

“THE ORIGIN OF ANGELS.”

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First Christian Reformed Church

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Sermon Texts: Nehemiah 9:6; Revelation 5:11-12

Introduction.

Article 12 of the Belgic Confession has more to say about the creation of spiritual or angelic beings than the rest of creation. That reminds us of the difference of the times. Today there is much more controversy over the creation of the earth.

During the middle ages there was a far greater preoccupation with mysterious and miraculous things. There was much superstition, and interest in magic and witchcraft. So much so that some speculated and debated how many angels could dance on the head of a pin.

People were tormented by fear of evil spirits. The Reformation with the proclamation of God's free and sovereign grace delivered people from their fears.

The skeptics of our day dismiss or deny the existence of angels and demons. They live in a closed universe, a universe where this is all there is and there ain't no more. They believe very little, nothing that can't be seen or proved.

Then there are the super naturalists, astrologers and Satanists today who go to the other extreme and make far too much of the spirit world.

With doctrines like this one that involve mysterious and invisible things, we must be careful not seek to know too much or go beyond what Scripture plainly teaches. Some people have far too great an obsession with angels or demons or supernatural things.

We seek this evening what glorifies God and edifies His people. So let's spend some time in God's Word to learn what it reveals and teaches concerning angels. We will study the fallen angels next week.

Angels: What are they?

Angels are real, they are not the stuff of magic or myth. The doctrine of angels is taught in both the OT (mentioned 108 times) and the NT (mentioned 165 times). To deny the existence of angels is to deny the truth and authority of Scripture and of Jesus. Jesus believed in and received ministry from angels.

Angels are created. Every angel is a creature, a created being. They are as completely dependent on God as every other created being or thing.

Nehemiah 9:6 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.

Colossians 1:16 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.

Angels are spiritual beings, without bodies.

They are real spiritual beings having a real existence, but they are part of the invisible creation. They are true spirits. Ordinarily they cannot be seen unless they take on a bodily form to appear to people.

Luke 24:39 See my hands and my feet, that it is I myself. Touch me, and see. For a spirit does not have flesh and bones as you see that I have.”

Colossians 1:16 For by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and *invisible*.

As spiritual beings they do not marry or procreate and they do not die.

Apparently a very great number of them can be in a very limited space.

Luke 8:30 Jesus then asked him, “What is your name?” And he said, “Legion,” for many demons had entered him.

I wonder if this led to the medieval speculation: “How many angels can stand/sit/dance on the head of a pin?” But if angels are spiritual and not material, then they don’t occupy space so the number is basically unlimited or irrelevant.

Angels are moral, intelligent beings, possessing personality and will.

They have a moral nature knowing good and evil, right and wrong and they will be judged and rewarded based on this.

Angels are not omnipresent or omnipotent or omniscient. They are finite creatures and can only be in one place at one time. They have to travel from one place to another. They don’t know all things though their knowledge is far greater than ours.

Matthew 24:36 “But concerning that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, nor the Son, but the Father only.

I Peter 1:12 It was revealed to them that they were serving not themselves but you, in the things that have now been announced to you through those who preached the good news to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven, *things into which angels long to look*.

They have great power but not all power. They are the army of hosts.

Psalms 103:20 Bless the Lord, O you his angels, you mighty ones who do his word.

All power is subject to God’s power and purpose.

Angels: When were they created?

We know for sure that they were created at least by the sixth day of creation.

Genesis 2:1 Thus the heavens and the earth were finished, and all the host of them.

Exodus 20:11 For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and rested on the seventh day.

Some think that based on Genesis 1:1 and Job 38:4-7 they were created on the first day.

Genesis 1:1-2a In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth. 2 The earth was without form and void.

Job 38:4-7 “Where were you when I laid the foundation of the earth?

Tell me, if you have understanding.

5 Who determined its measurements—surely you know! Or who stretched the line upon it?

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?

But Psalm 148 suggests they were present at creation:

Psalm 148:1-5 Praise the Lord!

Praise the Lord from the heavens; praise him in the heights!

2 Praise him, all his angels; praise him, all his hosts!

3 Praise him, sun and moon, praise him, all you shining stars!

4 Praise him, you highest heavens, and you waters above the heavens!

5 Let them praise the name of the Lord! For he commanded and they were created.

They apparently went through a time of testing or probation like Adam and Eve and some of them fell away sometime before the tempting of Adam and Eve.

Other than these hints we cannot say for sure when they were created.

Angels: How many angels are there?

How great in number no one knows, but judging from the number of them scattered around our house there must be a lot.

Deuteronomy 33:2 “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.

