

The Classification & Characteristics of Angels

Lesson 2

In Christian and biblical tradition, angels are spiritual beings created by God to serve various roles. The Bible and other religious texts describe different types of angels with distinct purposes.

Here are nine (9) of the main types:

1. Seraphim (Isaiah 6:2-3)

- The highest-ranking angels, closest to God.
- Described as having six wings: two covering their faces, two covering their feet, and two for flying.
- Constantly worship and glorify God, saying, “Holy, holy, holy is the Lord Almighty.”

2. Cherubim (Genesis 3:24; Ezekiel 10)

- Guardians of God’s glory and sacred places.
- Often depicted with multiple faces (human, lion, ox, and eagle) and multiple wings.
- Assigned to protect the Garden of Eden and later seen in the Ark of the Covenant.

3. Thrones/ Ophanim (Colossians 1:16)

- Represent divine justice and authority.
- Often associated with carrying out God's judgments.
- Sometimes depicted as fiery wheels covered in eyes (Ezekiel 1:15-21).

4. Dominions (Colossians 1:16)

- Angels that regulate the duties of lower angels.
- Act as administrators of divine order.
- Rarely interact directly with humans.

Here are nine (9) of the main types (cont.):

5. Virtues (Ephesians 1:21)

- Associated with miracles and divine intervention.
- Strengthen and assist believers in times of need.
- Thought to control elements of nature.

7. Principalities (Ephesians 3:10)

- Guardian angels of nations and leaders.
- Influence worldly affairs according to God's will.
- Work in overseeing large-scale spiritual battles.

9. Guardian Angels (Matthew 18:10)

- Assigned to protect and guide individuals.
- Believed to watch over humans and assist them spiritually.

6. Powers (Ephesians 6:12)

- Warrior angels who combat demonic forces.
- Defenders of the heavenly order.
- Mentioned in spiritual warfare contexts.

8. Archangels (Jude 1:9; 1 Thessalonians 4:16)

- High-ranking messengers and warriors.
- **Michael** is the only named archangel in the Bible, leading God's army against Satan.
- **Gabriel** is also considered an archangel, though not explicitly called one, delivering important messages (e.g., announcing Jesus' birth to Mary).

**While the classification is influenced by Christian tradition and later theological interpretations (e.g., St. Thomas Aquinas' hierarchy), the Bible does not explicitly list all these orders.



“In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord sitting on a throne, high and lifted up, and the train of His robe filled the temple. *Above it stood seraphim*; each one had *six wings*: with two he covered *his face*, with two he covered *his feet*, and with two he *flew*. And one cried to another and said: ‘Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts; the whole earth is full of His glory!’” (Isaiah 6:1-3).

Seraphim—Burning Ones (1/2)

The seraphim are not described extensively, but we may note these features:

- ▶ Seraphim have six wings
- ▶ They cover their faces with a set of wings
- ▶ They cover their feet with a set of wings
- ▶ They fly with a set of wings
- ▶ Seraphim form may resemble a person standing upright—but with wings
- ▶ They hover above God’s throne
- ▶ They sing praises to God a lot!

Seraphim—burning ones (2/2)

The seraphim here have six wings instead of the four wings of the cherubim in Ezekiel (which we'll see more about shortly). However, it's possible that these beings are not so different after all.

