



# MULTIPLYING THE KINGDOM OF GOD

## Study Notes by Thomas Hale

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### A COMPILATION OF CONTEMPORARY BIBLICAL COMMENTARIES AND DICTIONARIES RELATED TO THE SUBJECT OF ANGELS

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## “ANGELS”

Fleming, Don. “Angels.” [AMG Concise Bible Dictionary](#), AMG Publishers, 1990, pp. 17-18.

Angels are God’s servants and messengers in the heavenly and spiritual realm, where they find true satisfaction in the unceasing worship and service of God. They were created before man, they belong to a higher order than man, and their number is countless (Ps 103:20; 148:2; Isa. 6:2-3; Dan 7:10; Luke 12:8-9; 15:10; Col 1:16; Heb 12:22; Rev 4:8; 5:11-12; 7:11).

### Good and Bad Angels

At some time before the creation of man, some of the angels, under the leadership of one who became known as Satan, rebelled against God and so fell from their original sinless state (2 Peter 2:4; Jude 6). As a result there are good angels and evil angels. Christ has angels and so has Satan (Job 4:18; Matt 25:31, 41; Jude 9; Rev 12:7-9).

Both good and bad angels are under God’s sovereign rule, the difference between them being that the good angels are obedient and the evil angels rebellious. Even the chief of the evil angels, Satan, is no more than a created being under the authority of God. Satan and the evil angels who follow him can do their evil work only within the limits that God allows (Job 1:12; 2:6; see SATAN).

Because of the high position that angels have as God’s heavenly servants, the Bible speaks of them as holy ones, as stars, and even as sons of God. Again these expressions may apply to good angels and bad angels (Job 1:6; 2:1; 5:1; 15:15; 38:7; Ps 89:5, 7; Rev 9:1; 12:3-4, 9).

## Dealings with Mankind

Angels have many functions in relation to mankind, but above all they are God's messengers (Gen 19:1; 28:12; Exod 3:2; Num 22:22; Judg 2:1-4; 6:11; 2 Sam 24:16; 1 Kings 13:18; 19:5; Matt 1:20; 2:19; 13:41; 16:27; Luke 1:26-31; Acts 10:3-4; Gal 3:19; e.g. see GABRIEL). In many of the earlier Old Testament references, the angel (or messenger) of God appears to be almost the same as God himself. This is possibly because the angel is so closely identified with God as his messenger that when he speaks God speaks. The angel's temporary physical appearance is God's temporary physical appearance (cf. Gen 16:7-13; 21:17-18; 22:15-17; Exod 3:2-6).

To the godly, an angel may be a guide (Gen 24:7, 40; Exod 14:19; Acts 8:26; 27:23), a protector (Ps 34:7; 91:11; Dan 6:22; 10:13, 21; Matt 18:10), a deliverer (Isa 63:9; Dan 3:28; Matt 26:53; Acts 5:19), an interpreter of visions (Dan 8:16; Zech 1:8-14; Rev 1:1; 22:6) and, in fact, a sympathetic helper in all circumstances (Mark 1:13; Luke 22:43; Heb 1:13-14). Yet to the ungodly, angels may be God's messengers of judgment (Matt 13:39, 41; 25:31-32; Acts 12:23; 2 Thess 1:7-8).

There are various categories of angels (Gen 3:24; Isa 6:2; Ezek 10:3; Col 1:16; 1 Thess 4:16; Jude 9; see MICHAEL). Angels themselves do not have a physical form and do not reproduce their kind as humans do (Matt 22:30). When God sends them as his messengers to humans, he may give them a form similar to that of humans, though they are usually sufficiently different to create a feeling of great awe (Judg 13:15-20; Matt 28:2-3; Luke 2:9; 24:4; John 20:12; Acts 1:10; 6:15).

Cherubim are spirit beings of one of the higher angelic orders. They usually feature as guardians of God's throne and protectors of his interests (Gen 3:24; Exod 25:17-22; Ps 80:1; Ezek 1:4-14; 10:1-22; cf. Rev 4:6-11; see CHERUBIM).

