

# ANGELOLOGY # 1: DOCTRINE OF ANGELS, SATAN, AND DEMONS

## ANGELS

Angelology is an important, misunderstood, and doctrinally abused area of Systematic Theology. At times in history it has been a neglected doctrine because the modern, liberal theological mind rejects the existence of supernatural, spirit beings. The concept of angels has become more prominent today, but that is due to extra-biblical and unbiblical notions of angels. There have been television shows about angels, numerous books and magazine articles have been written with angels as the subject, the churchianity marketplace is loaded with angelic merchandise, and people oriented toward the mystical often claim they are receiving angelic visions and visitations. Much of this is unbiblical and a serious waste of time, but there is a much more ominous element of Angelology at work today. Video games, television programming, various genres of rock-and-roll music but especially heavy metal rock music, tattoo parlors, and Hollywood movies are saturated with “entertainment” that is promoting demonic activity. Attending a heavy metal rock concert is to attend a satanic worship service.

Man has no way of knowing about the existence of angels apart from biblical revelation; therefore, the only way to accurately understand Angelology is to allow the Bible to reveal the facts of the doctrine to us. In that way, angelic beings are not ignored as non-existent because the Bible clearly reveals their existence, and they are not over-emphasized because the Bible does not over-emphasize them. Allowing the Bible to speak prevents engaging in the extremes at both ends. Berkhof noted: “[I]t is quite evident that philosophy can neither prove nor disprove the existence of angels. From philosophy, therefore, we turn to Scripture, which makes no deliberate attempt to prove the existence of angels, but assumes this throughout, and in its historical books repeatedly shows us the angels in action. No one who bows before the authority of the Word of God can doubt the existence of angels” [Louis Berkhof, *Systematic Theology*, 143]. This doctrine is greatly abused in churchianity because mysticism has become an important element of the modern church. This has been propelled by the predominance of the Pentecostal/Charismatic and Faith Movement strands of churchianity that dominate the Christian media today.

The Bible clearly revealed the existence of angels; they are named in 34 books beginning in Genesis [Gen. 16:7] and ending in Revelation [Rev. 22:16]. The word “angel,” singular and plural, is used 116 times in 107 verses in the Old Testament, and 180 times in 176 verses in the New Testament. There are quite a few other words that refer to spiritual beings of one sort or another such as cherubim, seraphim, archangel, powers, and so on. Perhaps the most important and powerful biblical argument for the existence of angels is that the Lord referred to them a number of times indicating that He certainly believed in the existence of literal beings called angels.

The Hebrew word for angel, מַלְאָכִים, means a messenger or an angel, and the Greek word, ἄγγελος, means a messenger or one sent to announce or proclaim. The concept of a

messenger is not confined to spirit beings; people can be messengers as well, but they are not spirit beings acting as messengers of God. Human beings can carry messages from one group to another, and they can carry God's message to people as the Word of God is proclaimed by the man of God. Context has to be considered in order to determine which is which. The prophets were also referred to as messengers in the Old Testament, but not often.

Genesis 24:7 <sup>7</sup>“The LORD, the God of heaven, who took me from my father's house and from the land of my birth, and who spoke to me and who swore to me, saying, 'To your descendants I will give this land,' He will send His angel [מַלְאָכָא] before you, and you will take a wife for my son from there. [angelic messenger]

Numbers 20:14 <sup>14</sup>From Kadesh Moses then sent messengers [מַלְאָכָא] to the king of Edom: “Thus your brother Israel has said, 'You know all the hardship that has befallen us; [human messenger]

2 Chronicles 36:15–16 <sup>15</sup>The LORD, the God of their fathers, sent *word* to them again and again by His messengers [מַלְאָכָא], because He had compassion on His people and on His dwelling place; <sup>16</sup>but they *continually* mocked the messengers [מַלְאָכָא] of God, despised His words and scoffed at His prophets, until the wrath of the LORD arose against His people, until there was no remedy. [messenger as prophet]

Matthew 13:41 <sup>41</sup>“The Son of Man will send forth His angels [ἄγγελος], and they will gather out of His kingdom all stumbling blocks, and those who commit lawlessness, [angelic messenger]

Luke 9:52 <sup>52</sup>and He sent messengers [ἄγγελος] on ahead of Him, and they went and entered a village of the Samaritans to make arrangements for Him. [human messenger]

Angels are subject to some time and space limitations, but they have some greater degree of movement across time and space than human beings possess. They are not omniscient, omnipresent, nor omnipotent. Because they are spirit beings, many of them can coexist in a small space. The demon possessed man in Luke 8:26-39 had so many demons in him, they were called Legion.