Matthew 26:53 Do you think that I cannot appeal to my Father, and he will at once send me more than twelve legions of angels? [6,000x12 = 72,000]

Hebrews 12:22 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,

Revelation 5:11 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,

Some translations translate myriads as ten thousand times ten thousand [one hundred million].

Sometimes they are mentioned in the context of the stars. Could they number as many as the stars?

Angels: Who are they?

Only two angels are named in Scripture.

Jude 1:9 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.”

Daniel 10:13 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.

Michael may be the leader of the angels (see Rev. 12:7-8).

Gabriel 1:19 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.

If the Apocrypha is to be believed, it names three more, Raphael, Uriel, and Jeremiel.

Today almost all depictions or descriptions of angels suggest they have wings and they are almost always feminine. But in Scripture with one possible exception (Zechariah 5:5-11) they are always referred to in the masculine gender.

And the only angelic beings clearly described with wings are cherubim and seraphim (but see Zechariah 5:5-11).

Other than Clarence in *It's a Wonderful Life* I'm not confident “every time a bell rings an angel gets its wings.”

Angels: What do they do?

Angels, first and foremost, are worshipers, examples to us in their devotion to God. They minister directly to God by glorifying Him.

Revelation 5:11-12 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!”

Angels find their highest joy to worship and praise God. They delight to sing His praises for He is worthy.

The Confession mentions two other tasks.

Angels are God's messengers, sent by God to earth to make special revelations of special events, especially all of the key events in the life of Jesus (birth, temptation, ministry, sufferings, resurrection and ascension). The word angel means messenger.

Luke 1:19 And the angel answered him [Zechariah], "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.

Angels are God's ministers to saints, they serve the elect, the heirs of salvation.

Hebrews 1:14 Are they not all ministering spirits sent out to serve for the sake of those who are to inherit salvation?

They are dispensers of God's grace and benefits to us. They provide and protect, they guide and direct. They are concerned for our safety. Frequently angels are seen in Scripture coming to the saints to lend assistance, or bringing hope or encouragement. Abraham, Hagar, Jacob, Joseph, Peter, and Paul.

Psalms 34:7 The angel of the Lord encamps around those who fear him, and delivers them.

Psalms 91:11-12 For he will command his angels concerning you to guard you in all your ways.
12 On their hands they will bear you up, lest you strike your foot against a stone.

What about guardian angels?

Clearly we know that God sends angels for our protection. Does Scripture teach that each saint has one angel assigned to him? Do angels play man-to-man defense or zone defense?

Psalms 91:11-12 For he will command his angels concerning you to guard you in all your ways.
12 On their hands they will bear you up, lest you strike your foot against a stone.

Matthew 18:10 "See that you do not despise one of these little ones. For I tell you that in heaven their angels always see the face of my Father who is in heaven.

Acts 12:15 They said to her, "You are out of your mind." But she kept insisting that it was so, and they kept saying, "It is his angel!"

Or do all the angels get involved in warfare on our behalf? Do all the angels rejoice at the salvation of one?

Calvin believes that many angels are appointed by God to take care of God's people, implying a host of angels around us.

Psalms 34:7 The angel of the Lord encamps around those who fear him, and delivers them.

We cannot say dogmatically or definitively from Scripture that every Christian has their own personal guardian angel.

Application and Conclusion.

First, this doctrine is meant for our comfort and encouragement and to strengthen our faith. God is with us, He will never leave us and forsake us. He has not left us alone and He sends His ministering angels to us.

God certainly needs no help, He can do everything for us by Himself. But it should be a comfort to know that He also commands legions of angels, innumerable guardians on our behalf and for our benefit and safety.

We need never fear the multitude of the enemy. He who is in us is greater than he who is in the world. God's legions far outnumber Satan's.

Second, angels remind us that our universe is not a closed universe, there is an unseen, invisible realm that's just as real as the visible world.

Jesus challenged and rebuked the Sadducees who said "there is no resurrection, nor angel, nor spirit (Acts 23:8).

We should be aware of angels and that when we worship we are in the company of angels.

Hebrews 12:22 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,

Finally, we see God's great love for us and His great plans for us in His relationship with us as compared to the angels.

He made us in His image. He gave us the ability to marry and to bear children in our likeness. While on earth we are lower than the angels, one day we will be like the angels and judge the angels.

When angels and man fell into sin God decided to redeem us, but not the angels. God could have let us go. But Jesus took on our flesh and our nature. We have been saved by grace from our rebellion even though we deserve what the fallen angels will receive. We have experienced God's love and grace in ways they never will. We are united to Christ in a way angels never will be. And God made angels to serve Him by serving us, while He made us to serve Him directly.