

THE DOCTRINE OF ANGELS

PART 1

INTRODUCTION

- Angelology – literally “the study of angels” – is one of the 10 major categories of theology developed in many systematic theology books (the others being the doctrine of God, Christ, Holy Spirit, man, sin, salvation, Bible, church, and end times)
- The tendency, however, is to neglect this area of theology because, while there are many places the Bible mentions angels, the reference to angels is usually incidental to some other topic (like who God is, how God works, how salvation occurs, what the plan for the future is, etc.)
- So this is often viewed as a difficult subject
- However, we must remember that these celestial beings are mentioned nearly 200 times in the Scriptures
- Also, at least 34 of the books of the Bible mention angels including the first book (Genesis) and the last book (Revelation)
- Finally, Jesus referred to angels numerous times (for example: Matt 13:39, 41, 49; Matt 24:31, 36; Matt 25:31, 41)
- So this is an important topic to study

THE MODERN FASCINATION WITH ANGELS

- Could be called “Angelmania”
- Examples:
 - TV show “Touched by an Angel”
 - Cover of Time Magazine, December 27, 1993: The New Age of Angels: 69% of Americans Believe They Exist...What in Heaven is Going On?
 - Newsweek Magazine article, December 26, 1993: Angels

Article begins this way: AS CHANTAL LAKEY TELLS THE STORY, she and her fiance, Dale, were exploring the Oregon coast when he lost his footing. As Dale plummeted to his death, Chantal shouted, "Please God! Help me!" and was immediately surrounded by a cloud of angels 400 feet above the sea. "It was like a whiteness all around," Lakey recalls, "and I could almost hear singing." Steadied by the heavenly host, Lakey managed to climb down the otherwise impassable cliff.

- Life Magazine article, December 1995

Deep down most Americans —69 percent, to be exact—do believe in angels, with 32 percent saying they've felt an angel's presence. Angel sites have surfaced on the Internet, three glossy national magazines devoted exclusively to angels recently began publishing, and over 100 new nonfiction books about angels appeared this spring, more than double last spring's total.

- Books you can buy on Amazon about Angels:
 - Angels 101: An Introduction to Connecting, Working, and Healing with the Angels
 - Angel Messages: Breathe and Lift in Angelic Love, Light, and Compassion
 - 15 Real Life Angel Stories in the News: Global Evidence of Angelic Assistance
 - Angels and Demons – by Dan Brown (author of *The DaVinci Code*)
 - Angels are Real, Angels Exist: Real-Life Encounters with Angels and Archangels, True Stories of Guardian Angels Helping Ordinary People
 - Angel Power for Beginners: Empower Your Life With Help from the Angels
 - Angels All Around Us: A Sightseeing Guide to the Invisible World
 - How to Hear Your Angels

- Quotes from books like these:
 - Everyone has a Spirit Guide or guardian angel who assists him in keeping on a chosen Karmic path. This resource helps you get in touch with yours.
 - You can learn to contact your guardian angel and be receptive to the angelic realm in your daily life. Learn how to attune to the higher frequencies of the Spirit, to be more aware of angels and nature spirits, and to communicate with these loving beings in order to develop a deeper appreciation of our own place in Creation
 - This book enables us to begin to open our hearts to these joyful and comforting protectors, so we can raise our consciousness to a new dimension
 - The authors teach you nine specific ways your personal angel protects you, how to call out to your guardian angel, and how to get your angel to answer your cry for help and assistance in matters big and small. You'll also find out about the Angelic Hierarchy and learn the actual language of the Angelic Kingdom!
 - Shows us how to co-create with the angels and the Kingdom of Heaven on Earth. Specific exercises and meditations help you communicate with angels who are waiting to be invited into your life!
 - By utilizing a combination of your birth sign and a specific colored candle, you can obtain the magic and wisdom you want in life by calling upon the angels. This book contains many spiritual secrets that will guide the reader to success and power.¹

- Items you can buy on Amazon about Angels:
 - Glow in the Dark Guardian Angel Visor Clip
 - Tibetan Silver Angel Wing Charm Beads
 - Sculpture Gardens 23 inch Guardian Angel Statue
 - Tarot Angel Cards
 - Angel Heart Guardian Angel Wing Pendant Necklace with Crystal Glass Accents
 - 24 inch Angel Windchime

- Our culture is fascinated by angels.....but why the fascination?
 1. Mankind has almost always had a penchant for the miraculous and the supernatural
 - Even many of the people during the time of Christ were drawn to Him simply because they wanted to witness the supernatural (see John 6:2, 26, 30)

 2. It is in response to the failure of rationalism to give the answers people are looking for

¹ Taken from *The Glory of Heaven* by John MacArthur, 148-149.

