

Angels

by R.P.D.

The sermon explores the nature, roles, and significance of angels in the Christian faith, emphasizing their ministry and protection for believers.

Scripture: Psalm 103:20, Luke 22:31, 1 Corinthians 6:3, 1 Corinthians 10:13, 2 Corinthians 11:14, Ephesians 6:11, Hebrews 1:14, 1 Peter 5:8, Revelation 20:10

Topics: "Angelology", "Spiritual Warfare"

Description

R.P.D. delves into the realm of angels, exploring the distinction between the unfallen and fallen angels. He emphasizes the role of angels as ministering spirits sent by God to care for believers and fulfill His purposes. The sermon covers instances of direct angelic help in the Bible, showcasing how angels have been instrumental in protecting, guiding, and delivering God's people throughout history. R.P.D. also sheds light on the fallen angels' rebellion against God, their harmful intentions towards humanity, and the reality of demon possession. The sermon concludes with a glimpse into the future judgment of fallen angels and the ultimate victory of believers over Satan and his demonic forces.

Transcript

ANGELS

The Greek word for angels means (and is sometimes translated) messenger. It is used for God, for men (as in Lk.7:24), for man's spirit (Acts 12:15) but primarily for a great order of spirit-creatures. Our study will be confined to these creatures.

Although generally unseen, angels are very real and are all around us. Evidently, God created them to be His servants, to do His will (Ps.103:20-21) and to handle His material affairs, and He still chooses to use them for this work. From Job 38:7, we gather that angels were created sometime before the creation of the earth. However, at some unknown past time, the greatest of all these angels, Lucifer, became puffed up with pride over his own beauty and greatness, and thus wanted to be equal to God (Isa.14:12-14, Ezek.28:12-15). Consequently, he "fell" from his great place-of-privilege and responsibility and took a whole host of lesser angels with him. Thus today, there are two major classes of angels, the unfallen and the fallen.

THE UNFALLEN ANGELS

Although most Christians know very little about God's (the unfallen) angels, it's not God's fault. There are about 100 passages in His Word that tell us about them.

Even though angels are awesome creatures, they are not divine in any way. They are not to be worshiped. In fact, God's angels will refuse worship (Rev.19:10, 22:8-9). Even the greatest of the angels are not all-powerful (omnipotent), all-knowing (omniscient) and can not be everywhere at once (omnipresent). However, in the Old Testament, there are a number of references to "the angels of the Lord" (Gen.16:1-13, 22:11, Ex.3:2, Num.22:31-32, Josh.5:13-15, Jud.13:18, etc.) where, as made clear by the context, God Himself was present in angelic form.

God's angels are very numerous as seen by Ps.68:17, Dan.7:10, Matt.26:53, Heb.12:22 and Rev.5:11-12. If the numbers given in these verses are literal, there are well over 100 million unfallen angels -- ample numbers to look after our needs.

God's angels are "ministering spirits sent forth to minister for those who shall be heirs of salvation" (Heb.1:14). Angels even gave the apostle John the material for the book of Revelation (Rev.1:1, 22:6). Thus, at least a portion of the work or mission of God's angels, which work they delight to do, is to look after us believers and our needs. Much of this work goes on completely unnoticed by us. Perhaps in heaven, we will know how thankful we should have been for angelic ministry. However, God, not angels, is to get the glory (Rev.19:10, 22:8-9).

Although primarily referring to the Lord Jesus, Psalm 91 gives us some instruction which we can apply to ourselves as to angelic protection. Quoting the verses as if they apply to us, we are told that for those who dwell in the secret place of the Most High, they are to "not be afraid for the terror by night nor for the arrow that flies by day, nor for the pestilence that walks in darkness ... there shall no evil befall you, neither shall any plague come near your dwelling (because) He (the Father) shall give His angels charge over you to keep you in all your ways" (vv.5-11). These are very real promises which we can lay hold of. Are we asking the Lord for angelic protection and are we in the right spiritual condition that our prayers are not hindered? See Ps.66:18 and Jas.4:3.

Although angels are spirits, (Ps.104:4, Heb.1:7,14) yet they are very capable of taking on human form. Some (such as Abraham, Gen.18) have thus entertained angels unawares (Heb.13:2).

Direct Angelic Help

Abraham (Gen.18:1-22)

Two angels and the Lord Himself came as men to Abraham to tell him that Sarah and he would have a son in their old age. Also, Abraham was told about the soon-destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah.

Lot (Gen.19:1-16)

The above two angels went on to Sodom to take Lot and his family out of the city before its destruction. They saved Lot from physical harm by blinding an evil mob and then pulled Lot and his family by the hand to speed them out of town.

