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**The Nature of Angels**  
**Series: Angels! Seriously?**  
**The Village Church at Shell Point**  
**Evening Service**  
**January 21, 2024**

I. **Angels! Seriously?**

- A. Rudolph Bultmann
  - 1. Exceptionally gifted NT scholar
  - 2. Contributed to one of the great reference works that nearly every theologian uses – Kittels Theological Dictionary of the NT
  - 3. “We cannot use electric lights and radios and, in the event of illness, avail ourselves of modern medical and clinical means and at the same time believe in the spirit and wonder world of the New Testament.” (1984)
  - 4. That would be the perspective of most of the Western world’s intellectual elite
  - 5. Is that your perspective?
- B. Contrast
  - 1. John G. Paton – missionary to New Hebrides (South Pacific) 19<sup>th</sup> Century
  - 2. Worked in an area of cannibalistic tribes
  - 3. Paton and wife were surrounded by cannibals intent on killing them
    - a. Fell to knees and prayed for deliverance
    - b. Heard cries of cannibals, expected to come in at any time
  - 4. Sunrise – natives retreating into the forest
    - a. Rejoiced
  - 5. Continued work
  - 6. Year later – chieftain of that tribe was converted
    - a. Paton asked him why he and his men had not killed him and his wife
    - b. Chief replied, “Who were all those men with you?”
    - c. Paton: “There were no men with us. There were just my wife and myself.”
    - d. Argument ensued
    - e. Chief: “There were hundreds of tall men in shining garments with drawn swords circling about your house, so we could not attack you.”
- C. Modern view – angels are simply mythological figures, figments of our imagination, convenient fictions
  - 1. Bultmann’s view is typical of theological liberalism
    - a. Theological school influenced by Enlightenment secularism and scientism
    - b. Inherent anti-supernatural bias

- c. Skeptical view of anything outside that which can be experienced by the senses
  - 2. Liberal argument is circular
    - a. Premise is that non-physical beings can't exist
    - b. When they find one in the NT they rule it out of order
      - (1) But they have determined the conclusion by their premise!
    - c. Same argument is used against the literal resurrection of Christ, the virgin birth of Jesus – indeed, against anything supernatural in the NT
  - 3. Typical of this view was the deist, Thomas Jefferson
    - a. Took his Bible, a pair of scissors, and cut out any evidence of supernaturalism in the NT
  - 4. A lot of contemporary people are like Thomas Jefferson – without the scissors!
    - a. Using figurative scissors of their minds to cut out the parts of the NT that you find aren't congruent with naturalistic assumptions
- D. On the other hand, another contemporary view is a preoccupation with the supernatural world
  - 1. As C.S. Lewis observed, the rejection of belief in the God of the Bible, has not led people to complete disbelief, but to a belief in almost anything
  - 2. So today, there are many who are fascinated with the angelic world – fixated on angels
    - a. Collecting angel memorabilia and angel art
  - 3. And while rejecting the God of the Bible and of Christ, nevertheless believe in angels!
- E. What are we to believe?
  - 1. We recognize the validity, authority, truth of the Bible
  - 2. Let's use the Bible to definitively determine the nature and function of the angelic world

## II. What are Angels?

### A. Created Spiritual Beings

- 1. Angels are part of the universe that God created
  - a. **Nehemiah 9:6** (ESV) — 6 “You are the LORD, you alone. **You have made heaven, the heaven of heavens, with all their host,** the earth and all that is on it, the seas and all that is in them; and you preserve all of them; and the host of heaven worships you.”
  - b. **Colossians 1:16** (ESV) — 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.

### B. Kinds of Angels

- 1. **Angels by any other name**

- a. **Sons of God: Job 1:6** (ESV) — 6 Now there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the LORD, and Satan also came among them. (Job 2.1)
- b. **Holy ones: Psalm 89:5** (ESV) — 5 Let the heavens praise your wonders, O LORD, your faithfulness in the assembly of the holy ones! **Psalm 89:7** (ESV) — 7 a God greatly to be feared in the council of the holy ones, and awesome above all who are around him?
- c. **Watchers: Daniel 4:13** (ESV) — 13 “I saw in the visions of my head as I lay in bed, and behold, a watcher, a holy one, came down from heaven.
- d. **Thrones, dominions, principalities, authorities: Colossians 1:16** (ESV) — 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.

