

What are the Angels doing that see God's face in Mt. 18:10 and guard children?
What others ways do angels surround us?

Angels watch over little ones and all other saints.

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

MSB (Mt. 18:10) **their angels.** This does not suggest that each believer has a personal guardian angel. Rather, the pronoun is collective and refers to the fact that believers are served by angels in general. These angels are pictured “always” watching the face of God so as to hear His command to them to help a believer when needed. It is extremely serious to treat any fellow believer with contempt since God and the holy angels are so concerned for their well-being.

Angels surround God and watch as God Himself rejoices over each one saved.

Luke 15:7,10 (NKJV) I say to you that likewise there will be **more joy in heaven** over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine just persons who need no repentance. ¹⁰ Likewise, I say to you, **there is joy in the presence of the angels of God** over one sinner who repents.”

What does that word enopion (in the presence of) mean?
Gabriel uses that to speak of the angels who stand around facing God's Throne in Luke 1:19.

Angels guard heirs of salvation.

Hebrews 1:14 (NKJV) Are they not all ministering spirits sent forth **to minister for those who will inherit salvation?**

Angels & the Seven pillars of fire/angels/Spirits around the Throne of God.

Revelation 1:4 (NKJV) John, to the seven churches which are in Asia: Grace to you and peace from Him who is and who was and who is to come, **and from the seven Spirits who are before His throne**, 3:1 “And to the angel of the church in Sardis write, “These things says He who has the seven Spirits of God and the seven stars: “I know your works, that you have a name that you are alive, but you are dead. 4:5 And from the throne proceeded lightnings, thunderings, and voices. Seven lamps of fire *were* burning before the throne, which are **the seven Spirits of God**. 5:6 And I looked, and behold, in the midst of the throne and of the four

living creatures, and in the midst of the elders, stood a Lamb as though it had been slain, having seven horns and seven eyes, **which are the seven Spirits of God sent out into all the earth.**

The Doctrine of the Creation of Angels¹

God uses this first verse to introduce us to these spirit-world creatures, that are unimaginably powerful, called angels in the Bible.

God created all the angelic creatures. God is worshiped and served by some of the angelic creatures. God uses all of them, controls all of them, and as we will see in this chapter: God actually imprisons some of these angels that He created. A simple diagram of angels would be:

God created all angels: then they split into two types as some rebelled and are fallen angels or demons + and some angels did not rebel and they are God's servants.

The rebellious angels are further divided into two groups as in this chapter we see that some of the rebellious angels are imprisoned in the Abyss, and others are not.

With that in mind, pause with me and look at the entire Bible's contents about angels and think of this:

Each of the angels we read about in God's Word has power that exceeds anything we can humanly understand as possible by the laws of the physical world that we know.

Knowing that we are surrounded by amazing, supernatural beings so powerful, but that are opposed to God and in rebellion against Him could make us fearful. But before we look at the power of these demons, think about where they came from. So, this morning the first application from this doctrinal truth about the creation of angels we can see and hold onto is about the One who created all things including these angels.

Here is the comforting doctrinal truth:

God is Absolutely, All-Powerfully Greater Than Everything that is Anywhere

God shows us His absolute power reflected by the creatures He made to surround Him in this Universe. Here in v. 1 we are looking at an angel. The concept of angels is not rare or uncommon to our lives.

¹ 131013AM ROK-30

But the understanding of just what we are talking about with the existence, power, and abilities of angels should be. They are beyond anything any of us have any comprehension of.

There is so much we don't know about what else is in the Universe besides us humans; but what we do know is overwhelming, if you pause to think about it. That is exactly what happens as we think about angels.

Angels are Supernatural & Super Powerful Creatures

We are surrounded at all times by supernatural creatures that dwarf us in every way.

They are powerful, mobile, and intelligent: ***beyond anything we can comprehend.***

As far as we know the angelic creatures are indestructible, they can't be killed or destroyed.

They travel the universe effortless, with no spaceships.

They seemingly never rest, or sleep, or even need to eat.

Almighty God is the originator, the Creator of angels.

Our Creator God spoke and billions of angels appeared from nothing.

So the truth that all of us this morning need to hold onto is the power of our God.

Today, tomorrow, and every tie we face any uncertainty or any fear we need to grasp tightly to this truth: God is greater than anything He created.

Our God is Greater than the Sum of All He Created

First, in your mind add together the vast **Universe** around us, made up of all forms of matter and energy, much of which we can only faintly comprehend. ***God made all of that.***

Then, to that vast and distant Universe, add all of the known forms of physical life you have ever seen, read about, or heard of that live on **Earth**. Our world still has so many plants and animals that are not even fully understood, and more are found each year: the further and closer we look. **God made all of that.**

Then, to all that astronomical universe that overflows with energy and matter of all forms, and geophysical world that teems with life, add the **spiritual world.**

There is as we who trust God's Word know, a whole world that exceeds the physical world, and the physical Universe. The Bible portrays this entire Universe as a tent rolled out in front of God's Throne. But around that Throne are innumerable, uncountable myriads of spiritual creatures that God calls angels. Those angels that God made from nothing, have powers that exceed our comprehension. **God made all of that.**

Angels & Demons

There are the two types of angels revealed by God: the good angels and the rebel angels. So, it is very clear from the divisions of the angels that God doesn't tolerate any rebellion at all.

There are many orders of both good and bad angelic creatures. On the good side there are at least five orders of good, or holy, angels:

1. **Lucifer The Guardian:** there was an anointed/covering cherub (Lucifer's, lit. "light", role before he fell to become Satan) in Ezekiel 28 and Isaiah 14;
2. **The Cherubim:** found around God's Throne and other places (Genesis 4, Ezekiel 1, Revelation);
3. **The Archangels:** (Gabriel and Michael are named);
4. **The Flames/Seraphim:** there are seven angels that seem to always stand like flames of fire around God's Throne (Rev. 1:4; 4:5; 8:2); they are possibly the Seraphim of Isaiah 6:2, 6, that are "burning" ones.
5. **The Angels:** (by the billions it seems), all through the Scriptures.