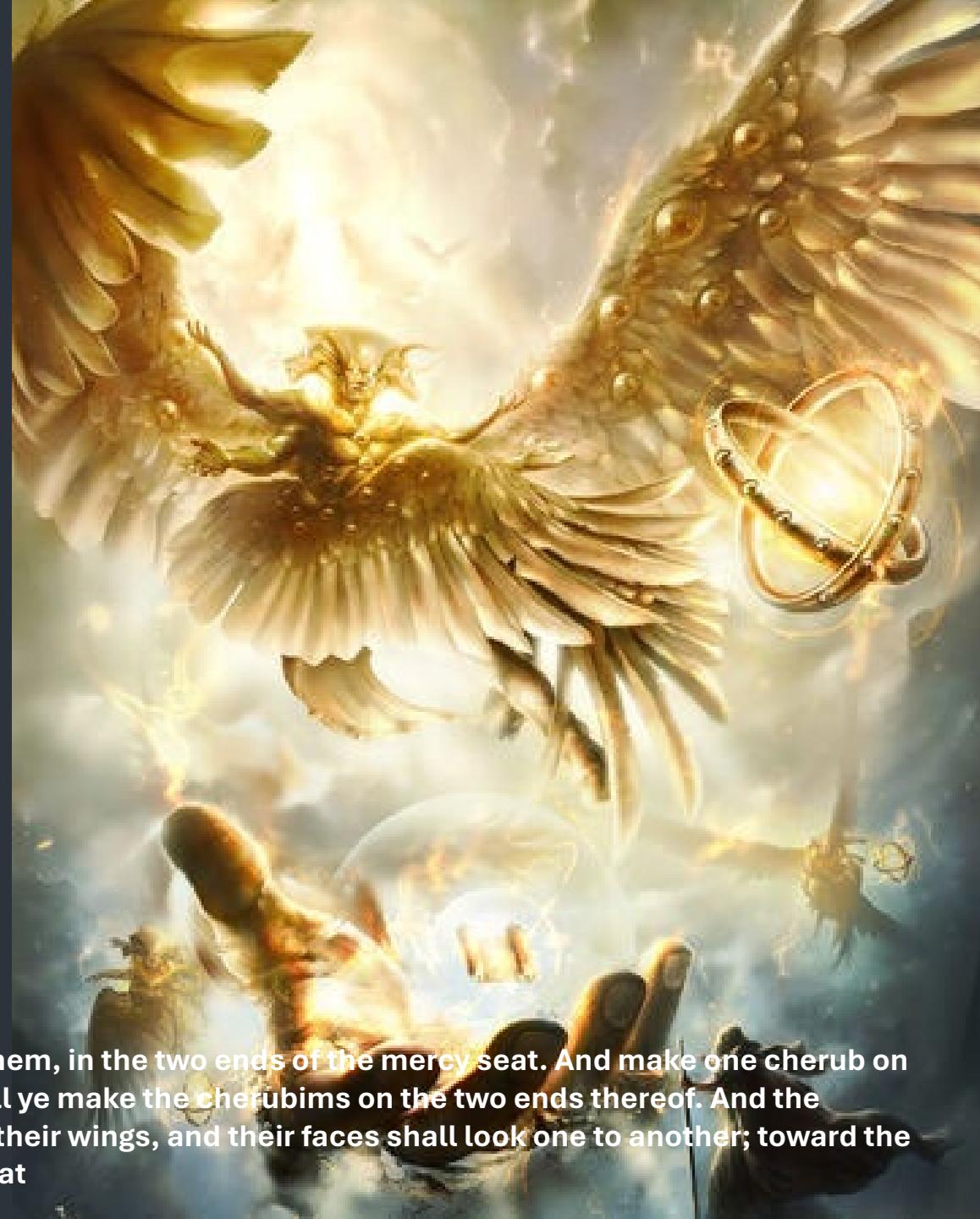
- ▶ The word *seraphim* literally means “burning ones”
 - ▶ The word *seraph* is translated elsewhere in Scriptures as “fiery serpent” and with another word later in the book of Isaiah as “fiery flying serpent” (14:29; 30:6; compare Numbers 21:6, 8; Deuteronomy 8:15).
 - ▶ Numbers 21:6 “And the LORD sent fiery serpents among the people, and they bit the people; and much people of Israel died..”
- ▶ It is commonly thought that the term *fiery* (i.e., burning) serpents suggests the sting of their bites. Although it may actually refer to the reflective quality of their glassy scales, by which they are “*shiny*.”
 - ▶ The Hebrew word for serpent, *nachash*, literally means “shining one.” So, a literal translation of Numbers 21:6 would be: “And sent the Eternal among the people the shining ones, the burning ones, and they bit the people.”
- ▶ What then of the seraphim Isaiah sees:
 - ▶ it may imply either a serpentine form (albeit with wings, human hands, and voices) or beings that have a ‘glowing’ quality about them” but... every angel is noted as a shining being of light (compare Revelation 10:1; 18:1), also described as a “flame of fire” (Hebrews 11:7).
- ▶ All of this becomes interesting when we consider that Satan is referred to in Scripture as a serpent and even a “fiery red dragon” (Revelation 12:4,9).
 - ▶ Satan’s description as “fiery flying serpent” (i.e., *seraph*) to much to be mere coincidence. But Satan is distinctly referred to in Ezekiel 28:14-16 as a cherub. Perhaps, then, a cherub and a seraph are the same thing... ???

