

Why Do We Need To Know About Angels?

Series: Why Did God Create Us?

So why should we learn about angels?

What Does The Bible Say?

26 Then God said, “Let us make human beings in our image, to be like us. They will reign over the fish in the sea, the birds in the sky, the livestock, all the wild animals on the earth, and the small animals that scurry along the ground.”

27 So God created human beings in his own image. In the image of God he created them; male and female he created them.

(Genesis 1:26–27 NLT)

God wants the human family to image God in the same way that the heavenly family does.

8 When the cool evening breezes were blowing, the man and his wife heard the Lord God walking about in the garden. So they hid from the Lord God among the trees. 9 Then the Lord God called to the man, “Where are you?” (Genesis 3:8–9)

God wants to live with the human family in the same way that He does with the heavenly family.

35 But someone may ask, “How will the dead be raised? What kind of bodies will they have?”

40 There are also bodies in the heavens and bodies on the earth. The glory of the heavenly bodies is different from the glory of the earthly bodies.

45 The Scriptures tell us, “The first man, Adam, became a living person.” But the last Adam—that is, Christ—is a life-giving Spirit. 46 What comes first is the natural body, then the spiritual body comes later. 47 Adam, the first man, was made from the

dust of the earth, while Christ, the second man, came from heaven. 48 Earthly people are like the earthly man, and heavenly people are like the heavenly man. 49 Just as we are now like the earthly man, we will someday be like the heavenly man. (1 Corinthians 15:35; 40; 45–49 NLT)

God wants the human family to someday have the same bodies as the heavenly family.

What does the heavenly family do?

19 Then Micaiah continued, “Listen to what the Lord says! I saw the Lord sitting on his throne with all the armies of heaven around him, on his right and on his left. 20 And the Lord said, ‘Who can entice Ahab to go into battle against Ramoth-gilead so he can be killed?’“There were many suggestions, 21 and finally a spirit approached the Lord and said, ‘I can do it!’ 22 “ ‘How will you do this?’ the Lord asked.“And the spirit replied, ‘I will go out and inspire all of Ahab’s prophets to speak lies.’“ ‘You

will succeed,' said the Lord. 'Go ahead and do it.' 23 "So you see, the Lord has put a lying spirit in the mouths of all your prophets. For the Lord has pronounced your doom." (1 Kings 22:19–23 NLT)

Some of the heavenly family contribute to the Divine Council decisions.

1 "Comfort, comfort my people," says your God. 2 "Speak tenderly to Jerusalem. Tell her that her sad days are gone and her sins are pardoned. Yes, the Lord has punished her twice over for all her sins." (Isaiah 40:1–2 NLT)

Some of the heavenly family are witnesses to God's decrees.

7 Three months later, on February 15, the Lord sent another message to the prophet Zechariah son of Berekiah and grandson of Iddo. 8 In a vision during the night, I saw a man sitting on a red horse that was standing among some myrtle trees in a small valley. Behind him were riders on red, brown, and white horses.

9 I asked the angel who was talking with me, “My lord, what do these horses mean?” “I will show you,” the angel replied. 10 The rider standing among the myrtle trees then explained, “They are the ones the Lord has sent out to patrol the earth.” (Zechariah 1:7–10)

Some of the heavenly family help God in taking care of the human family.

15 As I, Daniel, was trying to understand the meaning of this vision, someone who looked like a man stood in front of me.

16 And I heard a human voice calling out from the Ulai River, “Gabriel, tell this man the meaning of his vision.” (Daniel 8:15–16 NLT)

Some of the heavenly family explain what God is doing within the human family.

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around him, on his right and on his left. 20 And the Lord said, 'Who can entice Ahab to go into battle against Ramoth-gilead so he can be killed?' 'There were many suggestions, 21 and finally a spirit approached the Lord and said, 'I can do it!' 22 " 'How will you do this?' the Lord asked. 'And the spirit replied, 'I will go out and inspire all of Ahab's prophets to speak lies.' " 'You will succeed,' said the Lord. 'Go ahead and do it.' 23 "So you see, the Lord has put a lying spirit in the mouths of all your prophets. For the Lord has pronounced your doom." (1 Kings 22:19–23 NLT)

Some of the heavenly family execute what God wants done within the human family.

16 "Don't be afraid!" Elisha told him. "For there are more on our side than on theirs!" 17 Then Elisha prayed, "O Lord, open his eyes and let him see!" The Lord opened the young man's eyes, and when he looked up, he saw that the hillside around

Elisha was filled with horses and chariots of fire. (2 Kings 6:16–17 NLT)

Some of the heavenly family protect God's faithful human family.