Now remember again that these:

Angels Created by God Have Power that Exceeds our Comprehension

The power of the good angels is clear, but very little is told us about them. But when we look at the other, or dark side of the angel spectrum, several orders of bad, or unholy angels begin to test the limits of our minds as we see the scope of their powers.

There are possibly seven orders of evil angels:

1. **The Angel of Light:** as the former Lucifer, now as Satan is called in 2 Cor. 11:14, he is also called the ruler of this world (John 12:31), as the fallen formerly highest and most powerful of all the angels (Genesis 3, Isaiah 14, Ezekiel 28).
2. **The Destroyer:** this is a specific, named angel that is also referred to as the one sent from the Lord that brings death. “The **destroyer** was the same angel who had slain the firstborn of the Egyptians before Israel left Egypt (Ex. 12:23), who would kill 70,000 men because of David’s census (2 Sam. 24:15–16), and who, in response to the prayer of Isaiah and Hezekiah, would destroy the entire Assyrian army that was besieging Jerusalem (2 Chron. 32:21).²” This is probably the angel we see released again in Revelation 9.
3. **The Horrible Monsters under The Destroyer—Abaddon:** these are the horrific creatures in the Abyss, awaiting their deployment into warfare during the Tribulation. Rev. 9:1-11 contains a chilling description of them.
4. **The Doomed Angels:** these are described as evil angels chained by God, and imprisoned in the place called Tartarus (“prison” 1 Peter 3:19; “Tartarus” in 2 Peter 2:4), awaiting final judgment (also Jude 1:6-7).
5. **The Nation Princes:** these are like the Prince of Persia, and the Prince of Greece that Daniel learned about in Daniel 10:13-20
6. **The Others:** Paul describes what may be various other demonic orders of fallen angels, in Ephesians 6:12 (NKJV), where they are called: “principalities, powers, the rulers of the darkness of this age, spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places.”
7. **The Demons:** or also called “fallen” angels who seem to be the bulk of the 1/3 of the heavenly hosts who rebelled with Satan

² Quoted directly from: MacArthur, J. (1996). *1 Corinthians 10:10*. Chicago: Moody Press.

(Rev. 12:4). We find demons everywhere: from the lying spirit that got Ahab to go into battle and be killed, to the constant demon pests Christ deals with in the Gospels.

Note Just the Power of the Destroyer

Just one angel, under God's direct control, was able to kill every first born of Egyptians and their animals, in Egypt, on a single night in **Exodus 12:23** (the angel is differentiated from God, and named the destroyer).

Exodus 12:23 (NKJV) For the Lord will pass through to strike the Egyptians; and when He sees the blood on the lintel and on the two doorposts, the Lord will pass over the door and not allow the destroyer to come into your houses to strike *you*.

This angel is so powerful, God keeps him locked up in the "bottomless pit" of Revelation 9, and lets him loose only for tasks like the death of the first born, and the slaying of 70,000 Israelites at David's census (**2 Samuel 24:15-17**).

Paul refers to this angel as the "destroyer" in **1 Corinthians 10:10**; and the writer of Hebrews does so also in Hebrews 11:28.

1 Corinthians 10:10 (ESV) nor grumble, as some of them did and were destroyed by the Destroyer.

Finally, John explains in **Revelation 9:11** that this angel's name is actually Destroyer (in Hebrew: Abaddon; and in Greek: Apollyon).

Revelation 9:11 (NIV) They had as king over them the angel of the Abyss, whose name in Hebrew is Abaddon and in Greek is Apollyon (that is, Destroyer).

To know during one night, under darkness, in an ancient non-electronic world of 3,500 years ago who and which was first born among humans and animals is impossible to know in human terms. The Destroyer did.

Then to locate only the first born living within the Land of Egypt, not standing behind blood marked doorposts, in the darkness, and then to kill only them on the spot, without collateral civilian casualties is absolutely humanly impossible.

To do anything like this would have taken an army of night vision equipped commandoes, a fleet of helicopters, plus jeeps, and other transportation logistics, plus constant real time access to a biometric and geographic database no one presently possesses even today.

The Big Picture: God is Absolutely Powerful.

We can make some personal application: fear not but resist the powers of darkness.

The battle is already won. Christ has triumphed.

We are more than conquerors through Christ.

The sword of God's Spirit is the Word. We need to believe it, memorize it, have it ready, and use it by quoting the truth we know when we are tempted, fearful, discouraged, and weary.

Paul said: Be strong in the Lord, depend on the power of His might; but always be sure you are wearing the armor He left for us to use (Ephesians 6:10-17)!

Ephesians 6:10-17 (NKJV) Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might. 11 Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. 12 For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places. 13 Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. 14 Stand therefore, having girded your waist with truth, having put on the breastplate of righteousness, 15 and having shod your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace; 16 above all, taking the shield of faith with which you will be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one. 17 And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God;

So, angels are real, demons are horribly evil, but God has given us:

Chapter 19

Angels

What are angels? Why did God create them?

EXPLANATION AND SCRIPTURAL BASIS

A. What Are Angels?

We may define angels as follows: *Angels are created, spiritual beings with moral judgment and high intelligence, but without physical bodies.*

1. Created Spiritual Beings. Angels have not always existed; they are part of the universe that God created. In a passage that refers to angels as the “host” of heaven (or “armies of heaven”), Ezra says, “You are the LORD, you alone; you have made heaven, the heaven of heavens, *with all their host* . . . and the host of heaven worships you” (Neh. 9:6; cf. Ps. 148:2, 5). Paul tells us that God created all things “visible and invisible” through Christ and for him, and then specifically includes the angelic world with the phrase “whether thrones or dominions or principalities or authorities” (Col. 1:16).

