

Something About Angels

Lesson 1



Is man indeed the only intelligent being in his universe?

Is life as we know it confined to the earth alone?

On November 16, 1974, the people of the planet Earth sent a purposeful message to interstellar space. Using a giant radio telescope in Puerto Rico, we beamed up a 3-minute message about ourselves to anyone listening in a cluster of stars in the constellation Hercules. We told them all about the solar system we live in, about the population of the world at the time, and about the atomic elements we're made of. We haven't heard back from anyone.



Popular, But Wrong, Ideas About Angels

People have a number of ideas about angels that do not accurately reflect what we see revealed in Scripture. For instance, there is no mention of wings in most appearances of angels in Scripture, while they do occur in some visions—though not with just two (see discussion on page 14). There are other common misconceptions too.

Halos of light

A typical feature of angel costumes in children's Bible plays is a glittery halo—representing a supposed ring of light over the head denoting holiness. This recalls a lot of medieval art, where saintly Bible characters are depicted with a halo or glowing golden disk over or behind the



Angels do not have halos, which can be traced to ancient depictions of false gods.

used in the sacred art of many religions.

We find it among the Greeks and Romans. The rayed crown of the sun god Helios was depicted in the Colossus of Rhodes (and later copied for the Statue of Liberty). It was used in images of Hellenistic and Roman rulers. This may have been associated with the Zoroastrian divine luster that marked Persian kings. The halo also occurs in ancient Hindu and Buddhist art.

And it goes back much further. "Sumerian religious literature frequently speaks of . . . a 'brilliant, visible glamour which is exuded by gods, heroes, sometimes by kings, and also by temples of great holiness and by gods' symbols and emblems'" (Wikipedia, "Halo (religious iconography)"). Indeed, we see it prominently as the solar disc of Ra, the Egyptian sun god.

As the editors of *The Encyclopaedia Britannica* point out: "Because of its pagan origin, the form was avoided in Early Christian art, but a simple circular nimbus was adopted by Christian emperors for their official portraits. From the middle of the 4th century, Christ was also shown with this imperial attribute . . . In the 5th century it was sometimes given to angels, but it was not until the 6th century that the halo became customary for the Virgin Mary and other saints . . . The halo was used regularly in representations of Christ,



The idea of portraying angels and biblical personages with halos can be traced back to ancient Egypt. There the sun god Ra and other Egyptian deities were depicted with a solar disc (representing the sun) atop their heads.

the angels, and the saints throughout the Middle Ages" (Britannica.com/art/halo-art). While Christ and the angels do have glorious radiance—with brilliant, shining faces—this does not correspond to the halo and its origins as a pagan sun symbol.

Sitting on clouds

The idea of angels lolling about on clouds—and that people will do the same after they die—probably comes from a combination of archaic imagination and misapplied scriptural mentions of clouds in association with heaven. Satan in his rebellion said of his assault on heaven, "I will ascend above the heights of the clouds, I will be like the Most High" (Isaiah 14:14). Yet this was not ascending into some "Jack and the Beanstalk" kingdom of giants on the clouds, but rising out of the earth's atmosphere and traveling beyond outer space into another dimension.

We also see prophecies in Scripture of Christ coming with or on "the clouds of heaven" (Daniel 7:13; Matthew 24:30; 26:64)—or "coming in a cloud with power and great glory" (Luke 21:27). Consider that He also came to the ancient Israelites in a cloud with power and glory—in the pillar of cloud and fire that led them and that descended on the physical tabernacle.

When Jesus ascended to heaven after His resurrection "a cloud received Him out of [the disciples'] sight"—and angels said He would return in the same manner (Acts 1:9-11).

In most of these passages the reference is to the earth's atmosphere, where there are physical clouds. And even physical clouds can be spectacular. You've no doubt seen clouds of the sky beautifully illuminated by the sun as a grand display of the majesty of the Creator. In any case, the picture of angels sitting on actual clouds is more cartoonish than scriptural.

Idly strumming on harps

Another popular conception has angels

idly strumming on harps while floating about or sitting on the clouds. Yet we don't see this in Scripture either. It's true that some angels do have harps, while others have other instruments. Indeed, God enjoys music, and at least some angels were given great musical abilities, as is true of some people.

Notice what God said to the angel who rebelled and became Satan: "The workmanship of your timbrels and pipes was prepared for you on the day you were created" (Ezekiel 28:13). The apostle John in Revelation 5:8 refers to the 24 angelic elders "each having a harp"—presumably used in performance and praise before God. John later in Revelation 14:2 hears "the sound of harpists playing their harps."