No one knows how many angels exist, but the Bible indicates the number is very large. In Revelation 5:11, John revealed there are “myriads of myriads and thousands of thousands.”

Daniel 7:10 <sup>10</sup>“A river of fire was flowing And coming out from before Him; Thousands [אַלְפֵי] upon thousands were attending Him, And myriads [רִבּוֹן] upon myriads were standing before Him; The court sat, And the books were opened.

Thousands [אַלְפֵי] is an Aramaic word meaning one thousand. Myriad, [רִבּוֹן] is an Aramaic word meaning ten thousand or a myriad, but it refers to an innumerable number.

Revelation 5:11 <sup>11</sup>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 [δισμυριάς] of myriads, and thousands [χιλιάς] of thousands,

Myriad, [δισμυριάς], means very many, innumerable, and an indefinite, large number. Thousand, [χιλιάς], means a thousand.

These words are expressing the concept that the angels are an extremely large number that no one knows but God. In these verses, the reference is to unfallen, holy angels; it is not counting the fallen angels. We know that one-third of the number of the originally created angels rebelled with Satan (Rev. 12:4). I don't think it out of the question that there are billions of created beings we call angels and demons.

The very early church had a generally biblical view of Angelology. They knew angels were not to be worshiped. Berkhof wrote, "Some of them [angels] were regarded as good and others as evil. The former were held in high esteem as personal beings of a lofty order, endowed with moral freedom, engaged in joyful service of God, and employed by God to minister to the welfare of men.... The general conviction was that all angels were created good, but that some of them abused their freedom and fell away from God. Satan, who was originally an angel of eminent rank, was regarded as their head. The cause of his fall was found in pride and sinful ambition ..." [Louis Berkhof, *Systematic Theology*, 141].

I would suggest that while the angels were created "very good," they were also neutral in terms of sin. They had to be tested before their "very good" status was confirmed. Those who refused to join Satan in his rebellion against God passed the test, and they can never sin or rebel against God. Those who joined Satan's rebellion, lost the place in which God created them to serve and they can never be redeemed.

It didn't take too long for the church to begin straying into heretical territory. Soon after the apostle John died, the early church departed from sound doctrine in all areas of Systematic Theology. This was a problem for early Christian converts who obviously came out of pagan worship systems and the lack of sound doctrinal teaching over time was a problem as the church grew. Pagan concepts crept into the early church. The new converts did not receive good teaching, but we can't discount the fact that some, perhaps many, simply never really believed and added Christ Jesus to their pantheon of gods and mixed pagan worship practices with biblical worship practices. This problem became most acute when Constantine made Christianity the official religion of the Roman Empire. The overwhelmed church could not teach such a large number of people right away and pagan doctrines infiltrated the church in a big way. Many of those doctrinal aberrations are still part of the Roman Catholic Church, particularly mother/child worship that was introduced into the world by Nimrod and Semiramis at Babylon.

The pagan worship systems surrounding the early church influenced them to begin worshiping angels. Mysticism is a big part of paganism. Gnosticism, which had a deleterious effect on the early church, also had an angelic component. The aeons emanating from the spirit god, who is good, allowed that god to interact with created beings

which, being matter, were evil. These aeons were considered to be angels. Of course, they did not really exist, but that didn't prevent pagan Gnostics from believing in them.

In the fourth century, Ambrose of Milan taught people they had a duty to invoke patron angels. He was referring to the doctrine of guardian angels. According to Schaff, this concept led to the practice of acknowledging patron saints. [Philip Schaff, *History of the Cristian Church: Nicene and Post-Nicene Christianity: A.D. 311-590*, vol. 3, 3:430]. The problem with this doctrine is it is not appropriate to pray to angels. Prayer is an act of worship and believers are not to worship anyone or anything other than God. Ambrose was not educated in the Bible; he was appointed bishop by popular acclimation of the people as a layman who knew basically nothing. Like so many others, he brought Greek philosophy into his theology, specifically Stoicism.