That angels exercise moral judgement is seen in the fact that some of them sinned and fell from their positions (2 Peter 2:4; Jude 6; see chapter 20). Their high intelligence is seen throughout Scripture as they speak to people (Matt. 28:5; Acts 12:6–11; et al.) and sing praise to God (Rev. 4:11; 5:11).

Since angels are “spirits” (Heb. 1:14) or spiritual creatures, they do not ordinarily have physical bodies (Luke 24:39). Therefore they cannot usually be seen by us unless God gives us a special ability to see them (Num. 22:31; 2 Kings 6:17; Luke 2:13). In their ordinary activities of guarding and protecting us (Ps. 34:7; 91:11; Heb. 1:14), and joining with us in worship to God (Heb. 12:22), they are invisible. However, from time to time angels took on a bodily form to appear to various people in Scripture (Matt. 28:5; Heb. 13:2).

2. Other Names for Angels. Scripture sometimes uses other terms for angels, such as “sons of God” (Job 1:6; 2:1), “holy ones” (Ps. 89:5, 7), “spirits” (Heb. 1:14), “watchers” (Dan. 4:13, 17, 23), “thrones,” “dominions,” “principalities,” and “authorities” (Col. 1:16).

p 398

3. Other Kinds of Heavenly Beings. There are three other specific types of heavenly beings named in Scripture. Whether we think of these as special types of “angels” (in a broad sense of the term), or whether we think of them as heavenly beings distinct from angels, they are nonetheless created spiritual beings who serve and worship God.

a. The “Cherubim”¹ The cherubim were given the task of guarding the entrance to the Garden of Eden (Gen. 3:24), and God himself is frequently said to be enthroned on the cherubim or to travel with the cherubim as his chariot (Ps. 18:10; Ezek. 10:1–22). Over

¹ In Hebrew, the word כְּרֻבִים, H4131, is singular, while the plural form is כְּרֻבִים.

the ark of the covenant in the Old Testament were two golden figures of cherubim with their wings stretched out above the ark, and it was there that God promised to come to dwell among his people: “There I will meet with you, and from above the mercy seat, from between the two cherubim that are upon the ark of testimony, I will speak with you of all that I will give you in commandment for the people of Israel” (Ex. 25:22; cf. vv. 18–21).

b. The “Seraphim”² Another group of heavenly beings, the seraphim, are mentioned only in Isaiah 6:2–7, where they continually worship the LORD and call to one another, “Holy, holy, holy is the LORD of hosts; the whole earth is full of his glory” (Isa. 6:3).

c. The Living Creatures: Both Ezekiel and Revelation tell us of yet other kinds of heavenly beings known as “living creatures” around God’s throne (Ezek. 1:5–14; Rev. 4:6–8).³ With their appearances like a lion, an ox, a man, and an eagle, they are the mightiest representatives of various parts of God’s entire creation (wild beasts, domesticated animals, human beings, and birds), and they 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!” ’ (Rev. 4:8)

4. Rank and Order Among the Angels. Scripture indicates that there is rank and order among the angels. One angel, Michael, is called an “archangel” in Jude 9, a title that indicates rule or authority over other angels. He is called “one of the chief princes” in Daniel 10:13. Michael also appears to be a leader in the angelic army: “Now war arose in heaven, Michael and his angels fighting against the dragon; and the dragon and his angels fought, but they were defeated” (Rev. 12:7–8). And Paul tells us that the Lord will return from heaven “with the archangel’s call” (1 Thess. 4:16). Whether this refers to Michael as the only archangel, or whether there are other archangels, Scripture does not tell us.

5. Names of Specific Angels. Only two angels are specifically named in Scripture.⁴ Michael is mentioned in Jude 9 and Revelation 12:7–8 as well as in [p 399](#) Daniel 10:13, 21, where he is called “Michael, one of the chief princes” (v. 13). The angel Gabriel is mentioned in Daniel 8:16 and 9:21 as a messenger who comes from God to speak to Daniel. Gabriel is also identified as God’s messenger to Zechariah and Mary in Luke 1: the angel answers 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).

cf cf.—compare

² The Hebrew word שָׁרָף, H8597, is singular, while שָׁרָפִים is the plural form.

³ The descriptions differ somewhat between Ezekiel and Revelation but also have many similarities. It is difficult to tell whether these are different groups of creatures or whether those in Revelation have been transformed from the form they took in Ezekiel’s vision.

⁴ I have not counted Satan here, who is a fallen angel, and who is sometimes called by other names as well. (See chapter 20, on Satan and demons.)

6. Only One Place at One Time. Scripture frequently represents angels as traveling from one place to another, as in the verse mentioned above where Gabriel “was sent from God to a city of Galilee named Nazareth” (Luke 1:26). This 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. (Dan. 10:12–14)

The idea that an angel can be in only one place at one time is consistent with the fact that angels are created beings. Unlike God, who is omnipresent, they are finite creatures and therefore limited to being in one place at one time, as is everything else that God has created.⁵

7. How Many Angels Are There? Though Scripture does not give us a figure for the number of angels God created, it is apparently a very great number. We read that God on Mount Sinai “came from the *ten thousands of holy ones* with flaming fire at his right hand” (Deut. 33:2). We also learn that, “the chariots of God are tens of thousands and thousands of thousands” (Ps. 68:17 NIV). When we come to worship we come into the presence of “*innumerable* angels” (Heb. 12:22).⁶ Their number is even more strikingly emphasized in Revelation 5:11, where 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.” This expression indicates an amazingly large number (from a human standpoint)—an innumerable assembly of angelic beings praising God.

