

S T U D Y G U I D E



Angels and Demons

by R.C. Sproul



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The Heavenly Choir

MESSAGE INTRODUCTION

The praises of God's angels literally spring forth in worship of His infinite holiness. They cannot help but sing of His glory. Amidst a culture that remains skeptical of any and all things supernatural, the biblical narrative stands in direct confrontation of prevailing worldviews. In it, God's heavenly choir is depicted as an unceasing throng of other-worldly worship. In this lecture, Dr. R.C. Sproul examines common cultural myths regarding angels by clarifying what the Bible teaches about them

SCRIPTURE READING

Psalms 103, 148; Isaiah 6

LEARNING OBJECTIVE

1. To understand one of the main functions of angels in heaven.

QUOTATIONS

Bless the LORD, O you his angels, you mighty ones who do his word, obeying the voice of his word! Bless the LORD, all his hosts, his ministers, who do his will! Bless the LORD, all his works, in all places of his dominion. Bless the LORD, O my soul!

—Psalm 103:20–22

Holy, holy, holy!... cherubim and seraphim falling down before thee, who wert and art, and evermore shalt be.

—Reginald Heber, "Holy, Holy, Holy!"

LECTURE OUTLINE

I. Correcting cultural myths

- A. There is a vast difference between the Scriptural worldview regarding angels and our current cultural worldview.
- B. For example, in Rudolf Bultmann's *Kerygma and Myth*, the author argued that within the historical narratives of Scripture, there is an admixture of fiction and history.
- C. Bultmann posited that we should be about the task of "de-mythologizing" the Scriptures, ripping away the husk of myth so that we can get to the kernel of truth within. This was the only way modern man could make use of the biblical witness.
- D. One of Bultmann's famous quips went as follows: "Modern man cannot turn on a light bulb and believe in the miracles of the New Testament" (or, by implication, the spiritual realm). While angels are becoming increasingly popular in New Age theology, their existence is still largely denied in Western Culture.

II The Bible on angels:

- A. The Greek word *angelos* occurs more often than the word *agape* in the New Testament Scriptures. Angels are also found at the very beginning of the biblical narrative (Gen. 3:24), and continue to show up throughout the text.
- B. "*Angelos*" simply rendered, means "messenger." It almost exclusively refers to supernatural beings, as well as their activities in heaven (as opposed to earth).
- C. Isaiah 6: the prophet's calling is here described
 - i. Seraphim are seen worshipping God in verse 2, singing in antiphonal praise, "Holy, holy, holy is the LORD of hosts...."
 - ii. Repeating a word three times in the Hebrew language was a method of emphasis (cf. Rev. 8:13). This praising is their actual function.
 - iii. Note the physical description. They have six wings: two for flight; two to cover their faces; and two to cover their feet. Even the angels in the presence of God must cover their eyes, so bright is the glory of God (cf. Rev. 21:23, where there is no sun or moon in the new Jerusalem, because the glory of God illuminates it).
 - iv. Like Moses in the Midian wilderness, so these angels cover their feet, which is, in effect, a covering of their creatureliness, their naked exposure being covered before the refulgent glory of God.

STUDY QUESTIONS

- 1. Belief in a supernatural realm is more common in the modern era than it was in previous centuries.
 - a. True
 - b. False
 - c. Maybe

2. One of Rudolf Bultmann's favorite sayings was _____.
 - a. "Vicarious atonement"
 - b. "De-mythologize"
 - c. "Very God and very man"
 - d. None of the above
3. *Angelos*, in its most simple understanding, means _____.
 - a. "King"
 - b. "Soldier"
 - c. "Messenger"
 - d. "Winged Being"
4. In the Hebrew language, repeating a word three times signified what?
 - a. De-emphasis
 - b. Increased volume
 - c. Emphasis
 - d. Both a and b
5. How many wings do the angels have in Isaiah's vision?
 - a. Eight
 - b. Four
 - c. Two
 - d. Six
6. Covering feet in the presence of God is equal to _____.
 - a. Showing disdain for God's holiness
 - b. Covering creatureliness
 - c. Both a and b
 - d. None of the above

BIBLE STUDY

1. Read Isaiah 6:1–7. What does Isaiah see in this vision? What are the angels said to be doing?
2. Read Psalms 103:20 and 148:2. What do these Psalms tell us about the activity of angels?
3. Read the following texts of Scripture. In general, what do we learn about the "angel of the Lord" from these texts?
 - a. Genesis 16:7–11
 - b. Exodus 3:2
 - c. Exodus 23:20–23
 - d. Numbers 22:22–35

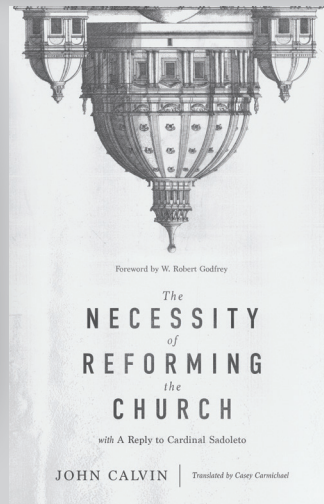
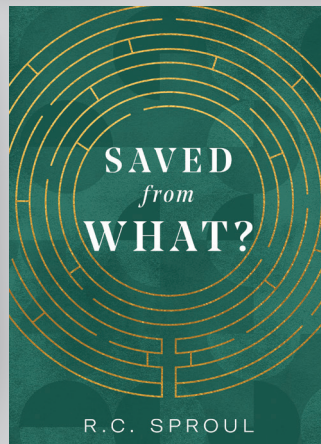
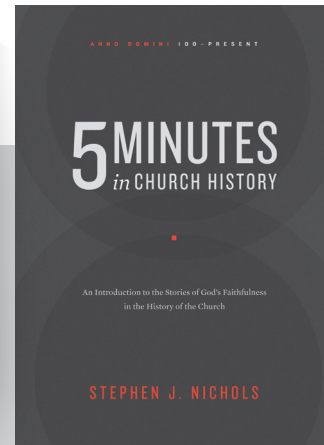
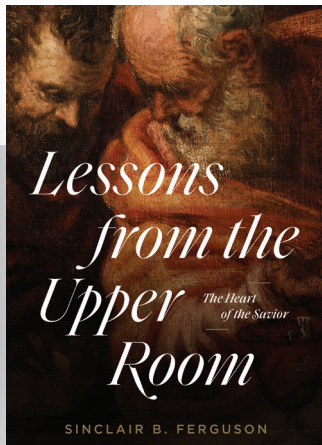
- e. Judges 6:11–22
- f. 1 Chronicles 21:12–30
- g. Psalm 34:7
- h. Zechariah 1:9–19

4. What activities of the angels are described in Revelation 6, 8–9 respectively?

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What elements of the modern Western worldview make belief in angels and demons so difficult for many? What is the most basic assumption of the modern worldview that makes such belief virtually impossible?
2. In spite of the fact that our modern scientific worldview disdains belief in the supernatural, bookstore shelves are filled with bestsellers about angels, and there are popular television series about angels as well. How would you explain the seeming discrepancy?
3. Based on general knowledge of Scripture, what are some of the most significant examples of encounters with angels (or demons) in its pages? Are encounters with angels and demons common throughout the Bible?
4. Dr. Sproul mentioned an anecdote about two trapped miners who claim to have been ministered to by an angel. What is your initial reaction to such a claim? Skepticism? Belief? Why do you think your initial reaction is what it is?

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