

Angels

.A. Popular ideas about angels

The words “angel” in both Hebrew (malakh) and Greek (•mmgλοζ) mean simply “a messenger”. The Bible has over 300 references to “angels”, 2/3 of which are in the New Testament. Jesus, himself mentioned angels many times. Cherubs or cherubims are referred to in scripture an additional 100 times. “Hosts” which may mean God’s heavenly army of angels are mentioned about 300 times. However, there are also many other expressions that may generally refer to beings that come under the category of angels:

Old Testament

“sons of God” - Job 1:6

“sons of the mighty” - Ps 89:6

“watchers” - Daniel 4:17

“mighty ones” - Joel 3:11

“the holy ones” - Zech 14:5

New Testament

“spirits” - Heb 1:14

“principalities” - Rom 8:38

“powers” - Eph 6:12

“thrones” - Col 1:16

“dominions” - Col 1:16

The secular media is full of references to angels. The Little Rock Library system has 221 books on angels. And angels a very a common theme in movies or TV shows.

- .1. What are some secular movies, TV shows, books, etc. that have angels as central characters?
- .2. Are there some common themes the characters have in common?
- .3. The concept of “guardian angels” is one of the most popular. Read Matthew 18:10 and Psalms 91:10-12. What do they say that could support the “guardian angel” idea? What do they not say related to our secular ideas about angels?
- .4. Another common theme is that angels move among humans incognito. Read Hebrews 13:2. Does this reference support this idea? In addition to showing hospitality, what more general advice might this reference have for us?
- .5. Has anybody got a story about a possible encounter with angels?

.B. The work of angels

Scripture records many instances of angels performing services for God or being the instrument of God's work. Cherubims, or perhaps "elders" which will be discussed later, are frequently mentioned in the worship of God or in ceremonial roles.

- .1. What are some of the modern Christian stories, told as true, about the work of angels on behalf of humans.
- .2. Without reading the scriptural references, let's recall all of the missions or appearances in the Bible that we can on which God sent angels.

Matt 28:2-6 - Spoke to the women at the tomb of Jesus
 Num 22:22-27 - Spoke to Balaam after appearing to the donkey
 Gen 19:1-25 - Warned Lot about destruction of Sodom
 John 5:4 - Occasionally troubled the water resulted in healing
 Gen 3:24 - Guarded the tree of life in the Garden of Eden
 Luke 1:28-38 - Told Mary about the birth of Jesus (Gabriel)
 Luke 2:7-15 - Announced Jesus' birth to the shepherds
 Matt 2:13 - Warns Joseph to flee to Egypt with baby Jesus
 Acts 5:19 - Visited Peter and John in prison
 Gen 16:7-12 - Comforted Hagar and promised her many descendants
 Gen 28:12 - Seen ascending and descending Jacob's ladder
 Gen 32:24-32 - Wrestles with Jacob and renames him Israel
 II Kings 19:35 - Killed 185,000 Assyrians in response to Hezekiah's prayer
 Judges 6:11-12 - Appeared to Gideon while he was hiding
 Acts 8:26 - Spoke to Phillip and sent him to the Ethiopian eunuch
 Revelations - Execute many judgements and worship God
 John 1:51 - Appeared at Jesus' baptism
 Luke 1:18-19 - Named John to Zacharias
 Ezekiel 1 & 10 - Appeared to Ezekiel with predictions
 Daniel 3:28 - Delivered S, M & A from fiery furnace
 Daniel 6:22 - Shut the lion's mouth to save Daniel
 Acts 11:13 - Sent Peter to Joppa where he witnessed gentile conversion
 Matt 4:11 - Ministered to Jesus after temptation
 Rev 12:7 - Fought against Satan (Michael)
 I Chron 21:16-17 - Appeared to David, killed 70,000 Israelites
 Exodus 12:23 - Killed the Egyptian first born
 Genesis 22 - Stopped Abraham from sacrificing Isaac
 Rev 7:11 - Seen by John worshipping God

- .3. Although Angels may intervene in many circumstances, we should not presume on their help. Read Luke 4:9-12. What are some ways that we might be tempted to presume on angels help?

.C. Relation of angels to God and Man

Angels were created by God for His purposes. (Ref Gen 2:1, Neh, 9:6, Col 1:16).