The interest in angels is due in part to pendulum swings of society. In the past, society had swung from the gross mystical speculations of the middle ages to the rationalism of the late 1800s and early 1900s. Now, due in part to the failure of rationalism and materialism to give answers and meaning to life, the emptiness of man's heart along with the futility of his pursuits has given rise to his interest in the mystical, in the supernatural, and in the spiritual. The tragedy is that our culture continues to pursue this independently of God's revelation, the Bible. The pendulum has swung back to mysticism as it is seen so prominently in the New Age movement, the occult, and in the cults. So belief in Satan, demons, and angels is more and more common place today and used as a substitute for a relationship with God through Christ. This predisposition is not because people are believing the Bible, but because of the rise of occult phenomena and the futility of life without God (see [Eph. 2:12](#) and 4:17-19).

J. Hampton Keathley, "Angelology: The Doctrine of Angels," https://bible.org/article/angelology-doctrine-angels#P99_6676

WHAT ARE ANGELS?

Definition

מַלְאָךְ (*malach*)

- "Messenger" is an inadequate term for the range of tasks this term describes. These were
 - 1) To carry a message
 - 2) To perform some specific commission
 - 3) To represent officially the one sending him.
- This term was used of human messengers; however, when describing angelic beings it includes the idea that they, by their very presence, present an aspect of God's glory

ἄγγελος (*angelos*)

- Classical Greek used this term for the messenger or ambassador who spoke and acted in the place of the one who sent him. It was often used of the messengers of the gods.
- In the New Testament, this term is found 175 times and is used of men only six of those times.
- Angels were seen as representatives of the heavenly world and as God's messengers.

Angels are created, spiritual beings with moral judgment and high intelligence, but without physical bodies.

Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 397.

Angels are spiritual beings created by God to serve Him, though created higher than man. Some, the good angels, have remained obedient to Him and carry out His will, while others, fallen angels, disobeyed, fell from their holy position, and now stand in active opposition to the work and plan of God.

J. Hampton Keathley, "Angelology: The Doctrine of Angels," https://bible.org/article/angelology-doctrine-angels#P99_6676

Other Terms

"Hosts" – because they surround and serve God, ready to do His bidding at any moment

"*Lord of hosts*" – see 1 Sam 1:11; 17:45; Isaiah 31:4

“Holy Ones” – because they were created holy and dwell in God’s presence which is characterized by holiness

Psalm 89:5-7 ~ The heavens will praise Your wonders, O Lord; Your faithfulness also in the assembly of the holy ones. For who in the skies is comparable to the Lord? Who among the sons of the mighty is like the Lord, A God greatly feared in the council of the holy ones, And awesome above all those who are around Him?

CHARACTERISTICS OF ANGELS

They are Created Beings

- Angels are created beings...they did not evolve from some lower or complex form of life...they are not the spirits of departed or glorified human beings
- All angels were created since angelic beings do not have the capacity to procreate

Nehemiah 9:6 ~ You alone are the LORD. You have made the heavens, The heaven of heavens with all their host, The earth and all that is on it, The seas and all that is in them. You give life to all of them And the heavenly host bows down before You.

Psalm 33:6 ~ By the word of the LORD the heavens were made, And by the breath of His mouth all their host.

Psalm 148:5 ~ Let them (angels) praise the name of the LORD, For He commanded and they were created.

John 1:3 ~ All things came into being by Him, and apart from Him nothing came into being that has come into being.

Colossians 1:16 ~ For by Him all things were created, [both] in the heavens and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities--all things have been created by Him and for Him.

- Because angels are created, they can only be in one place at a time
- Although they do not have physical bodies, they are not omnipresent
- Unlike God who is omnipresent, they are finite creatures
- When were angels created? → It must be before the end of the creation week in Genesis 1-2

Genesis 2:1 ~ Thus the heavens and the earth were completed, and all their hosts.

Exodus 20:11 ~ For in six days the LORD made the heavens and the earth, the sea and all that is in them, and rested on the seventh day; therefore the LORD blessed the sabbath day and made it holy.

