



Understanding Angels in the Bible



INTRODUCTION

This page briefing leverages the *Seven Golden Rules of Bible Interpretation* to present what the King James Bible teaches about angels after analyzing the 283 Bible verses containing the word angel(s) and other scripture. The Bible speaks of angel (“messenger”), angels, the host of heaven, sons of God, “watchers” and “holy ones” ([Dan 4:13, 17](#)), “ministering spirits” ([Heb 1:14](#)), an archangel ([1 Thess 4:16](#); [Jude 9](#)), cherubim ([Gen 3:24](#)), seraphim ([Isa 6:2](#)), and “living creatures” before the throne ([Rev 4:6–8](#)) just to name a few.

ANGEL ORIGIN, NATURE, AND RELATION TO HUMANITY

Created by God. All heavenly beings were made by God; they are not eternal or self-existent ([Neh 9:6](#); [Col 1:16](#)). Angels are creatures, not mini-gods.

Spiritual by nature. God “maketh his angels spirits” ([Ps 104:4](#); [Heb 1:7, 14](#)). They are spiritual beings who may be made visible or interact with the physical realm as God permits.

Personal beings. Angels have intellect, will, speech, emotion, and distinct names or titles ([Luke 1:19](#); [Dan 10:12–13](#); [Rev 14:18](#)). They are not impersonal forces or abstract “energies.”

Strength and finitude. Angels “excel in strength” yet remain finite. They are mighty but not omniscient, omnipotent, or omnipresent ([Ps 103:20](#); [Matt 24:36](#)).

Distinct from humans. Angels and humans are distinct orders of created beings ([Col 1:16](#); [Heb 2:16](#)). Angels do not become normal humans, nor do humans become angels. Believers will one day “judge angels” ([1 Cor 6:3](#)).

Mortality and marriage. Mortality and marriage. In the resurrection, the saints are “equal unto the angels; neither can they die any more” ([Luke 20:36](#)). The Lord teaches that “the angels of God in heaven” neither marry nor are given in marriage ([Matt 22:30](#)), so holy angels in their proper estate do not form marriage bonds or reproduce among themselves as normal humans do. Genesis 6 records “sons of God” taking “daughters of men,” which describes fallen angels who “kept not their first estate” and went after “strange flesh” ([Gen 6:1-4](#); [Jude 6-7](#)) an abnormal, sinful rebellion rather than normal marriage or normal reproduction. See the free page briefing, *Sons of God – Earthly Men or Angelic Beings*.

Higher and lower. At present, man is “a little lower than the angels” ([Ps 8:5](#); [Heb 2:7-9](#)), yet redeemed saints will judge angels and reign with Christ ([1 Cor 6:3](#); [Rev 5:10](#)).

ANGEL HIERARCHY, ORDERS, RANKS, AND NUMBERS

Ranks and realms. Scripture refers to principalities, powers, thrones, and dominions in the heavenly hierarchy ([Eph 1:21](#); [Col 1:16](#)). It also speaks of “elect angels” ([1 Tim 5:21](#)) and of a “chief prince” and “Michael” ([Dan 10:13, 21](#); [12:1](#); [Jude 9](#)).

All credit, praise, honor, and glory belongs to our beloved God!

© 2020 Peter D. Arvo | [\(CC BY-NC-ND 4.0\)](#) | Last updated: 3/7/2026 | [TheTorchbearerSeries.com](#)

Named beings. Certain angels are named:

- ❖ *Michael* ([Dan 10:13](#); [12:1](#); [Jude 9](#); [Rev 12:7](#))
- ❖ *Gabriel* ([Dan 8:16](#); [9:21](#); [Luke 1:19, 26](#))
- ❖ *Abaddon/Apollyon* ([Rev 9:11](#))
- ❖ The fallen “Lucifer,” a title/name for the “son of the morning” ([Isa 14:12](#)).

Orders / holy creatures.

- ❖ *Cherubim*: Guard Eden and are linked with the mercy seat and throne imagery ([Gen 3:24](#); [Ex 25:18–22](#); [Ps 99:1](#); [Ezek 1; 10](#)).
- ❖ *Seraphim*: Six-winged beings crying “Holy, holy, holy” ([Isa 6:2–3](#)).
- ❖ *Living creatures*: Around God’s throne in Revelation, continually worshipping ([Rev 4:6–8](#)).
- ❖ *Watchers / holy ones*: Participate in God’s decrees ([Dan 4:13, 17, 23](#)).

Numbers and organization. There is an “innumerable company of angels” ([Heb 12:22](#)); Daniel saw “thousand thousands” and “ten thousand times ten thousand” ([Dan 7:10](#)), echoed in Revelation ([Rev 5:11](#)). Some minister continually before God’s throne, while others are sent on specific missions ([Zech 6:5](#); [Rev 8:2](#); [Heb 1:14](#)). When asking “How many angels exist?” Scripture simply presents a vast numberless host ([Dan 7:10](#); [Heb 12:22](#); [Rev 5:11](#)).

