

Spiritual Blindness.

Number Three

Although there is even a dictionary on angels available in bookstores, what we know about angels does not come from our imagination but through revelation. Our sinful nature has made us blind for spiritual things. Unless the Spirit of God shows us through His Word the reality of the angelic world, we will only hear rumours of angels. When the king of Aram besieged Dothan, the Lord sent an army of heavenly beings to protect the city but Elisha's servant was not aware of them. He feared the strong force of the Ring of Aram surrounding the city. He asked Elisha, "O, my Lord, what shall we do?" "Don't be afraid," the prophet answered. "Those who are with us are more than those who are with them." And Elisha prayed, "O Lord, open his eyes so he may see." Then the Lord opened the servant's eyes, and he looked and saw the hills full of horses and chariots of fire all around Elisha." (2 Kings 6:8-17) Angels were sent by God to save His people Israel, the Old Testament church, from perishing at the hand of the King of Aram but it was not until the servant of Elisha had his spiritual eyes opened that he knew that Dothan was protected by God's heavenly host.

Angels Created by God.

When the Bible speaks about the heavenly realms it does not do so in terms of planets, dead stars, moon rocks or planetary rings; it reveals that personal beings populate the universe. The physical as well as the spiritual world owes its origin to God. There is no spiritual realm independent of God. The apostle Paul declares that "all things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible . . . were created by him (Jesus Christ) and for him." (Co1.1:16) Each angel is a special creation of God. But the Bible does not give us any detail about how God brought them into being as the Bible is not about angels but about man's creation and fall and God's gracious work of redemption. All what the Bible says about the creation of angels is that God "commanded and they were created."(Ps.148:2,5)

The angelic world is an enormous gathering of solitary heavenly beings. They don't form generations. Their number is complete. (Matt. 22:30) They are not eternal as they have a beginning. And they are not omnipresent as only God is everywhere present.

We do not know when the angels were created. St. Augustine honestly admitted that he never discovered in the Bible when the angels were created. But this did not prevent him from believing that it was on the first day as he supposed that there is a connection with the light and the angels of the light.

Calvin said that we should not indulge in speculating about the time of the creation of angels. Dr. Francis Nigel Lee suggests that they were probably already created and present as joyful witnesses during the execution of the work of the second day of formation week. Dr. Carl F. Henry argues, and I believe rightly so, that "As to the time of the angels creation, we know that, like all other creation, it was divinely accomplished before the seventh day on which God rested." One might expect that the creation of spirit intelligences and of human intelligences would occur on the same day since both humans and angels have rational endowments. But two considerations suggest that angels were created prior to man. For one thing, the angels were present at certain stages of creation (Job 38:7); this does not necessarily mean, however, that they were created before everything else and therefore even before the events of Genesis 1:1, or even necessarily that they were fashioned on the very first day of creation. Then, too, the role of the Serpent in Genesis 3, that is, Satan's activity as a fallen angel, implies both that angels existed before humans, and that their fall occurred before that of man.

The Number of Angels.

Is it really necessary to know the exact number of angels? A rabbi taught that God had available for the protection of every Israelite 10,000 times 1,000 angels because there were so many evil spirit in the world. There was a time when Christians had endless theological debates on the number of angels. Some historians seem to think that medieval theologians did nothing else but imagine how angels could dance on the head of a pin. This is an exaggeration of course. But some of them did claim to know the exact number of angels. One medieval theologian said 266,613,336, after the 133,306,668 followed Lucifer and fell; another said that there was an angel behind every blade of grass.

The Bible does not tell us the exact number of angels but we do get the distinct impression that they form an enormous company of heavenly beings. In Daniel 10:7 we read that ten thousand times ten thousand stood before the throne of God. Luke 2:13 says that a great company of heavenly host appeared to the shepherds. After His arrest in Gethsemane Jesus told Peter that His heavenly Father could put twelve legions of angels at His disposal. (Matt.26:53) This does not mean that Jesus said that there were literally 120,000 angels. Jesus used the number to tell Peter that He had myriads of angels who were ready to come to His aid.

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