

50+ Sunday School Class
All Saints Presbyterian Church
Austin, TX
November 22, 2020

What the Bible Says About ANGELS

Angelic Advent

As we approach the season of Advent, it is important we understand who angels are since they play a prominent role in the Advent and Christmas season. *Angel* is the English translation of the Greek word *angelos*, meaning “messenger,” which describes the role angels often have in Scripture, particularly as the Birth of Christ approaches.

Luke 1.11-19 – Angel Gabriel to Zechariah

And there appeared to [Zechariah] an angel of the Lord standing on the right side of the altar of incense. ¹² And Zechariah was troubled when he saw him, and fear fell upon him. ¹³ But the angel said to him, “Do not be afraid, Zechariah, for your prayer has been heard, and your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you shall call his name John. ... ¹⁶ And he will turn many of the children of Israel to the Lord their God ... to make ready for the Lord a people prepared.” ... ¹⁹ And the angel answered him, “I am **Gabriel**. I stand in the presence of God, and I was sent to speak to you and to bring you this good news.

Luke 1.26-33 – Angel Gabriel to Mary

²⁶ In the sixth month [of her cousin Elizabeth’s pregnancy] the angel **Gabriel** was sent from God to a city of Galilee named Nazareth, ²⁷ to a virgin betrothed^[b] to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. And the virgin’s name was Mary. ²⁸ And he came to her and said, “Greetings, O favored one, the Lord is with you!”^[c] ²⁹ But she was greatly troubled at the saying, and tried to discern what sort of greeting this might be. ³⁰ And the angel said to her, “Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. ³¹ And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus. ³² He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. And the Lord God will give to him the throne of his father David, ³³ and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end.”

Mt 1.18-21 – Angel to Joseph (Dream #1)

When his mother Mary had been betrothed^[i] to Joseph, before they came together she was found to be with child from the Holy Spirit. ¹⁹ And her husband Joseph, being a just man and unwilling to put her to shame, resolved to divorce her quietly. ²⁰ But as he considered these things, behold, an **angel** of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, “Joseph, son of David, do not fear to take Mary as your wife, for that which is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. ²¹ She will bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins.”

Luke 2 – Angels to Shepherds

⁹ And an **angel** of the Lord appeared to [the shepherds], and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were filled with great fear. ¹⁰ And the angel said to them, “Fear not, for behold, I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. ¹¹ For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord. ... ¹³ And suddenly there was with the angel a **multitude of the heavenly host** praising God and saying, ¹⁴ “Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among those with whom he is pleased!”

Mt 2.13 – Angel to Joseph (Dream #2)

¹³ Now when [the wise men] had departed, behold, an **angel** of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream and said, “Rise, take the child and his mother, and flee to Egypt, and remain there until I tell you, for Herod is about to search for the child, to destroy him.”

Angels are Special, Distinct Creatures

The Bible presents angels and humans as the two *distinct* beings whom God created with personal, intelligent, moral agency. Thus, contrary to common belief, humans do *not become* angels upon death. (Regardless, *It’s a Wonderful Life* is one of my favorite films!) Both angels and humans were originally under probation. Unlike humans, some angels endured their testing (**faithful angels**); however, like humans, other angels failed God’s testing and fell into sin (**fallen angels**, i.e., Satan and demons). Although angels and humans share similarities, angels also maintain distinctives.

Angels abound (though it’s unclear in what number), but there’s no indication they multiply

Matt 26.53

Do you think that I cannot appeal to my Father, and he will at once send me more than **twelve legions** of angels? [A Roman legion was 6000 men.]

Rev.5.11

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**, ¹² saying with a loud voice, “Worthy is the Lamb who was slain....”

Faithful Angels do not marry and cannot die

Matt 22.30

[I]n the resurrection [believers] neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are like angels in heaven.

Luke 20.34-36

Jesus said to them, “The sons of this age marry and are given in marriage, ³⁵ but those who are considered worthy to attain to that age and to the resurrection from the dead neither marry nor are given in marriage, ³⁶ for they *cannot die* anymore, because they are *equal to angels* and are sons of God, being sons of the resurrection.