8. Do People Have Individual Guardian Angels? Scripture clearly tells us that God sends angels for our protection: “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” (Ps. 91:11–12). But some people have gone beyond this idea of general protection and wondered if God gives a specific “guardian p 400 angel” for each individual in the world, or at least for each Christian. Support for this idea has been found in Jesus’ words about little children, “in heaven *their angels* always behold the face of my Father who is in heaven” (Matt. 18:10). However, our Lord may simply be saying that angels who are assigned the task of protecting little children have ready access to God’s presence. (To use an athletic analogy, the angels may be playing “zone” rather than “man-on-man”

⁵ Nevertheless, it seems that a very large number of angels can be in one place at the same time, at least if the example of evil angels or demons is a good indication of this fact. When Jesus asked the demonic forces in the Gadarene demoniac, “What is your name?” he said, “Legion”; for “many demons had entered him” (Luke 8:30). Even if we do not understand this literally to mean a number equal to a legion of the Roman army (3,000–6,000 men), and even if we allow that since Satan is the father of lies, the demons in the man could be greatly exaggerating, Luke still says that “many demons had entered him.”

⁶ The Greek term μυριάς (G3689, “myriad”) is an expression referring to “a very large number, not exactly defined” (BAGD, p. 529).

defense.)⁷ When the disciples in Acts 12:15 say that Peter's "angel" must be knocking at the door, this does not necessarily imply belief in an individual guardian angel. It could be that an angel was guarding or caring for Peter just at that time. There seems to be, therefore, no convincing support for the idea of individual "guardian angels" in the text of Scripture.

9. Angels Do Not Marry. Jesus taught that in the resurrection people "neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are like angels in heaven" (Matt. 22:30; cf. Luke 20:34–36). This would suggest that angels do not have the kind of family relationships that exist among human beings. Scripture is otherwise silent on this point, so it is wise not to attempt to engage in speculation.⁸

⁷ Another possibility is that "angel" in Matt. 18:10 and in Acts 12:15 (where the disciples think that Peter's "angel" is knocking at the gate) means not an angelic being but the "spirit" of the person who has died: for a defense of this view see B.B. Warfield, "The Angels of Christ's "Little Ones," ' in *Selected Shorter Writings* ed. John E. Meeter (Nutley, N.J.: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1970), 1:253–66; also D.A. Carson, "Matthew," *EBC* 8:400–401.

The problem with this interpretation is that not one clear example has been found where the word *angel* (Gk. ἀνῆρ, G467) means "spirit of a person who has died." Warfield (pp. 265–66), followed by Carson, quotes two supposed examples from extrabiblical Jewish literature, 1 Enoch 51:4 and 2 Baruch 51:5, 12. But these texts are not convincing: 1 Enoch 51:4 simply says, "And the faces of [all] the angels in heaven shall be lighted up with joy" (R.H. Charles, *The Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha of the Old Testament* 2 vols. [Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1913], 2:219), but does not say that people will become angels. 2 Baruch 51:5 states that the righteous will be transformed "into the splendor of angels" (Charles, 2:508), but this simply means that they will have brightness like the angels, not that they will become angels.

In two related passages, 2 Baruch 51:12 states that the righteous will have excellency "surpassing that in the angels," and 2 Baruch 51:10 says that "they shall be made like unto the angels" (Charles, 2:509), but these texts do not say that people will become angels, either. Moreover, since no extant Greek text is available for any of these three passages (1 Enoch is an Ethiopic text with some Greek fragments and 2 Baruch is a Syriac text), they are not useful for determining the meaning of the Greek word ἀνῆρ.

Warfield also cites *Acts of Paul and Thecla* ed. Tischendorf, p. 42, para. 5, ad finem, as saying, "Blessed are they that fear God, for they shall become angels of God," but the text dates from the late second century A.D. (*ODCC* p. 1049) and is an unreliable source of information about what the early church believed or what the New Testament teaches.

⁸ We should note that this statement of Jesus is given in answer to the Sadducees' question about a woman who had been married seven times, and that Jesus said that their question showed lack of knowledge both of Scripture and of "the power of God" (Matt. 22:29). Jesus' answer, therefore, should comfort us and not trouble us: we should contemplate heaven not with sorrow at the anticipation of diminished interpersonal relationships, but with joy at the prospect of enriched

10. The Power of Angels. Angels apparently have very great power. They are called “you mighty ones who do his word” (Ps. 103:20) and “powers” (cf. Eph. 1:21) and “dominions” and “authorities” (Col. 1:16). Angels are seemingly “greater in might and power” than rebellious human beings (2 Peter 2:11; cf. Matt. 28:2). At least for the time of their earthly existence, human beings are ^{p 401} made “lower than the angels” (Heb. 2:7). Though the power of angels is great, it is certainly not infinite, but it is used to battle against the evil demonic powers under the control of Satan (Dan. 10:13; Rev. 12:7–8; 20:1–3).⁹ Nonetheless, when the Lord returns, we will be raised to a position higher than that of angels (1 Cor. 6:3; see section C.1, below).

11. Who Is the Angel of the Lord? Several passages of Scripture, especially in the Old Testament, speak of the angel of the Lord in a way that suggests that he is God himself taking on a human form to appear briefly to various people in the Old Testament.

In some passages “*the* angel of the LORD” (not “*an* angel of the LORD”) is spoken of as the Lord himself. So “the angel of the LORD” who found Hagar in the wilderness promises her, “I will so greatly multiply your descendants that they cannot be numbered for multitude” (Gen. 16:10), and Hagar responds by calling “the name of *the LORD who spoke to her* “You are a God of seeing” ’ (Gen. 16:13). Similarly, when Abraham is about to sacrifice his son Isaac, “the angel of the LORD” calls to him from heaven and says, “Now I know that you fear God, seeing you have not withheld your son, your only son, *from me*” (Gen. 22:12). When “the angel of God” appeared to Jacob in a dream, he said, “I am the God of Bethel, where you anointed a pillar and made a vow to me” (Gen. 31:11, 13). Again, when “the angel of the LORD” appeared to Moses in a flame of fire out of the midst of a bush, he then said, “*I am the God of your father* the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob” (Ex. 3:2, 6). These are clear instances of the angel of the Lord or the angel of God appearing as God himself, perhaps more specifically as God the Son taking on a human body for a short time in order to appear to human beings.

