

THE DOCTRINE OF ANGELS

Words for “angel” - NT - *angelos* - Messenger
OT - *mal’ak* - Messenger
Other terms: “sons of God” = divine beings or heavenly powers, “holy ones,” “hosts,” “heroes,” “watcher,” “strong ones,” “council,” and “congregation.”

Meaning: (1) messenger, envoy (as humans - 1 Kgs 19:2; Lk 7:24; cp Hag 1:13; Mal 2:7, 31)

- (2) messenger, envoy (as divine spirits)
-to convey the mandates of God to men
-to harbinger special events
-to protect the faithful, either individual or collectively and execute condign punishment on their adversaries
-to serve as instruments of the divine displeasure against sinners within Israel itself.

OLD TESTAMENT:

1. GENERAL - Examples (Note creation of angels - Ps 148:2, 5; cf. Col 1:16)
Gen 6:1-4 - Fall of angels??? cp. 2 Pet 2:4; Jude 6 (1 Enoch)
Gen 18:2, 16; Ezek 9:2 - Mistaken for men
Gen 22:11 - Saved Isaac
Gen 31:11 - Assured Jacob
Ex 3:2 - Indicated to Moses special character of the burning bush
Gen 16:11 - Birth of Ishmael and Samson (Jdgs 13:3-5)
Gen 48:16 - Protected Jacob, cf. Gen 28:12; 31:11 (dreams)
Ex 23:20-23; 33:2 - Escorted Israelites through wilderness
Ex 14:19 - Put a cloud between Israelites and army of Egyptians
Jdgs 5:23 - Invoked a curse on a village which denied their aid against Philistines
1 Kgs 19:5 - Fed Elijah in the desert
2 Kgs 19:35; Isa 37:36 - Inflicted disaster of Assyrian invaders against Jerusalem
Ps 91:11 - Protect faithful in all their ways
Ps 35:5-6 - Discomfited and routed enemies in battle
Job 38:7 - Witness creation!
Zech 1:9, 11ff; 2:2-5; Ezek 40:3 - Mediators of revelation
Ps 78:49 - Destroying angel; destroyer (Ex 12:23) cp. Gen 19:13; 2 Sam 24:16; Ezek 9:1, 5, 7
Job 33:22 - Ministers of death
Dan 9:21; Rev 14:6 - Angels flew but not necessarily had wings!

NOTE: Cherubim and Seraphim had wings - Isa 6:2; Gen 3:24;
Ezek 1:5-12; 10:19-22; 11:22; Ps 18:10
Num 22:22ff - Visible to donkey but not to Balaam
Ps 91:11ff - Cares for man but NOT AS GUARDIAN ANGEL in O.T.

2. ANGELIC HOSTS

Dan 7:10; 1 Kgs 22:19 - God of hosts (countless numbers of angels on all sides of God's throne)
Ps 103:21; 148:1ff. - Ever praise the name of God

3. ANGEL OF YAHWEH

A heavenly being given a particular task by Yahweh, behind whom the angel's personality entirely disappears.

(*means passages where one cannot tell the difference between Yahweh and the angel of Yahweh)

*Gen 16:7ff. - The angel and Hagar

Gen 18 - Abraham intercedes with the angel for Sodom.

*Gen 22:11ff - The angel interposes to prevent the sacrifice of Isaac.

Gen 24:7,40 - Abraham sends Eliezer and promises him the angel's protection.

*Gen 31:11ff - Appears to Jacob saying "I am the God of Bethel."

Gen 32:24ff - Jacob wrestles with the angel: "I have seen God face to face."

Gen 48:15f - Jacob speaks of God and the angel as identical.

*Ex 3 (cf. Acts 7:30ff) - The angel appears to Moses in the burning bush.

Ex 13:21; 14:19 (cf. Num 20:16) - God or the angel leads Israel out of Egypt.

Ex 23:20ff - The people are commanded to obey the angel.

Ex 32:34-33:17 (cf. Isa 63:9) - Moses pleads for the presence of God with his people.

Josh 5:13-6:2 - The angel appears to Joshua.

*Jdgs 2:1-5 - The angel speaks to the people.

Jdgs 6:11ff - The angel appears to Gideon.

Explanation: Ex 23:20ff. - "for **my name** is in him."

God's character and authority is given to the angel!

Ex 32:34-33:17 - A clear distinction between an ordinary angel and the angel who has God's Presence.

Kittel - "When the reference is to God apart from man, Yahweh is used; when God enters the apperception of man, the 'Angel of Yahweh' is introduced" Vol. 1, p. 77. Cp. Gen 21:17ff. and *texts above.

Interpretations of WHO the "Angel of Yahweh" is:

- 1) an angel with special commission.
- 2) momentary descent of God into visibility (Theophany).

