

ANGELS – Part 2

Acts 12:1-19

We are again studying the topic of angels. For the third and final time let's read Acts 12:1-19 as our springboard text...

Acts 12:1-19

Last Sunday we examined how angels are both **like and unlike** human beings. And while we had moved on to discuss their purpose (to glorify God and to serve the saints), I ran across a small detail this past week that I think is worth mentioning...

Mark 16:1-7

The detail that I am referring to is in verse 5: the words "young man." In the Greek, the word is νεανισκον...the "nea" part of the word coming from neo, meaning new. Thus a "new man" or a "young man" or "young adult male."

Through the years I have often had conversations about how we will appear in heaven. I think this is particularly of interest to those who are quite old and hurting from many ailments. The idea that they will for all eternity have a body **free of such ailments** is appealing but they wonder, "Will I be old for all eternity?" Conversely the question could be asked if young children or babies that die will forever be young children or babies. When asked about this I often ask, "When God created Adam, do you think he made him as an infant or an adult?" As God gave specific instructions to Adam, and then, in the making of Eve, told them to "be fruitful and multiply" we – and every artist through the centuries – have portrayed Adam and Eve as young adults: old enough to understand clear instructions and old enough to reproduce...but not too old. Right?

And here we have an angel appearing and the text notes that he looked like a **YOUNG** man.

Or consider last Sunday, we looked at Genesis 19 where two angels met Lot in Sodom. There we read of the men of the city demanding to "have them" (and this is implied) so as to sexually molest them. It would be reasonable to conclude that they appeared as young men and not as old men.

Now why is this significant?

1. (First of all) I think this gives us some direction in thinking about our eternal state. I think, and with good reason, that we all will appear as we would in the "PRIME" of life. Be it 17, 18, 19...in that sort of range.
2. (Secondly) If that is the case, then this is helpful in understanding why, in Luke chapter 24, when Jesus appeared to the two men on the road to Emmaus, **they didn't recognize him**. They had seen him, only days before as a wearied, beaten up (and beaten down) man of sorrows who was 33 years old. And now they met along the road this vibrant, youthful looking man. It was Jesus, but they had never seen Jesus at such a young age.

I have read that Mel Gibson is preparing to make a follow up film to his well-received "The Passion of the Christ" starring Jim Caviezel. This follow up film would be on the resurrection of Christ. The one problem I see with it is that Jim Caviezel is now 51 years of age, and if the plan is to portray him (again) as Jesus, and the filming were to begin today, Jim is now some 30 years or more **TOO OLD to portray the resurrected Christ**.

But, anyway, let's get on with our study of the Purpose of the Angels...

Now last Sunday we **ended** with quickly looking at Hebrews 1:14. Let's turn to that again...

Hebrews 1:14

That angels are ministering spirits is clear enough when we examine the life of Christ.

- For not only did **an angel named Gabriel** make known to Mary that she was to become the mother of an eternal king, but it was also **an angel that informed Joseph** as to Mary's future son and that his name was to be called Jesus.
- At the time of Jesus' birth, it was an angel of the Lord that **announced to the shepherds** that Jesus had been born. And then, quite suddenly "there was with the angel **a multitude of the heavenly host** praising God and saying, 'Glory to God in the

highest, and on earth peace among those with whom he is pleased' (Luke 2:13-14)

- Following Christ's time of temptation by the devil, in the wilderness, it tells us in Matthew 4:11, "Then the devil left him, and behold, **angels came and were ministering to him.**
- On the night when Jesus was betrayed, while still in the Garden of Gethsemane, agonizing in prayer, Luke 22:43 adds, "And there appeared to him **an angel from heaven, strengthening him.**"
- As noted last Sunday, at the moment of his arrest and Peter's cutting off of Malchus' ear, Jesus rebuked Peter saying, "Do you think that I cannot appeal to my Father, and he will at once send me more than **twelve legions of angels?** (Matthew 26:53).
- And if I understand Revelation chapter 12 at all correctly, it was at the time of Jesus' death – when he cried "It is finished" – that Satan and his angels, who up to that point had been engaged in a battle against the angel Michael and his angels, was thrown out of heaven and down to the earth.
- And, as read earlier, it was an angel (who looked like a young man) who told the women at the tomb that Jesus was alive.

The point here is not only that we see angels appearing quite regularly in the life of Christ but that they truly were ministering spirits – helpful spirits – to Christ. And what was true in the life of Jesus was and is true in our lives as well.

So how come we don't see angels?

Well, if Hebrews 13:2 is correct (that some have been "entertained unawares," that is, without us knowing it) it is possible that **angels have appeared** to us more than we know.

It is, of course, about now that every husband should tell his wife that he thinks she has been an angel, and maybe the wives would say the same thing back to their husbands. But it follows that if GOOD angels can be entertained unawares, that the same might be true for FALLEN angels as well. And as every parent knows, our wonderful little children can, at times, seemingly fluctuate between both extremes.

Plenty of people have, of course, **told stories** of supposed encounters with angels. Inevitably they are stories of running

out of gas and suddenly some stranger appearing, giving them gas and just when they turned to thank them the stranger was gone...disappeared.

Or maybe they are stories of how, when much younger, an angel appeared to them in their bedroom.

I have heard **many** of these stories. **It is hard to know what to make of them.** Did they really happen or is it that the person telling the story merely believes they happened?

Ruth and I have had many interactions whereby she will swear she told me something and I will swear she did not – or vice versa. And which of us have not had dreams that seemed SO REAL that upon awakening we questioned for hours, days or even years as to whether or not the events of the dream were real or just imagined?

