

May 4, 2014 Temple Baptist Church, Jamestown, ND
TITLE: ANGELS AND ADVERSARIES, (*This We Believe* #7)

Cherubs are fat, naked babies with little feathery wings; angels procreate with humans; we become angels when we die, complete with wings; etc. These are each unbiblical myths, yet part of our cultural understanding of angels. What are some of the popular ideas associated with angels and the supernatural? (Audience)

This creation includes a spiritual world different from what we usually experience, complete with others God created to serve Him. There are the six-winged **seraphs**, whom Isaiah sees in his vision in the temple (Isaiah 6:1-7). **Cherubim** (plural form of cherub) are sent to guard the way to the tree of life in the garden of Eden (Genesis 3:24) and are represented as gold-covered winged creatures above the ark of the covenant, displayed, as well, in temple embroidery, carvings and décor. Ezekiel writes of them assisting and guarding God's glory (cf. chpts. 10 & 41), likely the same as the *living creatures* in the book of Revelation (cf. Psalm 18:10; 2 Samuel 22:11).

One of the names of God in the OT, *Yahweh Sabbaoth*, the LORD of Hosts/Armies also translated the LORD Almighty, reflects the fact that there are myriads of supernatural beings assisting, indeed, surrounding Him.

The Hebrew or Greek word simply meaning *messenger* is often used. *Angel*, the English way of saying the Greek word, is commonly how it is translated in the Bible. But what exactly are angels . . . and why does it concern you and me? Angels . . .

- Not usually seen, are part of this created world.

When were they created? We do not know. The Bible simply says, *In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.* Genesis 1:1

Paul says of the Son, *For by him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things were created by him and for him.* Colossians 1:16

We will use the term *angel* in a broad sense, because Paul indicates that there is an **entire world which influences and interacts with our own, a world characterized by powers, rulers, thrones and authorities, both visible and invisible.**

In other words there **is more to this created world than what you and I regularly see.** The Bible records interactions between angels and humans in various places: with Abraham and Sarah, Hagar, Lot and his family, Jacob, Moses, Balaam, Joshua, Gideon, Samson's parents, David, Solomon, Isaiah, Ezekiel, Daniel and Zechariah are some examples in the OT. In the NT there are interactions between angels and Zechariah (John's father), Mary, Joseph, the shepherds, Jesus, the women at Jesus' tomb, the disciples after Jesus' ascension, Peter in jail, Cornelius, Philip, Paul and John.

Paul concludes the letter we know as Ephesians with these words: *Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. Put on the full armor of God so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes. **For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.***

Therefore put on the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand. Ephesians 6:10-13 You are a part of something bigger, so put on and use the armor God gives.

Angels give us a glimpse of another world, a world different from our own, but no less real. Angels . . .

- Are created to serve God and His creation.

They glorify Him. David writes, *Praise the LORD, you his angels, you mighty ones who do his bidding, who obey his word. Praise the LORD, all his heavenly hosts, you his servants who do his will.* Psalm 103:20-21 (cf. 148:1-5)

In the examples I mentioned in the OT and NT of angels interacting with humans, they **always serve as God's emissaries, His messengers, often with a direct word from Him.** Sometimes the interaction is through a vision, sometimes a personal visit. Sometimes they appear in brilliance, other times they seem to be mistaken for ordinary humans.

This begs the question of what they actually are. **Angels are spiritual, even supernatural, to be sure, but to say that they do not have a form is probably pushing the text beyond what it says.** The three *messengers* who come to remove Lot and his family from Sodom, for example, literally grasp Lot's hand. The image of wings seems to come from the image of the seraphim, cherubim and perhaps the idea that they can move quickly (also cf. showing hospitality to strangers/angels, Heb. 13:2).

The mistaken idea that we become angels when we die may be influenced by Luke 20:35-36 (cf. Matthew 22:30). Jesus is comparing us with angels after we die in that there is no marriage after death. From the passage we deduce that **angels do not marry and do not die.** They are moral beings, but not mortal beings.

The Bible mentions two angels by name, **Michael** (Daniel 10:13, 21; 12:1; Jude 9; Revelation 12:7) and **Gabriel** (Daniel 8:16; 9:21; Luke 1:19, 26).

Psalm 103 states that **angels obey, serve and do God's bidding, apparently dwelling most of the time in His presence in heaven.** The writer of Hebrews reminds us that **the Son, Jesus Christ, is superior to angels.** *Are not all angels ministering spirits sent to serve those who will inherit salvation?* Hebrews 1:14 In other words they serve the cause of Christ by ministering to our needs. How?

