

Revelation 5: 11 and 12; “Ten Thousand Times Ten Thousand”, Sermon # 41 in the series – “The Faithful and True Witness”, Delivered by Pastor Paul Rendall on February 28th, 2016, in the Afternoon Worship Service.

John says, “Then I looked and I heard the voice of many angels around the throne...” Now, this is the first time in this book in which we get a look at the holy angels in relation to the four living creatures and the elders. And we find that they are many and we find that they have a voice. We find that they are around the throne with the four living creatures and the 24 elders praising the Lamb who was slain. Angels we are told in Hebrews chapter 1, verse 14, are all “ministering spirits sent forth to minister for those who will inherit salvation.” Since they are praising the Lamb, which is the picture symbol of our Lord Jesus Christ, I think that it would be good for us this afternoon to ask the question: What are angels, and for what purpose were they created? “What are they like in their nature?” For we will become acquainted with them better on the last Day, the Day when Christ appears; and we will be praising the Lord together with them, from that Day on into eternity. So let us think about these 2 questions together in order that we may see that angels have a great and good purpose in the plans of God in relation to the Kingdom of Christ.

1st- What are angels, and for what purpose were they created?

We need to understand first of all that angels are created spirit beings. They were made by God, through Jesus Christ, at the beginning of the creation. Turn with me to Psalm 33: 6. Since the section of Revelation that we are studying speaks so much of praise being given to God, it should not surprise us that verse 6 has verses of praise that precede it. God has given his higher creation, of both angels and men, the intelligence and the ability to praise him. Indeed, it is one of the main occupations of both. But listen to verse 1. “Rejoice in the Lord, O you righteous!” “For praise from the upright is beautiful.” “Praise the Lord with the harp; make melody to Him with an instrument of ten strings.” “Sing to Him a new song; play skillfully with a shout of joy.” “For the word of the Lord is right, and all His work is done in truth.” “He loves righteousness and justice; the earth is full of the goodness of the Lord.” All of this comes before what we read now. “By the word of the Lord the heavens were made, and all the host of them by the breath of His mouth.” The angels were created when the Lord made the heavens. They were created to praise the Lord as we who are redeemed have been re-created, in the New Birth, to the praise of His glory. It says in Job 38: 7 that “the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy.” I do not believe that this is referring to the literal stars, but rather to the angels. The angels were created to sing, and shout and praise the Almighty, being joyful about all that He was creating in the material realm.

The angels, if they have bodies, they are not material bodies, they are celestial or spirit bodies, not composed of earthly materials, but having defined spiritual boundaries and properties which have the appearance of a body, and which is only to be seen in the spiritual dimension. 1st Corinthians 15: 39 and 40 says, “All flesh is not the same flesh, but there is one kind of flesh of men, another flesh of animals, another of fish, and another of birds.” “There are also celestial (heavenly) bodies, and terrestrial bodies; but the glory of the celestial is one, and the glory of the terrestrial is another.” In the immediate context which follows these verses, this may be primarily referring to the celestial bodies such as the sun, the moon, and the stars. But I believe that this truth can be applied to the angels themselves. They have a celestial body but it is not flesh. And yet, they clearly have the ability to praise the Lord with songs and voices in heaven. “Then I looked, and I heard the voice of many angels around the throne, saying with a loud voice, ‘Worthy is the Lamb who was slain to receive power and riches and wisdom, and strength and honor and glory and blessing.’” These are the praises of angels as well as men.

Angels, at times, have assumed human form and have been manifest in that bodily form for the purposes of fulfilling God's word which is given to them to give to men. I am thinking of the appearances made to Abraham, Balaam, and even Peter in the New Testament book of Acts where it says in chapter 12, verse 7, "Now behold, an angel of the Lord stood by him, and a light shone in the prison; and he struck Peter on the side and raised him up saying, 'Arise quickly!' "And his chains fell off his hands." "Then the angel said to him, 'Gird yourself and tie on your sandals'; and so he did." "And he said to him 'Put on your garment and follow me." "So he went out and followed him, and did not know that what was done by the angel was real, but thought he was seeing a vision."