So maybe angels have been appearing more than we realize, and we're simply clueless about them. It is hard to say.

In the book, Out of the Silent Planet, C.S. Lewis wrote about the eldila – spirit like beings that one can train oneself to be aware of. But without that kind of conscious effort at seeing them, they do not appear.

And of course, Lewis helped us all in thinking more about angels with his book The Screwtape Letters. There we learn of one Wormwood and the instructions being given to him by his more experienced demon uncle, Screwtape. As **fallen angels are generally equated with demons** (and this is a debatable equation), Lewis sets up the reader for the kind of situation often portrayed in cartoons wherein some person – usually a man – has a **good angel** (often holding a harp and with wings) standing on the man's shoulder and talking into his one ear, while a bad angel – a demonic character with pitchfork in hand – is standing on his other shoulder talking into his other ear.

We have all seen these kind of cartoons.

But the truth is, at least from what I can see in scripture, **this is not that far off base.**

For while the good angels are ministering to us (Hebrews 1:14), protecting us, holding us accountable, encouraging us and so forth, as 1 Peter 5:8 says, "Satan goes around like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour" (KJV). And what Satan does we may assume "his angels" (Revelation 12:7) do as well.

Let's move along...a number of points...

1. The Bible seems to teach that we EACH have an angel assigned to us. This is what people are speaking of when they speak of a guardian angel.

Matthew 18:10

Here the reference is to the angel or angels that are assigned to "one of these little one" – which may refer either to a child or to one who was considered insignificant or unimportant. This would seem to imply that there are at least as many angels as there are human beings.

2. These angels help protect us from harm.

Matthew 4:5-7

These two quotes are from Psalm 91, verses 11-12 – quotes that are taken to apply **to all who seek refuge in God**. The implication of these verses is that the angels of God are watching over us, "every step we take" (to quote Amy Grant).

I don't know about you but I have often **marveled** at the fact that I have reached the age that I have reached. My eyesight is terrible and has been terrible since the time I was a young boy. How is that I never went over some cliff? I ride motorcycle...I ride a solowheel...I have been known to take risks and yet I have survived. It is a marvel. "Angels watching over me, every step I take." **It must be true.**

3. These angels are aware of our lives and decisions.

1 Corinthians 11:1-10

This last line is a most interesting line: "Because of the angels."

The issue of head coverings (for women) is, at heart, the issue of submission. A woman's wearing of a head covering is **a visual sign of her submission** to, in particular, her husband. Some churches and Christians have continued to apply this in a very literal way. Others – led by Western Evangelicals – have said that **the SIGN of submission is not necessary as long as there is submission.**

But regardless of one's view on wearing or not wearing head coverings, Paul here adds that – and this is how I take verse 10 – the issue of a woman's submission to a husband is **a WITNESS AGAINST the angels.** For if you remember from last Sunday, it was, according to Jude verse 6, the issue of some angels NOT STAYING WITHIN THEIR OWN POSITION OF AUTHORITY that led to their condemnation. **They didn't like being subject to God** and so they **BUCKED HIS AUTHORITY OVER THEM** and this led to their condemnation, the devil or Satan being at the head of that group.

4. In the end it is we who will judge the angels.

1 Corinthians 6:3

That we are going to judge the angels I take to be within the context of **judging the fallen angels** who refused to submit to God and stay within their proper place. Every time that we come to church to sing praises to God, and pray to God, in both of those acts we are acknowledging that God is God and we are not. And in saying that we are in effect pronouncing a judgment against Satan and his angels. For in praising God and praying to God we are doing, at those times, what they would not do. And in so doing we are bringing a judgment against them.

5. Nonetheless, the angels will be used to help carry out God's judgment on humanity.

Matthew 24:29-31

Those angels that have remained faithful to God will, in the end, do his bidding: to help in the separation of the sheep from the goats, by calling together all the elect from over all the earth. And how will they know who the elect are? The answer is: By their observation of us all along.

Remember in the book of Job, how Satan appeared before God and God asked him what he had been doing?

Job 1:6-8

This is what angels do. **They watch, they observe.** Some protect and serve the saints. But they move "to and fro."

Listen, people – even Christians – can fall into all sorts of sins when they think they are not being watched.

- Funds can get embezzled;
- homes can get broken into;
- pornography may be viewed

We call these "secret sins" – sins that, we think, no one else is aware of. But listen to me now, **the angels DO OBSERVE...EVERYTHING.**

There's an old CHICK TRACT in our tract rack. It is probably the **best known** of all Chick Tracts. It is entitled "This Was Your Life!" It tells, in comic book fashion, the story of a man who dies and appears before God in judgment. There, God and the man watch on a giant screen the man's life: from beginning to end. Parts of it are very embarrassing...condemning really. All in all it is, I think, a **pretty good tract.**

Whether or not God will review the **entirety** of our lives with us is unknown. But I do know this, that if there is **any question** as to what we DID or DID NOT DO, the angels of God will be able to testify either **for us or against us.** For they know us. They know us better than our husband or wife or our children. **They see us at all times.** And thus, back to the gathering of the elect, they will have no problem at all identifying and seeing the difference between those who **truly belong to Christ** and those who simply **say they belong to Christ.**

For they see us as we really are.

In Luke 15:10 Jesus said, "I tell you, there is joy before the angels of God over one sinner who repents."

They know us.
They know what true repentance looks like.
They know what we are like in secret.
They know.

And so when there is **true repentance** even in just ONE life, they rejoice!

**Brothers and sisters,
Let us walk and live with an awareness of the angels of God around us.**