

## Lesson One - Angels: Ministering spirits (Part One)



From the outset: I want to give official recognition and gratitude to Dr Charles Ryrie and his very helpful book: *Basic Theology: A Popular, Systematic Guide to Understanding Biblical Truth*. I have drawn extensively from his outlines on this subject.

*"By angels we mean those spiritual beings that God created higher than humans, some of whom have remained obedient to God and carry out his will, and others of whom disobeyed, lost their holy condition, and now oppose and hinder his work."*<sup>1</sup> - Millard Erickson

*"It is impossible to use electric lights and the wireless and to avail ourselves of modern medical and surgical discoveries, and at the same time to believe in the New Testament world of spirits and miracles."* 743 He maintains that there is nothing unique or distinct about the New Testament writers' belief in spirits. It is merely a reflection of the popularly held ideas of their day. In other words, it is a myth.<sup>2</sup> – Quoting Rudolf Bultmann a German Lutheran Theologian of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century.

Do Angels Exist? Normally the higher the education of people the more doubtful they are of any spiritual existence beyond what can be **examined** under a microscope, **viewed** through a telescope or **experienced** first-hand through the senses. Yet Christians believe they exist.

Where do we get information about the existence of spirit beings? Other than fictional movies there are no **authorities or objective** handbooks on the spiritual dimension.

Biblical Knowledge: If you accept Biblical Revelation then you have to conclude that angels (and other spiritual beings) exist.

The Old Testament speaks about angels just over **100** times, while the New Testament mentions them about **165** times.

### A. In the Old Testament

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<sup>1</sup> Erickson, Millard J. (2013-08-15). Christian Theology (p. 405). Baker Publishing Group.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid, p. 407

- a. The Old Testament always presents angels as real, objective, existing creatures. They are not **illusions**.
  - b. In the thirty-four occurrences in the Pentateuch (the books of the Law), angels are acting as **messengers**, which is what the Hebrew word for angel means. (*Malak* - Heb)
    - i. Other Old Testament terms for angels are “holy ones” (Ps. 89: 5, 7) and “watchers” (Dan. 4: 13, 17, 23). Collectively, they are referred to as “the council” (Ps. 89: 7), “the assembly” (Ps. 89: 5), and “host” or “hosts,” as in the very common expression “LORD [or LORD God] of hosts,” found more than sixty times in the book of Isaiah alone.<sup>3</sup>
  - c. Abraham ate and conversed with angels (Gen. 18).
  - d. Many of the references in the Pentateuch and in Judges are to the Angel of Yahweh, who seems to be Deity. (**Theophany** or **Christophany**)
  - e. An angel executed the judgment on Israel after David wrongly took a census of the people (2 Sam. 24:16— hardly an illusion).
  - f. There are evidently **ranks** or hierarchies of angels.
  - g. **Isaiah** refers to seraphim (6:2)
  - h. **Ezekiel**, to cherubim (10:1–3).
  - i. **Daniel** mentions Gabriel (9:20–27) and Michael (10:13; 12:1).
  - j. Zechariah mentions angels frequently as agents of God (chap. 1) and **interpreters** of visions (chaps. 1–6).
  - k. In the psalms angels are depicted as God’s servants who **worship** Him and who **deliver** God’s people from harm (34:7; 91:11; 103:20).
- B. In the New Testament - In addition to what our Lord taught about angels (*angelos* – GK), the writers of the New Testament also affirmed their real existence.
- a. The Gospel writers relate their ministry to Christ’s birth, life, resurrection, and ascension (Matt. 2:19; Mark 1:13; Luke 2:13; John 20:12; Acts 1:10–11).
  - b. In the record of the book of Acts angels were involved in **helping** God’s servants, **opening** prison directing Philip and Cornelius in

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<sup>3</sup> Erikson, p.408

- ministry (8:26; 10:1–7), and encouraging Paul during the storm on his voyage to Rome (27:23–25).
- c. Paul (Gal. 3:19; 1 Tim. 5:21), the writer of Hebrews (1:4), Peter (1 Pet. 1:12), and Jude (v. 6) all assumed the existence of angels in their writings.
  - d. About sixty-five clear references to angels occur in the **Revelation**, more than in any other single book of the Bible.
- C. In the Teachings of Christ
- a. Angels ministered to Christ in the wilderness after His **temptation** by Satan (and, of course, no reporter was present at the Temptation, so His truthfulness is behind the account).
  - b. He taught that the human state in the **resurrection** would be like the angels; i.e., non-procreative (Matt. 22:30).
  - c. Angels will **separate** the righteous from the wicked at the end of the age ( Mt 13:39) and will accompany the Lord at His second coming (Mt 25:31).
  - d. Even without adding the references to Christ’s activity in relation to demons, there is sufficient evidence that He believed in the **reality of angels**. How do Critics of the supernatural who usually do not wish to abandon the words of Christ, how do they handle this evidence that Christ believed in the existence of angels?
    - i. Some say He was actually **deceived**. He believed they existed but actually they do not.
    - ii. Others affirm that He accommodated His teachings to the **ignorant** beliefs of the people of His day. In other words, since they believed in angels (and demons)
    - iii. The writers of the Gospels **added** these references to angels since they believed in them.
    - iv. Of course, there is another option, and it is the simplest and most obvious. Christ knew that angels exist and reflected that knowledge in His teaching. <sup>4</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Ryrie, Charles C. (1999-01-11). Basic Theology: A Popular, Systematic Guide to Understanding Biblical Truth (p. 140). Moody Publishers.

