Congregation of the Lord Jesus Christ,

The BCoF was written in 1561. And we get a bit of a window into the world of that time from the fact that this article contains one paragraph about creation and providence, and two whole paragraphs about angels! In the 16th century, the doctrine of creation was universally accepted; it simply was not a matter of major debate. There was *fascination* with angels, there was *superstition* about angels, there was *prayer* to angels, there was angel *artwork*, and there were also a lot of misconceptions or wrong ideas about angels.

Well, if we were re-writing the Confession article today, we would add a lot more about creation, but we could easily just leave the section about angels as it is because there is still fascination and superstition and misconception when it comes to angels. And we can even put this to the test this afternoon: How many wings do angels have? Two? Four? Six? Different amounts of wings? None? We will come back to this later.

But let me also share this interesting Bible fact for you: The Greek word for sin is *hamartia*, the Greek word for unconditional love is *agape*, and the Greek word for angel is *angelos*. Which one of those three words – sin, love, or angel, occurs more often in the NT than the other two? *Angelos*! So if the Bible devotes that much space to angels, then we ought to take them seriously and make sure we understand them properly.

So what we will do this afternoon is to spend a bit of time surveying what the Bible reveals about angels and then we will end by looking at three verses that mention angels that should really encourage us and lead us to thankful worship of the Lord.

1. So we begin with **a short survey of what the Bible reveals about angels**.

* 1. And the best place for us to start is **at the beginning**.
     1. You will see in the third paragraph of Article 12 that the Sadducees deny the existence of spirits and angels and the Manichees say “that the devils were not created, but have their origin in themselves.”
        1. The **Sadducees** were a religious/political party from around the time of Jesus. And **Acts 23:8** tells us that they did not believe in angels or spirits. And you find that same thinking today in the philosophy of Materialism. Materialism is the belief that what we can see is all that there is. Materialism rejects the idea of God or spirits or angels or the afterlife – you live, you die, and what we can see is all that there is.
        2. The **Manichees** were followers of a man named Mani, who lived around 200 years after Jesus. He taught that God and the angels are eternal and so are devil and the demons. He denied the creation of angels and the fall of the demons or evil angels. He believed that they always existed and that the creation and history is about this cosmic battle between God and the devil, between the angels and the demons, between good and bad. So your job is to fill the universe with more good than bad, which is how God defeats the devil. And you find the same sort of thinking today in many religions and philosophies - Yin and Yang, good vs evil, light vs dark, etc.
        3. And the ideas of the Sadducees and the Manichees were becoming popular in some parts of the church in the days when the Belgic Confession was written and as I have said, you still find these ideas today.
     2. So **what does the Bible tell us abut the creation of the angels**?
        1. Well, the angels are not eternal beings. They are creatures.
           1. How does the Bible begin? “In the beginning, God.” So what existed before creation or in eternity was God and God alone.
           2. Turn to **Colossians 3:16** (p984). There we read, “*For by Him (by Jesus Christ) all things were created; things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities*.” “All things means *all* things. Everything else that exists apart from God was created by God. And this is made explicit with the reference to “powers or rulers or authorities.” They are words the Bible uses to describe the angels and the demons of the heavenly realm. So the angels were created by God.
           3. And we know that God created all things in the first six days of creation week. So sometime in those six days the angels were created.

In our earlier reading in **Job 38**, God was asking Job if He was there at creation. And in v7, God said to Job, were you there “*when the morning stars sang together and all the sons of God shouted for joy*?” The NIV doesn’t have “Sons of God” but “angels.” And the Greek version of the OT has ‘*angelos*.’ So this verse suggests that the angels witnessed some of God’s work of creation and shouted for joy. And while we can’t be dogmatic about it, it may well be that the angels were created on the first day.

