

STUDY ON GOD'S ANGELS

“And of the angels He says: “Who makes His angels spirits and His ministers a flame of fire.”” (Hebrews 1:7)

One of the main reasons for the study of angels is their prominence in Scripture. There is much said about angels and their function. Their influence is not restricted to any one time in history - we find angels being involved in the work of God from Genesis to Revelation and from Abraham to Jesus to John the beloved in the book of Revelation. Since the Bible gives much space to their ministry, we ought to pay attention to what Scripture says about them.

Furthermore, their function is important for us to understand. Since they play an important role in God's overall plan for humanity, it is necessary for us to understand the extent of their involvement and how they relate to us.

God Created Angels

According to Scripture, they are part of the universe God created. In a passage that refers to angels (the “host” or “armies” of heaven), we read in Nehemiah 9:6:

“You alone are the Lord; You have made heaven, the heaven of heavens, with all their host, the earth and everything on it, the seas and all that is in them, and You preserve them all. The host of heaven worships You.” (Nehemiah 9:6)

In the New Testament, Paul tells us that God created all things “visible and invisible,” and specifically includes the angelic world with the phrase “whether thrones or dominions or principalities or authorities” (Colossians 1:16).

While these Bible verses tell us that God created angels, the Bible also suggests that they do not “exist” in the same way we do. The author of Hebrews suggests that all angels are “spirits” (Hebrews 1:13-14). When Jesus appears to the disciples, he asserts that **“spirits” do not have bodies** like he does.

“Behold My hands and My feet, that it is I Myself. Handle Me and see, for a spirit does not have flesh and bones as you see I have.” (Luke 24:39)

In the Bible, angels cannot usually be seen by humans unless God reveals them (see Numbers 22:31, Luke 2:13). A good example is in 2 Kings 6:17

“And Elisha prayed, and said, “Lord, I pray, open his eyes that he may see.” Then the Lord opened the eyes of the young man, and he saw. And behold, the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire all around Elisha.” (2 Kings 6:17)

However, from time to time angels took on a bodily form and appeared to various people in Scripture (Matthew 28:5; Hebrews 13:2).

4 Main Types of Angels

Scripture names three categories of heavenly beings that appear to be types of angels: cherubim, seraphim, and “living creatures.” One other one not mentioned directly are “Other angels”.

Cherubim

Cherubim are mentioned in several places throughout Scripture:

- They guarded the entrance to the Garden of Eden (Genesis 3:24).

- God is enthroned above them (Ezekiel 10:1–22).
- God rides on them (Psalm 18:10)
- Two golden figures of cherubim sit above the Ark of the Covenant, where God promised to dwell among his people (Exodus 25:22, see also verses 18–21).

Seraphim

“Above it stood seraphim...” (Isaiah 6:2)

The seraphim are only mentioned once in the Bible. They appear in Isaiah 6:2–7, where they continually worship the Lord and say, *“Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts; the whole earth is full of his glory” (Isaiah 6:3).*

Living creatures

“Also, from within it came the likeness of four living creatures. And this was their appearance: they had the likeness of a man.” (Ezekiel 1:5)

Ezekiel and Revelation speak of other kinds of heavenly beings known as “living creatures” around God’s throne (Ezekiel 1:5–14, Revelation 4:6–8). They appeared like a lion, an ox, a man, and an eagle. They, too, worship God continually: *“Day and night they never cease to sing, ‘Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord God Almighty, who was and is and is to come!’” (Revelation 4:8)*

Other Angels

“And God sent an angel to Jerusalem to destroy it. As he was destroying, the Lord looked and relented of the disaster, and said to the angel who was destroying, “It is enough; now restrain your hand.” And the angel of the Lord stood by the threshing floor of Ornan the Jebusite. Then David lifted his eyes and saw the angel of the Lord standing between earth and heaven, having in his hand a drawn sword stretched out over Jerusalem. So, David and the elders, clothed in sackcloth, fell on their faces.” (1 Chronicles 21:15-16)

These angels, the Cherubim, the Seraphim and living creatures mainly operate in heaven and have no earthly functionality. There are other angels who are not categorised into these three categories that minister to saints on earth as part of the ministry of God to us.