## THE CREATION OF ANGELS

### I. THE FACT OF THEIR CREATION

- a. Angels are **created beings** (Ps. 148:5). This means they did not evolve from some lower or less complex form of life. This is reinforced by the fact that angels do not procreate (Matt. 22:30). When they were created, they were created as angels. They are not the spirits of departed **men** or especially **saintly** people.

### II. THE AGENT OF THEIR CREATION

- a. All things were created by Christ (John 1:1–3). Specifically, **angels** were created by Him. *Col. 1:16 For by Him all things were created that are in heaven and that are on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers. All things were created through Him and for Him.*

### III. THE TIME OF THEIR CREATION

- a. The Bible does not undebatably state the time of their creation. They were present when the **earth** was created (Job 38:6–7 NIV)

### IV. THE STATE OF THEIR CREATION

- a. Holy - Originally **all angelic** creatures were created holy. God pronounced His Creation good (Gen. 1:31), and, of course, He could not create sin. God's good angels, who did not rebel against Him, are called holy (Mark 8:38). These are the elect angels. (1 Tim. 5:21)
- b. **Creaturely** - Angels are creatures, not the **Creator**. Yet they are a separate order of creatures, distinct, for example, from human beings (1 Cor. 6:3; Heb. 1:14).

### V. THE NATURE OF ANGELS

- a. THEY ARE **PERSONALITIES** - Personality means to have personal existence.
  - i. The main elements of personality are considered to involve **intelligence**, emotions, and will.
  - ii. Angels then qualify as personalities because they have these aspects of intelligence, emotions, and will. This is true of **both** the good and evil angels. Good angels, Satan, and demons possess intelligence (Matt. 8:29; 2 Cor. 11:3; 1 Pet. 1:12). Good angels, Satan, and demons show emotions (Luke 2:13; James 2:19; Rev. 12:17). Good angels, Satan, and demons demonstrate

that they have wills (Luke 8:28–31; 2 Tim. 2:26; Jude 6).

Therefore, they can be said to be persons. Three reasons angels know more than man. (1) Angels were created as a **higher order** of creatures in the universe than humans are. Therefore, innately they possess greater knowledge. (2) Angels **know more** about God than humans do (Lk 1.19 Gabriel – stood in the presence of God. James 2:19; Rev. 12:12). (3) Angels gain knowledge through **long experience** of human activities. Unlike humans, angels do not have to study the past; they have experienced it.

- iii. The personality of angels means that they are not merely **personifications** of abstract good or evil, as some have considered them to be. This includes Satan, who also is a personality, not a personification of man's collective idea about evil.

b. THEY ARE **SPIRIT BEINGS**

- i. Angels, demons (assuming they are fallen angels), and Satan belong to a class of beings that may be labeled spirit beings. Angels are said to be **ministering spirits** (Heb. 1:14). Demons are called **evil** and **unclean** spirits (Luke 8:2; 11:24, 26), and **Satan** is the spirit that now works in the sons of disobedience (Eph. 2:2). As spirit beings they are **immaterial and incorporeal**. The Scriptures explicitly call angels and demons spirits (**pneumata**) in Matthew 8:16; Luke 7:21; 8:2; 11:26; Acts 19:12; Ephesians 6:12; and Hebrews 1:14. Though God is also a spirit Being, this does not mean that angels are **infinite** in nature as God is; rather they are finite spirit beings.

- c. THEY ARE **IMMORTAL** AND DO NOT PROPAGATE - The number of angels is and always will be the same. The Lord taught that angels do not propagate baby angels (Matt. 22:30) and that they do not die (Luke 20:36).

- d. THEY ARE **HIGHER CREATURES** THAN MEN - The writer to the Hebrews said that when our Lord became incarnate He became for a little while lower than the angels (2:7–9). This is because man who was created in the image of God is lesser than God by nature. He is also lower than angels since they belong to a class of superhuman beings

- (elohim) who are stronger than man by nature and, unlike man, not subject to death.
- e. THEY WERE ORIGINALLY **HOLY** BEINGS - Jude 6 indicates that originally all the angels were holy creatures. Some were elect (1 Tim. 5:21) and others sinned (2 Pet. 2:4). Presumably all might have remained in that original state of holiness, and those who did not rebel were confirmed forever in their holy state.
- i. To sum up: though there are similarities between angels and Deity and between angels and men, angels are a **distinct class** of beings.
  - ii. Like Deity, but unlike men, they do not **die**. Like Deity, they are **superior** in strength to men though they are not omnipotent as God is (2 Peter 2:11). Like both Deity and men, they have **personalities**. Like Deity they are **spirit beings**, though not omnipresent as God is. Men, by contrast, are **both** spirit and material beings (James 2:26). Angels do not **procreate** as men do (Matt. 22:30). Man was made a little lower than the angels. And yet in his resurrected and glorified body, man will **judge** angels (1 Cor. 6:3).

Keep this in mind as we continue to study angels.

Heb 1:14 Are they not all ministering spirits sent forth to minister *for those who will inherit salvation?*