

Sunday, February 14, 2010—The Truth About Angels: Basic Facts About the Angelic World

Introduction

- Over the past two years I have had many of you ask me questions regarding the existence, nature, and activity of Angels.
- Very early in my ministry I preached a series on Angels. Over the past ten years my thinking and understanding on this issue has grown and matured.
- There is much confusion in our day about the nature and activity of Angels. What relationship if any do Angels have with the Body of Christ?
- In this new series I am going to try and answer your questions in a through and systematic fashion. As with all our studies we need to be prepared to let God's word define truth for us not personal stories and experiences.
- II Peter 1:16-19—we need to place more stock in what God's word says than personal experience.
- Angelology is one the nine main loci of Systematic Theology. This is the branch of theology that deals with the existence, nature, organization, and personality of Angels and Demons.

How Do We Know Angels Exist?

- Theologian, Charles C. Ryrie makes the following observation regarding mankind's knowledge of the existence of Angles. Mankind has no natural predisposition to assume that angles are part of the created order, because humanities nature predisposition is antisupernaturalism. In addition, his experience would not incline him to consider the possibility of angels, and his faith in his own intellect would compel him to seek other explanations for phenomena he cannot readily understand. (*Basic Theology*, 121)
- Bernard Ramm, has famously stated, "mankind has no handbook titled *A Guide to All Possible Creations*. It has not information about creation apart, from the data afforded by this creation." In other words, man's limited knowledge does not permit him to conclude there are no such beings as angles (*Basic Theology*, 121).
- Colossians 2:18—the Bible says that people who claim to have seen angels to do falsely.
- If one accepts the Biblical revelation then there can be no question about the existence of angels. I believe in angles for the same reason I believe anything about God, Christ, heaven, hell, or any other spiritual things because the Bible says they exist.

Angelic Definitions

- There are a number of different words used in Scripture to define angelic beings.
- The Hebrew word *malak* simply means "messenger." The word is found 103 time in the Old Testament

- I Kings 19:2—human messenger
- Genesis 28:12—divine messenger
- As a divine messenger an angel is a “heavenly being charged by God with some commission.”
- The Greek word *angelos* occurs 175 times in the New Testament; of men it is only used six times. The word *angelos* is similar to the Hebrew word *malak*; it also means messenger . . . who speaks and acts in the place of the one who has sent him.
- The existence of angels is uniformly presented in Scripture. Thirty-four books of the Bible make reference to angles.
 - O.T.—17 books
 - N.T.—17 books
- Other scriptural terms used to describe angels:
 - Sons of God—Job 1:6, 38:7
 - Holy Ones—Daniel 4:17—“set apart” by God and for God as attendants of his holiness.
 - Host—is used to denote the armies of heaven (Psalms 89:6,8, I Samuel 17:45). Can also be used to describe a collection of angels (Isaiah 31:4, Luke 2:13).

Characteristics of Angels

- Angels are created beings; they did not evolve some lower form of life (Psalms 148:2,5).
- Angels were created by Christ (John 1:1-3, Colossians 1:16).
- Angels were present at creation (Job 38:7).
- Angels are creatures not the creator. Therefore, they are a separate order creatures distinct from humanity (Hebrews 2:7-9).
- Angels are not omnipotent or omniscient (I Peter 1:11-12).
- Angels are created beings and are subject to judgment (Matthew 24:41).
- Angels are innumerable in number (Hebrews 12:22).
- Angels excel in strength, power, and might.
 - II Peter 2:11
 - Isaiah 37:36
- Angels are immortal and never die (Luke 20:35-36).

- Angels don't grow old or age (Mark 16:3-5). This angel is referred to as a young man in appearance but he was present at the creation of the earth he was at least 4,000 years old.
- Angels are always men (Mark 16:5). This explains why the angels in heaven are not given in marriage, because they are all men (Matthew 22:30).
- Angels do not have wings (Revelation 21:17). If angels look like men and don't have wings this explains how people could have entertained angels and been unaware they were doing so (Hebrews 13:2).
- Angels are fundamentally spirits that possess a spiritual body that is not limited by the confines of time and space like humans are (Psalm 104:4, Hebrews 1:14).

Classifications of Angels

- The Scriptures speak of the assembly and council of angels (Psalm 89:5-7). This speaks to the fact that they are organized.
- Cherubim—cherub is mentioned 27 times and cherubim 64 times in the Bible, most of the references being to the furniture and curtains of the tabernacle and the temple.
 - Cherubim are of the highest order or class, created with indescribable powers and beauty. . . their main purpose and activity might be summarized in this way: they are proclaimers and protectors of God's glorious presence and holiness. (*Moody Handbook of Theology*, 290)
 - The clearest description of them is found in Ezekiel 10:15-20. Comparing this passage with Ezekiel 1:4-10 it can be seen that the cherubim are called "living creatures" and they are said to be four in number.
 - These four living creatures are seen again surrounding the throne of God (Revelation 4:6-9, 5:8, 14)
 - Cherubim are first mentioned in Genesis 3:24 as guarding sinful man's access to the tree of life.
 - Exodus 25:18-22—figures of the cherubim overshadowed the mercy seat in the tabernacle and later the temple.
 - Ezekiel 28:14-16—the fact the Satan was originally a cherubim indicates that cherubim are the highest ranking members of the heavenly hosts.
 - From these references it appears safe to conclude that cherubim are especially concerned with safeguarding and upholding the holiness of God.
- Seraphim—these are only mentioned one time (Isaiah 6:2, 6), in connection with Isaiah's vision of the Lord. They resemble cherubim in many respects and are likewise concerned with the holiness of God.

- The word *seraph* means burning and it is interesting to note that it is three times translated fiery serpent (Numbers 21:8; Isaiah 14:29, 30:6).
- Michael the Archangel—is designated as the archangel or highest ranking angel (Jude 9, I Thessalonians 4:16). Now where does the Bible speak of archangels plural. When Paul says that the voice of the archangel will be heard at the translation of the church, he does not seem to feel the need to name that archangel which supports the conclusion that there is only one.
- Chief Princes—is referring to a group of superior angels whose existence underscores the main point about ranking and organization (Daniel 10:13).
- Gabriel—is another high ranking angel although not on the same level as Michael. His name means “hero of God,” and his function is bring important message from God to several individuals.
 - Daniel—Daniel 8:16, 9:21
 - Zacharias—Luke 1:19
 - Mary—Luke 1:26
- The Elect Angels—this expression is found only once in the Bible in I Timothy 5:21. The elect angels are not a special group of unfallen angels, but apparently all of the unfallen angels.
- The Angel of the Lord—this angel is a unique person. The Angel of the Lord is a Christophony, a preincarnate appearance of Christ. This angel speaks as God, identifies Himself with God, and exercises the prerogatives of God. Appearances of this angel cease after the incarnation of Christ which supports that he was the preincarnate Christ.
 - Genesis 16:7-12, 21:17-18, 22:11-18
 - Exodus 3:2
 - Judges 2:1-4, 5:23, 6:11-24, 13:3-22
 - II Samuel 24:16
 - Zechariah 1:12, 3:1, 12:8