Angels: Definition & Characteristics (Parts 1-2)

Prepared by Nathan L Morrison for Sunday May 20th & 27th, 2018

Text: Heb. 1:13-14

### Intro (Part 1)

1. The world has been fascinated with angels for centuries (millennia) and there are vast differences in the way they are depicted.
2. Because of that, what do we normally picture in our minds when we think of an angel?
   1. Many people, of course, think about a beautiful woman or perhaps a chubby little baby.
   2. Perhaps you think of a beautiful woman with a long, flowing robe, perhaps with huge wings and maybe a halo; and we might think of Valentine’s Day’s version of an angel from Greek Mythology: Cupid, the chubby little baby with a bow and arrow.
   3. Just on Google alone, probably 90% of all angel images on the Internet fall into one of these two categories – beautiful women or chubby babies!
   4. The remaining 10% of angel images fall into one of these two categories: Images that are inappropriate; and Images of some rather evil-looking creatures that appear to be from various video games.
3. From what we know about angels in the Bible, we know that the creatures we read about in the Scriptures would have never starred in a Victoria’s Secret commercial!
   1. The Scriptures reveal that angels are never pictured as being women! Where did that prevalent idea come from? Whenever an angel appears in human form, it appears in the form of a man.
      1. Whenever we find an angel’s name, it is a masculine name, such as Michael or Gabriel. It uses masculine pronouns (he, him, his, and so on).
      2. That eliminates roughly half of all of the artwork depicting angels!
   2. In God’s word it is rare to read of any angels with wings!
      1. We read about the Cherubim and Seraphim having wings, but other than that, we can’t really read of angels depicted with wings.
   3. The Scriptures reveal that angels are never pictured as being chubby little babies (or some variation of that), or depicted as a child of any kind!
      1. Instead, in their spirit form, angels are usually described as awe-­‐ inspiring figures – shining with brilliant light, carrying flaming swords and appearing in forms where the natural reaction of most people was to fall down in worship and fear. *(Children and babies don’t usually illicit such reactions from people – “Awww-how-cute-reaction,” NOT dread)*
      2. Just by looking at God’s word, we have eliminated basically the other half of all angel-related artwork in the world around us!
4. Most people are interested in angels, but most are terribly uninformed in terms of what the Scriptures actually say they are or what they do!
5. Let’s discuss angels, their definition & characteristics as defined by the Scriptures! *(not by man’s ideas)*

#### Angels: Definition

* 1. Although angels are mentioned hundreds of times in the Scriptures (108 in O.T. & 186 in N.T.), never is an angel the main point of the story. And that is the main point: *Angels are never the main point!* 
     1. Instead, the story is about Abraham or Jesus, and an angel is mentioned.
  2. What does “Angel” mean?
     1. Both in Hebrew and in Greek, the term translated as “angel” literally refers to a “messenger.” An angel, therefore, is a messenger
     2. *H4397 mal'âk [mal-awk']:* To despatch as a deputy; a messenger; specifically of God, that is, an angel (also a prophet, priest or teacher): - ambassador, angel, king, messenger.
     3. *G32 aggelos [ang'-el-os]:* A messenger; especially an “angel”; by implication a preacher: - angel, messenger. (Broad use for term! – like “elder”)
  3. Three ways this term is normally used:
     1. 1st: The term “the angel of Yahweh” or “the angel of the Lord” (Gen. 16:7; Judges 6) refers to the authority of the angel to speak for God! (Many people believe when it says, “the angel of the Lord” it is referring to God Himself)
        + 1. *Gen. 16:7-13:* “The angel of the Lord” met Hagar in the wilderness and promised to bless her with many descendants.”
          2. *Gen. 18:* Abraham with 3 angels, and one turned out to be God!
          3. *Exodus 3:* The burning bush. Ex. 3:2 states “the angel of the Lord” was the form of the fire that burned but didn’t consume the bush, however, it says God spoke from the bush to Moses and doesn’t mention the angel again.
          4. *Judges 6:* Gideon dealt with “the angel of the Lord,” who spoke to him from God! *Heb. 2:2: Words spoken by angels unalterable*
     2. 2nd: The term “angel” or “messenger” is also used to refer to various human messengers.
        + 1. Is. 42:19: The same term is also used by Isaiah to refer to Israel.
          2. Haggai 1:13: Haggai is described as being the Lord’s “messenger,” and the term for “angel” *(H4397)* is used there.
          3. Mal. 2:7: The same term is also used to refer to the priests. The priests are described as God’s messengers. Note: Hebrew word is MALAK *(H4397),* and where the name Malachi *(H4401: from 4397)* comes from! He was a “messenger” of God.
          4. *Some believe the “angel” of the 7 churches in Asia in Revelation chapters 2-3 refer to a human recipient of the letter.*
     3. 3rd and most usual sense of this word: Reference to “spiritual beings” – not divine *(Heb. 1:4),* but not human *(Heb. 2:7-9),* either.
        + 1. Hebrews 1:13-14: “Ministering spirits.”
          2. The angels who delivered a message to Lot in Sodom – Gen. 19.
          3. The angel who delivered a message to Abraham – Gen. 22.
          4. The angel who delivered a message to Paul in Acts 27 (message that Paul would not die in the shipwreck).
          5. The angel Gabriel who delivered messages to Daniel *(Dan. 8:16; 9:21)* and to Zechariah and Mary in *Luke 1:19, 26.*
          6. Michael, the Archangel, who was mentioned in *Daniel 10:13, 21; 12:1* as “one of the chief princes,” and as “the great prince;” is identified as “the archangel” in Jude 9 *(see also Rev. 12:7).*
     4. There are hundreds of other examples, but the main point here is to define the term, and the word “angel” refers to a “messenger of God.”
  4. Angels, whether sent from God to deliver a message, whether human or supernatural, they serve a purpose of revealing God’s will to mankind!