Christophany / Theophany

A theophany is a manifestation of God in the Bible that is tangible to the human senses. In its most restrictive sense, it is a visible appearance of God in the Old Testament period, often, but not always, in human form. In some instances, these appearances were referred to as Angelic appearance.

- Jacob wrestled with what appeared to be a man but was God (Genesis 32:28-30). This may also have been a Christophany.
- Abraham’s encounter in Genesis 22:11-18 is either a theophany or Christophany.
- Gideon’s encounter in Judges 6:11-18 is also either a theophany or Christophany although the bible records an angel appearing to Gideon.

Angels have a Hierarchy

Angels in the Bible appear to have a rank and order. The angel hierarchy is supported by Jude 9, when the angel Michael is called an “archangel”—a title that indicates rule or authority over other angels. He’s also called “one of the chief princes” in Daniel 10:13, and appears to lead God’s angelic army in Revelation 12: “Now war arose in heaven, Michael and his angels fighting against the dragon; and the dragon and

his angels fought, but they were defeated” (Revelation 12:7–8). Paul also tells us that the Lord will return from heaven “with the archangel’s call” (1 Thessalonians 4:16). Scripture does not tell us if this refers to Michael, or if there are other archangels as well.

Only 2 Named God-Angels

Only two angels are specifically named in Scripture.

Michael: As we said above, the archangel Michael is mentioned in Jude 9, Revelation 12:7–8, and Daniel 10:13 and 21.

Gabriel: He is mentioned in Daniel 8:16 and 9:21 as a messenger who comes from God to speak to Daniel. He is also identified as God’s messenger in Luke 1. He tells Zechariah, “*I am Gabriel, who stand in the presence of God*” (**Luke 1:19**). Then we read, “*In the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent from God to a city of Galilee named Nazareth, to a virgin . . . and the virgin’s name was Mary*” (**Luke 1:26–27**).

Angels are not Omnipresent

Angels frequently appear as messengers in the Bible, traveling from one place to another (see the verse above, where Gabriel “was sent from God to a city of Galilee named Nazareth”).

The fact that angels are not omnipresent is made explicit when an angel comes to Daniel and says:

“I have come because of your words. The prince of the kingdom of Persia withstood me twenty-one days; but Michael, one of the chief princes, came to help me, so I left him there with the prince of the kingdom of Persia and came to make you understand what is to befall your people in the latter days.” (**Daniel 10:12–14**)

If angels were omnipresent, Michael would not have “came to help” because he would have already been there, and this angel would not need to leave Michael to bring this message. **Unlike God, who is omnipresent, angels are finite creatures, limited to one place at one time.**

Angelic Numbers are Beyond Counting

The Bible doesn’t tell us how many angels God created. But apparently, there are a lot of them. Here are a few of the ways the Bible tells us how many angels there are:

- On Mount Sinai, God “*came from the ten-thousands of holy ones, with flaming fire at his right hand*” (**Deuteronomy 33:2**).
- We also learn that, “*the chariots of God are tens of thousands and thousands of thousands*” (**Psalms 68:17 NIV**).
- When we come to worship, we come into the presence of “*innumerable angels*” (**Hebrews 12:22**).
- John says, “*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*” (**Revelation 5:11**).

Every biblical reference to the total number of angels suggests that they are beyond counting.

Everyone Has an Angel?

“He will give his angels charge of you to guard you in all your ways. On their hands they will bear you up, lest you dash your foot against a stone” (**Psalms 91:11–12**).

“Take heed that you do not despise one of these little ones, for I say to you that in heaven their angels always see the face of My Father who is in heaven.” (**Matthew 18:10**)

I would not call these “guardian angels” as the world seems to suggest but it is entirely possible especially based on Jesus’ words in Matthew 18:10 seem to support the idea that individual people (or at least children) have their angels. The entire function of personal angels is still subject to interpretation.

Angels do not Marry

Jesus taught that in the resurrection people “neither marry nor are given in marriage but are like angels in heaven” (Matthew 22:30, see also Luke 20:34–36). This clearly suggests that angels do not marry.