At other times the angel of the Lord seems to be distinguished from God (see 2 Sam. 24:16; Ps. 34:7; Zech. 1:11–13), and passages that mention “*an* angel of the Lord” (e.g., Luke 1:11) usually indicate an angel sent by God.

B. When Were Angels Created?

All the angels must have been created before the seventh day of creation, for we read, “Thus the heavens and the earth were finished, and all the host of them” (Gen. 2:1, understanding “host” to be the heavenly creatures that inhabit God’s universe). Even more explicit than this is the statement, “In six days the LORD made heaven and earth, the sea, *and all that is in them* and rested the seventh day” (Ex. 20:11). Therefore all the angels were created at least by the sixth day of creation.

relationships. (See chapter 20, pp. 413–14, for a discussion of the “sons of God” in Gen. 6:2, 4.)

⁹ Whether the angels who sinned lost some of their power when they rebelled against God and became demons, or whether their power is still the same as it was when they were angels, Scripture does not tell us.

But can we be any more specific? There may be a hint at the creation of angelic beings on the first day of creation when we read that “in the beginning God created the heavens and the earth” (Gen. 1:1), and then immediately after we read that “the *earth* was without form and void” (Gen. 1:2), but with no mention of the heavens in this second verse. This may suggest that the uninhabitable state of [p 402](#) the earth is contrasted with the heavens where, perhaps, God had already created angelic beings and assigned them various roles and orders. This idea is made more plausible when we read that “the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy” at the time when God laid the “cornerstone” of the earth and sunk its “bases” in the process of forming or founding it (Job 38:6–7). If the angels (“the sons of God”) shouted for joy when God was making the earth inhabitable, this could imply that God created the angelic beings early on the first day.

However, since we have only hints in Scripture, we must remain content with the fact that God has not given us much information about the time of the creation of the angels. Further speculation, apart from clear scriptural data, would seem to be useless. “The secret things belong to the LORD our God; but the things that are revealed belong to us and to our children for ever, that we may do all the words of this law” (Deut. 29:29).

Some time before Satan tempted Eve in the garden (Gen. 3:1), a number of angels sinned and rebelled against God (2 Peter 2:4; Jude 6). This event occurred apparently after the sixth day of creation when “God saw everything that he had made, and behold, it was very good” (Gen. 1:31), but beyond this, Scripture gives us no further information.

C. The Place of Angels in God’s Purpose

1. Angels Show the Greatness of God’s Love and Plan for Us. Human beings and angels (using the term broadly) are the only moral, highly intelligent creatures that God has made. Therefore we can understand much about God’s plan and love for us when we compare ourselves with angels.

The first distinction to be noted is that angels are never said to be made “in the image of God,” while human beings are several times said to be in God’s image (Gen. 1:26–27; 9:6). Since being in the image of God means to be like God,¹⁰ it seems fair to conclude that we are more like God even than the angels are.

This is supported by the fact that God will someday give us authority over angels, to judge them: “Do you not know that *we are to judge angels?*” (1 Cor. 6:3). Though we are “for a little while lower than the angels” (Heb. 2:7), when our salvation is complete we will be exalted above angels and rule over them. In fact, even now, angels already serve us: “Are they not all ministering spirits sent forth *to serve* for the sake of those who are to obtain salvation?” (Heb. 1:14).

The ability of human beings to bear children like themselves (Adam “became the father of a son in his own likeness, after his image,” Gen. 5:3) is another element of our superiority to angels, who apparently cannot bear children (cf. Matt. 22:30; Luke 20:34–36).

Angels also demonstrate the greatness of God’s love for us in that, though many

¹⁰ See chapter 21, pp. 442–44.
cf cf.—compare

angels sinned, none were saved. Peter tells us that “*God did not spare the angels when they sinned* but cast them into hell and committed them to pits of nether gloom to be kept until the judgment” (2 Peter 2:4). Jude says that “the angels that did not keep their own position but left their proper dwelling have been kept by him in eternal chains in the nether gloom until the judgment of the great day” p 403 (Jude 6). And we read in Hebrews, “For surely it is not with angels that he is concerned but with the descendants of Abraham” (Heb. 2:16).

We see, therefore, that God created two groups of intelligent, moral creatures. Among the angels, many sinned, but God decided to redeem none of them. This was perfectly just for God to do, and no angel can ever complain that he has been treated unfairly by God.

Now among the other group of moral creatures, human beings, we also find that a large number (indeed, all) have sinned and turned away from God. As with the angels that sinned: God could have let all of us go on our self-chosen path toward eternal condemnation. Had God decided to save no one out of the entire sinful human race, he would be perfectly just to do so, and no one could complain of unfairness on his part.

But God decided to do much more than merely meet the demands of justice. He decided to save some sinful human beings. If he had decided to save only five human beings out of the entire human race, that would have been much more than justice: it would have been a great demonstration of mercy and grace. If he had decided to save only one hundred out of the whole human race, it would have been an amazing demonstration of mercy and love. But God in fact has chosen to do much more than that. He has decided to redeem out of sinful mankind a great multitude, whom no man can number, “from every tribe and tongue and people and nation” (Rev. 5:9). This is incalculable mercy and love, far beyond our comprehension. It is all undeserved favor: it is all of grace. The striking contrast with the fate of angels brings this truth home to us.

The fact that we have been saved from a life of rebellion against God means that we are able to sing songs that angels will never be able to sing for all eternity.

Redeemed—how I love to proclaim it!
Redeemed by the blood of the lamb;
Redeemed through his infinite mercy—
His child, and forever, I am.

This song, and all the great songs proclaiming our redemption in Christ, are ours alone to sing. Unfallen angels see us sing these songs and they rejoice (Luke 15:10), but they will never be able to make them their own.

