

Rumours of ANGELS

I have heard of several instances of the recording of 'angelic' voices singing and praising God. In one case it arises from sounds generated in a worship time when this other worldly noise took over and was recorded via the PA system. Tapes of this soon became hot property in the south where the experience took place. Another happened when a Christian rock band finished recording for the day and left the studio. On returning they found that equipment had recorded an extra 50 seconds of tape with no one around to switch equipment on. A tape of this is also exciting Christians.

What are we to make of all this?

- Firstly, we must be wary of strange experiences, especially towards the end of the age when deception will reach a peak (Matt 24:4ff, 24).
- Secondly, we cannot ignore the possibility of fakes and publicity seekers. The New Testament warns us to test and prove all things so this must pass the test.
- Thirdly, how do we know what angel singing sounds like? We have no precedent to judge it by. Is it not possible that it could be demonic and to our detriment? Should we not, at least, be sure first?

The starting point must be to examine the Bible and evaluate the possibility of this being angelic singing. This is what I propose to do here. I will start with a very brief look at the doctrine of angels.

ANGELIC MATTERS

Angels are elect and good or evil and damned

There are only two types of angelic spirit beings: those that rebelled against God and serve Satan (Matt 12:24-29; 1 Tim 4:1) and those that obey God and are his ministering spirits (Heb 1:14; 1 Tim 5:21; Ps 103:20).

Angels were all created good but Satan led an uprising and took perhaps a third of the angelic host with him (Rev 12:4,9). This revolt led to the devil and his angels being cast out of heaven down to the atmospheric regions around the earth (called Tartarus by Peter: 2 Pt 2:4; Jude 6) where they became foul demons, evil spirits.

Within the angelic order there seem to be various ranks or levels of authority and function: (Rm 8:38; 1 Cor 15:24; Eph 1:21; Col 1:16); however, this is not very clear. What is more certain is that there is a group identified as: archangels (1 Thess 4:10; Jude 9). We know the name of only two angels: Michael and Gabriel.

Angels are not redeemed

The interesting point is that angels are not redeemed. Angels that fell with Satan are doomed. There is no repentance for angels; those that God allowed to fall, including Satan, are certain of eternal destruction. Angels, therefore, know nothing of salvation from personal experience. All they understand of the purposes of God in redemption is what they see in us. That is why they long to look at the glory of God in the church (Eph 3:10). They are thrilled to see God's work in man (1 Pt 1:12).

What do angels do?

- The word angel means, messenger (from angello: to tell or deliver a message). They serve the will of God.
- They are involved in acts of deliverance of God's people (Acts 5:19, 12:7-10) and they act in judgment (Acts 12:23).
- Angels watch over church meetings (1 Cor 11:10; Eph 3:10).
- After Pentecost these appearances are rare since all God's children now have the Holy Spirit indwelling them and do not need angelic ministry. Appearances in Acts were for very special purposes during a transitional period.
- Angels work for the sake of those who are to obtain salvation (Heb 1:14); ie they protect the elect to the point of salvation whereupon the Holy Spirit takes over to ensure training in righteousness.

They usually announce themselves to men and women, they don't hide the fact to God's people. They come in the name of God with warnings, encouragement or direction. They envision and prepare God's people (Acts: 8:26, 10:3-8, 27:23).

CHERUBIM

There is another type of heavenly being that is often confused with angels. That is the Cherubim (singular = cherub). A full study of the Cherubim is not possible here but some very important features must be mentioned.

- Cherubim sing praise (Rev 5:9).
- They support or flank the throne of God, he is enthroned upon the Cherubim (Ps 80:1, 99:1; Isa 37:16; 1 Sam 4:4; 2 Sam 6:2; 2 Kg 19:15; 1 Chr 13:6).
- Their images appear in the tabernacle (Ex 26:1,31, 37:7-9 cf Num 7:89; Heb 9:5), and in the temple (1 Kg 6:23-28; 2 Chr 3:10-13).
- They perform God's will (Ezek 10).
- They are associated with God's glory and presence (Heb 9:5, the only mention in the NT).

- Revelation refers to them as living creatures (Rev 4:6-8) who worship God at his throne.

Main Features

We can identify the key functions of these beings as: creatures which are closely associated with and supporting God's throne; who worship God and are closely connected with God's glory.

Cherubim are not angels

What is important for us to note in this study is that the Cherubim are not the same as angels. There is no specific connection mentioned in scripture, in fact they are distinguished from them in Rev 5:8,11, 7:11. Also they are never sent on missions but stay by the throne. So what are they?

Cherubim are representatives of:

'the future glorified animate creation'¹

These creatures, though in heaven, bear the marks of earthly created life, not spiritual beings. They are also brought very close to God's glory and support his throne rather than being sent on divine errands to earth.

It appears that God created these beings to hold the place of redeemed creation in heaven until the work of redemption is complete. They stand in the place of the redeemed, particularly glorified mankind. They show that God's purpose is that living creatures (man) are to be associated with the throne, pursue God's will and worship him. Evidences for this are:

- There are four of them (Ezek 1:4-14; Rev 4:6) which is the symbolical number of creation in scripture (eg: four winds, four corners of the earth etc).
- They are the heads of the animate creation: (lion - wild beasts, ox - tame beasts, eagle - birds, and man).
- They are beneath the throne of God and the earth is said to be his footstool ie beneath the throne of God (Isa 66:1; Matt 5:35).
- Their song is of creation (Rev 4:11).
- Whenever they speak it is in connection with the earth.
- When earth is placed under the curse they are brought in to preserve the way to the tree of life, (this is the same word as keep or guard in Gen 3:24, ie they are not just to keep man out of Eden). In other words they prevent the curse from going on forever, preserving the hope of a new world without sin.

