

ANGELS - Their Nature and Mission

- 1) **THE EXISTENCE OF ANGELS** - References to angels are common in the Scriptures. Angels are treated as a normal part of the spiritual realm. See **Acts 12:15** - "They said to her, "You are out of your mind." But she kept insisting that it was so, and they kept saying, "It is his angel!" Note that while the church found it hard to believe that Peter was at the door, *it seemed perfectly natural to them that it might be his angel.* By his angel we should think, not of Peter's angel as though Peter were dead and his angel was his ghost, but *his* angel in the sense of an angel specifically **assigned** to care for Peter.

- 2) **THE NATURE OF ANGELS** - A number of facts stand out:
 - a) **Angels are MESSENGERS** - "*Angelos*" means "*messenger*". Angels don't draw attention to themselves. They **always point to something else**. In their **visible arrivals** in Scripture they seem to **arrive, speak or act**, and then quickly **disappear**. They seem to have a special role in the **major events in God's program**. This is evident in the **birth** (Luke 2:13), **resurrection** (Matthew 28:2-6) and **ascension** of Jesus (Acts 1:10). See also His **return** - **Matthew 16:27** - "For the Son of Man is going to come with his angels in the glory of his Father, and then he will repay each person according to what he has done."

 - b) **Angels are MORAL BEINGS** - They are not robots. There are **holy angels** and there are **unholy angels**. As a simple rule, the Scriptures refer to holy angels by the single term "**angels**". Unholy angels are clearly marked out as such - **Matthew 25:41** - "Then he will say to those on his left, 'Depart from me, you cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels.'" **2 Peter 2:4** - "For if God did not spare angels when they sinned, but cast them into hell and committed them to chains of gloomy darkness to be kept until the judgment..." See also **Jude 6, Revelation 12:7-9**. Wicked angels were not created that way but **freely chose to rebel against God** - **Jude 6** - "And the angels who did not stay within their own position of authority, but left their proper dwelling, he has kept in eternal chains under gloomy darkness until the judgment of the great day..." Likewise, holy angels remain holy by free moral choice.

 - c) **Angels are SPIRITS** - See **Hebrews 1:14** - "Are they not all ministering spirits sent out to serve for the sake of those who are to inherit salvation?" In their normal essence they are not physical beings. They do not have bodies. **They may, however, appear in human form** (see **Genesis 18:2**, and especially **19:1-4** - "The two angels came to Sodom in the evening, and Lot was sitting in the gate of Sodom. When Lot saw them, he rose to meet them and bowed himself with his face to the earth [2] and said, "My lords, please turn aside to your servant's house and spend the night and wash your feet. Then you may rise up early and go on your way." They said, "No; we will spend the night in the town square." [3] But he pressed them strongly; so they turned aside to him and entered his house. And he made them a feast and baked unleavened bread, and they ate. [4] But before they lay down, the men of the city, the men of Sodom, both young and old, all the people to the last man, surrounded the house." Here they actually eat! - and Hebrews 13:2).

Because they are spirits, angels are not limited by normal spatial relations. They move about freely and invisibly, unhindered by physical objects (notice how they just **suddenly appear** in **Luke 24:4** - "While they were perplexed about this, behold, two men stood by them in dazzling apparel.")

 - d) **Angels are FINITE CREATURES** - Though they are **immortal** (they will never die), they are not **eternal** (that is, they did not always exist, but were **created** - see **Psalms 148:1-5** - "Praise the Lord! Praise the Lord from the heavens; praise him in the heights! [2] Praise him, all his angels; praise him, all his hosts! [3] Praise him, sun and moon, praise him, all you shining stars! [4] Praise him, you highest heavens, and you waters above the heavens! [5] Let them praise the name of the Lord! For he commanded and they were created." Jesus is clearly designated as the Creator of the heavenly beings - **Colossians 1:16** - "For by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things were created through him and for him."

When the angels were created is an open question. Verses that speak about this at all seem to put their creation **before the creation of the world** - **Job 38:4-7** - "Where were you when I laid the earth's foundation? Tell me, if you understand. [5] Who marked off its dimensions? Surely you know! Who stretched a measuring line across it? [6] On what were its footings set, or who laid its cornerstone-- [7] while the morning stars sang together and all the angels shouted for joy?" (NIV). These angels, like the fallen angel, Satan, are already on the scene at the time of the creation recorded in Genesis 1-3.