* + - * 1. But the major point is that the angels are created beings.
  1. Well, the next thing for us to consider is **what are angels**?
     1. I asked you earlier how many wings do angels have? And if I asked you boys and girls to draw a picture of an angel, I am sure your pictures would include things like flowing white gowns, halos, wings, golden harps, and maybe even a little bow and arrow if you are thinking about Cupid, right?
     2. Earlier I asked you how many wings angels have. Well, one class or rank of angel is called Cherubim in the Bible. In Exodus 25 Moses was told to sculpt two Cherubim for on top of the Ark – they had two wings. Another class of angel mentioned in the Bible is the Seraphim. Isaiah 6 says they have six wings – two to cover their feet, two to cover their face, and to or flying. So if you answered two or six, you are correct.
     3. However, in their essential being, angels are spirits. The last verse of our Hebrews reading describes angels as “ministering ***spirits***.” So angels are not flesh and blood creatures; they are spirits.
        1. Perhaps you remember that when Jesus rose from the dead and appeared to the disciples, they thought He was a spirit. And Jesus said, “*A spirit does not have flesh and bones, as you see I have*.”
        2. **Luke 8** records the story of a demon-possessed man. We read, “*Jesus asked him, ‘What is your name? And he said, ‘Legion,’ for many demons had entered him*.” And Jesus commanded them to leave the man and they entered a herd of pigs.
        3. So we should not think that angels need wings to fly! They can appear like human beings, as did the angels who visited Abraham or Gabriel when he visited Mary, or they can appear like winged creatures, but those of you said that angels do not have wings are also quite correct.
  2. Well, we have seen that the angels were created and that they are spirits but I have already referred to the angels and demons. So **where do the demons come into the picture**?
     1. Well, can one of you boys and girls tell us how God described everything He had made during creation week? Was it OK or was it good or was it *very* good? It was very good, we are told in Genesis 1:31.
     2. And we mentioned **Job 38:7** earlier where we are told that all the angels shouted for joy at God’s work of creation.
     3. So there were no demons at the end of day six of creation week.
     4. And yet, by the time we get to ch. 3, and we don’t know exactly how long that is after creation week, we are introduced the Serpent who is the devil in disguise.
     5. So, sometime time between their creation and the fall of Adam and Eve, some angels, led by Satan, rebelled against God.
        1. Turn in your Bibles to **Jude 1:6** (P1027). There it says, “*And the angels who did not stay within their own position of authority, but left their proper dwelling, he has kept in eternal chains under gloomy darkness until the judgment on the great Day*.”
        2. And if you turn back just a few pages to **2 Peter 2:4** (p1018), we read, “*For if God did not spare angels when they sinned, but cast them into hell and committed them to chains of gloomy darkness to be kept until the judgment*…”
        3. And in **Revelation 12:3** we are given a picture of the devil as a great red dragon. We are told that “*his tail swept down a third of the stars of heaven and cast them to the earth*.” And this may mean that 1/3rd of the angels joined the devil in the rebellion against God.
     6. So by way of summary, as our Confession article puts it, “Some of [the angels that God created] have fallen from the exalted position in which God created them into everlasting perdition [or condemnation or eternal judgment].” And these are the fallen angels or demons. And their leader or general is Satan.

