

ANYBODY SEE AN ANGEL

This morning I want to speak to you about a topic that we don't hear too much preaching on these days. And that is the subject of angels. The Bible speaks of angels quite a bit. They are mentioned 108 times in the OT and 165 times in the NT. So there is no doubt as to the reality of angels. And the belief in angels is found in the mythologies of numerous other ancient cultures as well. The Babylonians pictured them as couriers who brought down messages from the gods to men. Hesiod (He´see-ud), an early Greek poet, wrote, "Millions of supernatural creatures walk the earth". And the Egyptians and some Eastern nations also believed in such supernatural creatures. Bible teacher A.C. Gaebelein says that the belief in angels is well nigh universal

But though just about all of us believe in angels, most of us actually know very little about them. And what we think we know just might not be accurate. But beloved, God created angels for a high and holy purpose. And as Christians, knowing the truth about angels can give us great comfort and strength in times of trials and tribulations. And so today I want us to look at these wonderful creatures that God made called angels.

Turn in your Bibles, please, to Hebrews 1. In this chapter we find angels mentioned no less than five times. Now, we must understand that the focus of the chapter is not angels. The focus is our Lord Jesus Christ and how He is so much superior than the angels (v. 4). But the fact that the writer of Hebrews mentions angels that many times tells us that they still have a major role in the grand purposes of God. We'll learn about that role in a few minutes, but let's begin our study by going back to the very beginning of angels.

What was the origin of angels? From what we can surmise from Scripture, God created angels either before or on the first day

of Creation Week. Genesis 1:1 says, "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth". Now, when the Bible speaks of "heaven" or "the heavens" it is talking about two distinct places. "Heaven" is God's dwelling place, outside the created universe. Paul calls it "the third Heaven". And "the heavens" in Gen. 1 is the abode of the sun, moon, and stars. Mark 12:25 tells us that the angels live in Heaven. And from Rev. 5 we learn that for at least some angels this refers to the Heaven where God dwells. But some angels could live in the heavens that's the home of the sun, moon, and stars as well. This much we know for certain – angels were present when God created the earth on that very first day of history. Job 38:7 says that when God laid the foundations of the earth that the sons of God – who are the angels – shouted for joy. So God created the angels at least before He created the earth, and possibly before the creation of the entire universe.

Another question that some ask – how many angels are there? While the [Scriptures](#) give no definite figures, we are told in Daniel 7:10 that the number of angels is very great, "Ten thousand time ten thousand", which is 100,000,000. But the Bible teaches that there are way more angels than that. For listen to Matthew 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". Jesus says that every little child has an angel in the presence the Father in Heaven. How many could that be? Well, I did a little number crunching this week to try to at least get a ballpark figure.

First of all, I believe that the little children Jesus is speaking of are all those who are under the age of accountability, those who do not understand when they sin against a holy God and are not responsible for their sins. This age is not set in stone; it is different for every child. I will say that it is younger than many believe, because children who are saved when they are five or six

years old must first become accountable to God because of their sin. They must understand that they are lost and need a Savior. And there are children who are definitely saved at that age. But assuming that the average age of accountability is six years old, I discovered that about 11% of the world's population is six years old or under. Do you know how many people that is?

788,000,000. That's how many children have a guardian angel protecting them every moment of every day. And if you add just one angel protecting every Christian in the world, which is true according to Ps. 91, that's millions and millions more, perhaps close to one billion total.

But beloved, a billion angels just may not be a drop in the bucket. We can count a billion right? But Heb. 12:22 tells us that in the New Jerusalem there are an innumerable company of angels. More than can even be counted. And when you think about it this makes perfect sense. The Bible tells us in Psalm 19 and 147 that all the stars give glory to God. And in Rev. 5 we read that's what the angels do. Now, how many stars out there are giving glory to God? No one knows. But it is an innumerable number. And while we cannot be dogmatic, it is certainly reasonable to believe that God created just as many angels to fill the Heaven where He dwells with His glory as He did the stars to fill the heavens where they dwell with His glory. But any way you slice it, there are more angels in the heavens and in this universe than we can fathom.