Remember, because angels are finite creature, **they are not divine nor semi-divine**. They are not to be worshipped, **nor do they desire worship** - see **Revelation 22:8-9** - "I, John, am the one who heard and saw these things. And when I had heard and seen them, I fell down to worship at the feet of the angel who had been showing them to me. [9] But he said to me, "Do not do it! I am a fellow servant with you and with your brothers the prophets and of all who keep the words of this book. Worship God!" Angels know their place and themselves worship the true God.

- e) **Angels are NONSEXUAL beings** - See **Mark 12:25** - "When the dead rise, they will neither marry nor be given in marriage; they will be like the angels in heaven." Unlike man, who was commanded to replenish the earth from **one pair**, angels were **created**

in mass and the number has remained constant.

- f) **Angels are POWERFUL** - While not *omnipotent*, they are very *mighty* - **Psalm 103:20** - "Bless the Lord, O you his angels, you mighty ones who do his word, obeying the voice of his word!" See also **1 Chronicles 21:14-15**, and **Acts 12:23** - "Immediately an angel of the Lord struck him down, because he did not give God the glory, and he was eaten by worms and breathed his last."

3) **THERE ARE VARIETIES OF ANGELS** - We are not given much detail, but several groups are mentioned:

- a) **"THE ANGEL OF THE LORD"** - This is one of the great mysteries of Scripture. He seems to be a very special being *unlike any other angels*. See **Genesis 16:7-13** - "The angel of the Lord found her by a spring of water in the wilderness, the spring on the way to Shur. [8] And he said, 'Hagar, servant of Sarai, where have you come from and where are you going?' She said, 'I am fleeing from my mistress Sarai.' [9] The angel of the Lord said to her, 'Return to your mistress and submit to her.' [10] The angel of the Lord also said to her, 'I will surely multiply your offspring so that they cannot be numbered for multitude.' [11] And the angel of the Lord said to her, 'Behold, you are pregnant and shall bear a son. You shall call his name Ishmael, because the Lord has listened to your affliction. [12] He shall be a wild donkey of a man, his hand against everyone and everyone's hand against him, and he shall dwell over against all his kinsmen.' [13] So she called the name of the Lord who spoke to her, 'You are a God of seeing,' for she said, 'Truly here I have seen him who looks after me.'" Notice that this particular being seems almost indistinguishable from the presence of God Himself. This can be seen again in **Exodus 3:2-6**.
- b) **"ARCHANGELS"** - By definition, "*archangel*" means "*chief angel*". The word occurs only twice (1 Thess. 4:16, Jude 9). *Michael* is the only one positively identified as an archangel. Significantly, he is associated with great warlike power to fight against evil powers (see **Daniel 10:21, 12:1**, and **Revelation 12:7** - "Now war arose in heaven, Michael and his angels fighting against the dragon. And the dragon and his angels fought back...")
- c) **"CHERIBUM"** - They are first mentioned in **Genesis 3:24** (to prevent sinful man from re-entering the garden and *as sinners partaking of the tree of eternal life*). They were pictured on the lid of the *ark of the covenant* - **Exodus 25:18-22** - "And you shall make two cherubim of gold; of hammered work shall you make them, on the two ends of the mercy seat. [19] Make one cherub on the one end, and one cherub on the other end. Of one piece with the mercy seat shall you make the cherubim on its two ends. [20] The cherubim shall spread out their wings above, overshadowing the mercy seat with their wings, their faces one to another; toward the mercy seat shall the faces of the cherubim be. [21] And you shall put the mercy seat on the top of the ark, and in the ark you shall put the testimony that I shall give you. [22] There I will meet with you, and from above the mercy seat, from between the two cherubim that are on the ark of the testimony, I will speak with you about all that I will give you in commandment for the people of Israel."

They are also pictured at the *curtain into the Holy of Holies* (**Exodus 26:31**). Their particular purpose seems to be to *keep what is unclean from the presence of God*. They proclaim and guard His perfect holiness. Their ministry seems tied to preserving the honor and holiness of God.

- d) **"SERAPHIM"** - The only clear reference is **Isaiah 6:2-6** - "Above him stood the seraphim. Each had six wings: with two he covered his face, and with two he covered his feet, and with two he flew. [3] And one called to another and said: 'Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts; the whole earth is full of his glory!' [4] And the foundations of the thresholds shook at the voice of him who called, and the house was filled with smoke. [5] And I said: 'Woe is me! For I am lost; for I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; for my eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts!' [6] Then one of the seraphim flew to me, having in his hand a burning coal that he had taken with tongs from the altar." The Seraphim are shown as angels who *constantly worship at the throne of God*. They are concerned that the whole earth be full of God's glory. This is by no means a complete list of all the kinds of angels.