

Angels and Demons.

(Numbers and Ranks Considered)

Question 1—*What do we know concerning the numbers of the angels?*

Answer—Although the Scriptures do not give any precise figures, the Bible does represent the angels to be very numerous, as indicated by the presentations of them in their surrounding the heavenly throne, for they are called an host, 1 Kings 22:19. The word used is *šābā'* (שָׁבָא'; *army*), a term which indicates both the difficulty in numbering them, *cf.* Deut. 4:19; as well as their organization, *cf.* Num. 1:52. It is due to their number and the structure of their organization under the sovereignty of God that they are referred to as belonging to Him, *cf.* Amos 4:13; for they are always accounted His ministers, Ps. 103:21. Moreover, if there are passages which might seem to contain poetical exaggerations, we will see there are others which show this multitude to be literally true, because the simple statements of the historical books confirm the pictorial imagery of the Psalms and other poetical books, *e.g.*, 2 Chron. 18:18.

For example, in the Psalms, David includes a triumphal song, written on the occasion of an important victory, *cf.* Ps. 68:32-35. In this, he speaks of the enmity which the kings of the earth had to Zion because God made it His peculiar dwelling place; then, he shows the protection with which it was clothed, Ps. 68:17. This multitude was the same which attended the giving of the law on Mount Sinai, under the tutelage of Moses, Deut. 33:2. Significantly, if we understand the joining of the authority of the law to that of the prophets, this vast number of angels attended the protection of their ministry, *cf.* 2 Kings 6:16, 17.

When we turn to the Advent of Christ, we see that the air around Bethlehem on the night that He was born to be the Redeemer of men was filled with a multitude of the heavenly host, Luke 2:13, 14; these had attended Him as the Lord of glory in His descent from heaven, and then as they went back to wait for the day when He was, as God-man, to ascend to the throne again, *cf.* Gen. 28:12 *with* John 1:51.

During His ministry on earth, while in the garden of temptation, had Jesus so willed, He declares that more than twelve legions of angels were prepared to guard Him, Matt. 26:53. It is these multitudes, the heavenly host, surrounding the throne of God, which we are told are thousands of thousands, even ten thousand times ten thousand, which attend His ascension and session at the right hand of God the Father, waiting for the great Day of Judgment, Dan. 7:9-14. This vast number is presented as remaining as ministering spirits throughout the Messianic era, while the history of the church unfolds, Rev. 5:11. It is these which shall attend His coming again in glory, *cf.* Matt. 25:31 *with* Jude 14.

Finally, so vast is this number that the apostle Paul, while giving a vision of the inhabitants of the heavenly world, includes an innumerable company, even myriads, of angels, Heb. 12:22.

Question 2—*What might we ascertain regarding the organization of the angels?*

Answer—The question concerning order among the angels is both general and specific.

As to the general question, we may say without any doubt there exists order amongst the angels for several reasons: 1.) There is no disorder (*ataxia*) in heaven, for God does not love confusion but that all things be done peaceably and orderly, *cf.* 1 Cor. 14:33, 40. 2.) The names of the different kinds of angels clearly indicates that such an order must exist, *e.g.*, Col. 1:16. 3.) Such distinctions seem to carry over into the realm of the evil angels, for one appears to be their prince, or leader, *cf.* Matt. 25:41.

When we turn to the question of an order of excellence or power or jurisdiction, whereby one angel differs from another, not only in species, but in power or authority, it appears to have some basis, *e.g.*, Dan. 10:13; yet, how these authorities relate to one another is unclear. Nevertheless, we are certain that the name “hosts” does point to some kind of authority structure according to which these hosts operate, *cf.* Jos. 5:14; presumably in accordance with their various ministerial duties which are carried out by the voice and command of God, Ps. 103:20, 21.

Question 3—*What might we learn of the different kinds of angels mentioned in Scripture?*

Answer—*First*, we encounter the *cherubim*, whose singular name, *kěrúb* (כְּרֻב), is thought to be derived from the Akkadian verb meaning “to bless, praise, adore;” its Hebrew cognate signifies “to cover, or clothe,” *cf.* 1 Chron. 15:27. As “covering” angels charged with protecting the praise and adoration of God, they are first mentioned as angelic guardians of Paradise lost, after man had fallen, Gen. 3:24 (*to keep, guard*; לְשֹׁמְרֵי הַדֶּרֶךְ, the way to the tree of life). These *cherubim* are thought to represent a “fulness of knowledge,” which, considering they next appear overshadowing, or covering, the mercy seat, in the tabernacle, shows that they are keen to *keep* the knowledge of the way of life open for fallen men, Ex. 25:20. Depictions of these *cherubim* appear on the tabernacle curtains, Ex. 26:1, 31. From the mercy seat, between these *cherubim*, God is said to speak to men, Ex. 25:22; Num. 7:89. These same were used for decoration of Solomon’s temple, including placing two large *cherubim* in the most holy place with their two inner wings touching above the ark and their two outer wings touching the walls, *cf.* 1 Kings 6:29, 32; 7:29. These *cherubim* are continued to be depicted as decorating the symbolic, or millennial, temple, in Ezekiel’s vision, Ezek. 41:18-20, 25.

