - 4. Angels are always spoken of using a masculine form of speech, never the feminine **(Rev 19:17)**
  - 5. Angels evidently have freewill like men... The ability to choose between right and wrong:
    - a. The Bible refers to angels that sinned, were chained, & cast into Hell **(2 Pet 2:4)** → Isaiah refers to a rebellion among the rank of angels led by Lucifer (Day Star) **(Is 14:12-15)**
    - b. Paul warns the church at Galatia not to accept any other gospel, even if it were to come from the mouth of an angel! Even if it didn't happen, shows the freewill **(Gal 1:8)**
- B. There are some common conceptions people have of angels that either contradicts what the Bible reveals about them or goes beyond what the Bible says into the land of conjecture!
  - 1. When we think of angels, we typically think of the traditional man-made pictures: **(Dan 10:5, 6)**
    - a. While the Bible does present angels as having the ability to fly **(Rev. 14:6)**, it does not typically present angels as having a pair of wings! One class of angels does are shown to have wings, the Cherubim & Seraphim, but they have four! **(Ez 10:20-21)**
    - b. No where does the Bible speak of angels having halos & harps! It does not speak of angels as overweight babies with bows & arrows shooting people to make them fall in love!
    - c. While it may shatter the imaginations of some and ruin Christmas... The Bible never says

- that every time a bell rings an angel gets its wings... It's a neat though, right?
2. The Bible does not teach that Christians turn into angels when they die. Some will say, "There's another angel in God's choir." We stay distinct from them after death (**Heb 12:22-23**)
  3. Angels are not passive and unimposing in their appearance... Every time they appeared to men they caused great fear and men fell down before them! (**Dan 8:17; Matt 28:4**)

## **II. WHAT DO ANGELS DO? THEIR WORK...**

### **A. When you take all of their work as a whole, it seems an angels main purpose is to glorify God!**

1. All created things we made by the Lord in order to fulfill God's purpose for Himself (**Col 1:16-18**)
  - a. Whether angels, a rock, a tree, a human, or a mountain – It's all created by Him & for Him!
  - b. All of God's creation, taken together, form a grand chorus glorifying His nature and His love... All the while carrying out the will of God in this world – It all exists for God!
2. When the Psalmist pictures God's creation praising Him, part of that choir is angels (**Psa 148:1-2**)
3. As Revelation pictures what Heaven is like, it describes it as a place of great worship! Angels are there speaking God's praise and worshipping Him always (**Rev 5:11-12; 7:11-12**)
4. All of God's creation exists to glorify Him – Whether it's by obeying His will, showing His power and might through it's existence, or worshipping Him! Are you fulfilling His purpose for you?

### **B. Angels were often used by God during Biblical times to carry out God's will on earth:**

1. Sometimes this meant that they would speak on behalf of God to man:
  - a. When God sent angels to Abraham they took the form of a man – Walking, talking, and even eating with him... Then they gave him a very important message from God! Later these angels came to Lot & spent the night in his house! (**Gen 18:2ff; 19:1ff**)
  - b. When Hagar was sent away from Abraham's home and thought her and Ishmael her baby would die... An angel appeared and relayed God's message to her (**Gen 21:14-19**)
  - c. Probably most notable was the involvement of angels at Jesus' birth → They spoke to Mary (**Lk 1:26-38**); to Joseph (**Mt 1:19-21**); and also to the shepherds (**Lk 2:8-15**)
  - d. After Jesus' ascension it was angels who appeared to the disciples giving them instructions to go on to Jerusalem and wait for more instructions there (**Acts 1:10-11**)
2. Sometimes this would mean doing performing specific works for God:
  - a. Remember when Abraham was offering up Isaac as a sacrifice? Once God saw Abraham's obedience it was an angel He sent to stop Abraham, saving Isaac (**Gen 22:18ff**)
  - b. We remember the pillar of fire and cloud, but sometimes forget that God also sent His angel to lead the Israel through the wilderness & into Canaan (**Exodus 23:20-23**)
  - c. When Jesus was raised from the dead, it was an angel that God chose to use to roll away the stone... Then they just take up residence sitting on the stone! (**Matt 28:1-7**)
3. Sometimes angels were used by God to minister or serve men in some special way:
  - a. When Jacob was about to reunite with his brother Esau and was filled with many anxieties and fears, God sent an angel to provide him comfort & reassurance (**Gen 32:1-2**)
  - b. Later on it was Elijah who needed reassured → He had just experienced a great spiritual victory at Mt Carmel, but was being chased by Jezebel. Running for his life, feeling all alone, and hungry an angel fed him and gave him encouragement (**1 Kings 19:4-8**)
  - c. On at least two occasions we find angels coming to Jesus during extremely difficult and trying times to strengthen Him – Temptations & Gethsemane (**Mt 4:11; Lk 22:43**)
  - d. Twice angels are sent by God to release Peter from prison (**Acts 5:17-20, 12:7-11**)