- They were most likely created early on the first day (i.e. before the creation of the world) since Job tells us that they were present when the earth was created:

Job 38:6-7 ~ On what were its bases sunk? Or who laid its cornerstone, ⁷ When the morning stars sang together And all the sons of God shouted for joy?

- Jesus Christ is the agent of their creation...He created the angels

John 1:1-3 ~ In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things came into being through Him, and apart from Him nothing came into being that has come into being.

Colossians 1:16 ~ For by Him all things were created, both in the heavens and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things have been created through Him and for Him.

They are Spirit Beings

- As spirit beings they are immaterial and incorporeal – they have no body

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

Luke 8:2 ~ and [also] some women who had been healed of evil spirits and sicknesses: Mary who was called Magdalene, from whom seven demons had gone out.

Ephesians 2:2 ~ in which you formerly walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, of the spirit that is now working in the sons of disobedience

- The fact that angels do not have a material body is supported by the fact that they are not given to marriage and procreation (Mark 12:25) nor are they subject to death (Luke 20:36)
- Furthermore, Paul identifies angels as being “invisible” in Colossians 1:16
- However, they can reveal themselves in the form of human bodies (angelophanies)

Genesis 18:2, 16, 22 ~ When he lifted up his eyes and looked, behold, three men were standing opposite him; and when he saw them, he ran from the tent door to meet them and bowed himself to the earth...Then the men rose up from there, and looked down toward Sodom; and Abraham was walking with them to send them off...Then the men turned away from there and went toward Sodom, while Abraham was still standing before the LORD.

Genesis 19:1 ~ Now the two angels came to Sodom in the evening as Lot was sitting in the gate of Sodom. When Lot saw them, he rose to meet them and bowed down with his face to the ground.

Matthew 28:5 ~ The angel said to the women, “Do not be afraid; for I know that you are looking for Jesus who has been crucified.

Hebrews 13:2 ~ Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for by this some have entertained angels without knowing it.

- Regarding their appearance as spirit beings...²

Since they are spirit beings, they are usually not seen, unless God gives the ability to see them or unless they manifest themselves. Balaam could not see the angel standing in his way until the Lord opened his eyes ([Num. 22:31](#)) and Elisha’s servant could not see the host of angels surrounding him until Elisha prayed for his eyes to be opened ([2 Kings 6:17](#)). When angels have been seen as recorded in Scripture, they were often mistaken as men because they were manifested in a man-like appearance ([Gen. 18:2, 16, 22; 19:1, 5, 10, 12, 15, 16; Judg. 13:6; Mark 16:5; Luke 24:4](#)). Sometimes, they appear in a way that either manifests God’s glory ([Luke 2:9; 9:26](#)) or in some form of brilliant apparel (cf. [Matt. 28:3; John 20:12; Acts 1:10](#) with [Ezek. 1:13; Dan. 10:6](#)). Consistently, they have appeared as real men, never as ghosts, or as winged animals (cf. [Gen. 18:2; 19:1; Mark 16:3; Luke 24:4](#)).

They are occasionally pictured in other forms and in other manifestations as with wings, and as a combination of man, beast, and birds as in [Ezekiel 1:5f](#) and [Isaiah 6:6](#). But apparently such manifestations only occurred by way of a vision or special revelation from God. No angel literally appeared in such form.

² This section taken from J. Hampton Keathley, “Angelology: The Doctrine of Angels,” https://bible.org/article/angelology-doctrine-angels#P99_6676

They also seem to always have appeared as youthful or mature men ([Mark 16:5](#)), but never as old men, perhaps because they neither age nor die ([Luke 20:36](#)).

In the present fascination of our culture, previously referred to as *angelmania*, the common conception of angels is that of winged creatures and most times as female.

Some of the commonly held conceptions are not supported by the scriptural witness. There are no indications of angels appearing in female form. Nor is there explicit reference to them as winged, although [Daniel 9:21](#) and [Revelation 14:6](#) speak of them as flying. The cherubim and seraphim are represented as winged ([Exod. 25:20](#); [Isa. 6:2](#)), as are the symbolic creatures of [Ezekiel 1:6](#) (cf. [Rev. 4:8](#)). However, we have no assurance that what is true of cherubim and seraphim is true of angels in general. Since there is no explicit reference indicating that angels as a whole are winged, we must regard this as at best an inference, but not a necessary inference, from the biblical passages which describe them as flying.¹⁶

While angels generally appear as men in Scripture, [Zechariah 5:9](#) may suggest this is not always the case. The two women mentioned in this passage are not specifically called angels, but they are clearly agents of God or forces of Satan, like angels, good or evil.