Isaac's Bride (Gen.24:7,40)

Abraham's servant was to seek a bride for Isaac. Abraham told his servant that "the Lord God ... will send His angel before you and you shall take a wife unto my son from there." God's angel was sent to prepare the way for the servant and how perfectly that way was prepared! Read that whole chapter.

Elisha (2 Kings 6:8-23)

The Syrian armies had surrounded Dothan to capture Elisha because King Ben-had-ad correctly blamed Elisha for his problems. Elisha was calm but his servant wasn't. Finally, Elisha told him to "Fear not for they who are with us are more than they who are with them" (v.16). Elisha then asked the Lord to open the servants eyes and "he saw that the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire round about Elisha" (v.17). The Syrians were then blinded and Elisha was protected. Truly, "the angel of the Lord encamps round about those who fear Him and delivers them" (Ps.34:7).

Hezekiah (2 Chron. 32:9-23).

Sennacherib, King of Assyria, attacked Jerusalem and King Hezekiah, and relied on God. Hezekiah and Isaiah prayed "and the Lord sent an angel who cut off all the mighty men of valor and the leaders and captalns in the camp of the King of Assyria." From 2 Kings 19:35 and Isa.37:36, we learn that 185,000 were killed that night. Although the account in 2 Kings and Isaiah would indicate deity in angelic form in some translations, 2 Chron. makes it clear that it was an ordinary angel.

The Women at the Tomb (Matt.28:2-S).

The Lord's tomb had been sealed and elite guards posted to make it absolutely secure. But the Lord had risen. How was this to be shown to all? Well, an angel came and rolled back the stone. The guards were powerless to stop him. In great fear, they shook and became as dead men. The women and the disciples were thus able to clearly see that the Lord had risen. See also John 20:12.

The Apostles in Prison (Acts 5:17-25)

The apostles had been trown into the common prison. An angel came and opened the prison in such a manner that the apostles were able to get out without anyone knowing it: the prison was found locked with the guards still outside, yet it was empty.

Peter in Prison (Acts 12:4-11)

Peter had been in prison for several days and was in chains, sleeping between two guards. Suddenly, an angel came, woke Peter up, the chains fell off, the main gate opened by itself and Peter was free without anyone knowing about it till the next day. This release was connected with prayer (v.5).

Daniel (Dan.3:19-28,6)

We first have the account of Shadrach, Meshack and Abednego who are thrown into a furnace but one who was like "a son of the gods" (an angel) came and protected them and that was used in part, towards King Nebuchadnezzar's eventual salvation. Then we have the account of Daniel being thrown into the lion's den for obeying God instead of the King. Being unharmed, Daniel told the king, "My God called to come the Lord died as our substiute. What love! What grace!

Other Angelic Work

As we said earlier, God has chosen His creatures to carry out much of His practical work on earth. Just as God expects us believers to fulfill His wishes and directions as to His true Church, including the discipling of sinning believers, so He expects His angels to do the same in a wider field pertaining to His people. In 2 Sam.24. an angel killed 70,000 Israelites because of their sin and was about to destroy Jerusalem when the Lord told him, "It is enough: stay now your hand." See also 1 Chron.21:27. Then in Ezek.9:1-11, 6 angels who had charge over Jerusalem obeyed the Lord's command to act in judgment and thus killed many who had openly sinned in that city. Then in Acts 12:23, an angel smote King Herod so that he died because he didn't give God the glory.

In the future of judgment on the unsaved nations, "the reapers are (to be) the angels" (Matt.13:39). "The Son of Man shall send forth His angels and they shall gather ... and cast them into a furnace of fire" (Matt.13:41-42).

Angels were also prominent at the Lord's birth and related events. First, Gabriel came to Zacharias to announce that John (the Baptist) would be born to him, Since Zacharias didn't believe him, Gabriel made him a mute (unable to talk) until John was born (Lk.1:11-20). Next, Gabriel came to Mary to announce that she would be the virgin-mother of our Lord (Lk.1:26-35). Then an angel announced Jesus' birth to shepherds and suddenly there was great multitude of the heavenly host who said (not sang) "Glory to God in the Highest" (Lk.2:9-15). Angels also appeared to Joseph (Matt.1:20, 2:13,19).

