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WHERE DO ANGELS COME FROM?

John McGraw, a tough character who managed the New York Giants baseball team back in the 1910s to 1930s, ran his ball club like a dictatorship. His nickname, in fact, was "Little Napoleon." He didn't tolerate back talk, and woe to the player who made a mistake like missing a sign. McGraw inspired fear and respect in his players.

During one game, John McGraw's wife was sitting in the stands and wanted to relay a message to her husband. She started gesturing toward one of the players, waving at him to come over to her, but he didn't see her and walked away. Mrs. McGraw waved some more, but to no avail.

After the game, Mrs. McGraw saw the player and

said to him in mild exasperation, "Didn't you see me waving at you? I was trying to get your attention!"

"Good grief, Mrs. Mac," the player said as he turned pale. "Don't tell me you're giving signs too!"

That player's reaction is similar to what happens to many believers when it comes to the subject of angels and demons. We are so busy looking in one direction that we're oblivious to a second sphere of existence that is very active and needs our attention. In this case, however, there are real consequences to ignoring this second world and its principal characters and activities.

God's Word has so much to say about angels—both good angels and demons (which are evil angels)—that all I can do in this booklet is give you the basic framework and major points of emphasis the Bible makes about them. But this study will give you enough information to help you be aware of the critical role that these supernatural, spirit beings play in God's plan both in history and eternity.

Angels have been popular in Hollywood movies and in our culture for some time. At the same time the demonic world has become a popular theme in television and films. Just go to any theater in October, and you will see movie after movie displayed about these evil beings. Halloween movies may seem like silly, even childish storytelling intended to simply scare, but good angels and bad angels (demons) are real, and they have a lot more significance than we actually give them. And much of

what we read and watch about angels is really fluff compared to what the Bible teaches.

What I want to do is discuss in greater detail the role of angels in our lives as we consider their origin, activities, and future. While all angels had the same origin in eternity past as God's creation, good and bad angels today work in opposition to each other in the world. So let's look at how angels impact us, how to understand them better, and how to even utilize the gifts and services they provide on God's behalf.

It's also important to say that we can't talk about angels—good and rebellious—without getting into the issue of spiritual warfare, which will be part of our focus. This answers the question, "Why do I need to know about angels?" They are fighting against each other, and you are the prize they're fighting for!

RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT

Let's begin by looking at the origin of the angelic world. In Colossians 1:16, Paul wrote: "For by Him [Christ] all things were created, both in the heavens and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things have been created through Him and for Him." This verse makes it clear that the angelic realm was not created as an end in itself. The myriads of angels that God created were made to fulfill His divine purposes.

When were angels created? We don't know exactly when, but it was before the creation of the earth and mankind. During His answer to the patriarch Job, God asked this question: "Where were you when I laid the foundation of the earth? . . . When the morning stars sang together and all the sons of God shouted for joy?" (Job 38:4, 7).

The sons of God were the angels, who formed a choir and sang in celebration at creation. We know these are the angels because back in Job 1:6, the "sons of God" came to report to God on His throne, and Satan was among them. As we'll see, Satan was the greatest of the angels before his rebellion and judgment.

As created beings, angels are not to be worshiped, glorified, or adored in and of themselves. When the apostle John fell down to worship the angel who had shown him great things, the angel said, "Do not do that. I am a fellow servant of yours and of your brethren the prophets and of those who heed the words of this book. Worship God" (Revelation 22:9). The angels were created to worship, glorify, adore, and serve God. That's where Satan got into trouble, because he wanted to be worshiped rather than serve God (Isaiah 14:12–14).

Many verses in the Bible reveal the motivation and purpose of the angels. According to Psalm 148:2, the angels find their delight in praising God. The writer of Hebrews said of angels, "Are they not all ministering

spirits, sent out to render service for the sake of those who will inherit salvation?" (1:14).

Even though angels take on human appearance and become visible on occasion, they are spirit beings who do not have flesh and blood. Hebrews 13:2 says, "Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for by this some have entertained angels without knowing it." When necessary, God will direct one of His invisible angels to become visible in the life of a believer in order to accomplish a divinely ordained purpose.

This happened to Abraham and Sarah when "three men" (Genesis 18:2) showed up at the door of their tent one day to announce that Sarah would have a son at the age of ninety. The custom of the day was to be hospitable to strangers, and Abraham went all out for them. He may have done this because he was a kind and godly person, or because he sensed that these were special visitors. He probably did it for both reasons.

One of the men was God Himself, most likely Jesus in a preincarnate appearance, because His promise to Abraham was personal: "I will surely return to you at this time next year; and behold, Sarah your wife will have a son" (18:10). The other two "men" were actually angels whom God had sent to destroy Sodom and Gomorrah (18:20–22; 19:1).

Abraham entertained these strangers without knowing that they came bearing the provision of God for

the miracle that Sarah and he needed—the ability to conceive well past the age of childbearing (Romans 4:18–21).

Angels are also spirit beings, and the same is true of demons—who are fallen angels. In Ephesians 6:12, Paul describes these fallen angels as “spiritual forces of wickedness”: “Our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places.”

ANGELS ARE PERSONAL BEINGS

Angels are pure spirit, but that doesn't mean they are just floating apparitions. Angels are personal beings, and, likewise, the evil angels did not lose their personhood when they became demons. Angels have the three primary attributes of personhood, which are *intellect*, *emotions*, and *will*.

Angels have intellect. According to 1 Peter 1:12, they long to understand more about our salvation. In other words, they can think, and they talk with people. And they have emotions, for we read in Job 38:7 that they were filled with joy at creation. Jesus said in Luke 15:10 that the angels rejoice when a sinner gets saved.

Angels also have a will, because each angel had the choice to follow Satan in his rebellion or remain true

to God. Satan exercised his will when he tried to usurp God's throne.

We see all three of these attributes demonstrated when Jesus confronted a demon-possessed man who lived naked among the tombs (Luke 8:26–31). The multitude of demons who were tormenting this man exercised their intellect first of all by recognizing Jesus: "What business do we have with each other, Jesus, Son of the Most High God?" Then they made a request through the man: "I beg You, do not torment me" (v. 28). So Jesus gave them permission to enter a herd of pigs nearby (v. 32).

The demons also displayed their emotions and wills by expressing fear of torment and begging Jesus not to send them away where they could no longer be active. Many Bible teachers believe that the demons calling Jesus by name was not just a recognition of Him, but it was an attempt to gain control over Him. That could be why Jesus often told demons to be quiet when they spoke to Him (Mark 1:25).

ANGELS CANNOT BE COUNTED

Here's another fact about the origin and existence of angels: they are a host of beings so numerous they can't be counted. We see an awesome picture of this in Daniel's description of God on the throne as Judge: "A river of fire was flowing and coming out from before

Him; thousands upon thousands were attending Him, and myriads upon myriads were standing before Him" (Daniel 7:10).

"Myriads upon myriads" is another way of saying "ten thousand times ten thousand," which is one hundred million angels. And those were just the ones Daniel saw.

Demons must also exist in vast numbers. Revelation 12:4 indicates that one-third of the angelic host followed Satan in his rebellion. Satan and his followers are all angels who chose to reject God's authority and were cast from heaven (Isaiah 14:12–15; Ezekiel 28:14–15).

This vast evil host on earth is a key reason you and I need divine help to wage successful spiritual warfare. And Satan is so clever and intelligent that we are no match whatsoever for him in our own strength. But in God's power we can overcome an army!

The number of angels was fixed by God and will not change, both because they do not procreate (Matthew 22:30) and because, like our spirits that will live on forever in either heaven or hell, they are eternal beings.