Conclusion (Part 1)

1. There is something else we know about the angels:
   1. According to the Lord himself, “…there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents” *(Lk. 15:7, 10).*
2. With that in mind, God tells us through His word that we must repent and be baptized for the forgiveness of our sins! *(Mk. 16:16; Acts 2:38; 22:16)*
3. If you haven’t yet, and would like to, today you can cause the angels to rejoice by obeying the gospel, or repenting of your sins!

### Intro (Part 2) – Sunday May 27th, 2018 by Nathan L Morrison

1. The world has been fascinated with angels for centuries and there are vast differences in the way they are depicted (World sees beautiful women, winged beings, and chubby babies for most part, while Scriptures depict them as usually appearing as men, and rarely with wings).
2. Most people are interested in angels, but most are terribly uninformed in terms of what the Scriptures actually says they are or what they do!
3. What they are: Messengers!
   1. Both in Hebrew and in Greek, the term translated as “angel” literally refers to a “messenger.” An angel, therefore, is a messenger.
   2. *H4397 mal'âk [mal-awk']:* A messenger; specifically of God, that is, an angel (also a prophet, priest or teacher): - ambassador, angel, king, messenger.
   3. *G32 aggelos [ang'-el-os]:* A messenger; especially an “angel”; by implication a preacher: - angel, messenger. (Broad use for term! – like “elder”)
4. We looked at their definition so now let’s look at their characteristics as defined by the Scriptures!