In like manner, angels will also be prominent at Christ's return. At the Rapture, there will be the "voice of the archangel" (1 Thess.4:16) who is Michael (Jude 9). Then when Christ (and we with Him) are manifested at His Appearing (return to earth) about seven years after the Rapture, we are told that "all His holy angels (will come) with Him" (Matt.25:31, Mk.8:38, Lk.9:26, 2 Thess.1:7). These angels will then gather all of God's elect of that time (Mk.13:27) and, as we have seen, will also gather the unsaved for judgment.

When a believer dies, angels have the job of escorting the spirit and soul (the real person) into God's presence (Lk.16:22, 2 Cor.5:6-8, Phil.1:23). What an escort! What a journey! What a meeting! Although we may fear the suffering that is sometimes connected with dying process, no Christian needs to have any fear of death (Heb.2:14-15). "To depart and be with Christ is far better" (Phil.1:23).

Finally, in Dan.10:10-21, God gives us a glimpse of the angelic battles that undoubtedly go on daily, unnoticed by us. Daniel had prayed and at that moment, an angel had been sent to him. However, a great demon -- the "prince" of Persia -- had interfered and prevented his arriving for three weeks until Michael came to help him break away. When God's angel had finished giving Daniel the message that God had for him, the angel was going back to battle the "prince" of Persia and then the "prince" of Greece was to come. So we see that Satan has set some of his chief angels to watch over certain countries to try to insure that his will is accomplished. God's angels oppose Satan's angel in this.

Watching And Learning From Us

Angels are learning of God's ways and wisdom by watching us (His Church, 1 Cor.4:9, Eph.3:10). They see how we fulfill God's intended order both in creation and in the Church. The woman's place in both fields is to be in subjection (not inferiority) so the angels watch for a covering on the woman's head in the assembly or when praying or speaking of the Lord's things elsewhere, to see whether or not she accepts her place before God. One of her reasons for having this sign-of-authority on her head is "because of the angels" (1 Cor.11:1-6, specially v.10). The angels also "desire to look into" the truth of Scripture (1 Pet.

1:12), specially that which speaks directly of Christ. Also, since angels are watching and listening to us, nothing is done in secret and we need to be careful not to call sin merely an "error" before the angels (Ecc.5:6).

One who truly obeys the Lord has His promise that He will "confess his name before My father and before His angels" (Rev.3:5, Lk.12:9). Further, "there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over (every) sinner that repents" (Lk.15:10).

God's angels are always referred to as men when they appear in human form. In answering a question about husbands and wives in heaven, the Lord said that when they rise from the dead, "they neither marry nor are given in marriage but are as the angels who are in heaven" (Mk.12:25). The Lord also said. "Neither can they die any more for they are equal unto the angels and are the sons of God, being the sons of resurrection" (Lk.20:36). These verses don't mean that we will simply be turned into angels, as great as that would be. Although we will be like angels in many ways, we believers have a unique and very special place before Christ as His bride (Eph.5:25-32). We are His redeemed. He died for us. We will be like Him (1 John 3:1-2) and have His own nature (2 Pet.1:4). However, individual family relationships will be gone as we will all be members of the family of God. Just as God's angels do not "marry," neither will we.

Classes of God's Angels

There are different classes of angels. Satan was undoubtedly the greatest of them all and even Michael, the archangel (Dan.12:1, Jude 9) evidently recognized this created (not moral) greatness and thus "dared not bring against him a railing accusation (Jude 9). See 2 Pet.2:10-11. Then there are the Seraphim (Isa.6:2-3). Gabriel (Lk.1:19,26, Dan.8:16, 9:21) and the Cherubim (Gen.3:24, Ezek.10:20). There are many other verses that speak of Cherubim and quite a study can be made of this class of angels who specially guard God's righteousness and government. Lucifer was a Cherub (Ezek.28:14,16).

The Lord in humiliation and glory

As Man in His humiliation (Phil.2:6-9), the Lord "was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death" (Heb.2:9). Now still a Man (although ever God the Son), "God has highly exalted Him and given Him a name which is above every name that at the name of Jesus, every knee should bow ... and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father" (Phil.2:9-11). So, "being made so much better than the angels as He has by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than they ... let all the angels of God worship Him" (Heb.1:4-7).

FALLEN ANGELS

We already saw that sometime in the distant past, Satan and a large group of other angels fell from their place of privilege due to their rebellion against God (Isa.14:12-14, Ezek.28:12-15).

Two Classes

Although there isn't absolute agreement on this point, it seems evident that there are two classes or groups of fallen angels. The first group are those who "Kept not their first estate but left their own habitation (and are thus) reserved in everlasting chains under darkness unto the judgment of the great day" (Jude 6). They are even now in "the deepest pit of gloom" (2 Pet.2:4-5, JND), awaiting their final casting into hell with the rest of the fallen angels, including Satan (Rev.20:10).