In the first chapter of Ezekiel, these *cherubim* are said to have humanlike bodies with hands, Ezek. 1:5, 8; 10:7; each had four faces and four wings, Ezek. 1:6; and they seem to be as corner posts bearing the throne of God, Ezek. 1:22-28; 11:22. Thus, these *cherubim* form the chariot of God, by which He effects His providence over all of the creation, *cf.* 1 Chron. 28:18. So, God is said to ride upon the *cherubim* as He goes forth in executing His divine purposes, *cf.* Ps. 18:10; 2 Sam. 22:11. Also, from between these *cherubim*, as noted with the mercy seat, the Lord shines forth His guidance for man and his salvation, for He comes to man by revealing Himself in the incarnation of the Son, *cf.* Ps. 80:1. Therefore, the four faces of the *cherubim* are described as looking like a man, a lion, an ox and an eagle, Ezek. 1:10; Rev. 4:7. These have been thought to be symbolic of the four Gospels through which knowledge of salvation is revealed in Jesus Christ, *cf.* 1 Sam. 4:4. Thus, they are seen contemplating His resurrection, *cf.* John 20:12; and attending His ascension, *cf.* Acts 1:10, 11.

Second, there are the *seraphim*, whose name, *śārāp* (שָׂרָפִים), is derived from a root meaning “to burn,” *cf.* Lev. 4:12. From this, arises the notion that the angels are flames of fire, Ps. 104:4. These are said to guard the throne room of God, Isa. 6:2, 6; and appear to be filled with the Divine fire of Him Who is a consuming Fire, like the burning bush, which burned with fire but was not consumed, *cf.* Heb. 12:29; Ex. 3:2. They are ministers of fire to consume iniquity, burning with a holy love to God, *cf.* Isa. 6:7. Interestingly, their name *śārāp* (שָׂרָפִים) also signifies the fiery serpents which the Israelites encountered in the wilderness, Num. 21:6; Deut. 8:15. Being bitten by these serpents required looking to a brazen pole constructed by Moses, which typified Christ, *cf.* Num. 21:8 with John 3:14.

Third, there are *thrones*, whose name, *thronos* (θρόνος), Col. 1:16; signify those angelic hosts which accompany the *cherubim* and bear the Divine throne, being thought to be the same as those called “wheels,” *’ōpan* (אֲפָנִים), Ezek. 1:15, 16. Thus, these are likened unto the “wheels” of the “chariot” which conveys the Divine throne, *cf.* Dan. 7:9. Herein, they bear an analogous relation to the twenty four elders which are the *thrones* described by John, Rev. 4:4; 11:16.

Fourth, there are *dominions*, whose name, *kuriotēs* (κυριότης), signifies a ruling power, or lordship, *cf.* Jude 8. This describes some angels whose role it seems to be to exercise some kind of lordship over other angels, Col. 1:16; Eph. 1:21. Thus, one angel can command another to act, *cf.* Zech. 2:3, 4.

Fifth, there are *principalities*, whose name, *archē* (ἀρχή), signifies an authority who initiates activity or process, *cf.* Tit. 3:1. This is used of angelic powers because of their presumed political organization, Col. 2:10; Eph. 3:10; but especially because this organization is thought to be related to the political organizations found among men, *cf.* Dan. 10:13, 20. Hence, when Jacob was on his way to meet Esau, it was discovered that he did not travel alone, *cf.* Gen. 32:1, 2 (*Mahanaim*; two camps, or hosts).

Sixth, there are *powers*, whose name, *exousia* (ἐξουσία), signifies the transcendent authority of their claim to rule, Eph. 3:10; Col. 2:10; together with *mights*, *dunamis* (δύναμις), which speak of their raw power, Eph. 1:21.

As far as any consideration of *archangels*, we shall see there appears to be only one who is the chief, or ruler, of the angels, 1 Thess. 4:16; He is named Michael, Jude 9, and His identity must be discussed later.

Finally, while it is true that Satan seeks to gain (as we shall see) and maintain a *throne*, *cf.* Rev. 2:13; so that he can bestow it as he sees fit, *cf.* Rev. 13:2; yet, this usurpation is ultimately brought to an end, *cf.* Rev. 16:10. It is notable that the apostle, when mentioning the status of the fallen angels maintains their organization under what appear to be the lower kinds of angelic structure, *cf.* Eph. 6:12.

Question 4—*What is the name of the one angel named in Scripture?*

Answer—There is one angel specially mentioned, who brought Zecharias a sign of the truth when he sought one in the temple, Gabriel, Luke 1:19. His name means “the mighty one (warrior) of God,” or “God is my strength.” He it is who also brought news to Mary that she would conceive a Son by the power of the Holy Ghost, Luke 1:26-35. It seems that his peculiar duty is to make known certain matters regarding the salvation of the people of God which needed to be revealed, for he is the same who appeared to Daniel to explain to him a vision, Dan. 8:16; 9:21-23.