

THE DOCTRINE OF ANGELS

PART 2

HOW ARE ANGELS ORGANIZED?

- Although the Bible doesn't describe in detail the hierarchy within the angelic realm, enough evidence exists to show that some organization exists

Classification

1. Archangel – the highest ranking angel

- Michael is the only angel designated archangel and may possibly be the only one of this rank
- His name means “who is like God?”
- Apparently, Michael is one of the chief princes (see #2 below)
- As the chief angel of God, he especially watches over Israel (Daniel 10:13, 21; 12:1) and leads the holy angels (Revelation 12:7)

Jude 9~ But Michael the archangel, when he disputed with the devil

1 Thessalonians 4:16 ~ For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first.

2. Chief Princes

Daniel 10:13 ~ But the prince of the kingdom of Persia was withstanding me for twenty-one days; then behold, Michael, one of the chief princes, came to help me, for I had been left there with the kings of Persia.

3. Rulers, Authorities, Thrones, Dominions, Powers

Colossians 1:16 ~ whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities-all things have been created by Him

4. Cherubim

- Cherubim are the highest group/order of angels, created with great powers and beauty
- Their main purpose is to proclaim and protect God's glorious presence and sovereignty

Genesis 3:24 ~ east of the garden of Eden He stationed the cherubim

Exodus 25:22 ~ There I will meet with you; and from above the mercy seat, from between the two cherubim which are upon the ark of the testimony, I will speak to you about all that I will give you in commandment for the sons of Israel.

Ezekiel 10:1-20

- Prior to his fall, Satan was a cherub (see Ezek 28:14)

5. Seraphim

Isaiah 6:2-3 ~ Seraphim... called out Holy, Holy, Holy, is the Lord

- Their name means “burning ones” and they are seen in Isaiah 6 (the only place they are mentioned in the Bible) praising and proclaiming God’s holiness
- They act as attendants at the throne of God and agents of cleansing
- Their duty is to praise God for his holiness

6. Living Creatures

Ezekiel 1:5, 14 ~ Within it there were figures resembling four living beings. And this was their appearance: they had human form....And the living beings ran to and fro like bolts of lightning.

Revelation 4:6-9 ~ four living creatures... did not cease to say, 'Holy, Holy, Holy is the Lord

- The four living creatures are in the immediate vicinity of the throne, encircling it
- Probably one in the front of the throne, one on either side, and one in the back...perhaps in constant motion around the throne (see Ezek 1:12)
- So it seems as though their station is in the inner circle nearest the throne...they offer worship to the one sitting on the throne
- Ezekiel says in chapter 10 that the living beings he saw in chapter 1 were cherubim (see Ezek 10:15, 20-22)
- So these are most likely an exalted order of cherubim
- They may be the official worship leaders of heaven because everytime the 4 living creatures worship, they lead others to worship!
- The worship of the Lord begins in Revelation 4 with the living beings (vs. 8)
- This causes the 24 elders to worship(Rev 4:9-11)
- Then the 4 living beings and the 24 elders worship together (Rev 5:8-10)
- Then it grows from there so that many thousands of angels join in (Rev 5:11-12)
- Finally, the concert of praise to the Lord is so comprehensive that it includes every created thing which is in heaven and on the earth (Rev) 5:13
- So these 4 living beings incite heavenly worship...it is their consuming passion!

Specific Angels

1. Michael – see above

Daniel 10:13, 21 ~ But the prince of the kingdom of Persia was withstanding me for twenty-one days; then behold, Michael, one of the chief princes, came to help me, for I had been left there with the kings of Persia. However, I will tell you what is inscribed in the writing of truth. Yet there is no one who stands firmly with me against these forces except Michael your prince.

Jude 9~ But Michael the archangel, when he disputed with the devil

Revelation 12:7-8 ~ And there was war in heaven, Michael and his angels waging war with the dragon. The dragon and his angels waged war, and they were not strong enough, and there was no longer a place found for them in heaven.

2. Gabriel

- His name means “hero of God” and his function was to bring important messages from God to various people
- He appears 4 times in the Bible; in doing so, he reveals and interprets God’s purpose and program concerning Messiah and His kingdom to the prophets and people of Israel

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

Daniel 8:16 ~ And I heard the voice of a man between [the banks of] Ulai, and he called out and said, "Gabriel, give this [man] an understanding of the vision."