People use Matthew 18:10 to support the concept of guardian angels particularly for children, but that is not actually an accurate interpretation. That verse has to do with faithful disciples who, at times, receive angelic assistance as they work in the name of the Lord.

On the other hand, there are verses that specifically prohibit the worship of angels. Paul revealed that worshiping angels can result in people losing rewards. Angels are fellow servants of God alongside born-again believers in the Lord and they are not divine. Angels are not made in the image of God, either. They are not worthy of worship.

Colossians 2:18 <sup>18</sup>Let no one keep defrauding you of your prize by delighting in self-abasement and the worship of the angels, taking his stand on *visions* he has seen, inflated without cause by his fleshly mind,

People who elevate angels into a position of worship are wasting their time and losing out on rewards at the judgment seat of Christ. Not only is worshiping angels sin, but it is a waste of time that could be better spent serving and glorifying the Lord which will be rewarded at the judgment seat of Christ.

Revelation 22:8–9 <sup>8</sup>I, John, am the one who heard and saw these things. And when I heard and saw, I fell down to worship at the feet of the angel who showed me these things. <sup>9</sup>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."

Around A.D. 500, a man thought to be a Syrian mystic assumed the name Dionysius the Areopagite after the man identified by Paul in Acts 17:34. It should be obvious he could not have been the person Paul interacted with on Mars Hill in Athens nearly five-hundred years before. He was a fraud and his work was fraudulent; therefore, he is properly referred to as Pseudo-Dionysius. He developed some doctrines about angels that negatively impacted the church because they were widely spread and apparently accepted by many people. "Dionysius the Areopagite divided the angels into three classes: the first class consisting of Thrones, Cherubim, and Seraphim; the second, of Might, Dominions, and Powers; and the third, of Principalities, Archangels, and Angels. The first class is represented as enjoying the closest communion with God; the second, as being enlightened by the first; and the third, as being enlightened by the second.

This classification was adopted by several later writers" [Louis Berkhof, *Systematic Theology*, 141]. This was simply made up. While there is a hierarchy of angelic beings, they do not conform to this scenario and he mixes together in the same hierarchical structure fallen and unfallen angels which is an error. They do not coexist and answer one to the other.

Angels are spirit beings and they are therefore not in the same kind of created being as humans although they can appear to be human when their assignment calls for them to appear as people in order to accomplish their mission. This occurred a number of times in the Old Testament most frequently as a theophany in the form of the angel of the Lord. Some theologians suggest that angels only appear to be human when people see them as flesh and blood, but the Scriptures do not really support that assumption. The Bible calls them "men" when they appear as men. Exactly what angels appearing in the form of men means in terms of bodily function is never stated, but it is revealed they do things that men do.

Genesis 19:1 <sup>1</sup>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*.

Judges 6:22 <sup>22</sup>When Gideon saw that he was the angel of the LORD, he said, "Alas, O Lord GOD! For now I have seen the angel of the LORD face to face."

Two angels and the Lord appeared as men to Abraham and Sarah in Genesis 18. Those men walked, talked and interacted with Abraham, needed their feet washed, and ate food. In Genesis 19, the men of Sodom recognized the angels as men who needed a place to stay and sleep for the night, needed their feet washed, ate food, and led Lot and his family out of the city before the Lord destroyed it. These angels appeared as men and the people they encountered thought they were men.

The existence of angels in the form of spirit beings suggests they do not have physical bodies as part of their created, natural state. The natural state of a spiritual being is by nature incorporeal, that is, not composed of matter and having no material existence. The Lord said spirit bodies do not have flesh and bones.

Luke 24:39 <sup>39</sup>"See My hands and My feet, that it is I Myself; touch Me and see, for a spirit does not have flesh and bones as you see that I have."

Paul noted that the dark element of the angelic realm also consists of spiritual beings operating as spiritual forces engaging in spiritual warfare.