Faithful Angels are confirmed in holiness, immortal glory and dwell in heaven

Mt 18.10

[I]n heaven their angels always see the face of my Father who is in heaven

Mt 22.30

[I]n the resurrection [humans] neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are like angels in heaven

Faithful Angels are “holy” or “elect”

Mt 25.31

When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, then he will sit on his glorious throne

Mk 8.38

...when [the Son of Man] comes in the glory of his Father with the **holy angels**

Lk 9.26

... when [the Son of Man] comes in his glory and the glory of the Father and of the **holy angels**

Acts 10.22

Cornelius, a centurion, an upright and God-fearing man, who is well spoken of by the whole Jewish nation, was directed by a **holy angel** to send for you to come to his house and to hear what you have to say.

1 Tim 5.21

In the presence of God and of Christ Jesus and of the **elect angels** I charge you to keep these rules without prejudging, doing nothing from partiality.

Rev 14.9-10

If anyone worships the beast and its image and receives a mark on his forehead or on his hand, ¹⁰ he also will drink the wine of God's wrath, poured full strength into the cup of his anger, and he will be tormented with fire and sulfur in the presence of the **holy angels** and in the presence of the Lamb.

Faithful Angels worship God continually and are not to be worshipped themselves

Ps 103.20-21

Bless the LORD, O you his angels, you mighty ones who do his word, obeying the voice of his word! ²¹ Bless the LORD, all his hosts, his ministers, who do his will!

Ps 148.2

Praise him, all his angels; praise him, all his hosts!

Rev 19.10

Then I fell down at [the angel's] feet to worship him, but he said to me, "You must not do that! I am a fellow servant with you and your brothers who hold to the testimony of Jesus. Worship God."

God commands Angels from heaven to render service to Christians

Heb 1.14

Are [the angels] not all ministering spirits sent out to serve for the sake of those who are to inherit salvation?

Angels protect believers...

Ps 34.7

The angel of the LORD encamps around those who fear him, and delivers them.

Ps 91.11-12

For he will command his angels concerning you [who have made the Lord your dwelling place] to guard you in all your way. ¹² On their hands they will bear you up, lest you strike your foot against a stone.

...especially little ones

Mt 18.10

See that you do not despise one of these little ones. For I tell you that in heaven their angels always see the face of my Father who is in heaven.

Angels watch Christians and The Church to see Christ's grace triumph in our lives

Lk 15.10

There is joy before the angels of God over one sinner who repents.

Eph 3.10

[T]hrough the church the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly places.

1 Pet 1.12

[The prophets] 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.

Angels don't have bodies and humans don't normally see them, yet they can appear visibly

Gen 18.2-19.22

[Visitors interchangeably called "The Lord," "the men," and later "angels" and "my lords," visit Abraham and his family, foretell of Sarah's pregnancy, and of plans to destroy Sodom and Gomorrah.]

Matthew 28.2-4

And behold, there was a great earthquake, for an angel of the Lord descended from heaven and came and rolled back the stone and sat on it. His appearance was like lightning, and his clothing white as snow. And for fear of him the guards trembled and became like dead men.

John 20.12-13

And [Mary Magdalene] saw two angels in white, sitting where the body of Jesus had lain, one at the head and one at the feet. ¹³ They said to her, "Woman, why are you weeping?"

Acts 12.7-10

[A]n angel of the Lord stood next to [Peter], 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. ⁸ 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." ⁹ 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. ¹⁰ When they had passed the first and the second guard, they came to the iron gate leading into the city. It opened for them of its own accord, and they went out and went along one street, and immediately the angel left him.

Hebrews 13.2

Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for thereby some have entertained angels unawares.

Angels seem to have a special ministry to believers at their death

Lk 16.22

The poor man died and was carried by the angels to Abraham's side.

Many angels can reside in a small area

Luke 8.30

Jesus then asked [the unclean spirit], "What is your name?" And he said, "Legion," for many demons had entered him.