Luke 1:26 ~ In the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent from God to a city of Galilee named Nazareth.

Luke 1:18-19 ~ Zacharias said to the angel, “How will I know this for certain? For I am an old man and my wife is advanced in years.” The angel answered and said to him, “I am Gabriel, who stands in the presence of God, and I have been sent to speak to you and to bring you this good news.

3. The Angel of the Lord

- The angel of the Lord in the Old Testament is always the person of Christ prior to his becoming a man through the incarnation.

Genesis 22:11-12 ~ But the angel of the LORD called to him from heaven, and said, "Abraham, Abraham!" And he said, "Here am I." He said, "Do not lay your hand on the lad or do anything to him; for now I know that you fear God, seeing you have not withheld your son, your only son, from me."

Exodus 3:2, 6 ~ The angel of the LORD appeared to him in a blazing fire from the midst of a bush; and he looked, and behold, the bush was burning with fire, yet the bush was not consumed...He said also, “I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.” Then Moses hid his face, for he was afraid to look at God.

- See also Genesis 16:7; Numbers 22:22; Judges 2:1, Judges 6:11, and Judges 13:3ff.
- In all of these examples, “the” angel of the Lord is equated with deity and is, therefore, usually identified as the pre-incarnate Christ.
- Interestingly, “the” angel of the Lord does not appear after the birth of Christ, presumably because Christ has taken on flesh at that point and no longer needs to manifest himself in pre-incarnate form.
- Thus, “the angel of the Lord” is not the same as “an angel of the Lord”

Luke 1:11 ~ And an angel of the Lord appeared to him, standing to the right of the altar of incense.

Acts 5:19 ~ But during the night an angel of the Lord opened the gates of the prison, and taking them out he said,

- After Christ’s birth, when “an” angel of the Lord is mentioned, it refers to a true angel (see also: Matthew 1:20; Matthew 2:13; Luke 2:9; Acts 8:26; Acts 12:7)

MINISTRIES OF GOOD ANGELS

Psalm 103:20 ~ Bless the LORD, you His angels, Mighty in strength, who perform His word, Obeying the voice of His word!

Hebrews 1:7 ~ Who makes his angels winds, and His ministers a flame of fire.

- Good angels exist to do the Lord's will and to accomplish His purposes
- Although God can act independently (i.e. without the use of means to accomplish His will), He has chosen to use instruments such as angels fulfill His will
- Thus, it is not surprising that we find in the Scriptures angels acting as the agents through which God works

They Worship God

Psalm 148:2~ Praise Him, all His angels; Praise Him, all His hosts!

Isaiah 6:3~ And one called out to another and said, "Holy, Holy, Holy, is the LORD of hosts, The whole earth is full of His glory

Revelation 5:11-12~ many angels... saying... Worthy is the Lamb that was slain

Revelation 7:11~And all the angels were standing around the throne and [around] the elders and the four living creatures; and they fell on their faces before the throne and worshiped God,

- While this activity usually takes place in God's presence, on at least one occasion it took place on earth – at the birth of Jesus

Luke 2:13-14 ~ And suddenly there appeared with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying, "Glory to God in the highest, And on earth peace among men with whom He is pleased."

They Serve God

1. They were mediators of the law

Acts 7:53~ you who received the law as ordained by angels, and [yet] did not keep it."

Galatians 3:19~ Why the Law then? It was added because of transgressions, having been ordained through angels by the agency of a mediator, until the seed should come to whom the promise had been made.

Hebrews 2:2 ~For if the word spoken through angels proved unalterable, and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompense,

- The Bible doesn't tell us exactly how angels were involved in the giving of the Law

2. They communicated God's message to people

Luke 1:11-20 –An angel announced the birth of John the Baptist to Zechariah

Luke 1:26-38 – Gabriel announced the birth of Jesus to Mary

Acts 8:26–An angel told Philip where to meet the Ethiopian eunuch

Acts 10:3-7 –An angel told Cornelius to summon Peter

Acts 12:7-11 – An angel spoke to Peter in prison

- Angels communicated God’s truth as the Holy Spirit directed them
- This is keeping in line with the basic meaning of the word *angel* which means “messenger”
- What about those today who claim messages from angels or other forms of new revelation?
- We must remember that the canon is closed and the Scriptures are complete and that Satan is a deceiver who disguises himself as “an angel of light” (2 Cor 11:14)

3. They are instruments of God’s judgment

2 Samuel 24:16-17 ~ When the angel stretched out his hand toward Jerusalem to destroy it, the Lord relented from the calamity and said to the angel who destroyed the people, “It is enough! Now relax your hand!” And the angel of the Lord was by the threshing floor of Araunah the Jebusite. 17 Then David spoke to the Lord when he saw the angel who was striking down the people, and said, “Behold, it is I who have sinned, and it is I who have done wrong; but these sheep, what have they done? Please let Your hand be against me and against my father’s house.”