2. Angels Remind Us That the Unseen World Is Real. Just as the Sadducees in Jesus’ day said that “there is no resurrection, nor angel, nor spirit” (Acts 23:8), so many in our day deny the reality of anything they cannot see. But the biblical teaching on the existence of angels is a constant reminder to us that there is an unseen world that is very real. It was only when the Lord opened the eyes of Elisha’s servant to the reality of this invisible world that the servant saw that “the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire round about Elisha” (2 Kings 6:17; this was a great angelic army sent to Dothan to protect Elisha from the Syrians). The psalmist, too, shows an awareness of the unseen world when he encourages the angels, “Praise him, all his angels, praise him, all his host!” (Ps. 148:2). The author of Hebrews reminds us that when we worship we come

into the heavenly Jerusalem to gather with “innumerable angels in festal gathering” (Heb. 12:22), whom we do not see, but whose presence should fill us with both awe and joy. An unbelieving world may dismiss talk of angels as mere superstition, but Scripture offers it as insight into the state of affairs as they really are.

3. Angels Are Examples for Us. In both their obedience and their worship angels provide helpful examples for us to imitate. Jesus teaches us to pray, “Your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven” (Matt. 6:10). In heaven God’s will is done by angels, immediately, joyfully, and without question. We are to pray daily that our obedience and the obedience of others would be like that of the angels in heaven. Their delight is to be God’s humble servants, each faithfully and joyfully performing their assigned tasks, whether great or small. Our desire and prayer should be that we ourselves and all others on earth would do the same.

Angels also serve as our examples in their worship of God. The seraphim before God’s throne see God in his holiness and continue to cry out, “Holy, holy, holy is the LORD of hosts; the whole earth is full of his glory” (Isa. 6:3). And John sees around God’s throne a great angelic army, “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!” ’ (Rev. 5:11–12). As angels find it their highest joy to praise God continuously, should we not also delight each day to sing God’s praise, counting this as the highest and most worthy use of our time and our greatest joy?

4. Angels Carry Out Some of God’s Plans. Scripture sees angels as God’s servants who carry out some of his plans in the earth. They 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 Sam. 24:16–17), smiting the leaders of the Assyrian army (2 Chron. 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 (Rev. 16:1). When Christ returns, angels will come with him as a great army accompanying their King and Lord (Matt. 16:27; Luke 9:26; 2 Thess. 1:7).

Angels also patrol the earth as God’s representatives (Zech. 1:10–11) and carry out war against demonic forces (Dan. 10:13; Rev. 12:7–8). John in his vision saw an angel coming down from heaven, and he records that the 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 ...” (Rev. 20:1–3). When Christ returns, an archangel will proclaim his coming (1 Thess. 4:16; cf. Rev. 18:1–2, 21; 19:17–18; et al.).

5. Angels Directly Glorify God. Angels also serve another function: they minister directly to God by glorifying him. Thus, in addition to human beings, there are other intelligent, moral creatures who glorify God in the universe.

Angels glorify God for who he is in himself, for his excellence.

Bless the LORD, O you his angels,
you mighty ones who do his word,

hearkening to the voice of his word! (Ps. 103:20; cf. 148:2)

p 405 The seraphim continually praise God for his holiness (Isa. 6:2–3), as do the four living creatures (Rev. 4:8).

Angels also glorify God for his great plan of salvation as they see it 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; cf. Heb. 1:6). Jesus tells us, “There is joy before the angels of God over one sinner who repents” (Luke 15:10), indicating that angels rejoice every time someone turns from his or her sins and trusts in Christ as Savior.

When Paul proclaims the gospel so that people from diverse racial backgrounds, both Jews and Greeks, are brought into the church, he sees God’s wise plan for the church as being displayed before the angels (and demons), for he says that he was called to preach to the Gentiles “that through the church the manifold wisdom of God might now be *made known to the principalities and powers in the heavenly places*” (Eph. 3:10). And 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 individual believers each day.¹¹ Paul also notes that Christ was “seen by angels” (1 Tim. 3:16), suggesting that they glorified God for Christ’s life of obedience. Moreover, the fact that women were to have clothing that appropriately signaled that they were women, “because of the angels” (1 Cor. 11:10), when the church assembled for worship, indicates that angels witness the lives of Christians and glorify God for our worship and obedience. Indeed, Paul reminds Timothy, when he wants to emphasize the seriousness of a command, 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 favor, doing nothing from partiality” (1 Tim. 5:21; cf. 1 Cor. 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.

D. Our Relationship to Angels

1. We Should Be Aware of Angels in Our Daily Lives. Scripture makes it clear that God wants us to be aware of the existence of angels and of the nature of their activity. We should not therefore assume that its teaching about angels has nothing whatsoever to do with our lives today. Rather, there are several ways in which our Christian lives will be enriched by an awareness of the existence and ministry of angels in the world even today.

When we come before God in worship, we are joining not only with the great

cf cf.—compare

cf cf.—compare

¹¹ The present tense verb ἐπιθυμοῦσιν (from ἐπιθυμέω, G2121) “long,” gives the sense “are continually longing, even at the present time” to look into these things. This longing includes a holy curiosity to watch and delight in the glories of Christ’s kingdom as they find ever fuller realization in the lives of individual Christians throughout the history of the church. (See discussion in Wayne Grudem, *1 Peter* p. 73.)

cf cf.—compare

company of believers who have died and come into God's presence in heaven, "the spirits of just men made perfect," but also with a great throng of angels, "innumerable angels in festal gathering" (Heb. 12:22–23). Though we do not ordinarily see or hear evidence of this heavenly worship, it certainly enriches our sense of reverence and joy in God's presence if we appreciate the fact that angels join us in the worship of God.

Moreover, we should be aware that angels are watching our obedience or p 406 disobedience to God through the day. Even if we think our sins are done in secret and bring grief to no one else, we should be sobered by the thought that perhaps even hundreds of angels witness our disobedience and are grieved.¹² On the other hand, when we are discouraged and think that our faithful obedience to God is witnessed by no one and is an encouragement to no one, we can be comforted by the realization that perhaps hundreds of angels witness our lonely struggle, daily "longing to look" at the way Christ's great salvation finds expression in our lives.