- 3) Logos - temporary pre-incarnation of the Second Person of the Trinity.
- 4) An angel in whom is God's Name (**This I accept!**).

4. ARCHANGELS (Seven, four or three) cp. NT - 1 Thess 4:16; Jude 9; Lk 1:19;
Rev 12:7

Michael - Dan 10:13,21; 12:1; Enoch 9:1; 10:11; etc. (angels of the nations -
Dan 10:20,21).

Gabriel - Dan 8:16; 9:21; Enoch 9:1; 20:7; 40:9; 1 QM 9:26.

Raphael - Tobit 3:17; 12:15; Enoch 10:4; 40:9 (cp. Rev 8:2).

Uriel - Enoch 9:1; 19:1; 20:2; cf. 1 QS 3:20.

Jeremiel - see Apocrypha

5. SPECIAL KINDS OF ANGELS: WINGED CREATURES!

Cherubim (pl.) - traits of men and animals - Gen 3:24; Ezek 1:5-12; 10:19-22;
11:22; Ps 18:10; 99:1; Isa 37:16; Ex 25:18-20; 37:6-9.

Seraphim - six wings - Isa 6:2 (Throne of God) cp. Num 21:6-8 = "seraph" =
fiery serpents!

*First time angels of an anthropomorphic kind have "wings."

cp. Dan 9:21 - borne in winged flight - LXX "borne with speed"

Enoch 61:1 - they took to themselves wings - not normally done!

LATER JUDAISM

1. Popular belief in angels greatly increased: (1) more contact with other religions;
(2) more stress on God's transcendence without diminution of His activity on earth.
 - However, rejected by Sadducees (Acts 23:8).
 - Represented Yahweh's omniscience and omnipresence, formed his court and attendants, were His messengers.
 - Linked with the stars, elements, natural phenomena, and powers, which they ruled as God's representative.
 - Individual has his *guardian angel!* (cp. guardian angel of Jacob)
ex. Mesopotamian = "guardian of welfare" *Massar sulmi*
 - Nations have their angels (see Walter Wink's *THE POWERS*) - includes powers, dominions, thrones, lords, authorities, serving angels.
 - Angelic FALL (?) - Gen 6:1-6 (Eth Enoch 6-16; 19-21)

2. QUMRAN - angels rule over a cosmic dualism - Kingdom of darkness and light;
princes and spirits; God and Michael.
"the disobedient Heavenly Watches" fallen. Battle in last days.
Names: Michael, Gabriel, Raphael, and Sariel.

Godly man always shielded by God's care and concern in the various angelic forms.

3. PHILO - Sees *Logos* behind angels mentioned in OT. Otherwise, angels and demons are manifestations and powers of the universe.
4. JOSEPHUS - *angelos* used for both angel and messenger. Angels take part in giving of the Law on Sinai (*Antiquities* 15.5.3).
5. ESSENES - speculated about angels, (cf. *Wars* 2,8,7)

NEW TESTAMENT:

1. GENERAL INFORMATION: 175 times; Gospels = 51 times
Acts = 21
Rev = 67
Letters = 36
 - Used of "messengers" (men) 6 times; Lk 7:24; 9:52; Jas 2:25; Matt 11:10; Mk 1:2; Lk 7:27 (Mal 3:1).
 - "Messenger of Satan" - 2 Cor 12:7 = personification of a disease?
 - OT concept of "angels" is taken over by NT writers! (EXPECTED!)
2. GOSPELS - Concentration with Jesus
 - His coming (Matt 1:20; 2:13, 19; 28:2, 5; Mk 1:13; Lk 1:19; 2:9, 13; 22:43; Jn 1:51; cf. Acts 1:10)
 - His second coming (Matt 13:49; 16:27; 25:31; 2 Thess 1:7).
 - Jesus is above the angels (Mk 13:27; Heb 1:4-14; Phil 2:9ff.).
 - Take an interest in the fate of men (Lk 15:10) and the apostles (1 Cor 4:9).
 - Carry soul to paradise (Lk 16:22 - Note this is in a parable).
 - "Guardian angels" (?) Matt 18:10; Acts 12:15. Sometimes used to support such an idea, but very doubtful. "Pop" theology supports this idea, not the Bible!
3. ACTS
 - Angels released apostles from prison - 5:19.
 - Philip instructed - 8:26
 - Cornelius instructed - 10:3ff. (10:22; 11:13).
 - Release of Peter from prison - 12:7-11.
 - Judgment on Herod - 12:23.
 - Stephen alludes to angels in Exodus narrative - 7:30, 35, 38.

- Disciples say to Rhoda - "It is his angel!" - 12:15. Rhoda was a product of her cultural understanding about "guardian angels," and the "angels" of dead people!
[guardian angel who could assume the bodily form of person he represents? Matt 18:10]
- Paul received message from an angel - 27:23.
- Sadducees did not believe in angels - 23:8.
- Pharisees did - 23:9.