20 Praise the Lord, you angels, you mighty ones who carry out his plans, listening for each of his commands. 21 Yes, praise the Lord, you armies of angels who serve him and do his will!

22 Praise the Lord, everything he has created, everything in all his kingdom. Let all that I am praise the Lord. (Psalm 103:20–22 NLT)

The heavenly family praises and worships God.

How Can You Obey?

Basically, everything that the heavenly family does, we the human family are also to do!

Additional Notes:

If you would like to use your home to disciple others, check out our training at <https://courses.crosswavesu.com/courses/cross-waves-host-training>. Cross Waves has produce short videos to train you how to use your home to reach others for Christ. So please check it out.

Explore:

This series comes from the book, *What Does God Want?* Michael S. Heiser and Blind Spot Press, 2018.

Explore:

Why should we care about angels? Because angelology helps us think more clearly about familiar points of biblical theology.

God's supernatural family is a theological template for understanding God's relationship to his human family of believers—and our greater importance compared to them.

Learning what the Bible says about angels ultimately is tied to

thinking well about how God thinks about us. What God wants us to know about angels contributes to our eternal perspective.

Several specifics come to mind.

Heiser, M. S. (2018). *Angels: What the Bible Really Says about God's Heavenly Host* (p. xv). Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press.

Explore:

Names for the heavily host:

1. “Spirit” (rûah; plural: rûahôt) 1 Kgs 22:19–23
2. “Heavenly Ones” (šamayim) Psalm 89:5–7
3. “Stars” (kōkeḇîm) Job 38:5–7
4. “Holy Ones” (qedōšîm) Ps 89:5–7
5. “Gods”/“Divine Beings” (ʿelōhîm) Psalm 82:1

Heiser, M. S. (2018). *Angels: What the Bible Really Says about God's Heavenly Host* (p. 13). Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press.

Terms that describe function

1. “Angel” (mal’āk; plural: mal’ākîm) Gen 18:1–8
2. “Minister” (verb: šrt, Piel stem: šērēt) Psalm 103:20
3. “Watcher” (îr; plural: îrîn) Dan 4:13, 17, 23
4. “Host” (šaba’; plural: šeḇa’ôt); “Mighty Ones” (gibborîm, ’abbîrîm) 1 Kings 22:19; Psalm 103:20
5. “Mediator” (mēliš) Job 33:23
6. “cherubim” (kerubîm); “seraphim” (śerāpîm) Isa 6:2

Heiser, M. S. (2018). Angels: What the Bible Really Says about God’s Heavenly Host (p. 17). Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press.

Explore:

Jesus is the Unique Son of God

But why would God create these troops of heavenly messengers when he certainly doesn’t need them? As Calvin says,

“Whenever he pleases, he passes them by, and performs his own work by a single nod.”

So Calvin comes to this conclusion: In creating angels, God must have had our interests in mind. God employs angels simply as “a help to our weakness,” in order to “elevate our hopes or strengthen our confidence.”

Calvin admits that God’s offer of his own personal protection ought to be enough for us. He says it’s “improper” for us “still to look round for help.” He adds, however, that if God in his “infinite goodness and indulgence” chooses to provide angels for our weakness, “it would ill become us to overlook the favor.”

His conclusion reflects the teaching of Hebrews 1:14, a verse we keep coming back to: Angels are “ministering spirits sent to serve those who will inherit salvation.” Angels are here for us.

Angels aren’t named in the creation account in Genesis 1, where the narrative focuses on visible creation. Their omission in that

passage could be another indication that angels are not under human authority. In the climax of creation week, God gave mankind the privilege and responsibility of ruling “over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air, over the livestock, over all the earth, and over all the creatures that move along the ground” (Genesis 1:26). But that list doesn’t include angels. We can herd cattle and cage canaries and grow cantaloupe and cauliflower in our gardens, but we can’t make angels do our laundry or warm up the car.

Jeremiah, D. (1996). What the Bible says about angels: powerful guardians, a mysterious presence, God’s messengers (p. 73).

Sisters, OR: Multnomah Books.

Explore:

The life and the world of angels is as involved and as active and as complex as ours is. They dwell in another dimension, but our

worlds intersect often, and at least some of their business is related to the affairs of this world. Hebrews 1:14 calls them “ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation.”

Martin Luther believed that an angel is a spiritual creature without a body created by God for the service of Christendom and the church. Whether that is really the main function of angels or not, we simply are not told, but it certainly is one of their duties. (The fact that they are organized in a highly structured chain of command may suggest that angelic duties are varied according to rank.)

As ministering spirits who minister to the elect, angels are no doubt active in human affairs, though usually unseen.

Undoubtedly they do many things on our behalf, but nowhere does Scripture encourage us to look further into how this occurs.

