

96306 - Gender of Angels and Do They Die?

the question

About the angels – will they die? Are there male and female angels? Can they reproduce?

Detailed answer

What most people believe is that the angels will die and that the Angel of Death will die, but there is no clear text concerning this. Rather there are texts which may indicate this, and there is the well known hadeeth (narration) about the "trumpet", which is a munkar hadeeth (rejected report). See: Da'eef al-Targheeb wa'l-Tarheeb.

Among the texts that have been narrated concerning this is the verse in which Allah says (interpretation of the meaning):

"Everything will perish save His Face." [28:88].

Ibn Kathir (may Allah have mercy on him) said: Allah tells us that all the inhabitants of the earth will depart and die, as will the inhabitants of the heavens, except those whom Allah wills, and nothing will be left but His noble Countenance, for the Lord, may He be exalted and sanctified, will not die, rather He is the Ever-Living Who will never die. Tafsir al-Quran il-'Azeem.

And Allah says (interpretation of the meaning):

"And the trumpet will be blown, and all who are in the heavens and all who are on the earth will swoon away, except him whom Allah wills. Then it will be blown a second time, and behold they will be standing, looking on (waiting)." [39:68].

Al-Bukhari and Muslim narrated from Ibn 'Abbas (may Allah be pleased with him) that the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) used to say: "O Allah, I seek refuge in Your glory – there is no god but You – from Your sending me astray, for You are the Ever-Living Who does not die, but jinn and men die."

Shaykh al-Islam Ibn Taymiyah (may Allah have mercy on him) was asked: Will all of creation, even the angels, die?

He replied: What most of the people believe is that all of creation will die, even the angels, and even the Angel of Death. There is a hadeeth concerning that which is marfoo' i.e., attributed to the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him).

The Muslims, Jews and Christians all agree that this is possible and that Allah is able to cause it to happen. It is only some groups of philosophers, the followers of Aristotle and the like, who differed concerning this, and those so-called Muslims, Jews and Christians who joined them in this, such as the authors of the Ikhwan al-Suffa letters and their ilk who claimed that the angels are minds and souls and that they cannot die under any circumstances; rather, in their view they are gods and the lords of this world.

The Quran and all other scriptures state that the angels are slaves of Allah who are subject to His command as Allah says (interpretation of the meaning):

“The Messiah will never be proud to reject to be a slave of Allah, nor the angels who are near (to Allah). And whosoever rejects His worship and is proud, then He will gather them all together unto Himself.” [4:172]

“And they say: 'The Most Gracious (Allah) has begotten a son (or children)'. Glory to Him! They [whom they call children of Allah i.e. the angels, 'Isa, son of Maryam, 'Uzayr], are but honoured slaves.” [21:26]

“And there are many angels in the heavens, whose intercession will avail nothing except after Allah has given leave for whom He wills and is pleased with.” [53:26]

Allah is able to cause them to die then bring them back to life, just as He is able to cause mankind and the jinn to die then bring them back to life. Allah says (interpretation of the meaning):

“And He it is Who originates the creation, then He will repeat it (after it has been perished); and this is easier for Him.” [30:27].

It is proven in a saheeh hadeeth (authentic narration) from the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him), via more than one isnad (chain of narration) and via more than one of the sahabah (companions), that he said: “When Allah speaks the Revelation, the angels swoon”. According to another report, “When the angels hear His words, they swoon.” Another report states: “The angels hear something like a chain dragging on a rock and they swoon, then when the fear leaves their hearts, they say: ‘What did your Lord say?’ They say: ‘The truth.’ Then they call out: ‘The truth, the truth.’”

In these saheeh ahadeeth (authentic narrations) we are told that they can swoon, so if it is possible for them to swoon, it is possible for them to die.