We have seen that angels can take on human form and can take people by the hand (Gen.19:1-16) and can eat food (Gen.18:1-17). Evidently these fallen angels who kept not their first estate but left their own habitation, came in human form as men into the realm of mankind and had sexual relations with the "daughters of men" (Gen.6:2-4). As a result, giants were born. The word wives in v.2 should really be women: these fallen angels chose unsaved women whom they liked (JND). But this great evil was destroyed in the flood and the angels involved were bound for eternity.

Others believe that the "sons of God" in Gen.6:2-4 simply refer to the godly descendents of Seth although the Hebrew words for "sons of God" always mean "angel" when used elsewhere, as in Job 1:6, 2:1. Also, the examples connected with the accounts of the bound angels in Jude 6-7 and 2 Pet.2:4-8 seem to confirm our original interpretation. Further, natural sexual union would not cause giants to be born, at least not in one generation.

The second class or group of fallen angels are not bound and are the devil's angels (Matt.25:41) to do his evil work. They are called demons (mistranslated devils in the KJV) but there is only one devil although there are many demons. See Matt.12:24-28. The name Satan means the adversary while devil means the false accuser. He is these things personified to their highest degree!

Attitudes of Fallen Angles

Satan and his demons hate men and God. Their whole intention is to harm men and God in any way they can. Satan still wants God's throne but his tactics are permeated with evil. Demons will injure mentally, physically and spiritually. See Mk.5:3-5. The demons possessed this poor man but they also hurt him. See Mk.1:26. Further, Satan will attempt to take away God's Word from those who hear it (Mk.4:15). Also, he will spiritually blind people: "The god of this age has blinded the minds of those who believe not lest the light of the Gospel of the glory of God ... should shine unto them" (2 Cor.4:4). He wills that no one be saved.

Demon Possession

Demon possession is very real. Although men today simply call it "mental illness," the Bible differentiates between illness (mental or physical) and demon possession (Matt.10:8. Lk.8:2, 9:1). In fact, many demons can possess one person. Speaking through a possessed man, the demons told the Lord, "My name is Legion for we are many" (Mk.5:9-13). See Matt.12:43-45, Lk.8:2 and Acts 16:16-18. In another case in Acts 19:11-16, certain unsaved men tried to imitate Paul's casting out of demons. The evil spirit said "Jesus I know and Paul I know but who are you?" Then the possessed man went after all seven of these self-proclaimed "exorcists" and badly injured them. So you can see that demon possession is nothing to play with or to take lightly.

Satan doesn't normally possess anyone. He usually leaves that up to his demons while he is elsewhere. But when it came to the Lord's betrayal, Satan himself entered into Judas at least twice (Lk.22:3, John 13:27). Satan wanted no slip-ups here. In John 13, when Satan entered into Judas, he was in the Lord's presence and the Lord ordered Judas to go and he went out and it was night (v.30) -- spiritual darkness at its height.

Demons Can Use Even Christians

Even Christians have to be careful of Satan and his demons. Although believers can't be demon-possessed since the Holy Spirit is living within, Satan and his demons can use believers for their evil purposes. In Acts 5:3, we read that Satan had "filled the heart (of Annanias and Saphira) to lie to the Holy Spirit" and it cost them their lives. 2 Cor.2:11 tells us that Satan can get an advantage over us so we are not to be ignorant of his devices -- his tricks. To get such an advantage, he will even transform himself (outwardly) into an "angel of light" (2 Cor.11:4) but we are warned that even if "an angel from heaven preach any other gospel unto you ... let him be accursed" (Gal.1:8). Holy angels will never go against God's Word but evil angels seek our worship, so we need to be watchful (Col.2:18). Everything be checked out with all that God's Word has to say on it before we have confidence that Satan isn't behind it.

We must watch out for pride so that we don't fall into the condemnation of the devil" (1 Tim.3:6) and also of other sin so we won't fall into the "reproach and snare of the devil" (1 Tim.3:7). Probably nothing is so sneaky as pride. We work at being humble and then are proud of our humility. It's so natural to exalt and justify oneself. I am doing something, etc.

However, we can fight pride and all of the devil's threats and tricks but not in our own power. We need to put on "the whole armor of God so that we may be able to stand against the wiles (tricks) of the devil (because) we wrestle not against flesh and blood but against principalities against powers, against the rulers-of-darkness-of-the-world, against spiritual wickedness in the heavenlies" (Eph. 6:11-12). Then James 4:6-8 tells us that "God resists the proud ... Submit yourselves, therefore, unto God: Resist the devil and he will flee from you." So you see, the prerequisite for winning over the devil is nearness to and obedience to God.