## 2. **Cherubim**

- a. Guarded the entrance to the Garden of Eden
  - (1) **Genesis 3:24** (ESV) — 24 He drove out the man, and at the east of the garden of Eden he placed the cherubim and a flaming sword that turned every way to guard the way to the tree of life.
- b. God enthroned on Cherubim, transported by Cherubim
  - (1) **Psalm 18:10** (ESV) — 10 He rode on a cherub and flew; he came swiftly on the wings of the wind.
  - (2) **Ezekiel 10:18–19** (ESV) — 18 Then the glory of the LORD went out from the threshold of the house, and stood over the cherubim. 19 And the cherubim lifted up their wings and mounted up from the earth before my eyes as they went out, with the wheels beside them. And they stood at the entrance of the east gate of the house of the LORD, and the glory of the God of Israel was over them.
- c. Cherubim above ark of the covenant – symbolizing the throne room of heaven
  - (1) **Exodus 25:22** (ESV) — 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.

## 3. **Seraphim**

- a. In presence of God, worshipping
  - (1) **Isaiah 6:2–3** (ESV) — 2 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!”

- b. Only mentioned in Isaiah 6
- 4. **Living Creatures**
  - a. **Ezekiel and Revelation**
  - b. Appearances like lion, ox, man, eagle
  - c. Representative of various parts of the entire creation
    - (1) Wild beasts
    - (2) Domesticated animals
    - (3) Human beings
    - (4) Birds
  - d. Constantly worshipping
    - (1) **Revelation 4:6-8** (ESV) — 6 and before the throne there was as it were a sea of glass, like crystal. And around the throne, on each side of the throne, are four living creatures, full of eyes in front and behind:
    - (2) 7 the first living creature like a lion, the second living creature like an ox, the third living creature with the face of a man, and the fourth living creature like an eagle in flight.
    - (3) 8 And the four living creatures, each of them with six wings, are full of eyes all around and within, and day and night they never cease to say, “Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord God Almighty, who was and is and is to come!”

C. **Order in the Angelic World**

- 1. Angels are not independent beings, each one acting on their own
  - a. They seem to have a rank and order about them
- 2. **Michael – archangel**
  - a. Title representing authority over other angels
  - b. **Jude 9** (ESV) — 9 But when the archangel Michael, contending with the devil, was disputing about the body of Moses, he did not presume to pronounce a blasphemous judgment, but said, “The Lord rebuke you.”
  - c. **Daniel 10:13** (ESV) — 13 The prince of the kingdom of Persia withstood me twenty-one days, but Michael, **one of the chief princes**, came to help me, for I was left there with the kings of Persia...
  - d. Leader of an angelic army
    - (1) **Revelation 12:7-8** (ESV) — 7 Now war arose in heaven, **Michael and his angels fighting** against the dragon. And the dragon and his angels fought back, 8 but he was defeated, and there was no longer any place for them in heaven.
  - e. Lord will return with the archangel’s call
    - (1) **1 Thessalonians 4:16** (ESV) — 16 For the Lord himself will descend from heaven with a cry of command, with the voice of an archangel, and with the sound of the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first.