Cherubim—with four faces (1/2)

The description of the cherubim

- ▶ (1) Each had four faces.
 - (a) The face in front is as a man.
 - (b) The face on the right is as a lion.
 - (c) The face on the left is as an ox.
 - (d) The face in back is as an eagle.
- ▶ (2) Each has two pairs of wings.
 - (a) One pair spreads out from the middle of the back
 - (b) The other pair is used to cover the body. These wings make a noise like waves crashing upon the seashore.
- ▶ (3) They have the legs of men, but their feet are cloven like calves' feet, which shine like burnished brass.
- ▶ (4) They have four human hands, with one located under each wing.
- ▶ (5) They seem to travel in groups of four. The outstretched wings of each cherubim touches those of the remaining three companions, so that they form a square. When they move, they move as a group without turning their bodies.

“And thou shalt make two cherubims of gold, of beaten work shalt thou make them, in the two ends of the mercy seat. And make one cherub on the one end, and the other cherub on the other end: even of the mercy seat shall ye make the cherubims on the two ends thereof. And the cherubims shall stretch forth their wings on high, covering the mercy seat with their wings, and their faces shall look one to another; toward the mercy seat shall the faces of the cherubims be” (Exod. 25:18-20) - The Mercy Seat



Cherubim—with four faces (2/2)

The duties/role of the cherubim:

- ▶ Kept Adam from the Tree of Life after the Fall, lest he eat of it and live forever in his sin – Gen.3:24
- ▶ Two golden cherubim were constructed at God's command and placed at either end on top of the Ark lid in the tabernacle Holy of Holies (See also Exod. 25:18-20; Heb. 9:5.)
- ▶ They appeared to Ezekiel
 - ▶ “Also out of the midst thereof came the likeness of four living creatures. And this was their appearance; they had the likeness of a man” (Ezek. 1:5). “Then I looked, and, behold, in the firmament that was above the head of the cherubims there appeared over them as it were a sapphire stone, as the appearance of the likeness of a throne” (Ezek. 10:1).
- ▶ God rode on a cherub to save David! (2 Samuel 22:7-11). This passage from 2 Samuel is repeated in Psalm 18:7-10. Here is just verse 10: “*And He rode upon a cherub: yea and did fly upon the wings of the wind.*”
- ▶ Satan was the chief cherub angel –
 - ▶ “How art thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning! how art thou cut down to the ground, which didst weaken the nations!” (Isa. 14:12)
 - ▶ “Thou art the anointed cherub that covereth; and I have set thee so: thou wast upon the holy mountain of God; thou hast walked up and down in the midst of the stones of fire” (Ezek. 28:14).
- ▶ We find composite creatures in ancient art and mythology bearing similarities with the cherubim Ezekiel saw and with the four living creatures



Four Living Creatures (sidenote)(1/2)

Ezekiel described what he saw as “four living creatures” (Ezekiel 1:5).

