

Sermon – Angels
2 Kings 19:32-36; Acts 12:1-11

Reference sheets / Handouts

III – John Paton was a missionary in New Hebrides Islands. One night a group of Hostile natives surrounded his headquarters. They wanted to burn out him and his wife and kill them. John and his wife prayed all night that God would deliver them. And their attackers left. A year later, the chief of this hostile tribe was converted to Christianity. Paton asked him about that night a year ago. He asked him what stopped him attacking them. The chief replied in surprise “Who were all those men you had in there with you?” John replied that there was only him and his wife. The chief said that he had seen many men standing guard. Hundreds of big men in shining armour with swords drawn in their hands, circling the mission station. The natives saw them and were afraid to attack. Had God sent his angels to protect them?

There are hundred of these sorts of stories.

But we don’t need to go to rumours or stories to know that angels exist. All the evidence we need is in the Bible. Not only does the Bible give us many accounts of angels at work in our world, but it also tells us who they are and what they are doing.

PPT – We’re going to look at four questions today: (see handouts)

1. What are angels?
2. What do they do?
3. What are the dangers?

AND

4. What does it mean for us today?

1. So first of all, **what are angels?**

The word angel is a word which simply means “messenger”. Sometimes it refers to heavenly angels, other times it refers to other messengers, like prophets or priests. For example, John the Baptist in Mark 1:2 is referred to as an angel, or messenger.

So let’s look at the times when the Bible is talking about *heavenly* “angles”:

PPT –

1. **Angels are created beings**, they are created by God for his purposes.
2. **Angels are powerful beings** – one angel killed 185,000 Assyrians in 2 Kings 19!
3. **Angels are eternal beings** – they live forever.
4. **Angels cannot be redeemed**. That is, once an angel has fallen into sin, it cannot be saved.

Jude 6 says: “⁶And the angels who did not keep their positions of authority but abandoned their own home—these he has kept in darkness, bound with everlasting chains for judgment on the great Day”. So Satan’s angels cannot be converted!

5. Finally, **angels will not inherit** the kingdom of heaven with us.

Angels who have not fallen are *in* God’s kingdom, but they do not inherit it like we do. A bit like living in someone’s house, but never being a member of the family.

Heb 1:14 says: “¹⁴Are not all angels ministering spirits sent to serve those who will inherit salvation?”

That makes **us** pretty important to God. **WE** are the ones created in God’s image. **WE** are the ones who Jesus came to save. **WE** are the ones who will inherit the kingdom of God. The angels who have fallen, like Satan and the other fallen angels, can never be saved. And angels who have never sinned will still never experience the joy of salvation that we experience through Jesus’ death on the cross. **WE** are the focus of God’s plans in this world. Angels are spirits who minister to **US**.

So where does that leave the angels? Well, they are simply “messengers” of God. They are one way God has chosen to work in our world.

So, second question, “**What do angels do?**”

PPT – **Mainly, 3 things:**

1. **Angels are messengers of words and prophecies.**

God uses angels to bring messages to people on earth.

- In Luke 1 and Matthew 1 an angel appears to Zechariah, to Mary and to Joseph to tell them about the coming births of John the Baptist and Jesus
- In Acts 8:26, an angel of the Lord tells Philip to go into the middle of the desert to preach the gospel to an Ethiopian Eunuch.
- In Rev 1:1 we're told that the book of Revelation is "¹The revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave him to show his servants what must soon take place. He made it known by sending his angel to his servant John..."

Angels bring messages from God to people. They reveal things to the prophets and the people of God. The difference now is that there is nothing left to "reveal". We have everything revealed to us through Jesus. So any words an angel might speak to us today will only be words of warning or encouragement, which God may just as easily send to us through one another, rather than by an angel.

2. Second, angels are messengers of judgement

- In Matthew 13:41-42, Jesus tells us that on the last day: "⁴¹The Son of Man will send out his angels, and they will weed out of his kingdom everything that causes sin and all who do evil. ⁴²They will throw them into the fiery furnace, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth."
- In 2 Kings 19, 1 angel strikes down 185,000 Assyrians
- In 1 Chronicles 21:16, the angel of the Lord strikes down 70,000 Israelites in Jerusalem for their disobedience to God.
- In Acts 12, Herod is struck down because he dishonours God

²¹On the appointed day Herod, wearing his royal robes, sat on his throne and delivered a public address to the people. ²²They shouted, "This is the voice of a god, not of a man." ²³Immediately, because Herod did not give praise to God, an angel of the Lord struck him down, and he was eaten by worms and died."

Angels are messengers of God's judgement. God uses them to deliver his immediate and final judgment on individuals, on cities, and on nations and finally, on the whole world.

3. Third, angels are messengers of mercy and deliverance

Ps 34:7 says "⁷ The angel of the LORD encamps around those who fear him, and he delivers them."

And we see this in action many times in the Bible. One time is in Acts 12:5-11 which we heard read to us:

⁷Suddenly an angel of the Lord appeared and a light shone in the cell. He struck Peter on the side and woke him up. "Quick, get up!" he said, and the chains fell off Peter's wrists.

⁸Then the angel said to him, "Put on your clothes and sandals." And Peter did so. "Wrap your cloak around you and follow me," the angel told him. ⁹Peter followed him out of the prison, but he had no idea that what the angel was doing was really happening; he thought he was seeing a vision.