As if to make the reality of angelic observation of our service to God more vivid, the author of Hebrews suggests that angels can sometimes take human form, apparently to make "inspection visits," something like the newspaper's restaurant critic who disguises himself and visits a new restaurant. We read, "Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for thereby some have entertained angels unawares" (Heb. 13:2; cf. Gen. 18:2–5; 19:1–3). This should make us eager to minister to the needs of others whom we do not know, all the while wondering if someday we will reach heaven and meet the angel whom we helped when he appeared temporarily as a human being in distress here on earth.

When we are suddenly delivered from a danger or distress, we might suspect that angels have been sent by God to help us, and we should be thankful. An angel shut the mouths of the lions so they would not hurt Daniel (Dan. 6:22), delivered the apostles from prison (Acts 5:19–20), later delivered Peter from prison (Acts 12:7–11), and ministered to Jesus in the wilderness at a time of great weakness, immediately after his temptations had ended (Matt. 4:11).¹³

When a car suddenly swerves from hitting us, when we suddenly find footing to keep from being swept along in a raging river, when we walk unscathed in a dangerous neighborhood, should we not suspect that God has sent his angels to protect us? Does not Scripture promise, "For 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" (Ps. 91:11–12)? Should we not therefore thank God for sending angels to protect us at such times? It seems right that we should do so.

2. Cautions Regarding Our Relationship to Angels.

¹² This is not to deny that the primary deterrent against sinning must be fear of displeasing God himself; it is just to say that as the presence of other human beings serves as an additional deterrent, so the knowledge of the presence of angels should also serve as a deterrent to us.

cf. cf.—compare

¹³ Note also the report in Luke 22:43 that when Jesus was praying in the Garden of Gethsemane, "there appeared to him an angel from heaven, strengthening him." This text has substantial ancient attestation.

a. Beware of Receiving False Doctrine From Angels: The Bible warns against receiving false doctrine from supposed angels: “But even if we, or an angel from heaven, should preach to you a gospel contrary to that which we preached to you, let him be accursed” (Gal. 1:8). Paul makes this warning because he knows that there is a possibility of deception. He says, “Even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light” (2 Cor. 11:14). Similarly, the lying prophet who deceived the man of God in 1 Kings 13 claimed, “*An angel spoke to me* by the word of the LORD, saying, “Bring him back with you into your house that he may eat bread and drink water” ’ (1 Kings 13:18). Yet the text of Scripture immediately adds in the same verse, “But he lied to him.”

p 407 These are all instances of *false* doctrine or guidance being conveyed by angels. It is interesting that these examples show the clear possibility of satanic deception tempting us to disobey the clear teachings of Scripture or the clear commands of God (cf. 1 Kings 13:9). These warnings should keep any Christians from being fooled by the claims of Mormons, for example, that an angel (Moroni) spoke to Joseph Smith and revealed to him the basis of the Mormon religion. Such “revelation” is contrary to the teachings of Scripture at many points (with respect to such doctrines as the Trinity, the person of Christ, justification by faith alone, and many others), and Christians should be warned against accepting these claims.¹⁴ The closing of the canon of Scripture (see chapter 3) should also warn us that no further revelation of doctrine is to be given by God today, and any claims to have received additional revelation of doctrine from angels today should be immediately rejected as false.

b. Do Not Worship Angels, Pray to Them, or Seek Them: “Worship of angels” (Col. 2:18) was one of the false doctrines being taught at Colossae. Moreover, an angel speaking to John in the book of Revelation 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” (Rev. 19:10).

Nor should we pray to angels. We are to pray only to God, who alone is omnipotent and thus able to answer prayer and who alone is omniscient and therefore able to hear the prayers of all his people at once. By virtue of omnipotence and omniscience, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit are also worthy of being prayed to, but this is not true of any other being. 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 Tim. 2:5). If we were to pray to angels, it would be implicitly attributing to them a status equal to God, which we must not do. There is no example in Scripture of anyone praying to any specific angel or asking angels for help.

Moreover, Scripture gives us no warrant to seek for appearances of angels to us. They manifest themselves unsought. To seek such appearances would seem to indicate an unhealthy curiosity or a desire for some kind of spectacular event rather than a love for God and devotion to him and his work. Though angels did appear to people at various

cf cf.—compare

¹⁴ Of course, there were times in Scripture when doctrinal truth came through angels (Luke 1:13–20, 30–37; 2:10–14; Acts 1:11; Heb. 2:2). The warning passages mentioned above forbid receiving doctrine contrary to Scripture from angels.

times in Scripture, the people apparently never sought those appearances. Our role is rather to talk to the Lord, who is himself the commander of all angelic forces. However, it would not seem wrong to ask God to fulfill his promise in Psalm 91:11 to send angels to protect us in times of need.

c. Do Angels Appear to People Today? In the earliest period of the church's history angels were active. An angel told Philip to travel south on a road that goes from Jerusalem to Gaza (Acts 8:26), instructed Cornelius to send a messenger to get Peter to come from Joppa (Acts 10:3–6), urged Peter to get up and walk out of the prison (Acts 12:6–11), and promised Paul that no one on his ship would p 408 be lost and that he himself would stand before Caesar (Acts 27:23–24). Moreover, the author of Hebrews encourages his readers, none of whom are apostles or even first-generation believers associated with the apostles (see Heb. 2:3), that *they* should continue to show hospitality to strangers, apparently with the expectation that they too might sometime entertain angels without realizing it (Heb. 13:2).

There seems, therefore, no compelling reason to rule out the possibility of angelic appearances today. Some would dispute this on the grounds that the sufficiency of Scripture (see chapter 8) and the closing of its canon (see chapter 3) rule out the possibility of angelic manifestations now.¹⁵ They would say that we are not to expect God to communicate to us through angels. However, this conclusion does not follow. Though angels would not add to the doctrinal and moral content of Scripture, God *could* communicate information to us through angels as he also does through prophecy¹⁶ or through ordinary communication from other persons, or through our observation of the world. If God can send another human being to warn us of danger or encourage us when we are downcast, there seems no inherent reason why he could not occasionally send an angel to do this as well.