4. PAULINE LETTERS

- Paul, a spectacle to men and angels - 1 Cor 4:9.
- Tongues of angels - 1 Cor 13:1.
- An angel from heaven - Gal 1:8
- Forbids worshipping of angels - Col 2:18.
- Christ "seen by angels" - 1 Tim 3:16 (cp. 1 Pet 1:12).
- Hospitality just great as if hospitable to an angel! Gal 4:14.
- Solemn charge has angels as witnesses - 1 Tim 5:21.
- *Law given through intermediary beings: i.e., angels - Gal 3:19 (Deut 33:2 LXX);
See also Acts 7:53; Heb 2:2.
- Parousia* accompanied by angels - 2 Thess 1:7.
- Christians are to judge angels (fallen?) - 1 Cor 6:3.
- *A woman ought to have authority on her head "because of the angels." WHAT DOES THIS MEAN?
 - 1) lust of angels (Gen 6:1-4) - uncovered heads of women cause angels to lust! (G. Kittel)
 - 2) angels are guardians of order in public worship (Qumran Community); defilement was offense to the angels. (J. A. Fitzmyer)
 - 3) worship of God - the woman, like the man, ought to have authority - in prayer and prophecy the woman (and man) is under the authority of God. (M. D. Hooker)
 - 4) "because of the messengers" - preachers! Women should be modestly dressed so as not to upset the messengers as they speak; i.e. not to dress as prostitutes did in those days. (B. Bryant)
- Satan disguises himself as an angel of light - 2 Cor 11:14ff.
- Angels cannot separate us from Christ (bad angels?) - Rom 8:38.

5. HEBREWS

- Apparently some were giving too much attention to angels (worship?) - Col 2:18
- Christ is superior to angels - 1:4.
- Lesser status 1:5ff.

- Task of angels is to worship - 1:6
- Function: (1) servants - 1:7 (Ps 104:4); 1:14; (2) winds and flames of fire
- NT worship - innumerable angels at Mt. Zion (heavenly Jerusalem) 12:22
- Entertaining angels unaware - 13:2; cp. Gen 18:1-8; 19:1-3.

6. PETER

- Interest in man's salvation - 1:12.

7. JUDE

- Michael, the archangel.

8. REVELATION

- Angels are busy carrying out the commands of God! Mediated by an angel - 1:1; 5:2 - loud voice (cp. 10:1; 18:1; 19:17).
- Powerful creatures - 10:1; 18:21.
- Robed in white, girdles of gold at their breasts - 15:6
- Actions of judgment are performed by angels (with trumpets 8:2; with plagues - 15:1; bowls 16:1).
- Courtiers around the throne of God - 5:11; 7:11.
- One holds keys to bottomless pit - 20:1.
- Michael - archangel wars against the dragon (Satan).

INTERESTING PROBLEM PASSAGES!!!

1. Law given through angels - Gal 3:19 (Deut 33:2 LXX)
See also Acts 7:53; Heb 2:2.
2. "A woman ought to have authority on her head *because of the angels.*"
-SEE ABOVE for four interpretations: Number 3 or 4 makes more sense.
3. Hebrews 2:7 (Ps 8:4) God or angels?
Hebrew - *elohim*; LXX - *angelos* cp. Lk 12:8-9 with Matt 10:32-33
(Enoch 99:3; 99:16; 100:10).
In Hebrew *elohim* can mean God or angels or powerful being.
However, *angelos* can only mean "angel" or "messenger."
4. Heb 13:2 - Entertaining angels unaware; cp. Gen 18:1-8; 19:1-3.
See also 12:22 = angels present at worship!
5. Gen 6:1-6 - "Sons of God" - angels? cp. 2 Pet 2:4; Jude 6 (1 Enoch)
Kaiser - "sons of God" are the "rulers of the day" who adopted the Near Eastern title of "sons of God"; i.e., "mighty men" = aristocrats!

*This is a more appropriate interpretation. These aristocratic dictators were adding women to their harems as a sign of strength and power. Jude and 2 Peter are talking about angels who left their place of service before God and thus are to be judged with Satan (perhaps an archangel at one time!).

To opt for demonic angels co-habiting with earthly women plays into the hands of the higher critics who see this as pure myth. I would like to “de-mythologize” this text!

6. Jude 9 - Michael contends against the devil for the body of Moses!
Nowhere in canonical scripture is this stated. Only in the Apocrypha!
7. Rev 2:1, 8, 12, 18; 3:1, 7, 14 - “to the *angel* of the church.”
 - 1) guardian angels of the churches?
 - 2) personification of these churches
 - 3) bishops

*None of the above are satisfactory interpretations.

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