3. Michael is only named archangel
    - a. Are there others?
- D. **Angels with Names**
1. **Michael**
    - a. Already seen Michael
  2. **Gabriel**
    - a. **Daniel 8:16** (ESV) — 16 And I heard a man’s voice between the banks of the Ulai, and it called, “Gabriel, make this man understand the vision.”
    - b. **Daniel 9:21** (ESV) — 21 while I was speaking in prayer, the man Gabriel, whom I had seen in the vision at the first, came to me in swift flight at the time of the evening sacrifice.
    - c. **Spoke to Zechariah: Luke 1:19** (ESV) — 19 And the angel answered him, “I am Gabriel. I stand in the presence of God, and I was sent to speak to you and to bring you this good news.”
    - d. **Spoke to Mary: Luke 1:26–27** (ESV) — 26 In the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent from God to a city of Galilee named Nazareth, 27 to a virgin betrothed to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. And the virgin’s name was Mary.
- E. **Capabilities and Limitations of Angels**
1. **Spiritual beings without bodies**
    - a. Sometimes we might consider that an asset rather than a limitation!
    - b. Cannot usually be seen, unless God gives a special ability to see them
      - (1) **Numbers 22:31** (ESV) — 31 Then the LORD opened the eyes of Balaam, and he saw the angel of the LORD standing in the way, with his drawn sword in his hand. And he bowed down and fell on his face.
      - (2) **2 Kings 6:17** (ESV) — 17 Then Elisha prayed and said, “O LORD, please open his eyes that he may see.” So the LORD opened the eyes of the young man, and he saw, and behold, the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire all around Elisha.
      - (3) **Matthew 28:5** (ESV) — 5 But the angel said to the women, “Do not be afraid, for I know that you seek Jesus who was crucified.”
  2. **Moral beings**
    - a. **Sinful angels: 2 Peter 2:4** (ESV) — 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...
      - (1) **Jude 6** (ESV) — 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—
  3. **Intelligent beings**

a. **Speak to people**

(1) **Acts 12:6–11** (ESV) — 6 Now when Herod was about to bring him out, on that very night, Peter was sleeping between two soldiers, bound with two chains, and sentries before the door were guarding the prison. 7 And behold, an angel of the Lord stood next to him, and a light shone in the cell. He struck Peter on the side and woke him, saying, “Get up quickly.” And the chains fell off his hands. 8 And the angel said to him, “Dress yourself and put on your sandals.” And he did so. And he said to him, “Wrap your cloak around you and follow me.” 9 And he went out and followed him. He did not know that what was being done by the angel was real, but thought he was seeing a vision. 10 When they had passed the first and the second guard, they came to the iron gate leading into the city. It opened for them of its own accord, and they went out and went along one street, and immediately the angel left him. 11 When Peter came to himself, he said, “Now I am sure that the Lord has sent his angel and rescued me from the hand of Herod and from all that the Jewish people were expecting.”

b. **Praise God:**

(1) **Revelation 5:11–12** (ESV) — 11 Then I looked, and I heard around the throne and the living creatures and the elders the voice of many angels, numbering myriads of myriads and thousands of thousands, 12 saying with a loud voice, “Worthy is the Lamb who was slain, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing!”

4. **Finite**

a. Only one place at a time (not omnipresent)

b. **Daniel 10:12–14** (ESV) —

(1) 12 Then he said to me, “Fear not, Daniel, for from the first day that you set your heart to understand and humbled yourself before your God, your words have been heard, and I have come because of your words.

(2) 13 The prince of the kingdom of Persia withstood me twenty-one days, but Michael, one of the chief princes, came to help me, for I was left there with the kings of Persia,

(3) 14 and came to make you understand what is to happen to your people in the latter days. For the vision is for days yet to come.”

5. **Lots of angels!**

- a. **Deuteronomy 33:2** (ESV) — 2 He said, “The LORD came from Sinai and dawned from Seir upon us; he shone forth from Mount Paran; he came from the ten thousands of holy ones, with flaming fire at his right hand.”
  - b. **Psalm 68:17** (ESV) — 17 The chariots of God are twice ten thousand, thousands upon thousands; the Lord is among them; Sinai is now in the sanctuary.
  - c. **Hebrews 12:22** (ESV) — 22 But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to innumerable angels in festal gathering...
  - d. **Revelation 5:11** (ESV) — 11 Then I looked, and I heard around the throne and the living creatures and the elders the voice of many angels, numbering myriads of myriads and thousands of thousands...
6. **Powerful**
- a. **Psalm 103:20** (ESV) — 20 Bless the LORD, O you his angels, you mighty ones who do his word, obeying the voice of his word!
  - b. **2 Peter 2:11** (ESV) — 11 whereas angels, though greater in might and power, do not pronounce a blasphemous judgment against them before the Lord.
7. **Don't marry**
- a. Not familial in the sense humans are
  - b. **Matthew 22:30** (ESV) — 30 For in the resurrection they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are like angels in heaven.