The book of Revelation also reveals “four living creatures” at God’s throne in heaven. Here is what we can glean from what was revealed to the apostle John:

- ▶ The four living creatures are in the midst of God’s throne and round about it.
- ▶ They have six wings (like the seraphim).
- ▶ Each has the likeness of a creature represented by one of the four different cherubim faces.
- ▶ They are full of eyes.
- ▶ The four living creatures never rest.
- ▶ They praise God continually
- ▶ Revelation 4: “Immediately I was in the Spirit; and behold, *a throne set in heaven*, and One sat on the throne ..Before the throne there was a sea of glass, like crystal. And in the midst of the throne, and around the throne, *were four living creatures full of eyes in front and in back*” (verses 2, 6).
- ▶ They appear to have eyes in the back of their heads! Or, if the eyes are associated with the wings, perhaps this is similar to peacock plumage—where what appear to be eyes can be seen from either side.
- ▶ “The *first living creature was like a lion*, the *second living creature like a calf*, the *third living creature had a face like a man*, and the *fourth living creature was like a flying eagle*. The four living creatures, *each having six wings*, were full of eyes around and within. And they do not rest day or night, saying: ‘Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, who was and is and is to come!
- ▶ These beings may not be so different from the cherubim and seraphim —considering that they are beyond our normal physical dimensions and might appear in shifted ways and can possibly change form.

Four Living Creatures (sidenote)(2/2)

It has been suggested that the faces of both the cherubim and the living creatures are to remind the elect throughout all eternity of the earthly ministry performed by our Lord.

These faces correspond directly to the fourfold gospel presentation of Christ.

- ▶ (1) Matthew presents him as the lion of the tribe of Judah.
- ▶ (2) Mark presents him as the lowly ox.
- ▶ (3) Luke presents him as the perfect man.
- ▶ (4) John presents him as the mighty Godlike eagle.



Ruling Angels

- ▶ “Far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come” (Eph. 1:21).
- ▶ “To the intent that now unto the **principalities and powers in heavenly** places might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God” (Eph. 3:10).
- ▶ “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).
- ▶ “And ye are complete in him, **which is the head of all principality and power**” (Col. 2:10).
- ▶ ‘Who is gone into heaven, and is on the right hand of God; **angels and authorities and powers** being made subject unto him” (1 Pet. 3:22).
- ▶ In the above passages the following organizational features are mentioned:
 - a. **Principalities** - Guardian angels of nations and leaders (Influence worldly affairs according to God’s will)
 - b. **Powers** - Warrior angels who combat demonic forces
 - c. **Thrones** - Represent divine justice and authority
 - d. **Authorities** – Associated with miracles and divine intervention & Strengthen and assist believers in times of need
 - e. **Dominions** -Angels that regulate the duties of lower angels (administrators)



Archangels (Michael)

- ▶ Michael –name means “Who is like God?”
 - ▶ He is referred to in Daniel 10:13 as “one of the chief princes”—that is, one of the leading rulers in the angelic realm.
 - ▶ He is further called, “the great prince who stands watch over the sons of your [that is, Daniel’s] people”—the Jewish people and, more broadly, all of Israel in Daniel 12:1,
 - ▶ This should be contrasted to Satan’s evil desire to “be like the most High.”
 - ▶ “I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will be like the most High” (Isa. 14:14)
- ▶ Michael is mentioned by name on four separate occasions in the Bible:
 - ▶ He helps a lesser-ranked angel get through to answer Daniel’s prayer - helps this angel who could not overcome the *demon prince of Persia* (Dan. 10:13, 21)
 - ▶ He will stand up for Israel during the tribulation (Dan. 12:1)
 - ▶ He disputes with Satan concerning the dead body of Moses (Jude 9)
 - ▶ He fights against Satan in the heavens (Rev. 12:7)



Michael symbolizes strength, righteousness, and protection, inspiring faith and resilience across cultures and eras.

Archangels (Gabriel)

Gabriel –name means “The mighty one of God” underscores his role as a bridge between the divine and humanity, guiding and inspiring believers with messages of faith and spiritual insight. Most well known named angel.

Has a very different role from that of the archangel Michael. He is likely an archangel too, although the Bible does not directly state this. He also might be a cherub—possibly even one of the two covering cherubim. Regardless, he is definitely a leading angel.

