

Stumbling Block No. 1: Angels
By Monty Pierce
Pastor, Central Baptist Church, Carthage
Nov. 28, 2021

PowerPoint presentation text
PDF prepared by Editor Eric Black, Baptist Standard

“Do You Believe in Christmas?” sermon series

Slide 1:

Historical event or interesting fable?

- Jack and the beanstalk vs David and Goliath
- Goldilocks and the 3 bears vs Balaam and the talking Donkey

When you think about Christmas, does it look more like this...

Slide 1 contains an image for which the Baptist Standard does not have license to publish.

Slide 2:

...or this?

Slide 2 contains an image for which the Baptist Standard does not have license to publish.

If we sometimes struggle with the reality of the birth narrative, imagine how a lost world must struggle. In this Christmas series we are going to look at some issues that create barriers for some people in believing and what the Bible has to say about these issues.

Slide 3:

Stumbling Block #1: Angels

Are angels real? YES!

Consider some reasons why some people doubt or have unbiblical understanding of angels.

Slide 4:

A scene from *It's a Wonderful Life*: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9fIrXo0raaU>

Slide 5:

“In Scripture the visitation of an angel is always alarming; it has to begin by saying “Fear not.” The Victorian angel looks as if it were going to say, “There, there.” – C.S. Lewis

Slides 6-11 contain images for which the Baptist Standard does not have license to publish.

Slide 12:

Myth #1: Angels are just plump babies with harps

Consider some myths regarding angels, commonly held ideas about angels that are not Biblical.

- The Sistine Chapel portrays angels as babies with wings sitting on clouds, and while this may be beautiful, it isn't accurate.

- Angels, technically, have no physical bodies. Hebrews 1:14 describes them as “ministering spirits.” However, God allows them to come in the appearance of man while they are communicating with people on earth.
- We get a glimpse of how mighty angels are when Pilate told his best guards to protect the tomb where Jesus was laid. An angel appears and rolls back the stone and the Bible states, “And for fear of him the guards trembled and became like dead men” (Matthew 28:4). Some of the best Roman soldiers could not stand before the grandeur of an angel.

Slide 13 contains an image for which the Baptist Standard does not have license to publish.

Slide 14:

Myth #2: People, especially children, become angels when they die.

- The Bible assures us that when we die we become like Jesus Christ—and Christ is greater than the angels. And this is true for everyone who belonged to Christ and was part of His family on earth, and has now entered Heaven. The Bible says, “We shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is” (1 John 3:2).

Slide 15:

Myth #3: Angels and demons are eternal and uncreated.

Praise him, **all his angels**; praise him, all his heavenly hosts. Praise him, sun and moon; praise him, all you shining stars. Praise him, you highest heavens and you waters above the skies. Let them praise the name of the LORD, **for at his command they were created.** Psalm 148:2-5

Slide 16:

Myth #4: Christians command angels.

- Hebrews 1:14 rhetorically asks, “Are they not all ministering spirits sent out to serve for the sake of those who are to inherit salvation?” Many believe this biblically warrants Christians to command angels.
- First, “for the sake of” is a translation of the Greek *dia*, which has a limited range of possible meanings. In this context, it “marks the object of the service of angels, not the source of their service”. In other words, angels work for the benefit of, but not at the behest of, believers.
- Second, to put it simply, “there isn’t a single instance in Scripture where a human being commands an angel”. Such a view would be inconsistent with Scripture’s teaching on angels, humans, and God’s authority. (However, believers will judge angels.)

Slide 17:

Angels are mentioned nearly 300 times in the Bible.

Slide 18:

Fact #1: Each angel is a direct creation, that is to say, they did not descend from an original pair as we did; they do not procreate as we do.

But Jesus answered them, “You are wrong, because you know neither the Scriptures nor the power of God. For in the resurrection they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are like angels in heaven. Matthew 22:29-30

Slide 19:

Fact #2: There is some evidence of guardian angels.

- First, Jesus refers to “little ones” and the fact that “their angels [will] always see the face of my Father who is in heaven” (Matt 18:10). This indicates angels are assigned as advocates for at least some individuals.
- Second, there is the story of Peter’s release from prison in Acts 12. After Peter was released, the believers who were praying for this freedom did not believe he was knocking at the door. Rather, when they heard he was outside, they replied: “It is his angel!” (Acts 12:15).

(Continued)

Slide 19:

- Beyond these tantalizing hints, we do know that angels protect individuals (Ps 91:11–12; Luke 4:10) and even were called “mediators” (Job 33:23). They also aided visionaries by providing interpretations (e.g. Dan 7:16). Angels will also gather in the elect (Matt 13:39; 24:31).
- So there is a biblical reason to believe in “guardian angels,” but probably not in the sense that has been popularized in TV and film. It is a mystery of which Scripture only reveals a sliver, and Christians would be wise not to see more than is revealed.