### III. **The Creation of Angels**

#### A. **Before the 7<sup>th</sup> Day**

- 1. **Genesis 2:1** (ESV) — 1 Thus the heavens and the earth were finished, and all the host of them.
- 2. **Exodus 20:11** (ESV) — 11 For in six days the LORD made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and rested on the seventh day....

#### B. **Perhaps on the 1<sup>st</sup> Day**

- 1. **Genesis 1:1–2** (ESV) — 1 In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth. 2 The earth was without form and void, and darkness was over the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters.
  - a. No mention of the heavens in v. 2; earth is void, contrasted with the heavens
- 2. **Job 38:6–7** (ESV) — 6 On what were its bases sunk, or who laid its cornerstone, 7 when the morning stars sang together and all the sons of God shouted for joy?
  - a. Sons of God worshiping God when the foundations were laid in the earth

#### C. **Certainly before the Fall**

- 1. Rebellion in heaven had already taken place

- a. After 6<sup>th</sup> day of creation, since everything after 6<sup>th</sup> day was good

#### IV. The Angel of the Lord

- A. Some passages indicate this is a **Theophany (or Christophany)** – visible appearance of the invisible God
  1. **“The angel of the Lord”**
- B. **Hagar**
  1. **Genesis 16:7–10** (ESV) —
    - a. 7 The angel of the LORD found her by a spring of water in the wilderness, the spring on the way to Shur.
    - b. 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.”
    - c. 9 The angel of the LORD said to her, “Return to your mistress and submit to her.”
    - d. 10 The angel of the LORD also said to her, “I will surely multiply your offspring so that they cannot be numbered for multitude.”
  2. **Genesis 16:13** (ESV) —
    - a. 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.”
- C. **Abraham**
  1. **Genesis 22:11–14** (ESV) —
    - a. 11 But the angel of the LORD called to him from heaven and said, “Abraham, Abraham!” And he said, “Here I am.”
    - b. 12 He said, “Do not lay your hand on the boy or do anything to him, for now I know that you fear God, seeing you have not withheld your son, your only son, from me.”
    - c. 13 And Abraham lifted up his eyes and looked, and behold, behind him was a ram, caught in a thicket by his horns. And Abraham went and took the ram and offered it up as a burnt offering instead of his son.
    - d. 14 So Abraham called the name of that place, “The LORD will provide”; as it is said to this day, “On the mount of the LORD it shall be provided.”
- D. **Jacob**
  1. **Genesis 31:11** (ESV) —
    - a. 11 Then the angel of God said to me in the dream, ‘Jacob,’ and I said, ‘Here I am!’
  2. **Genesis 31:13** (ESV) — 13 I am the God of Bethel, where you anointed a pillar and made a vow to me. Now arise, go out from this land and return to the land of your kindred.’ ”
- E. **Moses**
  1. **Exodus 3:2** (ESV) —



- a. 2 And the angel of the LORD appeared to him in a flame of fire out of the midst of a bush. He looked, and behold, the bush was burning, yet it was not consumed.
  2. **Exodus 3:6** (ESV) — 6 And he said, “I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.” And Moses hid his face, for he was afraid to look at God.
- F. Other passages seem to distinguish between the angel of the Lord and God Himself
  1. I.e., meaning an angel from the Lord
  2. **2 Samuel 24:16** (ESV) —
    - a. 16 And when the angel stretched out his hand toward Jerusalem to destroy it, the LORD relented from the calamity and said to the angel who was working destruction among the people, “It is enough; now stay your hand.” And the angel of the LORD was by the threshing floor of Araunah the Jebusite.

V. Next week – Angels and Us