#### Angels: Characteristics *(What do we know about them?)*

* 1. 1st: Angels are CREATED BEINGS
     1. We don’t know exactly when they were created. Only God knows!
     2. Gen. 3:24: The Cherubim were stationed there with a flaming sword, to keep Adam and Eve from reentering the Garden of Eden. *(There, in the Garden)*
     3. Job 38:4-7: They seem to have been present at the creation of the world. “Where were you, “…when the morning stars sang together and all the sons of God shouted for joy?”)
     4. Col. 1:16: “For by Him all things were created, both in the heavens and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities — all things have been created through Him and for Him.”) Also stated in Jn. 1:1-3.
     5. Rev. 4:11: The 24 elders praised Jesus, “Worthy are You, our Lord and our God, to receive glory and honor and power; for You created all things, and because of Your will they existed, and were created.”
     6. Ps. 148:1-2, 5: “Praise Him, all His angels; Praise Him, all His hosts! … Let them praise the name of the Lord, for He commanded and they were created.”
        + 1. Created beings who dwell in His presence praising Him – Is. 6:2-3; Rev. 5:11-14
     7. *Angels are created beings and praise God!*
  2. 2nd: Angels are SPIRITUAL BEINGS
     1. Heb. 1:13-14: “Are they not all ministering spirits, sent out to render service for the sake of those who will inherit salvation?” *Angels, therefore, are spirits, and as spiritual beings, they have the ability to MORPH & appear in different forms (appearances)!*
     2. Most of the time in the Bible, angels appear as regular men, as they did with Abraham and Sarah in Genesis 18: Three men showed up and one of those men ended up being the Lord Himself, but the other two were angels (sent to destroy cities of Sodom & Gomorrah – Gen. 19)
        + 1. In this way people have entertained angels and not known it, by showing hospitality to strangers! (Heb. 13:2)
     3. Mk. 16:5: The women who came to the tomb of Jesus saw a “young man *(Lk. 24:4-5: Two men)* clothed in a long white robe.” *(Jn. 20:12: It was 2 angels)*
     4. Mt. 28:2-3: The angel who rolled away the stone had an “appearance like lightning, and his clothing white as snow.” (The soldiers were terrified – 28:4)
     5. Jud. 13:3, 6, 8-9, 16-21: The “angel of the Lord” foretold the birth of Samson, and they did not know it was an angel, only that his appearance was “very awesome” (KJV: “terrible”) and only knew he was an angel when he “ascended in the flame of the altar.”
     6. Num. 22:22-32; II Kings 6:17: Sometimes, they can even be invisible! Balaam’s donkey saw the angel with a drawn sword but Balaam did not till God opened his eyes! Elisha at Dothan – God opened the eyes of Elisha’s servant and he could see the host around them, “And behold, the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire all around Elisha.”
     7. Mark 12:25 (Mt. 22:30): As spiritual beings they do not marry in Heaven!
     8. *Angels are not of the physical realm, but are spiritual beings!*
  3. 3rd: Angels have some kind of HIERARCHY among the angels – there is some kind of RANK OR ARRANGEMENT
     + 1. Rev. 12:7: Michael and his angels waging war with the dragon. Michael seems to be a leader of other angels. Jude 9 calls him, “archangel.” Dan. 12:1: Michael is responsible for standing guard over God’s people. *(I Thess. 4:16)*
       2. Lk. 1:19 (v.26): “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.” Gabriel also appears two times in the book of Daniel *(8:16; 9:21),* but it is more of a cheerful and encouraging role as opposed to the more of a military role played by Michael *(Dan. 10:13, 21; 12:1).*
       3. Ps. 80:1; Ezek. 1:5-11; 10:19: Cherubim are pictured as having four faces and four wings. Cherubim were placed at the entrance of the Garden of Eden, and were those creatures that were placed above the Ark of the Covenant.
       4. Is. 6:2-3, 6-7: Seraphim are only mentioned once in the Scriptures and were creatures with six wings, and who constantly praise God saying, “Holy, holy, holy.” Some have said that the Seraphim are not really angels, and yet when we look at Is. 6:6-7, we find that the Seraphim gave a message to Isaiah. An angel is a messenger.
       5. *There are different kinds of angels or ranks of angels!*
  4. 4th: Angels are NOT DEAD PEOPLE
     1. Over and over again, you hear people say something to the effect that this person who has departed from us is now one of God’s angels in heaven.
     2. Lk. 16:19-31: The rich man was still the rich man in torment and Lazarus was still Lazarus in Paradise *(Man was made in the image of God, not the angels! – Gen. 1:26-27)*
     3. *We do not become angels when we die! (I Jn. 3:2)*
  5. 5th: Angels’ numbers – THERE ARE MANY OF THEM
     1. Heb. 12:22: There are “myriads” of angels (NKJ: “innumerable”). Myriads: *G3461 murias:* a 10,000; by extension a “myriad” or indefinite number: - 10k.