It seems there are choirs and orchestras of angels in regular praise at the throne of God. John later sees a vision of people joining in



The idea that angels sit on clouds playing harps comes from misunderstanding of Scripture.

the music, "having harps of God" (Revelation 15:2). As the physical tabernacle and temple of God were intended as a model of the heavenly temple (see Hebrews 9:23-24), it seems quite likely that the Levitical choirs and musicians of the physical service were meant to model the ongoing heavenly praise directed toward God.

Don't be misled by popular—but *wrong*—ideas. Learn what the *Bible* reveals about God's powerful angels!

Photos, from left: Maler der Grabkammer der Nefertiti; Hemera Technologies/Alamy Stock Photo; thinkstock

Who are these cosmic creatures?

- Belief in angels is found in the history of all nations. The ancient Egyptians, Phoenicians, Greeks, and others all expressed their belief in angels.
- “The Mohammedans believe that two angels are assigned to each person. The angel on the right hand records all your good deeds. The angel on your left records all your evil deeds.
- “The Hebrews taught there were four great angels: (1) Gabriel, who reveals the secrets of God to men. (2) Michael, who fights and avenges God’s foes. (3) Raphael, who receives the departing spirits of the dead. (4) Uriel, who will summon everybody to judgment”
- In the apocryphal book of Tobit is an account of an angel by the name of Raphael. The young man whom the angel accompanied was in danger of being devoured by a big fish. The angel saved him. Then he told the young man to use the heart and liver of the fish against demon influence, and the gall against eye diseases, etc.
- According to Muslim legend, when Muhammad was transported to heaven he saw an angel there with “70,000 heads, each head had 70,000 faces, each face had 70,000 mouths, each mouth had 70,000 tongues, and each tongue spoke 70,000 languages.” This would make more than 1.6 septillion languages, and nearly 343 trillion mouths!
- The earliest archaeological evidence of angels to date appears on the stela of Ur-Nammu (2250 B.C.), and shows angels flying over the head of this king while he is in prayer.

Angels

The English word “angel” derives from a Greek word used in the original New Testament, *aggelos* (the double g or gamma pronounced here as a hard “ng” sound, as in “angle”). This word means “messenger.”

The Old Testament Hebrew word *malak* means the same thing. These terms are used in Scripture of human messengers as well as spirit messengers.

Context determines which is intended.

- ▶ Angels are *God's messengers* and His *spirit army*, and they are *very* numerous. Angels *do* exist! They exist to serve “those who will inherit salvation” (Hebrews 1:13-14).
- ▶ Because they are invisible, we tend to forget their role in carrying out God’s purpose and plan.
- ▶ We’ve all heard stories of supernatural intervention—some of them may even be *your* stories! *Many* angels have been given the duty of serving our needs, and their responsibilities and assignments may change with circumstances.
- ▶ Bible provides some interesting and profound verses that give us insight into these servants of God.



The Existence of Angels (1/2)

- ▶ The words involved
 - ▶ 1. Old Testament words
 - ▶ Malak, translated “angel” – It is used 111 times. The vast majority of these instances are in regards to the Angel of the Lord.
 - ▶ Ruach, translated “spirit” – It is used 6 times.
 - ▶ Sair and shed, translated “devils” – These are used 4 times.
 - ▶ 2. New Testament words
 - ▶ a. Aggelos, translated “angel” – It is used 181 times.
 - ▶ b. Daimon, translated “devil” – It is used 74 times.

The Existence of Angels (2/2)

The witness involved – Many biblical individuals met and were ministered to by angels. Some were:

1. Lot (Gen. 19:1)
2. Jacob (Gen. 28:12; 31:1)
3. Daniel (Dan. 8:16-19; 9:21-27; 10:10-15)3
4. Ezekiel (Ezek. 1:4-28; 10:1-22)
5. Isaiah (Isa. 6:1-7)
6. Zechariah (Zech. 1:10; 2:13) Old Testament prophet
7. Zechariah (Luke 1:11-20) New Testament priest
8. Mary (Luke 1:26)
9. The shepherds (Luke 2:9)
10. Joseph (Matt. 1:20; 2:13, 19)
- 11 Lazarus the beggar (Luke 16:22)
12. Mary Magdalene (John 20:12)
13. The women at the empty tomb (Matt. 28:5; Luke 24:23)
14. The apostles (Acts 5:19)
15. Philip (Acts 8:26)
16. Cornelius (Acts 10:3)
17. Peter (Acts 12:7)
18. Paul (Acts 27:23)
19. John the apostle –experiences, by far, more encounters with angels than any other person in the entire Bible, witnessing these heavenly creatures on dozens of occasions. Both personal & public encounters

The Origin of Angels (1/2)

- ▶ “For by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him” (Col. 1:16)
- ▶ Gen. 1:1-2, Gen. 2:1, John 1:1-3, Eph. 3:9

Angels, like man, were created by a special act of God. They did not evolve into being.