However, we should use *extreme caution* in receiving guidance from an angel should such an unusual event happen. (It is perhaps noteworthy that very few instances of such events are recorded today, and many of these involve the communication of antiscritptural doctrine, indicating that they are actually demonic appearances.) The fact that demons can appear as angels of light (see 2 Cor. 11:14) should warn us that the appearance of any angel-like creature does not guarantee that this being speaks truthfully: *Scripture* is our guide, and no angelic creature can give authoritative teaching that is contrary to Scripture (see Gal. 1:8).

An angelic appearance today would be unusual. If one should (apparently) occur, we should evaluate it with caution. But there is no convincing reason for saying that such an event absolutely could not happen, particularly in a time of extreme danger or intense conflict with the forces of evil.

QUESTIONS FOR PERSONAL APPLICATION

1. How might this chapter affect how you think about angels from now on? What difference would it make in your attitude in worship if you consciously thought about being in the presence of angels when you were singing praises to God?

¹⁵ See the discussion of the cessation of some spiritual gifts in chapter 52, below.

¹⁶ See chapter 53, pp. 1049–61.

2. Do you think there are angels watching you right now? What attitude or attitudes do you think they have as they watch you? Have you ever experienced a remarkably elevated sense of joy just after praying with someone to receive Christ as personal Savior? Do you think one aspect contributing to that joy might be that angels are also rejoicing with you because a sinner has repented (Luke 15:10)?
3. p 409 Have you had a remarkable rescue from physical or other kinds of danger and wondered if angels were involved in helping you at the time?
4. How can the example of angels who joyfully and faithfully perform their assigned tasks, whether great or small, be of help to you in the responsibilities that you face today, whether at work or at home or in the church?
5. How do you think you will feel when God asks you to judge angels (1 Cor. 6:3)? Explain what that fact tells you about the greatness of your humanity as created in the image of God.

SPECIAL TERMS

angel
 Angel of the Lord
 archangel
 cherubim
 living creatures
 Michael
 principalities and powers
 seraphim
 sons of God
 watchers

BIBLIOGRAPHY

(For an explanation of this bibliography see the note on the bibliography to chapter 1, p. 38. Complete bibliographical data may be found on pp. 1223–29.)

Sections in Evangelical Systematic Theologies

1. Anglican (Episcopalian)
 1882–92 Litton, 125–29
2. Arminian (Wesleyan or Methodist)
 1892–94 Miley, 2:490–96
 1940 Wiley, 1:472–76
 1983 Carter, 2:1047–69
3. Baptist
 1767 Gill, 1:375–84, 434–35
 1887 Boyce, 174–81
 1907 Strong, 443–64
 1917 Mullins, 276–80
 1976–83 Henry, 6:229–50
 1983–85 Erickson, 433–51
4. Dispensational
 1947 Chafer, 2:3–32

- 1949 Thiessen, 133–50
 1986 Ryrie, 121–34
5. Lutheran
 1917–24 Pieper, 1:498–508
 1934 Mueller, 196–202
- p 410 6. Reformed (or Presbyterian)
 1559 Calvin, 1:163–72 (1.14.3–12)
 1724–58 Edwards, 2:604–7, 612–17
 1861 Heppe, 201–19
 1871–73 Hodge, 1:637–43
 1878 Dabney, 264–75
 1938 Berkhof, 141–48
 1962 Buswell, 1:130–34
7. Renewal (or charismatic/Pentecostal)
 1988–92 Williams, 1:169–96

Sections in Representative Roman Catholic Systematic Theologies

1. Roman Catholic: Traditional
 1955 Ott, 114–21
2. Roman Catholic: Post-Vatican II
 1980 McBrien (no explicit treatment)

Other Works

- Bromiley, G.W. “Angel.” In *EDT* pp. 46–47.
- Dickason, C. Fred. *Angels, Elect and Evil*. Chicago: Moody, 1975.
- Graham, Billy. *Angels: God’s Secret Agents*. Revised and expanded edition. Waco, Tex.: Word, 1986.
- Joppie, A.S. *The Ministry of Angels*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 1953.
- McComiskey, T.E. “Angel of the Lord.” In *EDT* pp. 47–48.

SCRIPTURE MEMORY PASSAGE

Revelation 5:11–12: *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!”*

HYMN

“ANGELS FROM THE REALMS OF GLORY”

Angels, from the realms of glory,
 wing your flight o’er all the earth
 Ye who sang creation’s story,

EDT EDT—Evangelical Dictionary of Theology. Walter Elwell, ed. Grand Rapids: Baker, 1984.

EDT EDT—Evangelical Dictionary of Theology. Walter Elwell, ed. Grand Rapids: Baker, 1984.

now proclaim Messiah's birth:
Come and worship, come and worship,
 worship Christ the newborn King.
Shepherds, in the fields abiding,
 watching o'er your flocks by night;
p 411 God with man is now residing,
 yonder shines the infant light:
Come and worship, come and worship,
 worship Christ the newborn King.
Sages, leave your contemplations,
 brighter visions beam afar;
Seek the great desire of nations;
 ye have seen his natal star:
Come and worship, come and worship,
 worship Christ the newborn King.
Saints, before the altar bending,
 watching long in hope and fear,
Suddenly the Lord, descending,
 in his temple shall appear:
Come and worship, come and worship,
 worship Christ the newborn King.
All creation, join in praising
 God the Father, Spirit, Son;
Evermore your voices raising
 to th' eternal Three in One:
Come and worship, come and worship,
 worship Christ the newborn King.
Author: James Montgomery, 1816³

³ Grudem, W. A. (2004). *Systematic theology: an introduction to biblical doctrine* (pp. 397–411). Leicester, England; Grand Rapids, MI: Inter-Varsity Press; Zondervan Pub. House.