

## ANGELS IN THE BOOK OF REVELATION

Angels feature highly in the Book of Revelation. In fact, there is not a chapter which does not mention them in one form or another, and much of the action in the Revelation comes about through the speech or actions of angels.

As background to our study, what *is* the purpose of angels? Why have they been constantly used by God, even since before creation? ... Are they continuing to be used? ... First of all, do they exist? Yes, the Bible refers to them as real and actual beings at least 273 times in 34 books ranging from Genesis to Revelation.

The word 'angel' comes from a Greek word for 'messenger', and they have been active in human affairs since the beginning of time (Gen. 3:24), and also before time began, **Job 38:7** When the morning stars [*angels*] sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy. They have appeared in human form to bring messages, as with Abraham, Lot, Hagar, Gideon, and Daniel. Sometimes they served as protectors, **Dan. 6:22** My God hath sent his angel, and hath shut the lions' mouths, that they have not hurt me. ... **Dan. 12:1** And at that time shall Michael stand up, the great prince which standeth for the children of thy people. ... Their presence often produced fear (Lk. 1:12,29; 2:9; **Mt. 28:3** His countenance was like lightning, and his raiment white as snow: <sup>4</sup> And for fear of him the keepers did shake, and became as dead men.) This was also experienced by John when he fell on his face to worship one of them (Rev. 19:9-10). ... Only three angels are mentioned by name in Scripture, i.e. Michael, Gabriel, and Lucifer (... there are also fallen angels, cf. Jude, v 6 and Rev. 12:7-9). We do not know how many angels there are, but they are many, for example, when John described what he heard and saw around the throne in Heaven, **Rev. 5:11** And I beheld, and I heard the voice of many angels round about the throne. ... Similarly, **Heb. 12:22** But ye are come unto mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to *an innumerable [μυριάς, ten thousand, myriad] company of angels.*

However, while angels are beautiful creations of God ... and while they have a greater power and glory than humans, it is the humans who are created in God's image ... and it is the humans, - not the angels, - who will reign with Christ (Heb. 2:5). From one perspective, angels are superior to people, yet from another perspective, humans occupy the primary place in God's created order, and angels are serving in the background as they bring glory to Him.

Also, the Gospel is a wonder to the sinless angels for they never had the need of salvation. They were created in the realms of God's glory, in a condition of spotless purity, and in this perfect state they have continued to exist and thrive.

They are witnesses of the ongoing outpouring of God's grace, and the demonstration of the sufferings of Christ, and the continuous expression of the witness and power of the Holy Spirit throughout history. In his opening epistle, Peter reminded the believers of the beauty of the Gospel, **1 Peter 1:10** ... the grace that should come unto you: <sup>11</sup> ... the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow. <sup>12</sup> Unto whom it was revealed ... *which things the angels desire [long for] to look into.* ... The word for 'look into' (**παρακύπτω**) comes from two Greek words which indicates the action of stooping alongside, - bowing forward, - to look into, or leaning to the side to get a better view (cf. Lk. 24:12; Jn. 20:5,11). This means, - regarding salvation, - the angels are spectators, rather than participants. Being of a different nature to humans (**Heb. 2:16** For verily he took not on him the nature of angels; but he took on him the seed of Abraham), the angels cannot by themselves apprehend the meaning of the grace of God to sinners, and yet it is presented to them by viewing the witness of the Church, **Eph. 3:8** Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ; <sup>9</sup> And to make all men see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God, who created all things by Jesus Christ: <sup>10</sup> To the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places *i.e. the angels* might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God. ... The believers are 'the saints' (v.8), and the angels are the servants of the servants of God, **Heb. 1:14** Are they not all ministering **Λειτουργικός** /spirits, sent forth to minister **Διακονία** /for them who shall be heirs of salvation?

In the Book of Revelation, angels occupy a prominent role. Their numbers range from the many to the single. For example ...