Great though angelic beings are, human beings should not worship them (Col 2:18; Rev 19:10; 22:8-9). Jesus Christ is the one whom people should worship; for he is God, and therefore far above angels (Heb 1:5-13; Eph 1:20-21; Col 2:10; Rev 5:11-14). Those who through faith are united with Christ will thereby share Christ's dominion in the age to come, and this will involve them in judgment of angels (Heb 2:5-9; 1 Cor 6:3).

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Cox, Steven L. "Angel." *Holman Illustrated Bible Dictionary*, edited by Chad Brand et al., Holman Bible Publishers, 2003, pp. 66-67.

**ANGEL** Created beings whose primary function is to serve and worship God. Though some interpret the "us" in Gen. 1:26 as inclusive of God and His angelic court, the Bible does not comment as to when they were created. Unlike God they are not eternal or omniscient. The Hebrew word in the OT is mal'ak, and the NT Greek word is angelos. They both mean "messenger" and occasionally refer to human messengers.

**Classification of Angels** Angels not only carry messages to people (Gen. 18:9-16; Judg. 13:2-24; Luke 1:13, 30; 2:8-15), they also carry out God's will as He directs them (Ps. 148:2-5; Col. 1:16). The Bible offers little description of angelic messengers because the focus is on the message and not the messenger. Angels also performed tasks as mediators (Acts 7:53; Gal. 3:19; Rev. 1:1; 10:1).

Angels also serve God in His heavenly court. Titles such as "sons of God" (Gen. 6:2-4; Job 1:6; 2:1), "holy ones" (Ps. 89:5; Dan. 4:13), and "heavenly hosts" (Luke 2:13) identify angels as celestial beings who worship God (Luke 2:13-15; Rev. 19:1-3), attend His throne (Rev. 5:11; 7:11), and make up God's army (1 Sam. 1:11; 1 Chron. 12:22).

Angels are sometimes identified as winged creatures—the cherubim and seraphim. These angels appear in Ezekiel's visions (1:4-28; 10:1-22) and in Isa. 6:2-6. Cherubim are primarily guards/attendants to God's throne, whereas seraphim attend God's throne and offer praises to Him.

**Angelic Appearance** The physical appearance of angels varies, based on their categorization. Unlike popular imagery, only cherubim and seraphim have wings. Within biblical texts angels always appear as men and never as women or children. Angels identify with humans on the basis of form, language, and action. Angelic uniqueness is sometimes evidenced in Scripture by their activity or appearing in ways humans do not (Gen. 16:1-11; Exod. 3:2; Num. 22:23; Judg. 6:21; 13:20; John 20:12). The feature of a brilliant white appearance of angels occurs only in the NT (Mark 16:5).

**Guardian Angels** Though the term "guardian angel" does not occur in the Bible, many people believe angels are assigned to believers for this purpose on a permanent basis. Others hold that angels intervene in human history but in unique situations to assist believers (Pss. 34:7; 91:11-12; Acts 12:6-11, 15). Hebrews 1:14 confirms that angels do service to believers but by God's will and under His direction.

Angels are described as heavenly beings in the very presence of God (Matt. 18:10). They cannot be in heaven and on earth simultaneously. A likely interpretation of "their angels" in the presence of God is that they are poised for action at God's command. The angelic guardianship that is apportioned to the faithful appears as a universal phenomenon rather than as an individual one.

**Angels at Christ's Return** Angels predicted Jesus would personally, bodily, visibly come again to earth (Matt. 25:31; Acts 1:11). In His second advent Christ will descend from heaven (1 Thess. 1:10) with the voice of the archangel and the trump of God (1 Thess. 4:16; 2 Thess. 1:7). According to 2 Thess. 1:7, angels will accompany Him as the executors of His decrees.