This is really quite amazing, is it not? I believe that angels, (the word in the Greek means "messengers"), are those who have a spiritual body. But sometimes according to God's will and decree they assume a physical form to convey their message to God's elect people. They do not, very often it seems, have to assume a physical human form to be seen by men to accomplish their purpose on God's behalf. There is an interesting verse at the end of Acts chapter 12 about an angel of the Lord striking Herod because he did not give glory to God after he had given an oration to the people. The people were shouting out, "the voice of a god and not of a man"! It says, "Then immediately an angel of the Lord struck him." "And he was eaten by worms and died." Did the angel of the Lord necessarily have to appear to Herod to do this? I do not think so, although there are some very strange stories that revolve around this account. I am simply saying that their purpose and their function is to do God's bidding; to convey his messages of good news in things related to the salvation of men, or messages of judgment to those who have opposed or tampered with that good news. Actions of mercy or of judgment related to the messages given them to deliver, can follow, when it is God's will.

Think of Sodom and Gomorrah and the strategic role played by the two angels which accompanied the pre-incarnate Christ in his visit to Abraham, and the revelation given to that godly man, of the destruction of those cities. They went down there to deliver Lot and his 2 daughters, but one of the angels says to Lot in chapter 19, verse 13, "For we will destroy this place, because the outcry against them has grown great before the face of the Lord, and the Lord has sent us to destroy it." But the angels are those who are God's messengers and servants to do His bidding in everything good that God wishes them to do, in relation to those who will inherit salvation. And they are His messengers and servants to do His bidding in regard to all of His judgments against those who will oppose God and His holy will. Matthew 13: 41 says, "The Son of Man will send out His angels, and they will gather out of His kingdom all things that offend, and those who practice lawlessness, and will cast them into the furnace of fire."

2nd – What are the holy angels like in their nature and being?

Well, taking our cue from John Gill's Body of Divinity we find that they are holy, wise, and powerful. They are holy. They are called "the holy angels" in a number of places in the Scripture, such as Mark 8: 38 where it says, "For whoever is ashamed of Me and My words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him the Son of Man also will be ashamed when he comes in the glory of His Father with the holy angels." And Revelation 14: 9 and 10 where it says, "If anyone worships the beast and his image, and receives his mark on his forehead or his hand, he himself shall also drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which poured out full strength into the cup of His indignation." "He shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels and in the presence of the Lamb." They were created in holiness, but not all of them "kept their first estate", as it says in Jude 6. "And the angels who did not keep their proper domain, but left their own abode, He has reserved in everlasting chains under darkness for the judgment of the great day." Their proper domain is the domain of holiness and obedience to God's every word. But Satan drew some angels away from their original righteousness, and they could not be shown the same mercy as men were, through Jesus Christ, because they had been closer to God; in the immediate presence of perfect holiness, in a greater way than man who is of

the dust. And thereby they had a greater responsibility and a greater condemnation when they fell. Their fall was irretrievable. It was not as though Christ could not have died for them, but it was the purpose of God that it not be so. But there were myriads who did stand the test and it is they who are holy.

They are not as holy as God Himself is, by any means, but they are innocent and sinless according to the purposes of God; and their hearts response to those purposes. There is an interesting verse in Job 15: 15 which says, "If God puts no trust in His saints, and the heavens are not pure in His sight, how much less man, who is abominable and filthy, who drinks iniquity like water!" The heavens not being pure in His sight probably has reference to the angels who fell from their original righteousness. Others of the angels were confirmed in their holiness, after passing the test of not joining with Satan's rebellion, when he departed from holiness and dragged many others of the angels with him. 1st Samuel chapter 2, verse 2 says, "No one is holy like the Lord, for there is none besides You, nor is there any rock like our God." The reason that these angels stood and were confirmed in their holiness was because of God's electing grace, His confirming grace in Jesus Christ. It was a grace conferred upon them because they stood in their covenant of works, in their holiness and original righteousness, in the beginning. But still they needed Christ's grace, not in order to be saved, but rather to stand and to go on to fulfill all of God's good purpose for which they were created. Christ is the head over all principality and power; He has been placed over all the holy angels.