1. Well, with the remainder of our time, let’s consider **three wonderful Bible passages** about angels that should lead us to thankful worship of the Lord.
   1. The first is **1 Peter 1:10ff** (p. 1014). There we read, “*Concerning this salvation, the prophets who prophesied about the grace that was to be yours searched and inquired carefully, 11 inquiring what person or time the Spirit of Christ in them was indicating when he predicted the sufferings of Christ and the subsequent glories. It was revealed to them that they were serving not themselves but you, in the things that have now been announced to you through those who preached the good news to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven, things into which angels long to look*.”
      1. We are fascinated by angels! And even the OT Jews were fascinated with angels. When you read Jewish commentaries, it is staggering to see how many of the OT stories have been explained as the work of angels. Pagan beliefs also have all sorts of ideas and theories about the mighty angels. So in the minds of many, you have God or the gods, then you have the angel world, and then you have miserable mankind.
      2. But look what Peter says here: The OT prophets didn’t fully understand the things that they wrote about the Christ. The Spirit told them that they were serving people like you and me who are on this side of the cross. It is we that have the full revelation of Jesus in the Old and New Testaments together – the compete Bible.
      3. And Paul adds a comment to the end of v12 about the mighty angels who live and serve in heaven. He says that the things about Christ that we have in the Bible are “*things into which angels long to look*.” And the literal translation of that Greek phrase is that they want to gaze at these things with outstretched necks! Isn’t that remarkable!
      4. You see, with the angels, their eternal destiny is set. The good angels will enjoy heaven and the evil angels are already condemned to eternal hell and they know it. But with human beings it is different. We all begin life as fallen and sinful human beings who deserve hell. But through the preaching of the forgiveness of sins in Jesus Christ, we are able to choose to believe in Jesus and receive eternal life. And that fascinates the angels! Think about it; they do not know what it is like to experience grace or forgiveness or mercy. So everything about the Lord Jesus and our salvation is something that angels long to look at!
      5. And it is also why, as we are told in Luke 15, “*there is rejoicing in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents*.” When one who was on this side of the salvation line comes over to this side, that’s party time! That is something worth celebrating!
      6. So maybe you could be the reason for an angelic party in heaven today! Believe!
   2. The second verse is **1 Corinthians 6:3** (p). “*Do you not know that we are to judge angels?*”
      1. The context is here is the rebuke of the apostle to the Corinthian believers who were taking each other to court. Paul’s message was that as Spirit-filled believers they should either let matters go or sort the matters out within the church.
         1. And he makes his point by arguing from the greater to the lesser. He first says in v2 that believers will judge the world, or unbelievers. On Judgment Day, as the redeemed people of Christ, we will assist Him in judging all those who have rejected Him. So we should be able to sort out matters between us, as brothers and sisters in Christ.
         2. And then in v3 he ramps up this point by revealing that we will judge angels. Again, as the redeemed people of Christ, and as those who are created in the image of God, we will assist Jesus in the judgment of the angels. And this most likely refers to the fallen angels. We will be able to testify to glory and greatness of Jesus as a part of why the fallen angels are condemned to hell. So again, with that in view, we should be able to sort matters out between us, as brothers and sisters in Christ.
         3. We will judge the angels! We truly have a higher rank or value in God’s economy than the angels! Isn’t that staggering! Isn’t that encouraging!
         4. But it is also a call to wisdom and holy living. If we need to resolve serious matters between us as brothers and sisters, and if we will judge angels, then watching endless Youtube clips or liking endless instagram posts is surely not the best way to train our minds. Let us make time to fill our minds with Christ and His glory and grace! Devotions/reading.
   3. But we see this also, thirdly and finally, in **Hebrews 1:14** (p1001), where it says of the angels, “*Are they not all ministering spirits sent out to serve for the sake of those who are to inherit salvation*?”
      1. And there are several Bible stories that give us a picture of how the angels serve the people of God:

* There was a time when the King of Syria decided to kill Elisha, the prophet of God. So he sent horses and chariots and a great army, and they came by night and surrounded the city where Elisha lived. When Elisha’s servant got up in the morning, he went outside the gate and saw that the army with horses and chariots was all around the city. So he ran back to Elisha and said, "Alas, my master! What shall we do?" But Elisha said to him, "Do not be afraid, for those who are with us are more than those who are with them." And then Elisha prayed and said, "O LORD, please open his eyes that he may see." So the LORD opened the eyes of the servant and he went back out and looked again and behold, the mountain was full of an angelic army and chariots of fire that surrounded Elisha.
* And there is also the time when Jesus was arrested (Matthew 26:51-53). We are told that Peter took up a sword and struck the servant of the high priest and cut off his ear. Do you remember what Jesus said? He said, “*Put your sword back into its place. For all who take the sword will perish by the sword. Do you think that I cannot appeal to my Father, and He will at once send me more than twelve legions of angels?”*
* Another time is recorded in **Acts 12**. Peter was in prison and we read, “*And behold, an angel of the Lord stood next to him, and a light shone in the cell. He struck Peter on the side and woke him, saying, "Get up quickly." And the chains fell off his hands. And the angel said to him, "Dress yourself and put on your sandals." And he did so. And he said to him, "Wrap your cloak around you and follow me." And he went out and followed him. He did not know that what was being done by the angel was real, but thought he was seeing a vision.*”

So we may not see angels rescue us from prison. We may not see the chariots of angels that are on the Waitakeres accomplishing the Lord’s purposes for us. We may never know when angels have been busy to aid us or strengthen us or protect us, physically or spiritually.But there will have been and there will be many times when you receive unseen help from the angels that the Lord has dispatched to serve you!

But as wonderful as it is to think about the angels and what they do for us, the major point of Hebrews 1 is that the Lord Jesus is more glorious then the angels! The Father has given the position of power and prominence in heaven not to the angels, but to the Lord Jesus! And the angels do not serve us of their own accord, they are sent to serve us by the Lord Jesus!

And finally, **Revelation 5:11-12** says, “*Then I looked, and I heard around the throne and the living creatures and the elders the voice of many angels, numbering myriads of myriads and thousands of thousands, saying with a loud voice, "Worthy is the Lamb who was slain, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing*!"” The chief calling and delight of the angels is the thankful worship of God. And may all that we have learned about the angels leads us to thankful worship of the Lord also. Amen.