4. Finally, sometimes we find angels, as God's army, waging war against evil or for God's people:
  - a. Revelation pictures there being a war taking place between Satan and his angels and Michael and the angels in Heaven... of course Satan loses! **(Rev 12:7-12)**
  - b. When the Assyrian army was set to attack Jerusalem it was an angel of the Lord that came and single handedly wiped out 185,000 Assyrian soldiers in one night! **(2 Kings 19:35)**
  - c. My favorite is when Israel was battling Syria and it seemed hopeless... Syria had Israel closed in, but only Elisha could see that God's spiritual army (far greater and more numerous) had Syria surrounded... Elisha was not afraid! **(2 Kings 6:16-17)**
5. These are things we know angels being involved in... There's likely so much more we don't know!

**F. But the question always arises, what is it that angels do today in the lives of Christians?**

1. When we don't fully understand something we tend to dismiss it in our mind:
  - a. A good example of this is the Holy Spirit – Because of false ideas about His work and our lack of understanding of Him, some say, "The only way the Spirit works today is through the revealed word" when the Bible clearly teaches otherwise! **(Rom 8:26)**
  - b. Just because we don't understand all the how's and when's about angels doesn't mean they aren't being used by God today to carry out His will and work in our lives
  - c. Some think because spiritual gifts have ceased that the involvement of angels in the affairs of this world has ceased as well... what do angels have to do with spiritual gifts?
2. It's very comforting and exciting to know that the angels in heaven rejoiced when we obeyed the gospel and whenever anyone repents and returns to the Lord! **(Luke 15:10)**
3. The Hebrew writer encourages us to be hospitable on the basis of angels **(Hebrews 13:2)**
  - a. Admittedly it's possible that he's using Abraham and Lot merely as examples to make a point about the importance and value of hospitality – not trying to say it's possible
  - b. But this is a warning... we are to be hospitable because some did it and were unknowingly entertaining angels... So what does that imply? That we could be do the same, right?
  - c. This is written to Christians and no reason is given to limit it just for that time period!
4. Angels are also spoken of as ministering to those who are being saved **(Hebrews 1:14)**
5. This brings up the question most want answered: Do we have guardian angels looking over us?
  - a. Jesus spoke about how little children have angels that go before the Father **(Matt 18:10)**
  - b. The Psalmist spoke about how God would have angels watch over His people **(Ps 91:11-12)**
  - c. Now when people think of "guardian angels" they are thinking about a specific angel being assigned to them to protect them from danger and bless them in various ways
  - d. **Illustration:** Something nearly hits a person in the head and they say, "My guardian angel must have been looking out for me!" Or a person is in a long shopping line and a new one opens up & they get to go first so they say, "My guardian angel is looking..."
  - e. There's no Biblical reason to believe that we have our own specific angel assigned to us, but it does indicate that God does use angels to carry out His will in our lives.