2 Chronicles 32:21 ~ And the LORD sent an angel who destroyed every mighty warrior, commander and officer in the camp of the king of Assyria.

Acts 12:23~ And immediately an angel of the Lord struck him (Herod) because he did not give God the glory, and he was eaten by worms and died.

Revelation 7:2~ And I saw another angel ascending from the rising of the sun, having the seal of the living God; and he cried out with a loud voice to the four angels to whom it was granted to harm the earth and the sea,

- Angels are the executioners of God at the 2nd Coming of Christ:

Matthew 13:39-41, 49-50 ~ and the enemy who sowed them is the devil, and the harvest is the end of the age; and the reapers are angels. So just as the tares are gathered up and burned with fire, so shall it be at the end of the age. The Son of Man will send forth His angels, and they will gather out of His kingdom all stumbling blocks, and those who commit lawlessness ... So it will be at the end of the age; the angels will come forth and take out the wicked from among the righteous, and will throw them into the furnace of fire; in that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

2 Thessalonians 1:7-10 ~ and to give relief to you who are afflicted and to us as well when the Lord Jesus will be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels in flaming fire, dealing out retribution to those who do not know God and to those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. These will pay the penalty of eternal destruction, away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power, when He comes to be glorified in His saints on that day, and to be marveled at among all who have believed—for our testimony to you was believed.

- Notice particularly that the 7 trumpet judgments (Rev 8-9) and the 7 bowl judgments (Rev 16) are all unleashed by angels
- Notice also that an angel is involved in judging Satan and condemning him to the abyss for 1,000 years (Rev 20:1-3)
- Angels possess enormous God-given power which will be released at the end of the age
- Thus, they will serve as instruments of God’s great wrath and justice poured out on the wicked and unbelieving

I doubt that many figurines of punishing angels found their way into gift boxes last Christmas, but the Bible doesn’t hesitate to describe this part of their activity.

Kenneth O. Gangel

They Serve Believers

Hebrews 1:14 ~ Are they not all ministering spirits, sent out to render service for the sake of those who will inherit salvation?

- How do angels “render service” for believers?

1. They are the Answer to Some Prayers

Acts 12:5-10~ So Peter was kept in the prison, but prayer for him was being made fervently by the church to God... And behold, an angel of the Lord suddenly appeared, ... saying, "Get up quickly." And his chains fell off his hands. ... And when they had passed the first and second guard, they came to the iron gate that leads into the city, which opened for them by itself; and they went out and went along one street; and immediately the angel departed from him.

2. They Aid in Salvation

Acts 8:26~ But an angel of the Lord spoke to Philip saying, "Arise and go south to the road that descends from Jerusalem to Gaza."

Acts 10:3 ~ About the ninth hour of the day he clearly saw in a vision an angel of God who had [just] come in to him, and said to him, "Cornelius!"

3. They Observe Christians

1 Corinthians 4:9~ For, I think, God has exhibited us apostles last of all, as men condemned to death; because we have become a spectacle to the world, both to angels and to men.

Ephesians 3: 10 ~ in order that the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known through the church to the rulers and the authorities in the heavenly [places.]

1 Peter 1:12~ It was revealed to them that they were not serving themselves, but you, in these things which now have been announced to you through those who preached the gospel to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven - things into which angels long to look.

4. They Encourage and Help in Times of Danger

Psalms 91:11-12 ~ For He will give His angels charge concerning you, To guard you in all your ways. They will bear you up in their hands, That you do not strike your foot against a stone.

Daniel 6:22 ~ My God sent His angel and shut the lions' mouths and they have not harmed me, inasmuch as I was found innocent before Him; and also toward you, O king, I have committed no crime."

Matthew 4:11 ~ Then the devil left Him; and behold, angels came and began to minister to Him.

