

ANGELOLOGY (16)

QUESTION #21 - Who are the unfallen angels?

Now the unfallen angelic host is innumerable. Since all of the angels are not numbered, it is certain that all of the angels are not named in the Bible. However, it is just as certain that many unfallen angels are named or categorized in the Bible and a complete study of Angelology requires the mention of those angels who are identified. In the realm of unfallen angels there are at least eight who are mentioned:

(Unfallen Angel #1) - The elect angels.

These are holy angels of God who have been divinely elected or chosen by God for specific service (I Tim. 5:21). All unfallen angels may be classified as holy, elect angels. This term does imply that God did make a sovereign choice concerning angels. As Dr. Chafer said, "The fall of some angels is no more unanticipated by God than the fall of man." Unlike with man (chosen before the foundation of the world- Eph. 1:4), the Bible does not say when God chose His elect angels. It is possible that this classification did not exist until 1/3rd of the angels had rebelled. As Dr. Chafer said this term may imply "...that angels have passed a period of probation" (*Ibid.*, p. 17). The assignments, responsibilities and ministries of elect angels vary.

(Unfallen Angel #2) - The Church angels.

Church angels are holy angels of God who are assigned to a local church. Paul's charge to Timothy, who was ministering in the church of Ephesus, would indicate there are angels that do monitor church life (I Tim. 5:21). It appears however, from what Jesus Christ says that there is one key angel assigned to each church (Rev. 2:1, 8, 12, 18; 3:1, 7, 14). This angel would be responsible for assessing church life and giving reports to God concerning life in the church. He would be involved in the blessing or lack of blessing given to a church. It is possible that all angels connected to people who come to church (both unfallen and fallen) are subordinate to and accountable to this key church angel, for this angel is the central angel of the church. As Dr. Ryrie observed, this angel "...can refer to a superhuman being, that is, the guardian angel for each church" (*Ibid.*, p. 130).

(Unfallen Angel #3) - The Cherubim angels.

The cherubim angels are holy and highly exalted angels who are closely associated with the throne of God and with defending and protecting God's holy character (Gen. 3:22-24; Ex. 25:17-20; Ezek. 10:1-19). Dr. Chafer observed: "The cherubim first appear at the gate of the Garden of Eden after man has been expelled and as protectors lest man return to pollute the holy presence of God. They appear again as protector, though in golden images over the Ark of the Covenant where God was pleased to dwell. The curtain of the tabernacle, which separated between the divine presence and the unholy people, was embroidered with figures of cherubim (Ex. 26:1). Ezekiel refers to these beings under this title nineteen times and the truth concerning them is to be derived from these passages" (*Systematic Theology*, Vol. 2, p. 18). Satan was originally an angel who was classified as a "Cherub" angel (Ezek. 28:14).

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(Unfallen Angel #4) - The Seraphim angels.

The seraphim angels are holy and highly exalted angels, whose primary emphasis seems to be on the praise and honor and worship of God at His Throne, and also to see to it that all things at this throne are pure (Is. 6:2-7). This text in Isaiah is all we know about these angels. Dr. Charles Ryrie observed, "All we know about this rank of angelic beings is found in Isaiah 6:2-7" (*Basic Theology*, p. 129).

The Hebrew word "seraphim" comes from a word that means to burn, which most commentators believe is directly connected to the burning, consuming, fiery holiness of God. These seraphim have real faces, real feet and real personalities. They obviously can talk and move. Each one has six wings: two that cover the face; two that cover the feet; two that fly. These Seraphim obviously have a tremendous reverence and awe for God because they use two of their wings to cover their face in His presence.

From Isaiah 6:6-7 we learn that the seraphim are used by God at the Throne of God to make it possible for a sinful human to have access to the Holy God. This was in O.T. times prior to the cross work of Jesus Christ. But it is clear that they are very much interested that no unclean person has any access to God until he has been purified.

One key distinction between the Cherubim of the O.T. and the Seraphim of the O.T. seems to be that the Cherubim specifically protects and prevents any sinful human from having any access to God's holiness, whereas the Seraphim specifically purifies and makes it possible for a sinful human to have access to God. Both the Cherubim and the Seraphim guarantee that nothing unholy ever comes into the presence of God.

(Unfallen Angel #5) - The Living Creatures.

The noun "creatures" (ζωα) refers to living beings. These are holy and high ranking beings, who are stationed at the Throne of God. They are very unusual; they are very real and they are living. These beings are seen in both the O.T. and the N.T. In the O.T. they are described by Ezekiel (Ezek. 1:5-14; 10:10-14, 19-22). In the N.T. they are described by John in Revelation (Revelation 4:6-11).

We learn quite a bit about them from the book of Revelation:

- 1) They always appear near the Throne of God. 4:6; 5:6; 14:3
- 2) They worship God for His holiness and mercy in regard to sinful man. 4:8; 5:9, 14; 7:11; 19:4
- 3) They are closely connected to the process of judgment. 6:7
- 4) They are involved in knowing and revealing God's final program. 6:1, 7
- 5) They were not hostile in any way to the Apostle John. 6:1, 7
- 6) They are in a position of recognizable authority. 4:9-10; 14:3
- 7) They have several eyes and can look in all directions. 4:6
- 8) They have distinct features of an animal, human or bird. 4:7
- 9) They each have six wings. 4:8

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When we carefully examine Ezekiel's description of these beings and analyze the description of the Seraphim in Isaiah 6 and compare that with what is revealed in Revelation, we may accurately conclude that these "living creatures" are as high ranked cherubim who have all attributes of the Seraphim.

(Unfallen Angel #6) - The angel named Michael .

The actual name "Michael" means "who is like God" or "who is as God." It is not known for sure just how this angel is like God, but there is no question that he is a very high ranking angel of God who has great power and authority. He certainly is like God in his representation in that he does carry out the will of God.

According to Jude 9, Michael is an archangel (αρχαγγελος) which literally means he is a chief ruling angel, who may be deemed as royalty among the angels. This classification is fully supported in various Scriptures- Revelation 12:7-10; Daniel 10:13, 21; 12:1. The term "chief prince" or "great prince" refers to an angel of very high rank and very high royalty and it also means he has a tremendous amount of power.

Many believe, on the basis of I Thessalonians 4:16, that Michael will be the angel who will announce the Rapture at the end of the Church Age. We may observe from Daniel that Michael does seem to have a specific connection to the care of Israel, and if he is the archangel who announces the Rapture he obviously is announcing the end of the Church Age, which leads the program of God to swing back to Israel.

(Unfallen Angel #7) - The angel named Gabriel .

The name "Gabriel" means "the mighty one." When we track Gabriel through Scripture, it seems that one of his primary responsibilities is to give accurate understanding of the prophetic revelation that God gives to man (Daniel 8:15-17; 9:20-22; Luke 1:18-19, 26-28). It is clear from these passages that Gabriel has a tremendous grasp of God's Word.

He is an angel who has a great understanding of God's Word and is able to lead one to a proper interpretation of it. We may assume from this that one of the things that makes Gabriel "mighty" is his grasp of God's Word and program. His ability to know and interpret God's Word is part of that which gives him the name "Gabriel- the mighty one." We may also assume from this angel that the more one knows of God's Word and is able to accurately interpret it, the more mighty one is from God's perspective.