Mark 13:26-27 addresses the second coming of "the Son of Man." These verses describe the coming of Jesus with great power and glory and sending His angels to gather His elect. Many scholars assign the fulfillment of prophecy in Mark 13 to A.D. 70 in connection with the Roman destruction of Jerusalem and the temple. It is clear, however, that much of this text refers to His triumphant final return. Verse 27 confirms that the Son of Man will send angels to gather the elect. Angelic appearance often marked a turning point in biblical history (Gen. 18:9-15; Luke 1:13, 26-38; 2:8-15). Matthew's parallel passage (24:31) adds that the angels will gather the elect "with a loud trumpet." Angels will gather believers where believers will be like the angels in that they will not die or marry in heaven (Luke 20:35).

By performing this act, angels will assist in vindicating believers in the very presence of their enemies (Rev. 11:12). Angels will worship Christ at His return (Heb. 1:6). Likewise, believers will join the angels in the praise of God in heaven (Rev. 5:13; 19:6).

**Angels and the Final Judgment** The theme of angelic involvement in divine judgment occurs in both the OT and NT. According to 2 Kings 19:35, the angel of the Lord put to death 185,000 Assyrians, whereas 2 Sam. 24:16 reports that the angel of the Lord brought death to the children of Israel until the Lord told him to stay his hand at Jerusalem (2 Sam. 24:16). Exodus 14:19-20 records that the angel of the Lord stood between the Hebrews and the Egyptians, which resulted in the deliverance of the Hebrews and the subsequent destruction of the Egyptians in the Red Sea.

Some of these references pertained to immediate judgment and some to a final judgment (Gen. 19:12-13; 2 Sam. 24:16-17; 2 Kings 19:35; Ezek. 9:1, 5, 7). The NT likewise offers several examples of angelic participation in the judgment of evil, including immediate judgment (Acts 12:23) and a futuristic and final judgment (Rev. 8:6-9:21; 16:1-17; 18:1, 21; 19:11-14, 17-21; 20:1-3). At the crucifixion Jesus could have called upon 12 legions of angels in order to execute immediate judgment on those who crucified and mocked Him (Matt. 26:53).

According to Rev. 14:14-16, "the Son of Man" will gather the grain harvest (the believer), while Rev. 14:17-20 describes angels as gathering the unbelievers for the purpose of judgment. Angels will gather the "wheat" and the "tares" in the name of "the Son of Man" and by His authority (cp. Matt. 13:36-43). Angels will also gather impenitent people for Christ's judgment so that they may be cast into fire (Matt. 13:39-43; 2 Thess. 1:7-10). See Archangel; Cherub, Cherubim; Seraphim.

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Hearn, Walter R., and Howard F. Vos. "Angel." Baker Encyclopedia of the Bible, vol. 1, Baker Book House, 1988, pp. 87-89.

**Angel.** Messenger of God or supernatural being, either good or evil, with greater than human powers.

**The Concept of Angelic Beings.** The only source of valid information about angels is the Bible. The cherubim (plural of "cherub," a Hebrew word) were celestial beings sent by God to guard the tree of life in the garden of Eden (Gn 3:24). They were represented symbolically on the ark of the covenant (Ex 25:18-22), in the tabernacle (Ex 26:31) and temple (2 Chr 3:7), and seen by the prophet Ezekiel in a vision of the restored Jerusalem (Ez 41:18-20). Two angels, Gabriel and the chief, or archangel, Michael, are named in the Bible (Dn 8:16; 9:21; 10:13; Lk 1:19, 26; Jude 9; Rv 12:7-9).

Both Judaism and Christianity have the concept of fallen angels, of whom Satan is chief (Jb 1:6-12; Mt 25:41; 2 Pt 2:4), but neither the OT nor the NT goes into much detail about angels or demons. Scholars, poets, and artists have often gone beyond what is said about angels in the Bible. For example, the seraphim and cherubim were at times represented in the Bible as winged creatures, at least symbolically. In other passages, angels looked to observers like men clothed in white or shining garments (Lk 24:4; Acts 1:10). But even though Gabriel "flew swiftly" or "came quickly," the Bible does not describe angels as men with wings growing out of their shoulders. Some angels, however, are described in the Bible as having wings (Is 6:1-8; Ez 1:5-8, 24).