     2. Deut. 33:2: The Lord, “…came from the midst of ten thousand holy ones.”
     3. Ps. 68:17: The “chariots of God are myriads, thousands upon thousands.”
     4. Dan. 7:10 (in one of Daniel’s visions): Daniel saw God, and it says that, “…thousands upon thousands were attending Him, and myriads upon myriads were standing before Him.”
     5. Rev. 5:11: John said, “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 of myriads, and thousands of thousands.”
     6. So, how many angels are there?
     7. *There are many of them. In fact, like the stars of heaven, they cannot be numbered!*
  6. 6th: Angels can SIN & WILL BE JUDGED
     1. II Pet. 2:4; Jude 6: Sinful angels are kept in “eternal bonds” in darkness, reserved “for the judgment of the great day.”
     2. Mt. 25:41: Jesus said their end will be the same as the wicked parted to his left, “the eternal fire which has been prepared for the devil and his angels.”
     3. *Angels that rebelled and sinned will be judged and punished!*
  7. 7th: Angels are LIMITED IN THEIR KNOWLEDGE
     1. Mt. 24:36-39: Unlike God who knows everything, angels do not know everything.
     2. I Peter 1:10-12: Angels “longed to look” into details concerning Christ in prophecy!
     3. They are servants, not managers.
     4. *They are limited in their knowledge!*
  8. 8th: Angels are incredibly POWERFUL
     1. Gen. 19:11:Two angels sent to rescue Lot and destroy Sodom & Gomorrah struck men of Sodom with blindness.
     2. I Chr. 21:15-16: David saw the “destroying angel” hovering with a sword.
     3. II Kings 19:35: “Then it happened that night that the angel of the Lord went out and struck 185,000 in the camp of the Assyrians; and when men rose early in the morning, behold, all of them were dead.” One angel took out 185,000 enemy soldiers! *(Mt. 26:53: Jesus had at His command 12 Legions of angels!)*
     4. Acts 12:6-10: It was one angel who rescued Peter from jail: opening multiple prison gates and overcoming at least four squads of Roman soldiers in the process. Peter was even sleeping between two soldiers and bound with two chains, but those restraints were no match for an angel.
     5. Acts 12:23: Later in that chapter, it was an angel that struck arrogant King Herod with worms so that he died.
     6. *Angels, therefore, have some amazing power and some amazing abilities!*
  9. 9th: Angels are NOT TO BE WORSHIPED
     1. Col. 2:18: Paul very specifically warns about something that must have been a problem at the time – angel worship! *(Josh. 5:13-15: Not an angel!)*
     2. Rev. 19:10; 22:8-9: John had to be rebuked for doing it twice!
     3. *Angels, then, as mighty and amazing as they are, are not to be worshiped!*
  10. 10th: Angels will CARRY AWAY THE FAITHFUL TO HADES
      1. Luke 16:22: The poor man was “carried away by the angels to Abraham's bosom.”
      2. *Angels, according to Jesus, carry away the souls of the righteous!*
  11. 11th: Angels will be AGENTS OF JUDGMENT WITH CHRIST
      1. Angels played a role in the judgments of God in the past and will again when Jesus returns!
         + 1. Angels destroyed Sodom & Gomorrah for God (Gen. 19:11-13, 21-25: The angels said, “we are about to destroy this place, because their outcry has become so great before the LORD that the LORD has sent us to destroy it.” We can read that God rained down destruction from Heaven, but we learn it was through these two angels!
           2. Ps. 78:43-51: Angels were involved in the plagues against Egypt.
           3. I Chr. 21:11-16: “The angel of the Lord” killed 70,000 men of Israel with pestilence and was about to destroy Jerusalem when God said, “Enough.” David saw the “destroying angel” hovering with a sword!
      2. II Thess. 1:7-9: The Lord will be revealed from Heaven with “His mighty angels in flaming fire” dealing judgment to the wicked!
      3. Mt. 13:36-43: The Parable of the Tares explained: The angels are “reapers” and will throw the wicked (tares) into the furnace of fire!
      4. Mt. 13:47-51: The Parable of the Dragnet explained: The angels will throw the wicked bad fish) into the furnace of fire!
      5. *Angels carry out God’s will, whether by message or by judgment!*
  12. Angels are “messengers” of God and are amazing in how they carry out God’s commands, and yet, with all their powers, they are not to be worshiped!

## Conclusion (Part 2)

1. Angels long to look into the affairs of men concerning prophecy *(I Pet.1:10-12)* but also rejoice over the sinner who repents!
   1. According to the Lord himself, “…there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents” *(Lk. 15:7,10).*
2. God, in His word, tells us how to cause such rejoicing in Heaven: one must repent and be baptized for the forgiveness of sins! *(Mk. 16:16; Acts 2:38; 22:16)*
3. If you haven’t yet, and would like to, today you can cause the angels in Heaven to rejoice by obeying the gospel, or repenting of your sins!
4. Whatever your requests, let them be made known ***NOW*** while we stand & sing!