The holy angels are very wise creatures, as well. The woman of Tekoa in 2 Samuel 14: 20 says to David, "My lord is wise, according to the wisdom of an angel, to know everything that is in the earth." Again, this is not a wisdom that is as great as God's, for it says in Job 4: 18 and 19, "If He puts no trust in His servants, if He charges His angels with error, how much more those who dwell in houses of clay, whose foundation is the dust." But still, angels are very wise creatures. You never hear of a man in the Scriptures reproving an angel. They might hate and despise holy angels, but they are not wiser than they. In Jude verse 8, when speaking about the men who were destroyed by the Lord, in Sodom, it says, "These dreamers defile the flesh, reject authority, and speak evil of dignitaries." (glorious ones) That is, they spoke evil of the angels when they came to Lot's house. "Yet Michael the archangel, in contending with the devil, when he disputed about the body of Moses, dared not bring against him a reviling accusation, but said, 'The Lord rebuke you!'" You see how wise that angel was, even when facing the worst of fallen angels. The angels certainly do not know everything. They do not know the day of the Lord's return, and in the book of 1st Peter, chapter 1, and verse 12, it says that the angels long to look into the things related to the sufferings of Christ and the glories that would follow. But neither a human being, nor an angel needs to have all knowledge in order to be wise.

And finally, the angels are powerful creatures. It was the angels who helped perform many of the miraculous things done when the power of Pharaoh and Egypt were destroyed just before the children of Israel left. An angel of the Lord destroyed all the first-born of Egypt and were probably responsible for many others of the destructive things done. Psalm 78: 45 says, "God sent swarms of flies among them, which devoured them, and frogs, which destroyed them." "He also gave their crops to the caterpillar, and their labor to the locust." "He destroyed their vines with hail, and their sycamore trees with frost." "He also gave up their cattle to the hail, and their flocks to fiery lightning." "He cast on them the fierceness of His anger, wrath, indignation, and trouble, by sending angels of destruction among them." They are very powerful indeed. And yet their power is under perfect control and submission to the decree, the will and the purpose of Almighty God. It says in Psalm 103: 20, "Bless the Lord, you His angels, who excel in strength, who do His word, heeding the voice of His word." "Bless the Lord, all you His hosts, you ministers of his, who do His pleasure."

It was an angel of the Lord, who after our Lord Jesus Christ was raised from the dead, was given the opportunity to show off some of his power. It says in verse 1 of Matthew 28, "Now

after the Sabbath, as the first day of the week began to dawn, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary came to see the tomb.” “And behold, there was a great earthquake; for an angel of the Lord descended from heaven, and came and rolled back the stone from the door and sat on it.” “His countenance was like lightning, and his clothing as white as snow.” “And the guards shook for fear of him and became as dead men.” “But the angel answered and said to the women, ‘Do not be afraid, for I know that you seek Jesus who was crucified.’ “He is not here; for He is risen, as He said.” “Come, see the place where the Lord lay.” “And go quickly and tell His disciples that He is risen from the dead, and indeed He is going before you into Galilee; there you will see Him.” “Behold, I have told you.” “So they went out of quickly from the tomb with fear and great joy, and ran to bring His disciples word.” This is always the effect that holy angels have when they are seen by men. Their presence and the perception by men of their great power causes fear. But see how, even though they are so powerful, that they can speak words of great encouragement and comfort, and bring great joy to their hearers; because the angels of the Bible always speak of something related to Christ.

And yet, we must end with this, that the power that raised Jesus from the dead is greater than that of any angel, for an angel cannot raise the heart of a sinner dead in his trespasses and sins. But the power of God and Christ can, and will, for all who will believe. This, I believe, is why even angels say with a loud voice, “Worthy is the Lamb who was slain, to receive power and riches and wisdom, and strength and honor and glory and blessing!” Christ did not take upon Himself the nature of angels. And He does not redeem them, but He confirms them in their holiness, and He is their Head. And they rejoice as we do, in all of the triumphs that his grace has won for them, as well as for us.