ANGEL HABITATION, PRESENCE, AND ADMINISTRATION

Heaven and earth. Angels move between heaven and earth, ascending and descending at God’s command ([Gen 28:12](#); [John 1:51](#)).

Before God’s throne. They serve and worship in God’s immediate presence, exalting His holiness and worthiness ([Isa 6:2–3](#); [Rev 5:11–12](#)).

Among nations. Angelic “princes” are depicted in relation to earthly kingdoms, contending in the unseen realm ([Dan 10:13, 20–21](#)).

Heavenly administration. Angels sound trumpets, handle censers, and are entrusted with tasks at the heavenly altar ([Rev 8:2–5](#)). They participate in the administration of God’s judgments and answered prayers. [Dan 9:20–23](#); [10:12–13, 21](#); [Ps 103:20–21](#); [Matt 26:53](#); [Luke 22:43](#); [Rev 5:11–12](#); [7:1–3](#); [8:2–5](#); [15:5–8](#)

Observation of God’s people. Angels are aware of the order and testimony of Christ’s church: “for this cause ought the woman to have power on her head because of the angels” ([1 Cor 11:10](#)). Paul charges Timothy “before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, and the elect angels” ([1 Tim 5:21](#)).

Angels in conversation and conflict. Angels converse with one another in visions and prophetic scenes ([Dan 8:13](#); [Zech 2:3–5](#)). Scripture also shows angels battling: Michael and his angels war against the great Dragon/Serpent/Satan/Devil (see also [Dinosaur](#)) and his angels ([Rev 12:7–9](#)), and angelic princes fight each other on earth ([Dan 10:13, 20–21](#)).

ANGEL APPEARANCES AND MANIFESTATIONS

As men, often in white. Angels frequently appear in the form of men, sometimes in white or shining apparel ([Gen 18:2](#); [19:1–3](#); [Mark 16:5](#); [Luke 24:4](#); [Acts 1:10](#); [10:30](#); [Heb 13:2](#)). Their clothing is described as white or fine linen, with girdles ([Mark 16:5](#); [Luke 24:4](#); [Rev 15:6](#)).

Glorious splendor. Their countenance may be “like lightning” and garments “white as snow” ([Matt 28:2–3](#)).

All credit, praise, honor, and glory belongs to our beloved God!

© 2020 Peter D. Arvo | [\(CC BY-NC-ND 4.0\)](#) | Last updated: 3/7/2026 | [TheTorchbearerSeries.com](#)

Fire and elements. God “maketh his angels spirits; his ministers a flame of fire” (Ps 104:4; Heb 1:7). An angel is said to have “power over fire” (Rev 14:18), and others are linked with winds and other forces in judgment scenes. Gen 3:24; Exod 3:2; 2 Kgs 2:11; Ps 104:4; Isa 6:2–6; Heb 1:7; Rev 7:1; 8:5; 14:18; 16:8

Symbolic and visionary forms. Prophetic visions portray angels and heavenly creatures in what is thought to be symbolic forms: faces of man, lion, ox, and eagle (Ezek 1:10); six wings covering face and feet (Isa 6:2); multiform “living creatures” around the throne (Rev 4:6–8).

Voices. Angels speak intelligibly to people, but their voices are also likened to thunder, many waters, or a great multitude (Rev 10:3; 14:2; 19:6). They cry with a loud voice in worship and proclamation (Rev 5:2; 14:7), and at the Lord’s descent there is “the voice of the archangel” (1 Thess 4:16).

THE ANGEL OF THE LORD (THEOPHANY)

Certain passages present *the angel of the LORD* as a unique figure who speaks as God, bears God’s name, and receives worship—distinguished from ordinary created angels (Gen 16:7–13; 22:11, 15–18; Ex 3:2–6; Judg 13:16–22). God says of the Angel He sends, “my name is in him,” and grants Him authority to pardon or punish (Ex 23:20–22).

Joshua’s encounter with the Captain of the host of the LORD includes holy-ground language like that at the burning bush (Josh 5:14–15; cf. Ex 3:2–6). Malachi calls the coming Lord “the messenger [angel] of the covenant” (Mal 3:1). Thus the Son appears as the Angel of the LORD / “messenger of the covenant,” while the Holy Ghost is never called an angel in Scripture.

God also sends “his angel” in specific deliverances (Ex 23:20; Dan 3:28; 6:22), yet the Angel who bears His name is identified with the LORD Himself (Ex 23:21). Created angels consistently refuse worship (Rev 22:8–9). Taken together, these passages show that the Angel of the LORD in key texts bears God’s name and prerogatives and is probably best understood as the LORD Himself appearing.

