

Week Two: - Angels: Ministering spirits (Part Two)

*"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."*¹ - Millard Erickson



Once again: 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.

THE ORGANIZATION OF THE ANGELS

I. THE NUMBER OF ANGELS –

- a. There are large numbers of angels. Scripture has various ways of indicating their numbers: **"myriads"** (Deut. 33: 2); "tens of thousands and thousands of thousands" (Ps. 68: 17); "twelve legions" (36,000 to 72,000— the size of the Roman legion varied between 3,000 and 6,000) (Matt. 26: 53); "thousands upon thousands of angels in joyful assembly" (Heb. 12: 22); "thousands upon thousands, and ten thousand times ten thousand" (Rev. 5: 11).
- b. It is suggested that there is an angel for every person. Matt. 18:10 *"Take heed that you do not despise one of these little ones, for I say to you that in heaven their angels always see the face of My Father who is in heaven.)*.
- c. There is no increase or decrease in their number, whatever it is.

II. THE FACT OF THEIR ORGANIZATION

The Scriptures speak of the **"assembly"** and "council" of the angels (Ps. 89:5, 7), of their organization for battle (Rev. 12:7), and of a king over the demon-locusts (9:11). They are also given governmental classifications, which indicate organization and ranking (Eph. 3:10, good angels; and 6:12, evil angels).

III. THE RANKING OF ANGELS

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

- a. The **Archangel** - Only Michael is designated as the archangel or high ranking angel (Jude 9; 1 Thess. 4:16). Although the Bible nowhere speaks of other archangels, there evidently are other high-ranking angels (Dan. 10:13).
- b. Chief **Princes** - The phrase (Dan. 10:13), referring to a group of superior angels, underscores the fact of ranking among the angels. Of this group of chief princes, Michael apparently is the foremost one because he is the archangel.
- c. **Governmental** Rulers
 - i. Rulers or principalities. These words, used seven times by Paul, indicate an order of angels both good and evil involved in governing the universe (Rom. 8:38; Eph. 1:21; 3:10; 6:12; Col. 1:16; 2:10, 15).
 - ii. **Authorities** or powers. This likely emphasizes the superhuman authority of angels and demons exercised in relation to the affairs of the world (Eph. 1:21; 2:2; 3:10; 6:12; Col. 1:16; 2:10, 15; 1 Pet. 3:22).
 - iii. Powers. This word underscores the fact that angels and demons have greater power than humans (2 Pet. 2:11). See Ephesians 1:21 and 1 Peter 3:22.
 - iv. Place of rule. In one place demons are designated as world rulers of this darkness (Eph. 6:12).
 - v. Thrones or **dominions**. This designation emphasizes the dignity and authority of angelic rulers in God's use of them in His government (Eph. 1:21; Col. 1:16; 2 Pet. 2:10; Jude 8).
- d. Cherubim - Cherubim constitute another order of angels, evidently of high rank since Satan was a cherub (Ezek. 28:14, 16).
 - i. They seem to function as **guardians** of the holiness of God, having guarded the way to the tree of life in the Garden of Eden (Gen. 3:24).
 - ii. Decorations (Exod. 26:1; 36:8; 1 Kings 6:23–29).
 - iii. Involved with **Ezekiel** (Ezek. 1:4–5; 10:15–20).
 - iv. The millennial temple (Ezek. 41:18–20).
- e. **Seraphim** - All we know about this rank of angelic beings is found in Isaiah 6:2–7. Apparently the seraphim were an order similar to the cherubim.

IV. PARTICULAR ANGELS

- a. **Gabriel** - Mention has already been made of Michael because of his high rank. Gabriel also appears to be a high-ranking angel, though he is not designated as an archangel as Michael is. His name means "**hero of God**," and his function was to bring important messages from God to several individuals (Dan. 8:16; 9:21, to Daniel; Luke 1:19, to Zacharias; Luke 1:26, to Mary).
- b. Angels Associated with **Future Judgments** - Two of the three series of judgments of the Revelation are announced by angels. Revelation 8–9, chap. 16.
- c. Angels of the **Seven Churches** of Revelation 2–3 Each letter is addressed to the "angel" of the church, and those angels were seen in the right hand of the risen Christ in the vision of 1:16, 20. It is uncertain whether these are angelic beings or the human leaders of those churches. Though the word "angel" clearly means messenger, it can refer to a superhuman being, that is, to the guardian angel for each church. Or it may refer to a human messenger, that is, to the human leader (pastor) of each church (see Mark 1:2; Luke 9:52; and James 2:25 for the use of "angel" as designating human beings).
- d. Angel of **Yahweh** –
 - i. As discussed in chapter 40, the Angel of Yahweh is a Christophany, a preincarnate appearance of Christ. (Gen. 16:7–12; 21:17–18; 22:11–18; Exod. 3:2; Judg. 2:1–4; 5:23; 6:11–24; 13:3–22; 2 Sam. 24:16; Zech. 1:12; 3:1; 12:8).
 - ii. Appearances of the Angel ceased after the incarnation of Christ, which supports conclusions that He was the preincarnate Christ.

