

ANGELS

(Part 1)

No one can dispute that angels are a hot topic these days. Bookstores have several shelves filled with books about angels. People are simply fascinated about the subject of angels.

Unfortunately, much of the talk about angels strays from what the Scriptures have to say on the subject. The Church, however, has always held angels in high regard and has acknowledged their unique status in God's creation. In fact, there's a day on the Church's calendar that is devoted specifically to angels: September 29 - St. Michael and All Angels. Over the next two weeks, I will reprint from a pamphlet what the late Dr. A.L. Barry, former President of The Lutheran Church - Missouri Synod wrote about angels.

Do angels exist?

The Word of God - not popular television shows or magazine articles - is our only reliable source for knowing what angels are, and what they do. The Bible teaches us that angels were made by God during the six days of creation. Before creation there was only God (John 1:1-3), and after creation, we are told that on the seventh day God "rested from all the work of creating he had done"(Gen.2:3b). The Bible does not indicate on which day of creation God made angels. But angels are very real.

What does the word "angel" mean?

The word "angel" comes from a Greek word that means "messenger." Angels are God's messengers. Elsewhere in the Bible, angels are described as spirits (cf. Acts 23:9; Heb.1:14). The word "angel" is actually a description of what they do.

What are angels?

Angels are spirits. They are beings who do not have a physical body. Jesus Himself said, "a spirit does not have flesh and bones, as you see I have" (Luke 24:39). Evil an-gels too are described as not having "flesh and blood"(Eph. 6:12). In the Scriptures, when angels do appear in human form, this is only a momentary appearance for those who need to see them. Angels are not gods. They are God's creation and serve His holy and perfect will. The good angels are said to be "ministering spirits"(Heb.1:14), sent by God to serve us, His people.

Are angels human?

Human beings are the crown of God's creation. Only of human beings, and no other creature, did God say, "Let us make man in our own image"(Gen. 1:26). Furthermore, the Scriptures reveal that only into human beings did God breathe the breath of life (Gen. 2:7). Also, God did not give angels rule over His creation. This privilege He gave only to mankind (Gen. 1:26-28). Angels are not human beings. They exist as spirits who serve God and His people.

Do human beings become angels when they die?

No, human beings do not become angels when they die. The Scriptures are clear on this point. Until the last day, the souls of the dead are before the Lord, enjoying peace and rest in His presence, awaiting the final day when they will receive glorified bodies for all eternity (see 1 Cor.15; 1 Thess.5:17; Rev.7).

Are angels intelligent beings?

The Bible describes angels as having both intelligence and a will. The good angels know and follow the wisdom of God, which He has revealed through Christ to His church (Eph. 3:10). They gladly serve us, who are the heirs of the salvation Christ has won for us (Heb. 1:14). However, angels do not know all things. For instance, they do not know the thoughts of our hearts (1 Kings 8:39).

How powerful are angels?

Angels are extremely powerful beings. They are described as "mighty ones"(Ps. 103:20; 2 Thess. 1:7). The good angels guard and protect God's children (Ps. 91:11-13). The power of the angels is never unlimited, but is always subject to the will and authority of God. Evil angels too are powerful beings. The Bible tell us that they hold captive all unbelievers (Luke 11:21-22; Eph. 2:2). Believers in Christ are able to with-stand the temptation of evil angels through the power of God (Eph. 6:10-17).

Where are angels?

Angels, like God, do not inhabit the same physical dimension that human beings inhabit. From time to time, they are ordered by God to appear in our physical dimension. Thus, while there are times when angels will make an appearance at a distinct place (cf. Acts 12:7), they remain beings that inhabit no physical space.