ANGELS: HOLY AND FALLEN

Holy angels. Holy angels are loyal ministers who do God’s will, associated with His glory and coming in judgment (Ps 103:20; Matt 25:31; Luke 9:26). They are described as “ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation” (Heb 1:14).

Fallen angels. Some angels sinned and “kept not their first estate,” and are reserved in chains of darkness unto judgment (2 Pet 2:4; Jude 6). Satan can appear as “an angel of light” (2 Cor 11:14). Scripture also speaks of “evil angels” involved in judgment (Ps 78:49).

Blessing, cursing, and conflict. At God’s command, angels may bless or curse: Jacob invokes “the Angel which redeemed me from all evil” to bless the lads (Gen 48:16), while one is used to curse Meroz for not helping the LORD (Judg 5:23). Angels also fight and, when commissioned, may kill in judgment (2 Kings 19:35; Acts 12:23; Rev 12:7–9).

ANGEL ROLES AND ACTIVITIES: PAST, PRESENT, AND FUTURE

As created, powerful, holy spirits, angels serve God’s purposes in worship, revelation, protection, guidance, judgment, and administration (Heb 1:14).

Past works.

- ❖ *Creation and early history:* They rejoiced when God laid earth's foundations ([Job 38:7](#)).
- ❖ *Guidance and protection:* They guided patriarchs ([Gen 24:7](#); [48:16](#)), delivered Israel from Egypt, and judged enemies ([Num 20:16](#); [Ex 12:23](#); [2 Kings 19:35](#)).
- ❖ *Prophets and judges:* Angels appeared to judges and prophets ([Judg 6:11](#); [13:3](#)); they fed and strengthened Elijah ([1 Kings 19:5–7](#)).
- ❖ *Rescue and restraint:* Angels rescued Lot from Sodom ([Gen 19:15](#)), and one withstood Balaam with drawn sword ([Num 22:22–35](#)). They released apostles and Peter from prison ([Acts 5:19](#); [12:7–11](#)) and pronounced judgment, as when “Curse ye Meroz” is declared ([Judg 5:23](#)).

In these and similar scenes, angels clearly can defend, fight, and even kill when God so wills ([2 Kings 19:35](#); [Acts 12:23](#)).

Present ministry.

- ❖ *Care for believers:* Angels minister to the heirs of salvation ([Heb 1:14](#)), encamp round about those who fear the LORD ([Ps 34:7](#)), and keep God's people in all their ways according to His charge ([Ps 91:11–12](#)). Scripture indicates real angelic care, yet it does not define a strict one-to-one permanent “guardian angel” arrangement; the Lord speaks of “their angels” in reference to “little ones” ([Matt 18:10](#)), and believers in Acts say, “It is his angel” ([Acts 12:15](#)).
- ❖ *Observation and joy:* Angels observe church order and testimony ([1 Cor 11:10](#); [1 Tim 5:21](#)) and rejoice over one sinner that repents ([Luke 15:10](#)).
- ❖ *Watch over little ones:* “Their angels do always behold the face of my Father which is in heaven” ([Matt 18:10](#)).
- ❖ *Revelation and guidance:* God at times uses angels in dreams and visions to direct His servants ([Matt 1:20](#); [2:13, 19](#); [Acts 10:3](#); [8:26](#)).
- ❖ *At death:* Angels escort the righteous at death, as in the parable where the beggar is “carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom” ([Luke 16:22](#)).

Thus, angels do at times directly defend God's people at His command ([Ps 34:7](#); [91:11–12](#); [Dan 6:22](#); [Acts 12:7–11](#)).

Future roles.

- ❖ *Gathering and separation:* At Christ's return, the Son of man comes “with his angels,” who gather the elect and separate the wicked ([Matt 16:27](#); [24:31](#); [25:31](#); [13:39–41, 49](#)).
- ❖ *Judgments of the last days:* Angels blow trumpets and pour out vials in Revelation's judgments ([Rev 8–9](#); [16:1](#)).
- ❖ *Final conflict:* Michael and his angels war against the dragon and his angels; Satan is cast down, and later an angel binds him for a thousand years ([Rev 12:7–9](#); [20:1–3](#)).
- ❖ *Kingdom and eternity:* Angels are present in scenes of heavenly worship and administration in the millennial kingdom and eternal state ([Rev 19:1–14](#); [21:9, 12](#)).

Believers are cared for by angelic ministry now and will one day judge angels and reign with Christ ([Heb 1:14](#); [Ps 34:7](#); [1 Cor 6:3](#); [Rev 5:10](#)).

ANGEL CAPABILITIES IN THE PHYSICAL AND NON-PHYSICAL REALMS

Physical interaction. Angels can appear, speak, touch, and move objects ([1 Kings 19:5–7](#)). They roll away stones ([Matt 28:2](#)), open prison doors and iron gates ([Acts 5:19](#); [12:10](#)), and affect aspects of nature such as winds and judgments ([Rev 7:1](#); [16:8](#)).