The "Angel of the Lord" or "Angel of God" in the OT sometimes seems to be God acting as his own messenger (the Pre-incarnate Christ), yet other times seems distinct from God

Genesis 16.7-13

The "**angel of the Lord**" finds Hagar, commands her to return to her mistress Sarai and submit to her, promises to multiply her offspring beyond number, and confirms she is pregnant with Ishmael.

Genesis 18.1-33

"**Three wise men**" visit Abraham and "the Lord" prophesies that Sarah will have a son next year, and foretells his plans for Sodom and Gomorrah.

Gen 22.11-18

"The **angel of the Lord**" stops Abraham from slaying Isaac and affirms to Abraham blessing and offspring beyond number

Gen 24.7, 40

Abraham tells Isaac and his servant that the Lord God will send "**his angel**" before them to prosper their way to find Isaac a wife

Gen 31.11-13

“The **angel of God**” told Jacob in a dream to return to his homeland with his blessed livestock
Gen 32.24-30

“**A man**” wrestled with Jacob “all night and blessed him with a new name, Israel, because he had “striven with God” face-to-face and with men and prevailed.

Gen 48.15-16

Israel blesses Joseph and his sons saying, “The God before whom my fathers Abraham and Isaac walked, the God who has been my shepherd all my life long to this day, ¹⁶ **the angel** who has redeemed me from all evil, bless the boys...”

Ex 3.2-6

“[T]he **angel of the LORD** appeared to [Moses] in a flame of fire out of the midst of a bush” and “God called to him out of the bush”

Ex 14.19

“[T]he **angel of God** who was going before the host of Israel moved and went behind them, and the pillar of cloud moved from before them and stood behind them, ²⁰ coming between the host of Egypt and the host of Israel.”

Ex 23.20-23

“Behold, I send **an angel** before you to guard you on the way and to bring you to [the Promised Land] that I have prepared.”

Ex 32.34-33.5

The Lord said to Moses, “go, lead the people to the place about which I have spoken to you; behold, **my angel** shall go before you. ... ² I will send **an angel** before you, and I will drive out the Canaanites, the Amorites, the Hittites, the Perizzites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites.

Numbers 22.22-35

“**The angel of the Lord** ... with a drawn sword in his hand” blocked the way of Balaam’s donkey
Joshua 5.13-15

When Joshua was by Jericho, he lifted up his eyes and looked, and behold, a man was standing before him with his drawn sword in his hand. And Joshua went to him and said to him, “Are you for us, or for our adversaries?” ¹⁴ And he said, “No; but I am **the commander of the army of the LORD...**” And Joshua fell on his face to the earth and worshiped^[a] and said to him, “What does my lord say to his servant?” ¹⁵ And the commander of the LORD’s army said to Joshua, “Take off your sandals from your feet, for the place where you are standing is holy.” And Joshua did so.

Judges 2.1-3

Now **the angel of the LORD** went up from Gilgal to Bochim. And he said, “I brought you up from Egypt and brought you into the land that I swore to give to your fathers. I said, ‘I will never break my covenant with you, ² and you shall make no covenant with the inhabitants of this land; you shall break down their altars.’ But you have not obeyed my voice. ... ³ So now I say, I will not drive them out before you, but they shall become thorns in your sides, and their gods shall be a snare to you.”

Judges 6.11-23

“**The angel of the Lord**” calls Gideon to save Israel from Midian, promises that the Lord will be with him, and then consumes the food offering by fire as a sign of affirmation.

Scripture shows an increase in angelic activity during prominent turning points in redemptive history, such as the Days of the Patriarchs, the Exodus, the Giving of the Law, the Exile & Restoration, and the Incarnation, Birth, Resurrection and Ascension of Christ, and ...

... **Christ’s Return**

Mt 25.31

When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, then he will sit on his glorious throne.

Mk 8.38

[W]hoever is ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him will

the Son of Man also be ashamed when he comes in the glory of his Father with the holy angels.

Types of Angels

Archangel(s) – “chief” – only good

Jude 1.9

But when the *archangel Michael*, contending with the devil, was disputing about the body of Moses, he did not presume to pronounce a blasphemous judgment, but said, “The Lord rebuke you.”