**Angels as Messengers.** In the Bible, angels are spiritual beings who serve primarily as messengers. The English word "angel" comes directly from a Greek word for messenger. In Luke 9:52, Jesus sent "messengers" ahead of him. Usually the same word is translated "angel" and is understood to mean a spiritual messenger from God. In the OT also, one Hebrew word can refer either to a human messenger or to a spiritual being. It is not always immediately clear which is meant, especially since angels sometimes appeared in human form. In certain passages, "the angel of God" or a similar phrase may refer to God delivering his own message in a "theophany" (appearance of God himself).

Once the patriarch Abraham beheld that "three men stood in front of him" (Gn 18:2). They were clearly delivering a message from God that the elderly Abraham and Sarah would have a son. During the conversation God spoke directly (Gn 18:14). Two verses later, the men set out for Sodom, but the Lord lingered to talk to Abraham. Chapter 19 begins with "the two angels" arriving at Sodom, where they were taken to be men. Such ambiguity led a NT author to say, "Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for thereby some have entertained angels unawares" (Heb 13:2).

The two major words translated “angel” appear almost 300 times from Genesis to Revelation. One or two angels, or whole hosts (armies) of angels, may appear to a specific person. The angel who announced the birth of Jesus Christ to the shepherds was joined by “a multitude of the heavenly host” praising God (Lk 2:13, 14). In the garden of Gethsemane, Jesus said to one disciple, “Do you think that I cannot appeal to my Father, and he will at once send me more than twelve legions of angels?” (Mt 26:52). Such expressions as “the Lord of hosts” throughout the Bible probably refer to God as commander of an army of angels.

**How the Bible Speaks of Angels.** In the everyday speech of the time, humans were often compared to superhuman angels (2 Sm 14:20). Jesus said that “not even the angels” know when the end of the world will come (Mt 24:36). Peter wrote that salvation through Jesus Christ was so wonderful that it was something “... into which angels long to look” (1 Pt 1:12). Some passages refer to the strength or power of angels (Ps 103:20; 2 Thes 1:7; 2 Pt 2:11); others to their moral perfection (1 Sm 29:9), even though some “did not keep their own position but left their proper dwelling” (Jude 6). The reputation of angels for moral goodness was so high that Paul warned Christians of false teachers disguised as angels (Gal 1:8). Nor was Paul surprised at the success of false prophets, “for even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light” (2 Cor 11:14).

The physical appearance of angels in biblical encounters was often unusual enough to distinguish them from ordinary people. The angel who moved the stone from the entrance to Jesus’ tomb had an “appearance ... like lightning” and “raiment white as snow” (Mt 28:3). Stephen had “the face of an angel” as he prayed at his martyrdom (Acts 6:15), probably a peaceful and holy expression uncommon in such a circumstance.

Many passages about angels are descriptions of dreams or visions. “Jacob’s ladder” with angels ascending and descending (Gn 28:12) is an example. In another dream an angel spoke to Jacob (Gn 31:11). An angel appeared to Cornelius in a vision (Acts 10:1-3). Major passages of this type include Isaiah 6 (the seraphim), much of the Book of Ezekiel (the cherubim), and much of Daniel and Zechariah. In the NT, over a third of the references to angels are in the Book of Revelation. In most cases there, the angelic beings are glorious or grotesque figures seen in visions and not to be confused with human persons. The language describing such visions is appropriately mystical, or at least metaphorical and difficult to interpret.

Two passages are thought by many to describe the fall of Satan and other angels. “How you are fallen from heaven, O Day Star, son of Dawn!” (Is 14:12) occurs in a denunciation of the king of Babylon. “You were in Eden” (Ez 28:13) occurs in a denunciation of the king of Tyre. If the two human tyrants were seen as personifications of evil, the statements about Satan could be regarded as metaphorical. Passages that clearly refer to the fall of angels (2 Pt 2:4; Jude 6) do not go into detail.

