

# Back to Bible Basics

## Issue 23

### WHAT DO WE KNOW ABOUT ANGELS?

*Brett Rutherford*

There are many things that are mentioned in the Bible that we would love to know more about. However, we need to remember that God did not write the Bible to satisfy our curiosity. The purpose of the Bible is to reveal God's plan for redeeming man. While we live on the earth we have to be satisfied with what the Bible reveals to us about the spiritual realm. Moses said: *"The secret things belong to the Lord our God, but those things which are revealed belong to us and to our children forever that we may do all the words of the law"* (Deuteronomy 29:29).

One of those things that is mentioned in the Bible that stimulates the curiosity of believers and non-believers alike are angels. I have never met anyone in the church who would not love to know more about angels. We would like to know more about their nature. We would like to know about their duties today. We have to be careful that our curiosity does not get the better of us. We have to be content with what the Bible reveals about the nature and role of angels. Speculation about these heavenly beings can lead to the promotion of false doctrines. One of the greatest dangers that has arisen over this kind of speculation about angels is assigning greater importance to them than they deserve.

#### What does the Bible reveal about the nature of angels?

In the first place, the Scriptures teach us that the angels are created beings. Nehemiah wrote; *"Thou, even thou,*

*art Lord alone; thou has made heaven, the heaven of heavens, with all their host..."* (Nehemiah 9:6). Nehemiah made mention of the heavenly host. This is an obvious reference to angels. If angels are created, then they are not eternal like God.

In the second place, angels are not all-knowing like God. When Jesus was speaking of the day of judgment He said; *"But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven but My Father only"* (Matthew 24:36).

In the third place, angels are powerful, but not all-powerful like God. The great power of angels is demonstrated in II Samuel 24:15-17 and II Kings 19:35. In both of those passages one angel was responsible for killing tens of thousands of men. In Psalm 103:20 the psalmist wrote that angels are *"mighty in strength."* Even though angels are extremely powerful they are under God's control. For those angels who rebel God can easily restrain them until He is prepared to judge them (II Peter 2:4).

#### What do angels do today?

First, they continue to worship God. This is a duty that they performed in times past and there is no reason not to think that they still are performing that task (Ezekiel 8:4; Isaiah 6:1-3; Revelation 4:6-8). Second, angels minister to the righteous (Hebrews 1:14). We are not told how angels minister to the righteous. Some scholars believe that the angels serve the righteous through providential means. In other words, they may be employed in answering the prayers of the saints. Third, the Bible also teaches us that angels rejoice over each sinner who repents (Luke 15:10). This verse shows us that angels take a keen interest in mankind. Finally, Jesus also told us that it is the angels who carry the righteous to paradise when they die (Luke 16:22, 23).

#### What is that angels will not do today?

Before the Bible was fully revealed angels served as messengers of God (Genesis 18:10; Luke 1:11-19; Luke 1:26, 27). Angels no longer bring God's message to man because God's instructions to men have been fully revealed to mankind (II Timothy 3:16, 17; Jude 3; Revelation 22:18,19). Paul even warns us not to accept the word of angels because all has been revealed in the

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message that Paul and the other prophets of God taught men (Galatians 1:6-9). 

## “TOTAL HEREDITARY DEPRAVITY”

### Are we born in sin?

*Ian McPherson*

In 1618 the Dutch Council of Dort drew up an acrostic (TULIP) which was designed to summarize the main tenets of the teachings of John Calvin. The acrostic stands for **T**otal Depravity, **U**nconditional Election, **L**imited Atonement **I**rresistible Grace, and **P**erseverance of the Saints. The doctrine of Calvinism rests on a false assumption that the sovereignty of God automatically infers that man can contribute **nothing at all towards his salvation**. The first of these is: **Total Hereditary Depravity**.

This doctrine teaches that from Adam all mankind has inherited a completely fallen nature, and is without ability to make **any response whatsoever** to the gospel, without the Spirit making an arbitrary decision, **independent of the Bible**, to convert only those He wants to save. Calvinists say that those who are chosen to be saved have no choice in the matter, they cannot resist God's desire to save them, and once they are saved by God it is impossible for them to fall from grace. On the other hand those who are chosen to be lost cannot reach out to God. Salvation is absolutely impossible for them. They will spend eternity in hell without any ability to respond, and without any hope that God will ever reach out and save them.

**THE DOCTRINE OF TOTAL HEREDITARY DEPRAVITY IS FALSE.** It is true that as a result of Adam's sin, **death** passed to all men (Rom 5:12; 1 Cor 15:22). However, **physical death** is the only thing that is inherited unconditionally. Physical death happens when the soul is separated from the body (James 2:26, Genesis 35:18). However one becomes **spiritually dead** when **he separates himself from God through sin** (Isaiah 59:2, Ephesians 2:1, Luke 15:24). Since all have sinned (Romans 3:23), it required the divine intervention of God to save man. He does not save souls directly through the Spirit, but **indirectly** through the gospel when they are baptized (Acts 2:38, 22:16, 1 Peter 3:21).

**MAN IS NOT BORN A SINNER.** *“Behold, all souls are mine; as the soul of the father, so also the soul of the son is mine: the soul that sinneth, it shall die* (Ezekiel 18:4). This verse teaches that our **soul dies when we sin**, the necessary inference is that it is alive **before we sin!** This verse therefore teaches the exact opposite to Calvinism. Of necessity our soul **must be alive before it dies**. Sin is something that **man does, not** something that he inherits. We are accountable for **our own sins**, and not for the sins of others.

**MAN BECOMES ACCOUNTABLE TO GOD FROM YOUTH.** *“... the imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth”* (Genesis 8:21). Infants can be disobedient to their parents and lie etc. but God does not hold them accountable until they have reached the stage where their conscience matures and they become personally accountable to God for their actions. This happens at youth, not at conception or birth.

Calvinists use **Psalm 51:5** to support their theory. It says: *“Behold, I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me”*. This chapter is about David's remorse over his sin with Bathsheba. However it his mother's sin that is mentioned in this verse not David's or Adam's sin.

David had a baby boy to his adulterous relationship with Bathsheba. This child died when he was seven days old. After he died David said: *“Can I bring him back again? I shall go to him, but he shall not return to me”*. **2 Samuel 12:23**. David knew he could not bring his child back, but expected to one day see him again in heaven. Even though this baby boy was conceived in sin, God did not hold the child accountable. All children are born pure. Jesus said *“That in heaven their angels do always behold the face of my Father which is in heaven.”* (**Matthew 18:10**). Children do not bear the guilt of their father's sin (**Ezekiel 18:20**), **How** then could they bear the guilt of Adam's sin?

Calvin's wicked doctrine of “Total Hereditary Depravity” is false. It is beyond belief that anyone could consider that our loving God, who is the giver of every good and perfect gift (James 1:17), could give man a sinful soul? Not only this, but it infers that since Christ was a fleshly descendent of Adam (Luke 3:38, Romans 8; 3, Galatians 4; 4), He must also have been born totally depraved. Who could believe this? 