Acts 5:19-20 ~ But during the night an angel of the Lord opened the gates of the prison, and taking them out he said, "Go, stand and speak to the people in the temple the whole message of this Life"

Acts 27:23-24~ For this very night an angel of the God to whom I belong and whom I serve stood before me, saying, 'Do not be afraid, Paul; you must stand before Caesar; and behold, God has granted you all those who are sailing with you.'

- Angels do protect and guard believers

Regarding accounts of angelic protection, Dr. Kenneth Gangel gives the following account which is similar to others I have heard about, especially with missionaries: A veteran missionary friend of mine (now retired) tells the story about a woman missionary alone on a compound in northern Africa during a riot by one of the local tribes. She hid in a closet and prayed as warriors advanced along the dusty road toward the houses where the white intruders lived. Amazingly, she never heard them. No one ever entered her building, and there was no evidence of any turmoil. My friend learned later that the warriors, who intended to kill everyone at the missionary compound and burn it to the ground, instead retreated when they found the compound guarded by tall warriors dressed in white and carrying large swords. Angels?

Taken from *Angels, God's Ministering Spirits*, by J. Hampton Keathley,

<https://bible.org/article/angels-god%E2%80%99s-ministering-spirits>

5. They Care for the Righteous at Death

Luke 16:22 ~ Now it came about that the poor man died and he was carried away by the angels to Abraham's bosom; and the rich man also died and was buried.

MISCELLANEOUS ISSUES

Are there such things as “Guardian Angels”?

“Each of us is assigned to a guardian angel at the moment of conception. That angel is the coordinator for other angels.” ~ Eileen Elias Freeman, Angelologist

- Does the Psalmist teach that believers have a guardian angel?

Psalm 91:11 ~ For He will give His angels charge concerning you, To guard you in all your ways.

- No, this passage is directed to those who make the Lord their refuge; it is not a promise that every person has a specific guardian angel
- Does Jesus teach in Matthew that believers have a guardian angel?

Matthew 18:10 ~ See that you do not despise one of these little ones, for I say to you, that their angels in heaven continually behold the face of My Father who is in heaven.

- This passage does not teach that every believer has their own guardian angel as was the Jewish tradition in Jesus’ day:
 1. “These little ones” - Many commentators interpret this as referring not to physical children but to Christians. Christ was referring to the young children around him as a visual illustration of God’s spiritual children.
 2. Jesus speaks of believers and their angels in a collective not in an individual sense
 3. The focus of the angels’ attention is God, not believers. They are continually beholding His face.

4. The implication is that angels never take their eyes off God, less they miss some direction from Him regarding a task they are to perform on behalf of a believer
 5. This passage does emphasize God's care and concern for believers and that He has hosts of angels in His presence ready to be dispatched to help them when appropriate.
 6. The key emphasis is that it is God who is responsible to protect and guide believers. He can use angels though this is not at all necessary.
- Does Luke teach that believers have a guardian angel?

Acts 21:13 -15 ~ And when he(Peter) knocked at the door of the gate, a servant-girl named Rhoda came to answer. And when she recognized Peter's voice, because of her joy she did not open the gate, but ran in and announced that Peter was standing in front of the gate. And they said to her, "You are out of your mind!" But she kept insisting that it was so. And they kept saying, "It is his angel."

1. Jews at the time had a superstitious belief in guardian angels and thought that a person's guardian angel looked like the person themselves
2. This superstition is merely reflected in this text; it is neither affirmed here or anywhere else in Scripture.

What does Hebrews 13:2 mean?

Hebrews 13:2 ~ Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for by this some have entertained angels without knowing it.

- The audience that the book of Hebrews was written to was largely made up of those with a background in Judaism and a strong familiarity with the OT. Thus, though the author does not mention the OT characters he was thinking of, his audience would have immediately known:
 - Genesis 18:1ff - Abraham and Sarah
 - Genesis 19:1ff - Lot
 - Judges 6:11-24 - Gideon
 - Judges 13:6-20 - Manoah
- The focus of this passage is to encourage believers to show hospitality to people they do not know at all.
- He is *not* saying that we should show hospitality to strangers, because we just might be serving an angel
- He gives an extreme illustration of some who served strangers and unknowingly showed hospitality to angels.
- In other words -serve those whom God brings across your path because you don't know how He can use it for His glory