We are never encouraged to try to discern the unseen work of

angels in our lives. We're merely reminded to exhibit a Christlike hospitality, because we never know when or in what form an angel may be our guest. Colossians 2:18 warns believers not to become angel-worshippers, and not to develop our doctrine from visions.

Hebrews 1:14 specifically calls the angels "spirits," which implies that they do not have material bodies. Nonetheless, they may appear in visible form when God chooses to let them be manifest. And whenever Scripture describes any such angelic appearance, the angel always appears as a man. Masculine pronouns are invariably used to refer to them. For example, in Genesis 18–19, when angels came to visit Abraham and paid a visit to Sodom, they were fully human in appearance. They sat down with Abraham. They ate with him. They walked with him. They conversed in human language. Every detail of their visible form was in appearance human.

At other times angels appear as men, but with extraordinary, even supernatural, qualities. In Matthew 28:3, for example, the angel who appeared at Jesus' empty tomb was no normal-looking man: "His countenance was like lightning, and his raiment white as snow."

Biblical appearances of angels—unlike those of popular lore—often cause trauma and great fear. When an angel appeared to Mary, from the moment that he greeted her, "she was troubled at his saying, and cast in her mind what manner of salutation this should be" (Luke 1:29). When another angel appeared to the shepherds who attended His birth, "they were sore afraid" (Luke 2:9). When the Roman soldiers guarding Jesus' tomb spotted the angel there, "for fear of him [they] did shake, and became as dead men" (Matt. 28:4).

Whenever angels do appear to people in Scripture, it is in the role of a messenger. In fact, "messenger" is the primary meaning

of the Greek word *angelos*. So the angels provide a sort of heavenly messenger service, and we get glimpses of this throughout Scripture. The angel who appeared to Mary at the Annunciation identified himself: “I am Gabriel, that stand in the presence of God; and am sent to speak unto thee” (Luke 1:19). On this particular occasion, perhaps because of the sacred importance of the message, the highest-ranking archangel from the very presence of God was sent to Mary to deliver the word. Finally, as we have seen, angels are constantly ministering around the throne of God in worship. Worship is plainly one of their chief functions (cf. Isa. 6:3; Rev. 4:6–9; 5:9–12).

MacArthur, J. (1996). *The glory of heaven: the truth about heaven, angels, and eternal life* (pp. 158–160). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books.

Explore:

Some people might criticize you believing in angels or even expressing interest in them. Maybe you've already heard from critics like that. But don't let them worry you. You're in better company than they are.

In the Scriptures — from Genesis to Revelation — the existence of angels is simply assumed. The Bible contains more than three hundred direct references to them.

The same assumption about the reality of angels has always been widespread throughout our civilization. “There is nothing unnatural or contrary to reason” about a belief in angels, wrote J. M. Wilson earlier in this century. “Indeed the warm welcome human nature has always given to this thought is an argument in its favor. Why should there not be such an order of beings...?”

In 1952 the editorial board of the classic series *Great Books of the Western World* included “Angels” as one of the 102 most important topics and ideas that the famous authors of these great

books have discussed down through the ages. Throughout the full length of history, skepticism about angels has been the minority view, though it began to swell when faith in science replaced faith in God.

Those who have doubts might run the risk of suffering the same fate as the Sadducees, the only group of folks identified in the Bible as not believing in angels (Acts 23:8). Such “gross ignorance,” as John Calvin called it, was a point that put even the hypocritical Pharisees ahead of them. The Sadducees disappeared from history without a trace before the first century ended, though in Jesus’ day they were Israel’s most powerful Jews. They controlled both the high priesthood and the Sanhedrin, the Jewish ruling council. They were aristocratic, pragmatic, and arrogant — quite a contrast to the childlike faith that so easily believes in angels.

It's richly satisfying to see in Acts 5 how God chose to thwart the Sadducees in their actions against his apostles. After seeing the apostles heal the sick and powerfully proclaim the gospel, we read in Acts 5:17–18 that “the high priest and all his associates, who were members of the party of the Sadducees, were filled with jealousy. They arrested the apostles and put them in the public jail.”

Now God's chosen method for correcting this injustice is unveiled in verses 19–21:

But during the night an angel of the Lord opened the doors of the jail and brought them out. “Go, stand in the temple courts,” he said, “and tell the people the full message of this new life.” At daybreak they entered the temple courts, as they had been told, and began to teach the people.

The apostles might have held back a few laughs shortly after this episode when they were summoned once more before that no-

such-thing-as-angels crowd. The powerful Sadducees spurned angels, and would drop from history within a generation; the imprisoned apostles simply obeyed God's message delivered by an angel, and they would change history's course forever.