¹ E W Bullinger; *Critical Lexicon and Concordance of the NT*. Several of these thoughts on Cherubim come from this source.

- Images of them in the tabernacle show the connection with the blood and redemption (eg being part of the same gold piece of the mercy seat).

'Some hold that the Cherubim are real, personal creatures; others that they are ideal beings. The term "living creature" is applied to the same beings. They may be regarded as symbolical of the highest properties of creative life and typical of redeemed manhood.' (D A Reed, Outline of Fundamental Doctrines.)

[Seraphim may be the same as Cherubim or an order of angelic life they are only mentioned in Isa 6:2 and are said to say worship not sing.]

SUNG PRAISE IS THE PRIVILEGE OF THE REDEEMED

The Bible shows that sung worship arises from those who are redeemed. Only those who have been brought into the family of God by the atonement of Christ are able to sing in praise to God. It is the faithful who exult in glory and sing for joy (Ps 149:5).

Exodus is the great book of deliverance, salvation and redemption. Here Moses sings (Ex 15):

I will sing to the Lord for he has triumphed gloriously ... he has become my salvation. This is my God and I will praise him ... thou hast led in thy steadfast love, the people whom thou hast redeemed.

Redemption results in a song. In fact in Rev 15 we see this song of Moses repeated. The elect people of God, after conquering the beast, sing of redemption.

ANGELS ARE NEVER SAID TO SING PRAISE IN SCRIPTURE

There is no reference to an angel or angels singing at all. Angels only ever say, speak, or cry in praise.

- Paul refers to angels speaking but not singing in 1 Cor 13:1, yet later speaks of men singing in the spirit in 1 Cor 14:15.
- Angels say or speak praise:

The voice of many angels ... saying with a loud voice, 'Worthy is the Lamb'. (Rev 5:11-12, Greek: lego = relate)

And one called to another and said: 'Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts.' (Isa 6:3, Hebrew: amar = say)

Suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying, 'Glory to God in the highest'. (Lk 2:13-14, lego)

I heard what seemed to be the loud voice of a great multitude in heaven, crying, 'Hallelujah'. (lego)

Once more they cried, 'Hallelujah'. (ereo=speak)

Then I heard what seemed to be the voice of a great multitude, like the sound of many waters ... crying, 'Hallelujah'. (lego, Rev 19:1,3,6)

What about the morning stars in Job 38:7?

We must remember that this is poetic language. The reference is to the expression of God in creation put in poetic terms. The passage is about God creating the earth, so the natural, logical reading is that the stars glorified God at the time of creation. Why can't these morning stars just simply be morning stars, or be standing in for the whole heavenly creation? They cannot be angels anyway because angels are more obviously mentioned in the latter half of this verse described as sons of God. Notice that these do not sing but shout for joy.

CONCLUSION

Angels do not usually manifest themselves to saints secretly but come with a message from God to strengthen his people. In the Old Testament, men of God perceived that the experience was angelic, there was no doubt (eg Jud 6:22;13:21).

After Pentecost, God doesn't usually speak to his children via angels since he lives in them by his Spirit. It is the Holy Spirit who brings the things of Christ to us not angels (Jn 16:14). In any case, we have seen that the Bible shows that angels do not sing, only those who are redeemed are able to sing their praise to God.

So just what is this sound that is masquerading as the songs of angels? If it involves supernatural working, and is not a fake of men, then it cannot be from God and can only be demonic. It is certainly not recommended to listen attentively to it.

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Postscript 2013

The rumours of angelic singing initially started with the widespread reports of this occurring at a Dales Bible Week in 1977. It turns out that this was wishful thinking; the sounds were engineers playing back the recordings of earlier singing in the Spirit, in the middle of the night, so that tapes were ready for sale the next day. See blog below.

Pentecostal/Charismatic Post-It Notes

<http://pentecostalpostitnotes.blogspot.co.uk/2007/10/david-mansell-on-angelic-appearances-at.html>

David Mansell on Angelic Appearances at the Dales Bible Week 1977

"The same phenomenon (angelic singing) occurred at the Dales Bible Week in 1977. On several evenings after the meeting was over and the auditorium vacated and locked up for the night, heavenly singing was heard coming from the building at two or three o'clock in the morning. This was not only reported by those on site; people living in the houses near the site complained about the singing in the early hours of the morning!"

During the same week there were several angelic appearances, particularly to the young. One six-year old boy lost in the crowd and anxiously awaited by his parents suddenly turned up full of smiles. When asked how he found his way, he replied 'Oh a nice ghost in a shiny coat showed me the way'.

During a time of testimony another lad of six was asked what he enjoyed most about the Bible Week. He replied; "I liked it best when all the angels came and flew around the children's meeting playing their trumpets and praising God".

David Mansell - "A Radical Goal for Radical Christians" in "Revive Us Again!" edited by David Matthew - Harvestime (1990) - (pp101-102).

The Recordist said...

"...after the meeting was over and the auditorium vacated and locked up for the night, heavenly singing was heard coming from the building at two or three o'clock in the morning."

Yes that's right, or more to the point, reviewing and editing the music in the protakabin used as a recording control room sited next to the auditorium building.

There were a number of "singing-in-tongues" tracks which were often reviewed. At night sound travels, so you make up your own mind what was going on at 2am in the morning.

How do I know? Because I spent many thankless hours every night after the meetings reviewing the tapes in order to have on sale a music cassette. The Dales Bible Week (in association with Harvestime Publications, as it was known then) also had a very keen eye for business.

It's only many years later as to how the commercial elements expanded and prospered that the "Word of God" showed its commercial value and the shift to the US where more gains were possible.

History will out.

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