Some theologians think that Genesis 6:1-6 refers to fallen angels when it mentions “sons of God” who had sexual relations with women. That interpretation is based in part on Job 1:6-12, in which “the sons of God came to present themselves before the Lord, and Satan came also among them” (KJV).

**Christian Angelology.** Angelology, the doctrine of angels, is not a major theme in Christian theology in spite of the many references to angels in the Bible.

**Spiritual Creatures.** Angels are included in descriptions of all that God created (Ps 148:2; Col 1:16). There are hints that they witnessed the creation of the world (Jb 38:7). No matter how close to God angels may be, they share with humankind the status of creatures. But as wholly spiritual creatures they are free from many human limitations, such as death (Lk 20:36). They do not marry (Mt 22:30), so they could be regarded as sexless; in all biblical appearances of angels in human form they were taken to be men, never women or children. Their ability to communicate in human language and to affect human life in other ways is basic to their role in the Bible. Their power (Mt 28:2) and awesome appearance (vv 3, 4) sometimes tempted people to fear or worship them, but the NT does not condone the worship of angels (Col 2:18; Rv 22:8, 9). Though angels are stronger and wiser than human beings, their power and knowledge are also limited by God (Ps 103:20; Mt 24:36; 1 Pt 1:11, 12; 2 Pt 2:11).

**Relationship to Christ.** The apostle John had a vision of angels surrounding the throne of God (Rv 5:11). Paul once gave a particularly solemn command to Timothy “in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus and of the elect angels” (1 Tm 5:21). Christ became “much superior to angels as the name he has obtained is more excellent than theirs” (Heb 1:4). “When he brings the first-born into the world, he says, ‘Let all God’s angels worship him’ ” (Heb 1:6). “But to what angel has he ever said, ‘Sit at my right hand, till I make thy enemies a stool for thy feet’? Are they not all ministering spirits sent forth to serve, for the sake of those who are to obtain salvation?” (Heb 1:13, 14). Psalm 8 is quoted as referring to Christ, made “for a little while lower than the angels” (Heb 2:7, 8).

**Fallen Angels.** Before Christ’s final victory, Satan (literally “the adversary”) must first be conquered. On earth Jesus cast out demons “by the Spirit of God” (Mt 12:28). When his disciples discovered that the demons were subject to him, Jesus said, “I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven” (Lk 10:18). As his crucifixion drew near, Jesus said the time had come when “... the ruler of this world be cast out” (Jn 12:31). Many indirect references identify Satan as an angel who sinned because of pride, and Revelation 12:7-9 describes “war in heaven” in which the archangel Michael and his angels fought against Satan and his fallen angels. Although Christians are warned to be on guard against Satan who is still the “prince of the power of the air” (Eph 2:2), there is no biblical basis for excessive fear of the devil or evil spirits.

**Earthly Functions.** Meanwhile, “of the angels he says, ‘Who makes his angels winds, and his servants flames of fire’” (Heb 1:7; cf. Ps 104:4). Angels appeared to many of God’s people in the Bible to announce good news (Jgs 13:3), warn of danger (Gn 19:15), guard from evil (Dn 3:28; 6:22), guide and protect (Ex 14:19), nourish (Gn 21:14-20; 1 Kgs 19:4-7), or instruct (Acts 7:38; Gal 3:19). When Christ came to earth as the Savior, angels heralded his birth (Lk 2:8-15), guided and warned his parents (Mt 2:13), strengthened him

when he was tempted (Mt 4:11) and in his last distress (Lk 22:43), and participated in his resurrection (Mt 28:1-6). Jesus spoke about the guardian angels of little children (Mt 18:10). Philip was guided by an angel (Acts 8:26). Apostles were rescued from prison by an angel (Acts 5:19; 12:7-11). In a frightening situation, the apostle Paul was encouraged by an angel (Acts 27:21-25).