Clothing and food. Angels may be clothed in white or fine linen, with girdles ([Mark 16:5](#); [Luke 24:4](#); [Rev 15:6](#); [John 20:12](#)). They ate with Abraham ([Gen 18:8](#)) and were hosted in Sodom ([Gen 19:3](#)). Israel's manna is described as “angels' food” ([Ps 78:25](#); cf. [Ex 16:31](#); [Num 11:8](#)).

Knowledge and speed. They excel in strength ([Ps 103:20](#)) and may move swiftly ([Dan 9:21](#)), yet they do not know all things; for example, they do not know the day or hour of Christ's return ([Matt 24:36](#)).

All credit, praise, honor, and glory belongs to our beloved God!

© 2020 Peter D. Arvo | [\(CC BY-NC-ND 4.0\)](#) | Last updated: 3/7/2026 | [TheTorchbearerSeries.com](#)

Prayers and thoughts. Angels present or incense the prayers of the saints before God ([Rev 8:3–4](#)) and may be sent “for thy words” ([Dan 10:12](#)). However, Scripture reserves heart-knowledge to God alone and does not teach that angels can read human thoughts ([1 Kings 8:39](#)).

Barriers and “passing through.” Biblical accounts show sudden angelic appearances and divinely opened doors or barriers ([Acts 5:19; 12:10](#)). Some infer that angels “phase” through matter, but the text attributes such events to God’s power in opening and closing rather than to detailed mechanics.

Influencing decisions. Good angels guide and instruct at God’s command ([Acts 8:26](#)), while evil spirits deceive when God permits ([1 Kings 22:21–23; 1 Tim 4:1](#)).

Possession. Holy angels are never shown possessing humans. Scripture records possession by demons or unclean spirits instead (e.g., [Mark 5:2–13](#)).

ANGEL WEAPONS, CLOTHING, EMBLEMS, VEHICLES, AND RELATIONSHIP TO THE NATURAL WORLD

Weapons and restraints. Angels are pictured with swords ([Num 22:23, 31; 1 Chr 21:16](#)), sickles for reaping ([Rev 14:17–19](#)), trumpets for signaling divine acts ([Rev 8:2, 6](#)), and chains for restraint ([Rev 20:1](#)). In connection with Balaam, an angel with a drawn sword stands in the way, and the episode is also detailed with the donkey seeing the angel and reacting ([Num 22:23–27](#)).

Vehicles and chariots. Elijah is taken up by a chariot and horses of fire, and Elisha’s servant’s eyes are opened to see horses and chariots of fire around them ([2 Kings 2:11; 6:17](#)).

Clothing and emblems. Angelic clothing is repeatedly white, bright, or linen with golden girdles ([Mark 16:5; Luke 24:4; Rev 15:6](#)). Such garments mark their heavenly office and purity.

Relationship to created order. Angels are associated with winds ([Rev 7:1](#)), fire ([Rev 14:18](#)), and waters ([Rev 16:5](#)), as well as phenomena accompanying trumpet and vial judgments ([Rev 8–9; 16](#)). God is said to have poetically “rode upon a cherub, and did fly” ([Ps 18:10](#)), linking angelic beings with His sovereign control over creation.

Animals and nature. Angelic activity may affect animals: Balaam’s donkey sees the angel and turns aside repeatedly ([Num 22:23–27](#)), and an angel stops lions from harming Daniel ([Dan 6:22](#)). This fits with their broader involvement in God’s providential rule over the natural world; also see God’s influence over bears ([2 Kgs 2:23–24](#)), frogs, lice, flies, and locusts ([Exo 8; 10](#)), ravens ([1 Kgs 17:2–6](#)) etc.

WHAT SCRIPTURE DOES NOT REVEAL

Scripture gives substantial information about angels but also leaves many questions unanswered. It does not reveal:

- ❖ The exact total number of angels or a complete map of their hierarchy and ranks.
- ❖ Whether specific individual angels have a permanently assigned “guardian angel” role, though it affirms real angelic care over God’s people ([Matt 18:10; Acts 12:15](#)).
- ❖ The precise mechanics of angelic movement through space or matter, or the detailed nature of their speech and song.
- ❖ Whether angels are bound to our experience of time, or how they stand in relation to past and future; while they serve across history and reveal future events (e.g., in Daniel and Revelation), Scripture does not teach any notion of “time travel.”

Where Scripture is silent, we are to remain reverently silent and avoid any non-evidence-based speculation ([Deut 29:29](#)).

All credit, praise, honor, and glory belongs to our beloved God!

© 2020 Peter D. Arvo | [\(CC BY-NC-ND 4.0\)](#) | Last updated: 3/7/2026 | [TheTorchbearerSeries.com](#)