As for the exception (in the verse “except him whom Allah wills”), this applies to those who have been admitted to Paradise of the hoor al-‘iyn (maidens of Paradise), for there is no death in Paradise; and it applies to others, but we cannot be certain about who is exempted. It is proven in al-Saheeh that the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said: “The people will swoon on the Day of Resurrection and I will be the first one to wake up, and I will see Moosa holding onto the leg of the Throne and I will not know whether he awoke before me or whether he was one of those whom Allah exempted.” If the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) was not told of everyone who will be exempted by Allah, then we cannot be certain of that. This is like knowing when the (final) hour will begin or the names of all the prophets, and other things that we have not been told, and this knowledge cannot be attained except by being told. And Allah knows best. End quote from Majmoo’ al-Fataawa.

Al-Suyuti (may Allah have mercy on him) said: I was asked: Will the angels die when the trumpet is blown and will they come to life when the trumpet-blast for resurrection is sounded? The answer is: Yes. Allah says (interpretation of the meaning):

“And the trumpet will be blown, and all who are in the heavens and all who are on the earth will swoon away, except him whom Allah wills.” [39:68]

We have stated above at the beginning of this book that those who are exempted will be the bearers of the Throne, Jibril, Israfeel, Mikail and the Angel of Death, but they will die after that.

It was narrated from Wahb that these four angels were the first creatures to be created by Allah, and they will be the last of them to die, and the first to be brought back to life.

Then he supported his words with the texts that speak of the death of the people of heaven and the people of earth, even Jibril, Mikail, Israfeel and the bearers of the Throne, then the Angel of Death will be the last one to die.

See: al-Habaik fi Akhbar al-Malaik.

But the text referred to, which was quoted by al-Suyuti, is the same hadeeth of the Trumpet that we have already seen is classed as da'eef (weak) and munkar (odd).

The Standing Committee was asked: Please tell us about the two angels, Raqeeb and 'Ateed who are appointed to record man's deeds during his life. Do these two angels die, or where do they go after the man dies?

They replied: The affairs of the angels are unseen matters which cannot be known except through texts. There is no text which speaks of the death of those who record good and bad deeds when the person whose good and bad deeds they record dies. There is no text which says whether they remain alive, or what happens to them. This is known only to Allah, and what you have asked about is not something that we are required to believe and no deeds are connected to it. Asking about this comes under the heading of things that we should not be concerned with. Hence we advise the questioner not to bother with things that do not concern him, and to devote his efforts to asking about things that will benefit him and the Muslims in their religious and worldly affairs. End quote. Fataawa al-Lajnah al-Daa'imah.

Secondly:

The angels are not regarded as either male or female. As for being female, Allah has stated that they are not female, as He says (interpretation of the meaning):

“And they make the angels who themselves are slaves of the Most Gracious (Allah) females. Did they witness their creation? Their testimony will be recorded, and they will be questioned.”

[43:19]

“Or did We create the angels female while they were witnesses?” [37:150].

As for describing them as male, no such thing has been narrated.

Al-Haleemi said in al-Minhaj, then al-Qawnawi said in the abridged version thereof: It was said that the people of al-A'araf are angels who love the people of Paradise and reproach the people of Hell. But this is farfetched for two reasons: the first is the verse in which Allah says (interpretation of the meaning): “and on Al-A'araf (a wall with elevated places) will be men.” [7:46]. Men are males of sound mind, but the angels are not divided into male and female. The second is the fact that Allah tells us that they will want to enter Paradise, but the angels are not prevented from entering it, because preventing one who longs for something from attaining his desire is a punishment for him, but on that Day no angel will be punished. End quote. Narrated by al-Suyuti in al-Habaik.

Dr Muhammad ibn 'Abd al-Rahman al-Khamees said: We say that the one who says that they are female is committing an act of kufr (disbelief) because he has gone against the Book of Allah. And it cannot be said that they are male, because there is no saheeh text to that effect. End quote from I'tiqad Ahl al-Sunnah.

Thirdly:

The angels do not get married or reproduce, and it is narrated that there is consensus on this point.

Al-Razi (may Allah have mercy on him) said in his Tafsir: They are unanimously agreed that the angels do not eat, drink or get married. They glorify Allah night and day without ceasing. End quote.

And Allah knows best.