- .1. Read Hebrews 1:2-6. How is Jesus better than the angels?
- .2. According to Heb 1:14 what is the primary purpose of angels?
- .3. Angels don't know everything. Read I Peter 1:12. What are some things angels might want to investigate?
- .4. Although angels are powerful, humans will have some advantages over them. What are some advantages humans might have over angels?
- .5. Read I Cor 6:3-4. What do you think judging angels might involve?
- .6. Read Exodus 20:4. This commandment is primarily the reason that most Protestants don't have statues of angels. Some don't even have an angel on the top of their Christmas tree. Catholics generally interpret the scripture as "no images to worship" and use statues of angels liberally. Note that God instructed in Exodus 25 that images of cherubim were to be placed on the Ark of the Covenant. What do you think?
- .7. Col 2:18 clearly warns against worshiping angels. In Rev 22:8-9, even John the Apostle had to be corrected when worshiping an angel. Why do you think worshiping angels could be a temptation? A danger?
- .8. What are some ways humans might worship angels? Can you think of any examples when reported visions of angels (Col 2:18) have led people astray?

.D. Organization and roles of Angels

Numerous references seem to indicate that angels are organized into a sort of army:

“the host of heaven” - Deut 17:3

“the host of the Lord” - Josh 5:14

“the host of the high ones on high” - Isa 24:21

“more than 12 legions of angels” - Matt 26:53

“a multitude of the heavenly host” - Luke 2:13

- .1. What does a “host” of angels imply to you? What are some of the roles in an army that angels might fill?
- .2. Michael is referred to as an archangel in Jude 9. What role do you think an archangel might have? (Ref I Thess 4:16, Daniel 10:13&21)
- .3. Gabriel is occasionally mentioned in the context of a messenger from God. (Daniel, Zacharias, Mary) Why do you think angels aren’t specifically named more frequently?

Cherubs or cherubims are also prominent in the Old Testament. In Rev 7:11 and 11:16, they may be the “elders” worshiping God along with angels. Most theologians consider them as being a different type or rank of angel. It is not clear to this author whether they are angels or another form or created being. For example, wings are often associated with cherubims, but never specifically with angels. Seraphims are rarely mentioned, but appear to be another name for or similar to cherubims.

- .3. Cherubims seem to be mentioned in the context of worship of God or more ceremonial roles. Read Ezekiel 10. Why do you think God had the cherubim appear in this manner?
- .4. Cherubims are almost never mentioned in the New Testament. Hebrews 9:5 refers to the cherubims on the Ark of the Covenant. Why do you think that cherubims are not prominent in the New Testament?

- .5. What do you think about the relationship between angels and cherubims? Do the terms “angel” and “cherubim” refer to roles or could they be separate beings?

.E. Bad angels

Over 200 scriptures refer to Satan or demons mostly in the New Testament. The most common theology interprets Rev 12:7-9 as a conflict in heaven that separated good angels from Satan (a former angel) and his bad angels. Many interpret Rev 12:4 that Satan enticed 1/3 of the created angels to join his rebellion. These former servants of God became fallen angels or demons in the service of Satan.

- .1. What are some common ideas about Satan (sometimes called “The Devil”)?
- .2. What are some common ideas about demons (sometimes called “devils”)?
- .3. Frequently, people think of Satan and demons as having supernatural powers. Other than the power to deceive, can you think of any biblical evidence of this? (Note that Satan’s power to afflict Job was allowed him by God.)
- .4. Isaiah 14:12-15 is frequently described as descriptive of Satan’s rebellion. If so, what was the cause of Satan’s downfall?
- .5. According to Mat 25:41 what is the fate of Satan and the demons? (Ref II Peter 2:4)
- .6. Scripture describes Satan as a “roaring lion ... seeking who to devour” (I Peter 5:8). According to James 4:7, how are Christians to deal with Satan? What are some ways to resist Satan? (Ref “the armor of God” Eph 6:10-16)
- .7. How can Christians identify demons according to I John 4:1-4?
- .8. Has anybody ever experienced a Satanic or demonic attack? Can you describe it? What did you do?

- .9. Referring back to Rev 12:7-9, is it possible that the war is still currently underway, rather than past tense? If so, what do you think our role could be?