Slide 20:

- Beyond these tantalizing hints, we do know that angels protect individuals (Ps 91:11–12; Luke 4:10) and even were called “mediators” (Job 33:23). They also aided visionaries by providing interpretations (e.g. Dan 7:16). Angels will also gather in the elect (Matt 13:39; 24:31).
- So there is a biblical reason to believe in “guardian angels,” but probably not in the sense that has been popularized in TV and film. It is a mystery of which Scripture only reveals a sliver, and Christians would be wise not to see more than is revealed.

Slide 21:

Fact #3: Believers will judge angels.

- Do you not know that we will judge angels? How much more the things of this life!
- 1 Corinthians 6:3

Slide 22:

Fact #4: Angels don’t wear halos.

- Some works of art and movies portray angels as majestic beings with halos. But the Bible never describes angels as having halos. The origins of the halo lie elsewhere with another religion.

The halo is a common symbol with the sun gods of ancient paganism. It was common in a variety of cultures for the gods to have a disk of light behind their heads. Something even more common was the shaving of the head to create a hairstyle resembling a halo in order to worship the pagan gods (Leviticus 19:27).

Slide 23:

Fact #5: Angels Were Created Before Man.

Thus the heavens and the earth, and all the host of them, were finished. Genesis 2:1

Slide 24:

Fact #6: Angels Eat Food

The two angels came to Sodom in the evening, and Lot was sitting in the gate of Sodom. When Lot saw them, he rose to meet them and bowed himself with his face to the earth and said, "My lords, please turn aside to your servant's house and spend the night and wash your feet. Then you may rise up early and go on your way." They said, "No; we will spend the night in the town square." But he pressed them strongly; so they turned aside to him and entered his house. And he made them a feast and baked unleavened bread, and they ate. Genesis 19:1-3

Slide 25:

Fact #7: There Are Different Kinds of Angels

Archangels	1 Thessalonians 4:16
Seraphim	Isaiah 6:1-13
Cherubim	Exodus 25:20
Living Creatures	Revelation 4:6
Common Angels	Hebrews 13:2

Slide 26:

Fact #8: There are too many angels to count.

According to Scripture, there are thousands upon thousands of angels. Psalm 68:17 tells us "The chariots of God are tens of thousands and thousands," and Hebrews 12:22 asserts "But you have come to Mount Zion, to the heavenly Jerusalem, the city of the living God. You have come to thousands upon thousands of angels in joyful assembly."

Slide 27:

The Bible only mentions two angels by name.

- Although angels are mentioned many times in the Bible, only two good angels are named. Michael, the angel who helped God cast down Satan and who leads the heavenly armies, and Gabriel, the messenger angel who announced the coming of Jesus.

Slide 28:

What do angels look like?

Slide 29:

- The Bible doesn't tell us exactly what angels look like; in fact, they often are invisible to us, because they are spiritual beings who seldom take on any physical appearance.
- Some angels appear dressed in white clothing (Acts 1:9-11).
- Mighty and fearful
- Some multi-winged

Slide 30:

- Some have the appearance of men such as those who came to visit Abraham and Sarah (Gen. 18). Angels may be present and unperceived at any time (2 Kings 6:15-17).

- We are instructed: “Do not forget to entertain strangers, for by so doing some have entertained angels unaware” (Hebrews 13:2).

Slide 31:

“Believers, look up – take courage. The angels are nearer than you think.” Billy Graham

Slide 32:

What do angels do?

Slide 33:

- At the most basic level, angels play the role of God’s messengers. In fact, the Greek word “angelos” means just that — messenger, envoy, one who is sent, or one who brings news.

Slide 34:

Angels accompany Believers to heaven

- In Luke 16:22, Jesus told the story about a beggar who died and an angel carried him to Abraham’s side (another term for Heaven).

Many accounts tell of dying saints being at peace because of this angelic presence. The Lord is the God of all comfort, and He employs His heavenly army of angels to bring warnings of danger, tidings of joy, and messages of peace. This is not a man-made fable; this is God’s truth. The Bible calls angels “ministering spirits” sent to serve those who will inherit salvation (Hebrews 1:14). Believing that God will send these angelic comforters to escort us out of this world and into the next should give great peace to our souls.

Slide 35:

“No Christian is abandoned at the moment of death. The angels are the ushers, and our passage to heaven is under their escort.” — David Jeremiah

Slide 36:

“When my time to die comes, an angel will be there to comfort me. He will give me peace and joy even at the most critical hour, and usher me into the presence of God, and I will dwell with the Lord forever. Thank God for the ministry of His blessed angels!” Billy Graham

Slide 37:

We should not worship angels

- The Bible tells us that when an angel visited the Apostle John, John fell at his feet to worship him. The angel said, “See that you do not do that. For I am your fellow servant.... Worship God”
- Revelation 22:8-9

Slide 38:

Our choices influence angel’s emotions

- “In the same way, I tell you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents.” – Luke 15:10

They rejoice when we make the choice to follow Jesus. Angels are on our side, and they LOVE seeing us turn our hearts towards God.