An equally ironic but more poignant picture of the hardened Sadducees comes later in Acts, when Stephen was dragged before the Sadducee-dominated Sanhedrin. Stephen, "a man full of God's grace and power" (6:8), had been falsely accused of blasphemy. At his trial, "all who were sitting in the Sanhedrin looked intently at Stephen, and they saw that his face was like the face of an angel" (6:15). But angelic appearance wasn't enough to prevent the blinded Sadducees from stoning Stephen to death.

Jeremiah, D. (1996). What the Bible says about angels: powerful guardians, a mysterious presence, God's messengers (pp. 29–30). Sisters, OR: Multnomah Books.

Explore:

Scripture indicates that in heaven we will join the angels in worshiping God around His throne. Revelation 4:4 describes the very first scene John witnessed in his vision of heaven: “Round about the throne were four and twenty seats: and upon the seats I saw four and twenty elders sitting, clothed in white raiment; and they had on their heads crowns of gold.” Those elders represent the church. The fact that permanent seats are there for them indicates that the redeemed people of God will perpetually be worshiping there alongside the angels.

John goes on to describe the incredible creatures who worship nonstop around God’s throne, and adds this in verse 8: “They rest not day and night, saying, Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, which was, and is, and is to come.” Never tiring of their ministry, they offer the purest, most perfect worship around

the clock, exactly as Isaiah described it in his vision (cf. Isa. 6:3).

And when those beasts give glory and honour and thanks to him that sat on the throne, who liveth for ever and ever, the four and twenty elders fall down before him that sat on the throne, and worship him that liveth for ever and ever, and cast their crowns before the throne, saying, Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honour and power: for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created.

—Rev. 4:9–11

Revelation 5:8–12 portrays a similar scene, with multiplied thousands of voices singing of the worthiness of God and the Lamb.

That is the song of heaven. I cannot wait to hear it. I cannot wait to sing it with a glorified voice, and be part of the great chorus of the redeemed, with the entire host of heaven joining in.

Instantly, when we hear that sound, all earth's troubles will recede into utter insignificance. All our labors will be over, all our tears will be dried, and there will be nothing left but the sheer bliss of heaven and our perfect enjoyment of God—forever.

MacArthur, J. (1996). *The glory of heaven: the truth about heaven, angels, and eternal life* (pp. 160–161). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books.

Explore:

When did God create angels?

The Lord told Job that angels were already on the scene to celebrate when the earth was created. He asks Job in 38:4, “Where were you when I laid the earth’s foundation?” Job, of course, wasn’t around, so for his benefit God adds a few details of what that ground-breaking was like: It was “while the morning stars sang together and all the angels shouted for joy”

(38:7). Job wasn't there when the earth was formed, but the angels were, and having a good time of it too.

Therefore angels were made apparently before the third day of the creation week, the day when God gathered waters into seas and the dry land appeared (Genesis 1:9–10).

Psalms 104 seems to reflect the same timing for the angels' appearance. It's a psalm praising God's greatness for how he made and sustains all creation. In richly poetic imagery, the opening lines give a broad overview of what God created. The psalm seems to follow the same sequence as in Genesis 1: first of all light, then the heavens and the gathering of heavenly waters, then the land, seas, animals, and man.

Coming along naturally in this procession is verse four which reads, "He makes winds his messengers, flames of fire his servants." These lines often are taken as referring to angels.

That's the way the New Testament writer quotes them in

Hebrews 1:7. And in Psalm 104, this reference to angels comes immediately before the first mention of the earth in verse five: “He set the earth on its foundations.”

Creation scientist Dr. Henry Morris is my good friend and a member of our church, and he believes angels were formed on the second day of creation. He points to Psalm 104 and its implication that angels came as “the next act after the creation of the space-time cosmos and the establishment of God’s light-arrayed throne therein.” Very likely the angels are older than anything in the world as we see it.

Has God created any more angels since then? I have no biblical reason to believe he has. And apparently there’s been no reduction in their number either (except for the dismissal of the fallen angels, which we’ll take up later). Nor has there been any increase, since angels don’t reproduce — according to Jesus’ statement that angels don’t marry (Matthew 22:30, Mark 12:25,

Luke 20:34–36). We have as many angels today as we've ever had.

Jeremiah, D. (1996). What the Bible says about angels: powerful guardians, a mysterious presence, God's messengers (pp. 74–75). Sisters, OR: Multnomah Books.

Question 1 of 5

How would you explain how God inspired the Bible?

Question 2 of 5

What does it mean to image God?

Question 3 of 5

What will our heavenly bodies be like?

Question 4 of 5

How does the heavenly family protect us?

Question 5 of 5

Name some activities that the heavenly family does that we should do as the human family.