God sends angels to rescue and deliver his people. And we hear these stories time and time again today. Angels are here for *US* in this world. They are heavenly beings created by God to do His work.

So, Question 3, "What are the dangers?" I want to alert you to two dangers...

DANGER 1: fixation and worship

People can become **obsessed** with angels in their life. Some people pursue an understanding of angels far beyond what God tells us in the Bible. And the danger is this: that we become focussed on these other things, like angels or demons, rather than being focussed on Jesus.

This is what Paul talks about in Col 2:18 which he calls *angel worship*. This attitude to angels and demons may very well disqualify you for salvation. Angels exist to glorify God and to do his will. We are not to **worship** them, and they don't *want* to be worshipped. In Revelation 19:10, John says this about the angel in front of him:

"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!' "

Angels are merely servants, or messengers, of God. DO NOT FOCUS on angels or WORSHIP them.

DANGER 2: Dualism.

(mentioned last week – brief overview: NOT Good Vs Evil or God Vs Satan – God has already defeated Satan. It is a spiritual battle which has already been won. It is a battle, but God is in complete control.)

Finally, Question 4: “What does this mean for us today?”

The battle we face as Christians is a spiritual one. We continually struggle against the urges of sin. Satan and his fallen angels continually try to manipulate us and overpower us, but for those of us who **trust in Jesus**, God is there to protect us with his angels and strengthen us, and encourage us and comfort us. The angels deserve no glory, only God, because it's GOD who sends his angels to help us. We don't pray to angels. We don't thank the angels. They are God's servants. We thank God!

III – Imagine going in to Myer to buy a new shirt, and as you leave, you thank the sales assistant for making you this wonderful shirt... *They* didn't make it, they just delivered it!

Angels aren't responsible for protecting you. God is responsible. HE sends the angels to do HIS work of protecting you. GOD deserves the thanks and praise for that!

Let's wind it up.

The real existence of angels really leaves us with two things to remember:

1. God really is in control. Everything God does is done to bring him glory and praise. Angels are his agents in this world. The presence of angels should remind us that God is at work, caring for us at all times in all situations, and he is very powerful and in command of everything.

2. The battle we face as Christians is bigger than the visible. Forces which we do not see, and cannot understand, are at war against us. But those who trust in Jesus have already won the battle through his death and resurrection.

Remember **Ephesians 6:12** from last week:

¹²For 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.

God protects us every day in these spiritual battles, and we don't need to SEE his angels to know that he is protecting us.

III – When I take my car to the mechanics, I'm always amazed that he can fix what I can't fix. Same when I go to the dentist, or the doctor, or when I watch a painter paint, or a concert pianist play Beethoven like I never could. I like to watch their hands. The incredible skill. They are so gifted at what they do. I wish, when I see a concert pianist play, or a skilled mechanic work, I wish I could just **chop** their hands off and stick them on the end of my arms! But it wouldn't be the same would it. They're just hands. And the hands belong to them. The hands don't make the music, the pianist does.

Angels are the extensions of God's hands. They are God's fingertips surrounding us through all the trials of life. But we should not be tempted to focus on the hands of God. Look at God's face, not his hands. Where is the face of God? Jesus is the face of God. Our focus should always remain on Jesus. The face, not the hands. Every little thing an angel does should help us focus more clearly on Jesus.

Be astounded by God's work. He is doing much more than you can physically see. And he is completely in control of everything. His hands cause Tsunamis and cyclones, and rainbows and sunsets. And he orders his tens of thousands of angels to protect you and me every day. But most importantly, he doesn't want us to look at his hands. He wants us to look at his face. And God's face is Jesus. So be amazed at the work of his hands, but don't be distracted from his face.

PRAY.

BIBLE REFERENCES

QUESTION ONE: What are they?

“angel” means “messenger”.

1. Angels are created – **Col 1:16-17**

¹⁶For by him (*Christ*) 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.

2. Angels are powerful – **1 Chronicles 21:16. Matthew 28:2.**

3. Angels are eternal beings - **Luke 20:36**

4. Angels cannot be redeemed – **Jude 6**

⁶And the angels who did not keep their positions of authority but abandoned their own home—these he has kept in darkness, bound with everlasting chains for judgment on the great Day”

5. Angels cannot be co-heirs with us and Christ of the kingdom of heaven – **Hebrews 1:14**

¹³To which of the angels did God ever say, “Sit at my right hand until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet”? ¹⁴Are not all angels ministering spirits sent to serve those who will inherit salvation?

QUESTION TWO: What do they do?

Angels are messengers:

1. *Of words and prophecies*

- Acts 27:23-25
- Luke 1:11, 26 and Matthew 1:20
- Acts 8:26
- Rev 1:1

2. *Of judgment*

- Genesis 19
- Matthew 13:41-42
- 2 Kings 19
- 1 Chronicles 21:16
- Acts 12

3. *Of mercy and deliverance*

- Ps 34:7
- 2 Kings 6:14-17
- Acts 12:5-11 (p92)

QUESTION THREE – What are the dangers?

- Fixation and Worship – **Col 2:18**
- Dualism – **1 Peter 3:21-22**

QUESTION FOUR – What does it mean for us?

1. God really is in control
2. The battle we face as Christians is bigger than the visible
 - **Eph 6:10-13**