Fallen Angels Used By The Lord Against Unsaved

God sometimes uses Satan and his demons in a limited and controlled way to carry out His own sovereign purposes. There is an interesting account in 1 Kings 22:19-23, and 2 Chron.18:18-22 as to God's working with the very wicked King Ahab. Read it. Of course, God could have acted directly in His own power but as we have seen, He often chooses to use His creatures. Here, while sitting on His throne the Lord asks who will make Ahab go to a certain place where he will get killed. After considerable discussion among the angels, a spirit -- I judge a demon since God's angels wouldn't be a lying spirit -- says that he will be a lying spirit in the prophet's mouths and the Lord sends him on this mission and Ahab is killed. Again we see the delight that demons seem to have in harming men -- even men who are so evil that God has to act in swift judgment on them. See Ps.78:49.

In 1 Sam.16:14-16 and 18:10, we have the account of the rejected King Saul (see 1 Sam.15) when an "evil spirit from the Lord" came on him. The Lord had departed from Saul because of his sin (1 Sam.18:12) and thus allowed an evil spirit to come upon him and Saul was a miserable man from then on until his violent death a comparatively short time later.

Fallen Angels Used By The Lord To Sift Believers

In some manner, at least the apostles had the authority to "deliver ... one to Satan for the destruction of the flesh that the (human) spirit may be saved" (1 Cor.5:5, 1 Tim.1:20). Since Satan enjoys harming men, it would seem that God sometimes uses him in a very controlled manner to make believers hate the sins-of-the-flesh which have become prominent in their lives. A prime example of this was Job. Job was a good but self-righteous man, and it took Satan's hurtful work, allowed by the Lord to break down his self-righteousness (Job 42:6). Satan wanted to do this and the Lord allowed it within certain bounds as

seen by Job 1:8-12, and Satan was the ultimate loser. None of the Lord's disciples was more self-confident than Peter: "Lord, I am ready to go with Thee both into prison and to death" (Lk.22:33). Peter had to learn to have "no confidence in the flesh" (Phil.3:3). The Lord told Peter (and the other too) that "Satan has desired (demanded) to have you that he may sift you as wheat but I have prayed for you that your faith fail not" (Lk.22:31-32). Satan was all too eager to make Peter deny his Lord three times but even though Peter went through some rough times in Satan's sieve, his faith didn't fail and even his great sin was paid for at the cross, Peter soon was restored with much less self-confidence, the Lord still had the wheat and Satan was left holding the chaff.

Because Paul had seen heaven, the Lord knew how easily he would be puffed up with great pride so He gave him "a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan, to buffet him lest he should be exalted above measure" (2 Cor.12:7). So Satan was somehow allowed to "hurt" Paul in some limited way so that he would constantly need to rely on the Lord.

In such trials, "God is faithful, Who will not permit you to be tempted (tested) above that you are able but will, with the temptation, (testing), also make the way to escape that you may be able to bear it" (1 Cor.10:13), Truly, "we know that all things work together for good to those who love God" (Rom.8:28). Everything may not seem to be good but God works everything together for our eternal good.

Fallen Angels Still Have Access To Heaven But Not For Long

Satan and his demons still have direct access to the throne of God as we saw when looking at the account of Ahab in 1 Kings 22:19-22. Then, in Job 1:6 and 2:1, we see Satan coming with the other angels to present himself before the Lord. He has morally fallen but his physical expulsion from the heavenlies is still future. However, a little more than 3 1/2 years after the Rapture, there is going to be a short but fierce war in heaven. Perhaps the two greatest created beings -- Satan and Michael -- and their angelic hosts will fight. "Michael and his angels fought against the dragon, and the dragon fought and his angels and prevailed not ... and the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent called the devil and Satan ... he was cast out into the earth and his angels were cast out with him" (Rev.12:7-10). That time will begin the Great Tribulation and the revelation of the man-of-sin, "even him whose coming is after the working of Satan" (2 Thess.2:9).

Their Final End

We believers will be associated with the Lord at His Great White Throne judgment. There, "we shall judge angels" (1 Cor.6:3). Satan and his angels will then be cast into eternal hell, the lake-of-fire (Rev.20:10), the place originally prepared for them (Matt.25:41).

These accounts are far from being all that the Bible says about angels but we have perhaps hit the highlights in this study. I pray that interest, knowledge and love and trust in the Lord has been in the Lord has been increased as we have looked at these great creatures of God.

RPD July,1976

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