

The Angels

by Lewis Sperry Chafer

The Bible teaches that angels are a distinct order of creation, having a heavenly position above the sphere of man, and that they are involved in various ministries, including serving as messengers and witnesses.

Scripture: Genesis 16:1, Job 38:7, Psalm 8:5, Matthew 4:11, Matthew 25:31, Matthew 25:41, Matthew 28:2, Mark 5:9, Luke 2:13, Luke 7:24, Luke 8:30, Luke 22:43, Acts 1:10, 1 Corinthians 6:3, Galatians 3:19, 1 Timothy 4:1, 1 Timothy 5:21, Hebrews 1:14, Hebrews 2:7, James 2:25, 2 Peter 2:4, Jude 1:6, Revelation 1:20, Revelation 5:11, Revelation 20:10
Topics: "Angelology", "Eschatology"

Description

Lewis Sperry Chafer delves into the intricate details of angels as depicted in the Scriptures, emphasizing their distinct order of creation, heavenly position above man, and the various classes of angelic beings, including the unfallen angels and the fallen angels. The sermon explores the nature, ministry, and significance of angels in pivotal events such as creation, the giving of the law, the birth and resurrection of Christ, and their future role in the second coming of Christ.

Transcript

The Bible reflects God's knowledge of the universe rather than man's; therefore, in the Scriptures, the angels, concerning whom man of himself could know nothing, are introduced with perfect freedom, being mentioned about one hundred and eight times in the Old Testament and one hundred and sixty-five times in the New Testament.

The word angel means messenger, and in its Biblical use is sometimes employed of God, when as the Angel of Jehovah, He Himself serves as a messenger to men (Gen 16:1-13; Gen 21:17-19; Gen 22:11-16); it is used of men (Luk 7:24; Jam 2:25; Rev 1:20; Rev 2:1, Rev 2:8, Rev 2:12, Rev 2:18; Rev 3:1, Rev 3:7, Rev 3:14); and of departed spirits of men (Mat 18:10; Act 12:15). Of the latter use of the word it should be noted that, though the departed spirits of men may be called angels, the angels are not departed spirits of men, nor do men at death become angels.

The angels are a distinct order of creation and have been given a heavenly position, or sphere, above the sphere of man (Psa 8:5; Heb 2:7; Rev 5:11; Rev 7:11). Three heavens are mentioned in the New Testament (2Co 12:2), and in the Old Testament the word heaven is plural. When entering the human sphere, Christ was thereby, for a little time made lower than the angels (Heb 2:9); when returning to Heaven, Christ again passed through the angelic sphere (Heb 4:14; Heb 9:24) and was seated far above principalities and powers (Eph 1:20-21).

Since we know that there are many forms of created beings of a lower sphere than man, it is reasonable to believe that, though invisible, there are beings of a higher order than man. Like all beings, other than the Godhead, the angels are created. In Col 1:16 mention is made of their creation, and in Eze 28:13, Eze 28:15, the creation of Satan -- one of the angelic order -- is mentioned in particular.

The angels are always referred to in the masculine gender, and as to their number we read of "an innumerable company" (Heb 12:22, which word should be translated "myriads." Note Mat 26:53; Dan 7:10; Rev 5:11). It is also implied that there is no increase of their number by generation (Mat 22:30) and we know of no cessation of their existence by death.

If the angels have bodies, their bodies are of a spiritual order (1Co 15:44). When seen of men they have, for the time being, a material appearance (Mat 28:3; Rev 15:6; Rev 18:1). On the other hand, those of the angelic company known as demons are seen to be seeking entrance into the bodies of the creatures of earth (Luk 11:24-26).

Two classes of angelic beings are to be distinguished:

I. THE UNFALLEN ANGELS

1. Their nature. The unfallen angels are the "ministering spirits" (Heb 1:14) who kept their first estate and are therefore designated as the "holy angels" (Mat 25:31). In the Scriptures, these are in view in almost every reference to the angels.