“Praise ye him, all his angels: praise ye him, all his hosts. Let them praise the name of the Lord: for he commanded, and they were created”(Psa. 148:2, 5).

Each angel is a direct creation from God. This is perhaps why they are referred to as sons of God.

- a. in the time of Noah (See Gen. 6:2, 4)
- b. in the time of Job (See Job 1:6; 2:1.)

Now there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the Lord, and Satan came also among them” (Job 1:6).

Their number, once completed at creation, was forever fixed. Angels do not reproduce, nor do they die. (Luke 20:36)

The Origin of Angels (2/2)

- ▶ The time of their origin

“Then the Lord answered Job out of the whirlwind, and said, where wast thou when I laid the foundations of the earth? declare, if thou hast understanding. When the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy?” (Job 38:1, 4, 7).

In these verses God declares that the creation of angels took place prior to the creation of the earth.

- ▶ The purpose of their origin:

Angels were created to glorify Jesus Christ – “And again, when he bringeth in the first begotten into the world, he saith, And let all the angels of God worship him” (Heb. 1:6).

“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. 4:11). (See also Col. 1:16.)



The Nature of Angels (1/4)

► They are spirit beings

- While we are informed by Christ himself that spiritual beings do not possess flesh and bone (Luke 24:39), does this prove angels do not have any kind of body?
- On two specific occasions angels are described as partaking of physical food, and on one occasion as applying physical force.
 - They have been known to eat food.
 - Abraham served them under the oaks in Mamre (Gen. 18:1-8)
 - Lot served them in a home in Sodom (Gen. 19:1-3)
 - They have been known to apply force:
 - And, behold, the angel of the Lord came upon him, and a light shined in the prison: and he smote Peter on the side, and 6 raised him up, saying, Arise up quickly. And his chains fell off from his hands" (Acts 12:7).

The Nature of Angels (2/4)

- ▶ They are invisible beings.
 - ▶ While on occasion they do manifest themselves, their normal practice is to remain invisible. One basic reason for this is to prevent both unsaved and saved men from worshipping them.
- ▶ They are innumerable - they are presented to men as uncountable.
 - ▶ There may be as many angels as there are stars in the heavens, for angels are associated with the stars.
 - ▶ “Where wast thou when I laid the foundations of the earth? declare, if thou hast understanding. When the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy?” (Job 38:4, 7). (See also Psa. 148:1-3; Rev. 12:3, 4, 7-9.)
 - ▶ **If so, there would exist untold trillions of these heavenly beings!**

Chariots of God are twenty thousand, even thousands of angels Psa. 68:17

John’s heavenly vision - .. the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands” Rev. 5:11.



The Nature of Angels (3/4)

- ▶ They possess individual personalities
 - ▶ Intelligence
 - a. Angels explained to Daniel the details concerning God's final plan for Israel (Dan. 9:21-22; 10:14),
 - b. An angel revealed to John the mystery of religious Babylon, Satan's false church (Rev. 17:1, 7).
 - ▶ Will
 - a. Lucifer willfully left his first estate (Isa. 14:12-15).
 - b. A number of angels willfully sided in with Lucifer during his revolt (Jude 6)
 - ▶ Emotion
 - a. They displayed joy at the birth of Christ (Luke 2:13).
 - b. They desire to know the details of God's salvation (1 Pet. 1:12).
- ▶ They are superior to man
 - ▶ "What is man, that thou art mindful of him? and the son of man, that thou visitest him? For thou hast made him a little lower than the angels, and hast crowned him with glory and honour" (Psa. 8:4-5). (See also Heb. 2:6-11.)
 - ▶ They are stronger than man – "Bless the Lord, ye his angels, that excel in strength, that do his commandments, hearkening unto the voice of his word" (Psa. 103:20). "And to you who are troubled rest with us, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels" (2 Thess. 1:7). (See also 2 Pet. 2:11.)
 - ▶ They are smarter than man. They know the secrets of the past, having lived through it. They (probably) know the size and shape of the universe, being able to travel through it.



The Nature of Angels (4/4)

- ▶ They are inferior to God
 - ▶ They are not omnipresent
 - ▶ They are not omnipotent
 - ▶ They are not omniscient
- ▶ Like man, may have been made in the image of God
 - ▶ How was man made in God's image? It has been suggested that this image consisted of two things:
 - ▶ 1. Personality: Personality gives the basic capacity to have fellowship with the person of God.
 - ▶ 2. Holiness: Holiness provides the basic requirement to enjoy that fellowship – "Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord" (Heb. 12:14).
 - ▶ If the above definition is correct, then angels can be said to have been made in the image of God, also.



Other Lessons

The Moral Classification of Angels

The Characteristics of Faithful Angels

Classification of Angels

The Last Angelic Message

The Doctrine of Satan & Demons (tbd)



Thank you