No other passages address relationships between angels, so anything beyond this is simply speculation.

Angels are Powerful

Angels are called “mighty ones who do his word” (Psalm 103:20), “powers” (see Ephesians 1:21), and “dominions” and “authorities” (Colossians 1:16). They are certainly “greater in might and power” than humans (2 Peter 2:11, see also Matthew 28:2). Angels use their power to battle against Satan’s demonic forces (Daniel 10:13, Revelation 12:7–8, 20:1–3).

As powerful as angels are, followers of Christ are higher than them (1 Corinthians 6:3).

“Yet You have made him a little lower than God, And You have crowned him with glory and honour” (Psalm 8:5 AMP)

Angels carry out some of God’s Plans

There are numerous ways in which angels carry out God’s plans on earth:

- They frequently bring God’s messages to people (Luke 1:11–19, Acts 8:26, 10:3–8, 22, 27:23–24).
- They carry out some of God’s judgments, bringing a plague upon Israel (2 Samuel 24:16–17), smiting the leaders of the Assyrian army (2 Chronicles 32:21), striking King Herod dead because he did not give God glory (Acts 12:23), or pouring out bowls of God’s wrath on the earth (Revelation 16:1).
- When Christ returns, angels will come with him as a great army accompanying their King and Lord (Matthew 16:27, Luke 9:26, 2 Thessalonians 1:7).
- They patrol the earth as God’s representatives (Zechariah 1:10–11).
- They carry out war against demonic forces (Daniel 10:13; Revelation 12:7–8).
- John records that an angel “seized the dragon, that ancient serpent, who is the Devil and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years, and threw him into the pit . . .” (Revelation 20:1–3).
- When Christ returns, an archangel will proclaim his coming (1 Thessalonians 4:16, see also Revelation 18:1–2, 21, 19:17–18, and other passages).

Angels Directly Glorify God

Humans are not the only intelligent, moral creatures who glorify God. Angels glorify God for who He is in Himself, for His excellence. The Psalmist declares: *“Bless the Lord, you His angels, who excel in strength, who do His word, heeding the voice of His word.”* (Psalm 103:20, see also 148:2)

The seraphim continually praise God for his holiness (Isaiah 6:2–3), and so do the four living creatures (Revelation 4:8).

Angels also glorify God as they witness his plan unfold. When Christ was born in Bethlehem, a multitude of angels praised God and said, “*Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among men with whom he is pleased!*” (Luke 2:14, see also Hebrews 1:6).

Peter tells us that “angels long to look” (1 Peter 1:12) into the glories of the plan of salvation as it works out in the lives of believers each day. To emphasize the seriousness of particular commands, Paul reminds us that our actions are carried out in the presence of angelic witnesses: “*In the presence of God and of Christ Jesus and of the elect angels I charge you to keep these rules without favour, doing nothing from partiality*” (1 Timothy 5:21, see also 1 Corinthians 4:9). If Timothy follows Paul’s instructions, angels will witness his obedience and glorify God. If he neglects to obey, angels will also see and be grieved.

Do Not Worship Angels:

“Worship of angels” was one of the false doctrines being taught at Colossae (Colossians 2:18). In the book of Revelation, an angel warns John not to worship him: “*You must not do that! I am a fellow servant with you and your brethren who hold the testimony of Jesus. Worship God*” (**Revelation 19:10**).

We should not pray to angels, either. God can answer prayer. Paul warns us against thinking that any other “mediator” can come between us and God, “*for there is one God, and there is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus*” (1 Timothy 2:5). If we were to pray to angels, it would implicitly give them a status equal to God. There are no examples in Scripture of anyone praying to an angel.

Angels as Ministering Spirits

“*But to which of the angels has He ever said: “Sit at My right hand, till I make Your enemies Your footstool”? Are they not all ministering spirits sent forth to minister for those who will inherit salvation?*” (**Hebrews 1:13-14**)

What have we just heard by reading verse 14? That the angels are all ministering spirits sent forth on the Earth to minister for us who are the heirs of salvation. We should give more earnest heed to the fact that Jesus is greater than angels and that angels were created to minister for us.