- Gathered round the throne at King Jesus' coronation was the countless multitude, ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands (**Rev. 5:11**).
- Two chapters later, four angels restrain judgment upon the earth, **7:1** And after these things I saw four angels standing on the four corners of the earth, holding the four winds of the earth, that the wind should not blow on the earth, nor on the sea, nor on any tree.
- In chapter eight seven angels sound the seven trumpets of judgment, **8:2** And I saw the seven angels which stood before God; and to them were given seven trumpets.
- Angels fight under the command of Michael the archangel, **12:7** And there was war in heaven: Michael and his angels fought against the dragon; and the dragon fought and his angels, <sup>8</sup> And prevailed not; neither was their place found any more in heaven. <sup>9</sup> And the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world: he was cast out into the earth, and his angels were cast out with him. <sup>10</sup> And I heard a loud voice saying in heaven, Now is come salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of his Christ: for the accuser of our brethren is cast down, which accused them before our God day and night.

- An angel will preach the Gospel around the world, <sup>14:6</sup> And I saw another angel fly in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach unto them that dwell on the earth, and to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people, <sup>7</sup> Saying with a loud voice, Fear God, and give glory to him; for the hour of his judgment is come: and worship him that made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and the fountains of waters.
- An angel will announce the fall of Babylon, <sup>14:8</sup> And there followed another angel, saying, Babylon is fallen, is fallen, that great city, because she made all nations drink of the wine of the wrath of her fornication.
- The wicked will be judged in the presence of the angels, <sup>14:9</sup> And the third angel followed them, saying with a loud voice, If any man worship the beast and his image, and receive his mark in his forehead, or in his hand, <sup>10</sup> The same shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out without mixture into the cup of his indignation; and he shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels, and in the presence of the Lamb: <sup>11</sup> And the smoke of their torment ascendeth up for ever and ever: and they have no rest day nor night, who worship the beast and his image, and whosoever receiveth the mark of his name.
- God will despatch the angels at the end time to harvest both the good and the evil, <sup>14:15</sup> And another angel came out of the temple, crying with a loud voice to him that sat on the cloud, Thrust in thy sickle, and reap: for the time is come for thee to reap; for the harvest of the earth is ripe. <sup>16</sup> And he that sat on the cloud thrust in his sickle on the earth; and the earth was reaped. <sup>17</sup> And another angel came out of the temple which is in heaven, he also having a sharp sickle. <sup>18</sup> And another angel came out from the altar, which had power over fire; and cried with a loud cry to him that had the sharp sickle, saying, Thrust in thy sharp sickle, and gather the clusters of the vine of the earth; for her grapes are fully ripe. <sup>19</sup> And the angel thrust in his sickle into the earth, and gathered the vine of the earth, and cast it into the great winepress of the wrath of God.
- Prior to Christ's return, angels will pour out the seven vials/bowls of judgment on the people of the earth, Rev. 15 and 16.
- An angel reveals The Great Whore to John, Rev. 17:1-7.
- Another angel calls for the judgment of the people, <sup>19:17</sup> And I saw an angel standing in the sun; and he cried with a loud voice, saying to all the fowls that fly in the midst of heaven, Come and gather yourselves together unto the supper of the great God.
- Following Christ's return, an angel will bind Satan in the pit for one thousand years, <sup>20:1</sup> And I saw an angel come down from heaven, having the key of the bottomless pit and a great chain in his hand. <sup>2</sup> And he laid hold on the dragon, that old serpent, which is the Devil, and Satan, and bound him a thousand years, <sup>3</sup> And cast him into the bottomless pit, and shut him up, and set a seal upon him, that he should deceive the nations no more, till the thousand years should be fulfilled: and after that he must be loosed a little season.
- When Christ will reign during the Millennium from Jerusalem, there is no mention of angels. After the one thousand years, and entering the eternal state, - the 'new heaven and new earth' (Rev. 21:1), - angels are again praising God, <sup>Heb. 12:22</sup> But ye are come unto mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, <sup>23</sup> To the general

assembly and church of the firstborn, which are written in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect, <sup>24</sup> And to Jesus the mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling, that speaketh better things than that of Abel.

Andrew Bonar, “Angels will never be kings. They will always be servants”.

John Calvin, “Angels are the dispensers and administrators of the divine beneficence towards us”.

Anon, “Jacob saw angels ascending and descending, but none standing still”.