Revelation 12.7-8

Now war arose in heaven, *Michael and his angels* fighting against the dragon. And the dragon and his angels fought back, but he was defeated, and there was no longer any place for them in heaven.

Princes – both good and evil

Daniel 10 recounts a conversation between Daniel and an angel, who has an important message for Daniel but is prevented by the “kings” and “prince” of Persia (v.13, 20) and “prince of Greece” (v.20) from delivering it for three weeks, until Michael, “one of the chief princes” (v.13), “the great prince” (12.1), joins the spiritual battle. (Daniel 10.13 also mentions “*kings of Persia*” as being evil angels, but nowhere does Scripture refer to “kings” as good angels.)

Seraph(im) – only good

Isaiah 6 describes seraphim standing above the Lord, enthroned in the temple in heaven (v1-2).

“Each had six wings: with two he covered his face, and with two he covered his feet, and with two he flew. And one called to another and said: “Holy, holy, holy is the LORD of hosts; the whole earth is full of his glory!” (v3).

Cherub(im) – only good

Ezekiel 1 describes the appearance of four cherubim as generally having “a human likeness” (v5) or form, “each had...four wings” (v6), straight legs with calves’ feet (v7), human hands under each of their four wings (v8), and each having four faces—that of a human, lion, ox and eagle (v10). They “sparkled like burnished bronze” (v7) such that “their appearance was like burning coals of fire” (v13). We first learn of cherubim when God places them with “a flaming sword that turned every way to guard the way to the tree of life” after humanity’s fall (Gen 3.24). In addition to a guarding role, cherubim seem to have a supportive function. For example, Scripture describes God as “enthroned above the cherubim” (2 Kgs 19.15; Is 37.16), or when “He rode on a cherub and flew” (Ps 18.10).

Satan, Fallen Angels and Our Spiritual Battle

Origin

Just as darkness is an absence of light, we know that evil is an absence of good. Because God is good, holy and perfect, he cannot create evil. Nevertheless, we don’t know exactly how Satan and his demons came to be. Scripture seems to imply that they were angels created by God, with the freedom to exercise their own will, which they did so unfaithfully, resulting in their fall and judgment. Isaiah 14.12-14 seems to describe an angel of light (Lucifer) seeking to make himself like God.

Isaiah 14.12-14

“How you are fallen from heaven, O Day Star, son of Dawn! [Lit: *shining one* = *Lucifer*] How you are cut down to the ground, you who laid the nations low! ¹³ You said in your heart, ‘I will ascend

to heaven; above the stars of God I will set my throne on high; I will sit on the mount of assembly in the far reaches of the north; ¹⁴ I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will make myself like the Most High.'

Rev 12.9

And the great dragon was thrown down, that ancient serpent, who is called the devil and Satan, the deceiver of the whole world—he was thrown down to the earth, and his angels were thrown down with him.

Jude 1.6

And the angels who did not stay within their own position of authority, but left their proper dwelling, [God] has kept in eternal chains under gloomy darkness until the judgment of the great day

State of Judgment

John 16.11

[T]he ruler of this world is judged.

2 Peter 2.4

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

James 2.19

You believe that God is one; you do well. Even the demons believe—and shudder!

Mark 3.11

And whenever the unclean spirits saw [Jesus], they fell down before him and cried out, “You are the Son of God.”

Our Spiritual Battle

Ephesians 6.12

We do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places.

1 Peter 5.8

Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour.

2 Corinthians 11.14

Satan disguises himself as an angel of light.

James 4.7

Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.

Matthew 25.41

‘Depart from me, you cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels.

Revelation 12.12

[W]oe to you, O earth and sea, for the devil has come down to you in great wrath, because he knows that his time is short!”

Luke 22.31-32

“Simon, Simon, behold, Satan demanded to have you, that he might sift you like wheat, but I have prayed for you that your faith may not fail.

1 John 4.4

You are from God and have overcome [ungodly spirits], for **he who is in you is greater than he who is in the world.**”

For Discussion

What is your reaction to this study? Have you learned anything new?

What questions does this study raise for you?

How might this information help you in your Christian life?

Do you personally know of anyone who has had an experience with an angel?