They are Persons

- The fact that angels possess intellect, emotion, and will demonstrates the fact that they can be said to be persons
- The fact that they do not have human bodies does not mean they are not persons (i.e. God is a person but has no body)

1. Intellect

1 Peter 1:12 ~ the gospel... things into which angels long to look.

Matthew 24:36 ~ But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, nor the Son, but the Father alone.

2. Emotion

Luke 15:10 ~ Just so, I tell you, there is joy before the angels of God over one sinner who repents."

James 2:19 ~ You believe that God is one. You do well; the demons also believe, and shudder.

3. Will

2 Timothy 2:26 ~ and they may escape from the snare of the devil

Jude 6 ~ And angels who did not keep their own domain, but abandoned their proper abode, He has kept in eternal bonds under darkness for the judgment of the great day,

They are Immortal and Never Propagate

- The number of angels is and always will be the same.

Luke 20:36 ~ for neither can they die anymore, for they are like angels, and are sons of God, being sons of the resurrection.

Matthew 22:30 ~ For in the resurrection they neither marry, nor are given in marriage, but are like angels in heaven.

- How many angels are there?

Deuteronomy 33:2 ~ He said, "The LORD came from Sinai, And dawned on them from Seir; He shone forth from Mount Paran, And He came from the midst of ten thousand holy ones; At His right hand there was flashing lightning for them.

Daniel 7:10 ~ A river of fire was flowing And coming out from before Him; Thousands upon thousands were attending Him, And myriads upon myriads were standing before Him; The court sat, And the books were opened.

Matthew 26:53 ~ Or do you think that I cannot appeal to My Father, and He will at once put at My disposal more than twelve legions of angels?

- A legion = 6,000 troops

Hebrews 12:22 ~ But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to myriads of angels,

- "myriads" is often translated as "10,000"

Revelation 5:11 ~ Then I looked, and I heard the voice of many angels around the throne and the living creatures and the elders; and the number of them was myriads of myriads, and thousands of thousands,

- "myriads of myriads" expresses an amount beyond calculation

They are Higher Creatures than Men

Hebrews 2:6-7 ~ But one has testified somewhere, saying, "What is man, that You remember him? Or the son of man, that You are concerned about him? You have made him for a little while lower than the angels; You have crowned him with glory and honor, And have appointed him over the works of Your hands"

- By creation, man is lower than the angels in that angels are higher in intelligence and power and created order
- But, even though believers are currently lower than angels, they are higher positionally because of their union with Christ
- In fact, one day believers will be higher than the angels and will judge angels...this probably refers to some kind of ruling position believers will have over angels

1Corinthians 6:3 ~ Do you not know that we shall judge angels? How much more, matters of this life?

They are Not to be Worshipped

- Although they are a higher order of creatures than human beings are, they are not divine and do not receive worship

Revelation 19:10 ~ *Then I fell at his feet to worship him. But he said to me, "Do not do that; I am a fellow servant of yours and your brethren who hold the testimony of Jesus; worship God. For the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy."*

Revelation 22:9 ~ *But he said to me, "Do not do that. I am a fellow servant of yours and of your brethren the prophets and of those who heed the words of this book. Worship God."*

- Only God is to receive worship

The worship of angels (as with any other object of worship) distracts from the worship of God and attributes godlike powers to the object of worship. Angels are powerful and awesome in many ways, but, like us, they are only creatures and servants of the living God who alone deserves our worship. This means we are not to pray to them or trust in them even though God may use them to minister to our needs in various ways. Our trust is to be in God, not angels. They minister to us at His bidding under His authority and power. Though sometimes the instrument of aid or deliverance was an angel, New Testament believers recognized it was the Lord who delivered them (see [Acts 12:11](#)).

J. Hampton Keathley, "Angelology: The Doctrine of Angels," https://bible.org/article/angelology-doctrine-angels#P99_6676

- It is for this reason that the author of Hebrews, in the most extended passage on angels in the NT, demonstrated the superiority of Christ to even the mighty angels (see Hebrews 1:3-14)