There is another question that arises about angels. And this is a good one. What do angels look like? Are they male or female? Do some really look like Clarence Odbody, the short, stubby little man who was George Bailey's angel in the Christmas classic It's a Wonderful Life? Or are angels better looking than Clarence, like Dudley, the angel Denzel Washington played in "The Preacher's Wife"? Or do some angels really look like chubby

little babies with exposed bottoms and wings sprouting out their backs?

Well, first of all, angels don't look like anything unless God wills that we see them. Because angels are spiritual beings with spiritual bodies that are invisible to human eyes except by God's decree to reveal them. In 2 Kings 6 we read of the Syrian army surrounding Elisha and his servant at Dothan, ready to move in and capture them. And when the servant saw them he cried out to Elisha, "Alas, master, what shall we do?" And Elisha said, "Don't worry, son. Those who are with us are more than those who are with them". And then Elisha prayed, "Lord, open his eyes that he may see". And the Lord opened his servant's spiritual eyes, and he could hardly believe what he saw. What he saw was a great host of horses and chariots of fire surrounding him and Elisha. And we aren't even told what the angels in the chariots looked like. It didn't matter, because they were invisible anyway.

But when God does choose to allow men to see the angels, some of them look pretty intimidating. In Rev. 4 John writes that he saw four creatures in his heavenly vision who had faces of a lion, a bear, and eagle, and a man. He writes that they had six wings and that they were full of eyes front, back, around, and within. Daniel saw an angel whose waist was girded with gold, whose eyes were like torches, whose face was like lightening, and whose voice was like the voice of a multitude of people (Dan. 10:5-6). And when he saw the angel he had a meltdown. He said, "No strength remained in me". Matthew writes that the angel who rolled away the stone from Jesus' tomb had a countenance that shone like lighting and clothes that was white as snow. And when the guards saw the angel, they shook for fear and fell down like dead men (Matt. 28:3). So seeing an angel was at times a heart-pounding, knee knocking, terrifying experience.

Now, why is this? Well, it is simple. Angels are holy creatures, unlike you and me. They are sinless and they are powerful. And the awesome, magnificent appearance of an angel simply reflects the greatness of who they are. But also, angels are on a holy mission. God does not send angels on a sanctified snipe hunt just to get them out of His hair. Angels come on assignments with eternal matters to consider, from the God of all wisdom and might, the God Who never does anything without purpose. And there were times in Biblical days that God used the awesome appearance of His angels to shake men to the bone before the angel ever spoke a word, so they would not miss a word that they said. Or sometimes angels' appearance simply frightens men and thwarts their ungodly purposes.

Billy Graham tells the story of missionary John Paton, who was seeking to reach the hostile people of New Hebrides Islands. One night a group of these natives surrounded the missionary compound with the intent of burning it down and killing the Patons. But after a terrifying night of crying out to God for deliverance, when daylight came the natives unexplainably left. And it was not long after that that the chief of that hostile tribe was saved. Well, after he was saved John Paton asked him, "Why didn't you move in on us and kill us that night?" And the chief replied, "Who were all those men that you and there with you?" And Bro. Paton told him that no one was there but him and his wife. But the chief said not so, that there were hundreds of men circling the mission station, big men, with shining garments and drawn swords. And the chief said there was no way they were going to go up against that group of mighty warriors. The appearance of the angels was just too intimidating.

But many times in Scripture angels look no different than men. In Genesis 18 they appeared to Abraham as men and had a meal with him. The two angels who rescued Lot from Sodom

appeared as men. In fact, Hebrews 13:2 tells us to be sure to entertain strangers, because we may be entertaining an angel without even know it. So angels can look just like you or me. And an angel might indeed look like Clarence Odbody, or Dudley, and when you get to Heaven you may be shocked to find out just how many angels you encountered when you lived on earth. But in the Bible, when an angel appeared in the form of a human being it was always a man.