THE MINISTRY OF ANGELS

- I. Basically and essentially good angels are **servants** (Heb. 1:14).
 - a. IN RELATION TO GOD
 - i. They Praise Him (Ps. 148:1–2; Isa. 6:3)
 - ii. They Worship Him (Heb. 1:6; Rev. 5:8–13)
 - iii. They **Rejoice** in What He Does (Job 38:6–7)

- iv. They Serve Him (Ps. 103:20; Rev. 22:9)
- v. They **Appear** Before Him (Job 1:6; 2:1)
- vi. They Are Instruments of God's **Judgments** (Rev. 7:1; 8:2)
- b. IN RELATION TO NEW ERAS OR TIMES OF CHANGE
 - i. Angels appear to be unusually active when God institutes a new epoch in the sweep of history.
 - ii. They Joined in Praise When the **Earth Was Created** (Job 38:6–7)
 - iii. They Were Involved in the Giving of the **Mosaic** Law (Gal. 3:19; Heb. 2:2)
 - iv. They Were Active at the **birth** of Christ (Matt. 1:20; 4:11)
 - v. They Were Active During the **Early Years** of the Church (Acts 8:26; 10:3, 7; 12:11)
 - vi. They Will Be Involved in Events Surrounding the **Return** of Christ (Matt. 25:31; 1 Thess. 4:16)
- c. IN RELATION TO THE MINISTRY OF CHRIST
 - i. At His Birth
 - 1. **Prediction**. Gabriel predicted His birth (Matt. 1:20; Luke 1:26–28).
 - 2. **Announcement**. An angel announced His birth to the shepherds and was then accompanied in praise by a multitude of angels (Luke 2:8–15).
 - ii. During His Life
 - 1. **Warning**. An angel warned Joseph and Mary to flee to Egypt to escape Herod's wrath (Matt. 2:13–15).
 - 2. **Direction**. An angel directed the family to return to Israel after Herod died (vv. 19–21).
 - 3. **Service**. Angels ministered to Him after His temptation (4:11) and in His stress in Gethsemane (Luke 22:43).
 - 4. **Defense**. He said that legions of angels stood ready to come to His defense if called on (Matt. 26:53).
 - iii. After His Resurrection
 - 1. **The Stone**. An angel rolled away the stone from the tomb (Matt. 28:1–2).

2. **An Announcement.** Angels announced His resurrection to the women on Easter morning (Matt. 28:5–6; Luke 24:5–7).
 3. **Ascension.** Angels were present at His ascension (Acts 1:10–11).
- iv. At His Second Coming
1. **Rapture.** The voice of the archangel will be heard at the translation of the church (1 Thess. 4:16).
 2. **Second Coming.** Angels will accompany Him at the Second Coming (Matt. 25:31; 2 Thess. 1:7).
 3. **Judgment.** Angels will separate the wheat from the tares at His second coming (Matt. 13:39–40).
- d. IN RELATION TO NATIONS OF THE WORLD
- i. In Relation to the Nation Israel Michael, the archangel, especially **guards Israel** (Dan. 12:1).
 - ii. In Relation to Other Nations Angels watch over rulers and nations (Dan. 4:17) and seek to **influence** their human leaders (10:21; 11:1). During the coming Tribulation years, angels will be involved in the administration of God’s judgments (Rev. 8–9; 16).
- e. IN RELATION TO THE UNRIGHTEOUS
- i. Angels Announce Impending Judgments (Gen. 19:13; Rev. 14:6–7; 19:17–18)
 - ii. Angels **Inflict Judgments** on the Unrighteous (Acts 12:23; Rev. 16:1)
 - iii. Angels Will **Separate** the Righteous from the Unrighteous (Matt. 13:39–40)
- f. IN RELATION TO THE CHURCH
- i. Basic Ministry Basically angels **help believers** (Heb. 1:14).
 - ii. Background Ministry Angels have been involved in communicating and revealing the meaning of truth, which the church benefits from today (Dan. 7:15–27; 8:13–26; 9:20–27; Rev. 1:1; 22:6, 8).
 - iii. Specific Ministries
 1. **Prayer requests.** They bring answers to prayer (Acts 12:5–10).

2. Salvation. They aid in winning people to Christ (Acts 8:26; 10:3).
3. **Observing**. They observe Christian order, work, and suffering (1 Cor. 4:9; 11:10; Eph. 3:10; 1 Pet. 1:12).
4. **Encouragement**. They encourage in times of danger (Acts 27:23–24).
5. **Present at death**. They care for the righteous at the time of death (Luke 16:22).

Probably the statements about angels observing the conduct of redeemed people startle our thinking as much as any of these truths. What about this?

1 Cor 4.9; 11.2-16; 1 Pet 1.1-10-12