

The Doctrine of Angels

Part 1

We have come to one of the most difficult subjects in theology, the topic of angels. The difficulty lies in the fact that there is no developed or specific teaching in the Bible about these beings. We know they exist, but we know little about all their responsibilities. The Old Testament name for angels is the Hebrew *mala'ak* and the New Testament word is the Greek *angelos* or angel, both words mean “messenger” of God. Angels bring messages and perform duties according to God’s will and purposes. Some angels remained faithful but some rebelled and oppose God and believers.

The Character of Angels

Here are some of the things we know about angels from Scripture:

1. Angels are created spiritual beings, Ps 148:2, 5; Col 1:16; Heb 1:13-14.
2. Angels are immortal spiritual beings like believers, Lk 20:36.
3. Angels are innumerable hosts, Heb 12:22 and there are several scriptures that describe large numbers of angels, Deut 33:2; Ps 68:17; Mt 26:53; Rev 5:11.
4. Angels are wiser than humans, but not wiser than God, 2 Sam 14:17; Mt 24:36.
5. Angels are more powerful than humans but not as powerful as God, Ps 103:20.
6. Angels may be visible or invisible, Num 22:22-31; 2 Kin 6:15-17.
7. Angels sometimes they appear in human form, Gen 18:1-33.
8. Angels often are assigned to meet human needs, 1 Pet 1:12.
9. Angels have emotions and rejoice in heaven, Lk 15:10.
10. Angels are organized into ranks and orders, Rom 8 38; 1 Thess 4:16.
11. Angels have a special assignment to guard believers, Mt 18:10; Acts 12:15

The Ranks of Angels

We know from Romans 8:38 and 1 Peter 3:22 that there are different orders or ranks of angels. Paul’s words in Romans are “angels, principalities, and powers” and Peter’s words are “angels, authorities, powers” suggest at least three ranks. Angels from the Greek word *angelos*, seems to be a general term that could apply to all but also suggests the most common class of spirit beings and the lowest rank. The second rank is called by Paul, in Rom 8:38, “principalities” or *arche* pronounced ar-kay and by Peter *exousia*, one in authority, probably are the same and next highest rank. The third is “powers” from *dunamis*, from which we get the word dynamite, is the highest of the three orders mentioned. Other than the names we know nothing about the division of authority and responsibilities of each rank.

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