The Bible also tells us that though angels sometimes look like men, they are sexless creatures. They are neither male nor female. And Jesus tells us that when we enter Heaven, in that sense we will be as the angels, redeemed sexless saints. There will be no marriage relations in Heaven except one. And that is, all of God's children will be married to His Son, the Lamb of God, our Lord Jesus Christ. But don't feel badly that you won't set up housekeeping in Heaven with the honey you had on earth. For in Heaven your marriage to the Son of God will be the only intimate relationship that you will ever want or need. And the only desire of our lives in Heaven will be to pursue knowing God and join the angels in worshipping Him forever and ever.

So we've seen that angels are spiritual, sexless, created beings which God made before He created the earth. We have seen that there is an innumerable number of angels in the heavens and also all around us, and we've seen that angels can be awesome and glorious in appearance or they can look just like you and me. But now I want us to get to the more practical part of our study – what do angels do? Well, angels do a lot of things. But what angels do can be summed up in Heb. 1:14; "Are they not all ministering spirits sent forth to minister for those who will inherit salvation?"

God created angels to minister. First of all they minister to God. Rev. 5: 11-12 says, "Then I looked, and I heard the voice of

many angels around the throne....saying with a loud voice, 'Worthy is the Lamb who was slain to receive power and riches and wisdom, and strength and honor and glory and blessing!' This very moment there is a praise service going on in Heaven with the angels right in the middle of it, doing what they were created to do. Have you ever heard anyone say, "I've got my dream job"? We all know what that means. It means that you look forward to going to work every day, because you are crazy about the job you do. You would pay your company to work for them instead of them paying you if you could afford it. Beloved, nobody, and I mean nobody, ever had a better dream job in all of the universe than the angels, in God's presence singing God's praises.

But angels not only **sing God's praises**, but they **fight God's battles**. Look at Rev. 12:7-9. One day during the Tribulation Period there will be a great cosmic battle between the devil and his angels and the archangel Michael and a host of angels under his command. The disputed territory they are fighting for is the entire universe except the earth and its surrounding atmosphere, all the stars, all the planets and moons, all the galaxies. And John writes that Michael and his angels prevail, and Satan is defeated is cast down to the earth with all his demons. And what an awful fate for the earth that is going to be! But it was the angels of God that delivered the devil's defeat. And beloved, we must not think that this is the first time that the armies of heaven and hell go to war. We read in Daniel 10 where Daniel prayed for understanding of a vision for three weeks, but the devil prevented an angel from coming to him with the answer. And it was not until Michael jumped into the fray that the devil was defeated and Daniel got his answer. But just as sure as there is a devil and demons, the devil has been fighting against God's purpose of redemption ever since

the Garden of Eden, and God's angels have been the ones who meet him in battle.

Now, we must close and finish our study of angels next week. But what is our takeaway for today?

First of all, from our knowledge of angels **we are reminded of the majesty and might and greatness of God**. Think of it. God has created more angels than we have the ability to count, an innumerable number. Bam! Just like that. All of them created at once. And they fill the heavens with praise to His holy name night and day. And they do it because He is worthy of their praise. For God is infinite in power, infinite in holiness, infinite in wisdom, and infinite in love. So when you think of angels, think of how many there are and what they are created to do. And join them in their praises of our great and awesome God.

Secondly, from our knowledge of angels **we are reminded of the perfect care of God**. Angels are ministers to those who are heirs of salvation. They are our providers and protectors. It was an angel who provided food for Elijah when he was hungry (1 Kings 19:6). And it is angels who stand up to the enemy of our souls, the devil, and prevent him from destroying us. Because beloved, that is what the devil has set out to do! If you are saved he knows that he cannot touch your soul, but he will do all he can to destroy your life and your testimony while you are still on this earth, just like he tried to do with Job. But listen to Psalm 91: 9-12. What a promise! No evil shall conquer you if you are God's child. Why? Because God's angels are holding you up in their hands, keeping you from falling because of the vicious assault of the hounds of hell. And for God's perfect provision and protection through His angels, let us join them in praising Him today.