► Acts noted:

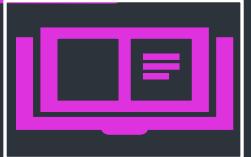
- explains the vision of the ram and goat battle to Daniel (Dan. 8:16)
- explains the Seventy weeks to Daniel (Dan. 9:21)
- predicts the birth of John the Baptist to Zacharias (Luke 1:19)
- predicts the birth of Jesus to Mary (Luke 1:26)
- assures Joseph concerning the purity of Mary (Matt. 1:20)
- warns Joseph about the plot of Herod (Matt. 2:13)
- tells Joseph about the death of Herod (Matt. 2:19)
- announces the birth of Christ to the shepherds (Luke 2:9)

Some have identified Gabriel with the various appearances of the Angel of the Lord.

- strengthens Christ in the Garden of Gethsemane (Luke 22:43)
- rolls the stone back at Christ’s resurrection (Matt. 28:2)
- frees the apostles from prison (Acts 5:19)
- sends Philip to the desert of Gaza to meet the eunuch (Acts 8:26)
- instructs Cornelius to send for Peter (Acts 10:3)
- frees Peter from prison (Acts 12:7)
- will sound the trumpet at the Rapture (1 Thess. 4:16)



(Seven) Archangels



In some Jewish and Christian apocryphal texts (such as the Book of Enoch), the seven archangels are often listed as:

Michael: Often viewed as the leader and protector.

Gabriel: Known as the messenger.

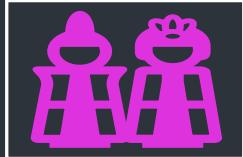
Raphael: Associated with healing. Mentioned as an angel in the Book of Tobit

Uriel: Linked to wisdom and illumination. Mentioned in Book of Enoch

Raguel: Connected with fairness and harmony.

Remel: Sometimes associated with compassion and hope.

Januel: Often seen as a guide or teacher.



In Eastern Orthodox Christianity, however, you might encounter a slightly different set of names. For instance, some traditions list:

Michael

Gabriel

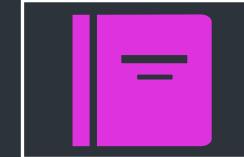
Raphael

Uriel

Selaphiel: Associated with prayer.

Jehudiel: Connected with divine mercy.

Barachiel: Seen as a bestower of blessings.



It's important to note that while (KJV) canonical scriptures (the Bible) explicitly mention only Michael and Gabriel, the extended list of seven archangels comes from extra-biblical and apocryphal writings. Consequently, no single list is universally accepted across all traditions.

In the book of Tobias, Raphael identifies himself as one of seven archangels "who stand before the Lord" (Tobit 12:15). Raphael also offers prayers on Tobias' behalf, and Tobias, in turn, thanks the angel because he is "filled with all good things through him" (Tobit 12:3).

Guardian Angels

Guardian angels – Do we have guardian angels?

The question is whether each person—or each believer—has an angel assigned to him/her. In the Old Testament, the nation of Israel had the archangel (Michael) assigned to it ([Daniel 10:21; 12:1](#)), but Scripture nowhere states that an angel is “assigned” to an individual (angels were sometimes sent to individuals, but there is no mention of permanent assignment).

But scripture states:

- ✓ **Psalm 91:11:** “For he shall give his angels charge over thee, to keep thee in all thy ways.”

This verse is often interpreted to mean that God assigns angels to watch over and protect believers.

- ✓ **Matthew 18:10:** “Take heed that ye despise not one of these little ones: for I say unto you, that in heaven their angels do always behold the face of my Father which is in heaven.”

Here, Jesus implies that children—and by extension, all believers—have angels in heaven who care for them.

- ✓ **Hebrews 1:14:** “Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation?”

This passage reinforces the idea that angels serve as helpers and protectors for those destined for salvation.

The Bible does not state whether each believer has a specific guardian angel, or whether various angels on occasion simply protect and aid the heirs of salvation. Both are logical possibilities.

Other Mentioned Angels

If fallen angels are included in the list of angels who are named in the Bible, two more names should be mentioned:

Lucifer/Satan and Apollyon/Abaddon. Lucifer rebelled against God and was thrown down from heaven along with the angels who followed him. Before his rebellion, Lucifer was a beautiful and powerful being; but he coveted equality with the Most High God and therefore became unholy and cursed (Isaiah 14:12–18; Luke 10:18).

