

"Angels Unawares"

Sunday School Series

One of the fields of study under the subject of Biblical Theology (the study of God and religious beliefs based on the Bible) is what some have called Angelology (the study of angels). Unfortunately, today we see somewhat of a "worship" of angels, and so the term Angelology can be misleading. We do not want to form any beliefs that are not in the Bible, and many common beliefs about angels do not come from the Bible at all. For example:

- In the Bible, angels are always referred to as male, yet most images we see of angels are female.
- The Bible doesn't say that angels have wings or halos, yet most images we see of angels add them.
- Seraphim and Cherubim are two types of heavenly beings which do have wings, but they are never called angels in the Bible (though we do not dispute that they could be considered a type of "angel," they are never referred to as such. Angels in the Bible that ever interact with humans always appear to be humans themselves)

For this study, we are only going to consider a small portion of the mysterious passages in the Bible that deal with angels or "angelic beings." It is not a super in-depth study, but we hope that it will clear up some confusion and give us a little better understanding of these particular passages of scripture.

- I. The cherubim that guard Eden (**Genesis 3:24**)
 - A. What is a cherubim?

1. The name itself is something of a mystery.
2. The singular form of the word, Cherub, may come from an old Hebrew word that means "like a child."
 - a. This is probably why some have depicted cherubim as children.
 - b. However, no reference of the cherubim describe them this way.
3. Most references to cherubim in the Bible have to do with the design of the ark of the covenant.
4. Cherubim in the Bible always have wings.
 - a. In some biblical descriptions, cherubim have 4 wings.
 - b. In some biblical descriptions, cherubim have 2 wings.
5. Cherubim seem to have a special responsibility to guard places or people.
 - a. Interestingly, many ancient cultures around the world have used similar figures in art and architecture that depict peculiar figures that guard thrones, entry ways to holy places and other important buildings.
 - 1) These often have the face of a man, the body of a lion or an ox, and a wings.
 - 2) Ezekiel and John both have visions of cherubim that use some similar imagery.
 - a) **Ezekiel 1:5-11**
 - b) **Ezekiel 10:14**
 - c) **Revelation 4:7,8**



- B. What are these cherubim doing?
1. Keeping the way of the tree of life.
 - a. What is the tree of life?
 - 1) The tree that Adam and Eve ate from, disobeying God's command, was the tree of knowledge of good and evil.

2) Apparently, before the fall, they had access to the tree of life.
(Genesis 2:9, 16-17)

b. Why must it be guarded?

1) After eating of the tree of knowledge of good and evil, however, the tree of life was definitely off limits **(3:22)**.

2) It appears as though if Adam and Eve could have eaten from the tree of life, their bodies would not have died as God had told them it would **(Genesis 2:17)**.

a) We understand this death to be a spiritual death
(Romans 5:12, 6:23)

b) But apparently the beginning of the process of physical death was also part of the curse.

2. It is not clear to us exactly why they are on the east side only.

3. It is not clear to us what the flaming sword is.

1) Interestingly, it appears to be a single sword.

2) There are many theories and interpretations, but we simply don't know.

C. Are they still there today?

1. Most likely, the garden was buried in the flood **(Genesis 6:17)**.

a. Even though plant life was destroyed, obviously, seeds still sprung up all over after the flood, and new plant life emerged.

b. It seems possible that the tree of life would have been able to produce as well if it gave off seed, but we don't know.

c. For this reason, God may have transported the tree to heaven
(Revelation 2:7, 22:2, 22:14)

2. The tree of life is used metaphorically throughout scripture.

a. Of wisdom (**Proverbs 3:18**,

b. Of the Fruit of the righteous/winning souls (**Proverbs 11:30**)

c. Of desire/hope that comes to pass (**Proverbs 13:12**)

d. Of a wholesome tongue (**Proverbs 15:4**)

D. Conclusion:

1. "Angels" may not be an accurate way to describe the cherubim that "keep the way of the tree of life"

2. In Genesis 3. However, the cherubim appear to be heavenly "beasts" that are created for specific jobs that bring honor and glory to God and proclaim His holiness.

3. It is not clear if there are a whole "species" of these beings or if the same cherubim that guarded the tree of life in the garden of Eden are the same cherubim that Ezekiel saw and that John saw in their visions.

4. Perhaps one day we will see them in Heaven, still guarding the tree of life.