Of the holy angels, several are mentioned in particular as well as certain classes:

(1) Michael the Archangel, whose name means "who is like unto God" (Dan 10:21; Dan 12:1; Jud 1:9; Rev 12:7-10).

(2) Gabriel, whose name means "the mighty one," and to whom has been entrusted various heavenly messages (Dan 8:16; Dan 9:21; Luk 1:19, Luk 1:26-38).

(3) The Elect Angels (1Ti 5:21).

(4) Principalities and Powers, which term is sometimes used of all angels, and sometimes of only the fallen angels (Rom 8:38; Eph 1:21; Eph 3:10; Col 1:16; Col 2:10, Col 2:15; 1Pe 3:22; Luk 21:26).

(5) Cherubim, or living creatures, who defend God's holiness from the pollution of sinful beings (Gen 3:24; Exo 25:17-20; Eze 1:1-18. Note also the original purpose for which Satan was created, Eze 28:14).

(6) Seraphim (Isa 6:2-7).

(7) The Angel of Jehovah, which title belongs only to God and is used in connection with the divine manifestations in the earth and therefore is in no way to be included in the angelic hosts (Gen 18:1 to 19:29; Gen 22:11-12; Gen 31:11-13; Gen 48:15-16; Gen 32:24-32; Jos 5:13-15; Jdg 13:19-22; 2Ki 19:35; 1Ch 21:12-30; Psa 34:7). The strongest contrasts between Christ, who is the Angel of Jehovah, and the angelic beings is presented in Heb 1:4-14.

2. Their ministry. Of the ministry of the unfallen angels revelation declares:

(1) They were present at creation (Job 38:7), at the giving of the law (Gal 3:19; Act 7:53; Heb 2:2; Rev 22:16), at the birth of Christ (Luk 2:13), at the temptation (Mat 4:11), in the garden (Luk 22:43), at the resurrection (Mat 28:2), at the ascension (Act 1:10), and they will yet appear at the second coming of Christ (Mat 24:31; Mat 25:31; 2Th 1:7).

(2) The angels are ministering spirits sent forth to minister to those who shall be heirs of salvation (Heb 1:14; Psa 34:7; 91:11). Though we have been given no communication or fellowship with the angels, yet we should recognize the fact of their ministry which is constant and effective.

(3) The angels are spectators and witnesses of the things of earth (Psa 103:20; Luk 12:8, Luk 12:9; Luk 15:10; 1Co 11:10; 1Ti 3:16; 1Pe 1:12; Rev 14:10).

(4) Lazarus was carried by the angels to Abraham's bosom (Luk 16:22).

II. THE FALLEN ANGELS

The fallen angels have been divided into two classes: (1) those that are free and (2) those that are bound. Of the fallen angels, Satan alone is given particular mention in the Scriptures.

It is probable that when Satan fell (Joh 8:44) he drew after him a multitude of lesser beings. Of these, some are reserved in chains unto judgment (2Pe 2:4; Jud 1:6; 1Co 6:3); the remainder are free and are the demons, or devils, to whom reference is constantly made throughout the New Testament (Mar 5:9, Mar 5:15; Luk 8:30; 1Ti 4:1). They are Satan's aids in all his undertakings and share his doom (Mat 25:41; Rev 20:10).

QUESTIONS

1. What is indicated as to the authorship of the Scriptures when they treat of angels as freely as they do of men?
2. a. What is the meaning of the word angel?
b. Of what classes is the title used?
3. Where is the abode of the angels in relation to man and in relation to Christ's present position?
4. What is revealed as to the gender of angels, as to their number, as to their increase, and as to their death?
5. Have the angels bodies?
6. What are the two general classes of angels?
7. Name the particular angels and classes of angels referred to in the Scriptures.
8. Who is the Angel of Jehovah?
9. In connection with what great events are the angels said to appear?
10. What relation do they sustain to the child of God?
11. What is said of the angels as witnesses?

12. What ministry was committed to them in connection with Lazarus the beggar?
13. Into what two classes are the fallen angels divided?
14. Describe the position and service of each of these classes.

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