He is now known as Satan and is God's chief enemy who seeks to deceive and destroy all of mankind (John 10:10).

Apollyon/Abaddon is another fallen angel, mentioned in Revelation 9:11, and he leads an end-times demonic army.

Angelic Name & Titles

Ministers

Host

Chariots

Watchers

Sons of the Mighty

Sons of God

Saints

Stars



Angels Names & Titles (1/3)

- ▶ **Ministers** – This signifies their religious duties and spiritual service.
 - ▶ “Bless the Lord, ye his angels, that excel in strength, that do his commandments, hearkening unto the voice of his word. Bless ye the Lord, all ye his hosts; ye ministers of his, that do his pleasure” (Psa. 103:20-21). “Who maketh his angels spirits; his ministers a flaming fire” (Psa. 104:4).

- ▶ **Host** – This name speaks of their military service.

As testified by Jacob – “And Jacob went on his way, and the angels of God met him. And when Jacob saw them, he said, This is God’s host: and he called the name of that place Mahanaim” (Gen. 32:1-2).

As testified by Joshua – “And it came to pass, when Joshua was by Jericho, that he lifted up his eyes and looked, and, behold, there stood a man over against him with his sword drawn in his hand: and Joshua went unto him, and said unto him, Art thou for us, or for our adversaries? And he said, Nay; but as captain of the host of the Lord am I now come. And Joshua fell on his face to the earth, and did worship, and said unto him, What saith my lord unto his servant?” (Josh. 5:13-14).

As testified by David – “Then said David to the Philistine, Thou comest to me with a sword, and with a spear, and with a shield: but I come to thee in the name of the Lord of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel, whom thou hast defied” (1 Sam. 17:45).

Angels Names & Titles (2/3)

- ▶ **Chariots** – This may refer to their swiftness.
 - ▶ “And he answered, Fear not: for they that be with us are more than they that be with them. And Elisha prayed, and said, Lord, I pray thee, open his eyes, that he may see. And the Lord opened the eyes of the young man; and he saw: and, behold, the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire round about Elisha” (2 Kings 6:16-17). “The chariots of God are twenty thousand, even thousands of angels: the Lord is among them, as in Sinai, in the holy place” (Psa.68:17). “And the angel answered and said unto me, These are the four spirits of the heavens, which go forth from standing before the Lord of all the earth” (Zech. 6:5).
- ▶ **Watchers** – This speaks of their duties as supervisors and agents
 - ▶ “I saw in the visions of my head upon my bed, and, behold, a watcher and an holy one came down from heaven; this matter is by the decree of the watchers, and the demand by the word of the holy ones: to the intent that the living may know that the most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever he will, and setteth up over it the basest of men” (Dan. 4:13, 17).
- ▶ **Sons of the mighty** – This title may refer to their awesome strength and power.
 - ▶ “Give unto the Lord, O ye mighty, give unto the Lord glory and strength” (Psa. 29:1). “For who in the heaven can be compared unto the Lord? Who among the sons of the mighty can be likened unto the Lord?” (Psa. 89:6).

Angels Names & Titles (3/3)

- ▶ **Sons of God** – This title may indicate their relationship with God.
 - ▶ “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). ‘When the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy?’ (Job 38:7)
- ▶ **Saints** – Usually the term saints in the Bible refers to saved human beings.
 - ▶ But on several occasions it is used in describing angels. “And he said, The Lord came from Sinai, and rose up from Seir unto them; he shined forth from mount Paran, and he came with ten thousands of saints: from his right hand went a fiery law for them” (Deut. 33:2). The “saints” Moses speaks of here accompanying God at the giving of the Law were angels, as attested to by three New Testament passages. (See Acts 7:53; Gal.3:19; Heb. 2:2.) This title may refer to their total separation to the will of God. (See also Dan. 8:13; Zech. 14:5.)
- ▶ **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 Rev. 12:3-4.) This may indicate both their number and their brightness.



Other Lessons

The Last Angelic Message

Moral Characteristics of Angels & the Doctrine of Satan & Demons (tbd)



Thank you