Ephesians 6:12 <sup>12</sup>For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual *forces* of wickedness in the heavenly *places*.

When an angel breaks into time and space in the form of a human being, that is an unusual event and it is not to be considered normative angelic behavior. It is for a God ordained specific purpose with specific people in a specific time and place.

The Bible referred to angels as “ministering spirits” in Hebrews 1:14.

Hebrews 1:14 <sup>14</sup>Are they not all ministering [λειτουργικός] spirits, sent out to render service for the sake of those who will inherit salvation?

Ministering, λειτουργικός, means serving, ministering, or engaging in holy service; it refers to a public servant or a minister. Fruchtenbaum wrote that this verse is the closest the New Testament comes to suggesting that believers have guardian angels. He also suggested that “The existence of guardian angels does not mean they make sure nothing bad happens to believers for bad things will happen to believers. They are guarding in the sense that nothing will happen to believers outside the will of God. [Arnold G. Fruchtenbaum, *Ariel's Bible Commentary: The Messianic Jewish Epistles: Hebrews, James, I & II Peter, Jude, 26-27*]. Whether or not believers actually have a guardian angel is not the point; the point is angels are assigned to minister to believers in some unrevealed, significant way. We simply do not know exactly how all that works; it has not been revealed in the Word of God.

Some theologians suggest that Luke 16:22 is a Scripture that revealed believers are escorted into their eternal rest in the presence of Christ by an angel or angels [Arnold G. Fruchtenbaum, *Ariel's Bible Commentary: The Messianic Jewish Epistles: Hebrews, James, I & II Peter, Jude, 27*; John Phillips, *Exploring the Gospel of Luke: An Expository Commentary, 220*]. In Luke, when the poor man, Lazarus, died, he was escorted to Abraham's bosom by angels. That is a common thought in Judaism and since the Lord said it happened in the case of Lazarus, it no doubt happened that way, but whether or not that set a precedent for all believers for all time is questionable. Paul said that to be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord (2 Cor. 5:8) which suggests an immediate translation from one's death bed into the Lord's presence. I don't think it wise to claim a biblical precedent based on Luke 16:22; it could be possible, but I would like more information before I consider it to be a precedent setting verse.

Luke 16:22 <sup>22</sup>“Now the poor man died and was carried away by the angels to Abraham's bosom; and the rich man also died and was buried.

Anecdotally, I have talked to hospice nurses who are very familiar with the fact that some believers seem to have someone there to receive them as they are dying. Sometimes the person will say, “Jesus is here to get me” or something similar. They will let the nurse know they want her to move so they can see who has come to get them. This is obviously not a biblical revelation, but some hospice nurses have experienced this phenomenon. If Jesus comes to receive us, that means angels do not come to receive us and therefore making Luke a determinative Scripture about angels escorting us at death into the Lord's presence cannot be correct. But I don't know that this hospice, anecdotal evidence is correct either. We may immediately be in the Lord's presence the moment our physical bodies die as Paul seemed to imply. My personal faith conviction would tend to be an immediate transfer from our bodies into the Lord's presence, but I would not get dogmatic about it. In terms of Angelology, some theologians do believe angels escort us into the Lord's presence at death.

Because angels are spirits, they are incapable of being seen unless they purposely reveal themselves or unless God reveals the angels to men. There are instances in the Old Testament where men are allowed to see a spirit being usually in connection with the Angel of the Lord.

Numbers 22:31 <sup>31</sup>Then the LORD opened the eyes of Balaam, and he saw the angel of the LORD standing in the way with his drawn sword in his hand; and he bowed all the way to the ground.

2 Kings 6:17 <sup>17</sup>Then Elisha prayed and said, "O LORD, I pray, open his eyes that he may see." And the LORD opened the servant's eyes and he saw; and behold, the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire all around Elisha.

Angels are not sexual beings; they cannot reproduce. Sexuality and reproduction are characteristics of physical bodies. Angels do not exist in relationships where two become one as bodies of flesh do. They are spirit and they cannot do that; they do not have a body of flesh. Whatever the number of angels originally created, that is the number that will always exist.