Angels assist, even guard, us in many ways, often without our being aware of their help. As to their treatment of children Jesus issues this stern rebuke to His disciples: *“See that you do not look down on one of these little ones. For I tell you that their angels in heaven always see the face of my Father in heaven.”* Matthew 18:10 The people praying for Peter’s release from prison do not believe Rhoda when she says Peter is outside knocking. They think it is his angel (Acts 12:15). David writes, *The angel of the LORD encamps around those who fear him, and he delivers them.* Psalm 34:7 (cf. Daniel 9:20-23; 10:10-11:1)

Jesus says the **angels throw a party when one sinner repents** (Luke 15:10) and are **amazed at God’s plan for our salvation** (1 Peter 1:12). They **will be part of and announce Jesus’ return** (1 Thessalonians 4:16; Revelation 19:14), but they **do not know when that will be** (Matthew 24:36). Angels . . .

- Choose to serve God or the Deceiver.

At some point before Eve and Adam’s sin some of the angels whom God created fell, Satan (the Accuser), being their chief. He is called the Devil, the Evil One, the Prince of the power of the air, the Adversary, the Ancient Serpent, the Dragon, the Deceiver.

Originally created good, as all God’s creation was created good, he fell, taking many angels with him (Revelation 12; Luke 10:18; Matthew 25:41; 1 John 3:8. Some also think Isaiah 14:12-15 and Ezekiel 28:2, referencing the kings of Babylon and Tyre, speak of Satan’s downfall.).

Satan and his legions, his demons, **have moral choice** . . . and their choice to oppose God has resulted in their being cast from His presence. They **attempt to thwart God’s rule**, as Paul mentions in Ephesians 6 (cf. Ephesians 2:2) and **tempt** you and me to rebel against God (Acts 5:3; John 13:2; 1 Corinthians 7:5; 1 Timothy 4:1; 1 Peter 5:8; 1 Chronicles 21:1; Luke 22:31). Satan is **the great accuser** (Revelation 12:10; Job 1:6-12; 2:1-7; Zechariah 3:1, 2).

Satan’s chief tool is deception, first evidenced with Eve (Genesis 3). Paul says he masquerades as an angel of light (2 Corinthians 11:14). Jesus directs these words to the Pharisees, who think they are following God’s ways, but oppose Jesus at every turn. *“You belong to your father, the devil, and you want to carry out your father’s desire. He was a murderer from the beginning, not holding to the truth, for there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks his native language, for he is a liar and the father of lies.”* John 8:44 (cf. 2 Corinthians 4:4) Angels . . .

- Must not be worshiped nor given undue influence.

Satan and his emissaries are not without power (cf. Luke 4:6-8), but that **power is limited** (Romans 16:20). **When we submit by faith to Christ, we become His.** *For he has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of*

the Son he loves, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins. Colossians 1:13-14 (cf. Acts 26:18) **Satan cannot have us, but he can influence us.**

The deceiver wants us to think that we are powerless or enslaved because of our past. Paul counsels us to **put on all the armor God provides** so that we can stand, not shrink back, protecting ourselves from the attacks of the evil one and using God's word as our offensive weapon. James writes, *Submit yourselves, then, to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.* James 4:7

Remember that **Christ gives the victory.** *Since the children have flesh and blood, he too shared in their humanity so that by his death he might destroy him who holds the power of death—that is, the devil—and free those who all their lives were held in slavery by their fear of death.* Hebrew 2:14 (cf. Romans 8:37-39)

Satan and his legions are a defeated foe and their destiny is the lake of fire (Revelation 20:10; Romans 16:20; 1 Corinthians 15:24; 2 Peter 2:4; Jude 6).

Paul warns us from becoming obsessed with the study of angels and the supernatural, to the point of worship (Colossians 2:18). *We will judge angels,* he says (1 Corinthians 6:3).

The Bible mentions several instances when people, in awe of these heavenly messengers, bow in worship. The response is always the same. Satan wants our worship, but those who truly serve God give Him the glory. John shares this encounter with the angel. *At this I fell at his feet to worship him. But he said to me, "Do not do it! I am a fellow servant with you and with your brothers who hold to the testimony of Jesus. Worship God! For the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy."* Revelation 19:10

Conclusion. Angels are God's messengers to bring about His purposes, including in our lives. **Let's live, not in fear, but rather in confidence** knowing that when we follow Jesus Christ, **we are fellow servants with these heavenly messengers, to His glory and amazing grace, one day to join them in eternal praise before God.** (Pray)

NEXT STEPS: Review the outline with another. Consider accessing this message on the TBC website and the NAB Statement of Beliefs (#3). Share what you believe about angels, Satan and the spiritual realm. What is the source of those beliefs? Do they match what the Bible says? Spend some time reviewing Ephesians 6:10-20 and pray together.