Matthew 19:4–6 <sup>4</sup>And He answered and said, "Have you not read that He who created *them* from the beginning MADE THEM MALE AND FEMALE, <sup>5</sup>and said, 'FOR THIS REASON A MAN SHALL LEAVE HIS FATHER AND MOTHER AND BE JOINED TO HIS WIFE, AND THE TWO SHALL BECOME ONE FLESH'? <sup>6</sup>"So they are no longer two, but one flesh. What therefore God has joined together, let no man separate."

When believers experience glorification salvation, the glorified bodies they receive will no longer be able to reproduce just as the angels cannot reproduce; therefore, there will be no need for marriage.

Mark 12:25 <sup>25</sup>"For when they rise from the dead, they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are like angels in heaven.

God obviously created man with the ability to reproduce and populate the earth. For whatever reason only He knows, He chose to limit the number of angels so they cannot reproduce, although it seems that a very large number of them exists.

Genesis 1:27–28 <sup>27</sup>God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them. <sup>28</sup>God blessed them; and God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth, and subdue it; and rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over every living thing that moves on the earth."

Additionally, whenever they are described, masculine nouns are used to identify them.

We have already examined Genesis 18-19 where two angels appeared as men.

In Daniel's angelic vision, he saw the figure of a person that looked like a man.

Daniel 8:15 <sup>15</sup>When I, Daniel, had seen the vision, I sought to understand it; and behold, standing before me was one who looked like a man [גִּבּוֹר].

Man, גִּבּוֹר, means man, a mighty, virile man, or a warrior. It refers to more than gender in the sense it refers to the nature of a man indicating he is a man endowed with spiritual strength or masculinity. The Messiah is referred to as גִּבּוֹר in Zechariah 13:7.

The archangel Gabriel has a masculine name and is described as being a man.

Daniel 9:21 <sup>21</sup>while I was still speaking in prayer, then the man [אִישׁ] Gabriel, whom I had seen in the vision previously, came to me in my extreme weariness about the time of the evening offering.

Man, אִישׁ, is the more generic term for an individual, a man, a male, or a husband. The word indicates the archangel Gabriel is considered to be a male whatever that means in regard to his status as an angel.

After the Lord's resurrection, two angels appeared to the women who visited the tomb. They were described as men, but they were also described as wearing brilliant clothing. Apparently, they looked like men who were dressed in what we would probably consider to be the brilliant clothing we associate with what will be worn in the presence of God. This clothing identifies them as angels rather than as men who coincidentally just happened to be at the tomb. These men had information to pass on to the women that no mere mortal man would have known.

Luke 24:4 <sup>4</sup>While they were perplexed about this, behold, two men [ἀνὴρ] suddenly stood near them in dazzling clothing;

Man, ἀνὴρ, refers to an adult male, a mature man, or a husband. It is a synonym of ἄνθρωπος which is the generic name for a man that distinguishes man from the gods and from animals.

Angels cannot experience physical death. The angels who rebelled against God suffered spiritual death, but they will exist for eternity as fallen angels suffering judgment in the place prepared for them (Mt. 25:41). The angels who passed the test will neither physically nor spiritually die. Man, however, must physically die; death is the punishment for rebellion against God. Man also spiritually died and God provided the remedy for that by means of faith.

Matthew 25:41 <sup>41</sup>"Then He will also say to those on His left, 'Depart from Me, accursed ones, into the eternal fire which has been prepared for the devil and his angels;

Genesis 2:17 <sup>17</sup>but from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat from it you will surely die."

Once a believer is resurrected, he cannot die which is the same state in which the angels exist.

Luke 20:36 <sup>36</sup>for they cannot even die anymore, because they are like angels, and are sons of God, being sons of the resurrection.

John indicated that even though good angels and demons could wage war against one another, they could not kill each other. Defeat for Satan's demonic forces meant they were forced out of heaven, it did not mean they physically died.

Revelation 12:7–9 <sup>7</sup>And there was war in heaven, Michael and his angels waging war with the dragon. The dragon and his angels waged war, <sup>8</sup>and they were not strong enough, and there was no longer a place found for them in heaven. <sup>9</sup>And the great dragon was thrown down, the serpent of old who is called the devil and Satan, who deceives the whole world; he was thrown down to the earth, and his angels were thrown down with him.