**Role in Judgment.** Christians expect angels to accompany Christ at his triumphant return (Mt 25:31; Acts 1:10, 11; 1 Thes 4:16; 2 Thes 1:7). Angels will participate in the last judgment, even as they have exercised God's judgment before. It was an angel who struck Herod Agrippa dead (Acts 12:21-23). The Destroyer, whose "passing over" the Israelites as he smote the Egyptians is celebrated in the Jewish Passover (Ex 12:21-27), may have been a "death angel."

**The Holy Spirit.** Since NT times, many of the works previously entrusted by God to his angels have been part of the Holy Spirit's function in the lives of believers in Christ. In his guidance, illumination, protection, and empowering of Christians, the Spirit nonetheless may continue to employ angels for the sake of God and his people.

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[Richards, Lawrence O. New International Encyclopedia of Bible Words: Based on the NIV and the NASB, Zondervan Publishing House, 1999, pp. 43-46.](#)

## ANGELS

Both the OT and the NT speak of created beings with individuality and personal identity who exist in a spiritual dimension that touches, but is not the same as, our material universe. Our attention is not focused on these beings, but the veil between us and the unseen world is pulled back slightly, and we can see glimpses of a reality that is closed to us now. What we glimpse is a spiritual universe within which an invisible war is continually being waged. This universe touches our own, for God is the Creator of both, and a single act is being played out on each stage. According to the Scriptures, although hidden from us, angels play a significant role both in our lives and in the whole course of history.

- OT
1. The angels
  2. The role of angels in the OT
  3. The angel of the Lord
  4. Daniel 10

- NT 5. The angels, good and evil
- 6. The role of angels in the NT
- 7. Jesus and the angels
- 8. Humanity and the angels

**OT—1. The angels.** The Hebrew word *mal'āk* means “messenger,” “representative,” or “angel.” It is used of both human and supernatural messengers, and the context will usually determine which is intended. The mission of a *mal'āk* is to (1) carry a message, (2) fulfill a special, specific commission, and/or (3) represent the one sending him.

The supernatural beings called angels are also referred to by other names. They are called “sons of God” (KJV), a phrase meaning direct creations of God (Job 1:6; 2:1; and possibly Ge 6:2-4). They are also called “mighty ones” in Ps 29:1 and “heavenly beings” in Ps 89:6, as well as “holy ones” in Ps 89:5, 7; Da 4:13, 17, 23; 8:13 (twice).

The angels were created by God and were witnesses to the creation of the material universe (Job 38:7). They serve as members of God’s eternal court (Job 1:6; Isa 6:2-4), and they are exhorted to praise him (Ps 103:20-21; 148:2).

There are different orders and different types of these powerful beings. The cherubim, for example, have traits of both humans and animals (Ge 3:24; Ps 18:10; Isa 6:2; Eze 1:5-14; 10:19-22). One powerful archangel, Gabriel, is identified by name four times in Scripture (Da 8:16; 9:21; Lk 1:19, 26).

Satan was created an angel and named Lucifer. The NT tells us what the OT hints at. Satan led a great rebellion in the unseen universe and was followed by many of the angels who fell with him. → Satan → Demons/Evil Spirits

**2. The role of angels in the OT.** While angels are not a major theme of the OT, there are many indications of their importance to sacred history. Angels were associated with God’s deliverance of his people from slavery in Egypt. God promised Israel, “I am sending an angel ahead of you to guard you along the way and to bring you to the place I have prepared” (Ex 23:20). On a similar mission of protection an angel aided Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego in the fiery furnace (Da 3:28) and Daniel in the lions’ den (6:22). One of the most graphic OT stories of angelic protection is found in 2 Ki 6. The king of Aram had sent an army to capture the prophet Elisha. Elisha’s servant stepped outside one morning to find the town of Dothan surrounded by an enemy force. He ran in terror to the prophet. Elisha quieted his fears and then asked God to open the servant’s eyes. Suddenly the servant saw “the hills full of horses and chariots of fire all around Elisha” (6:17). An angelic army was present to protect the Lord’s prophet.

In addition, angels were involved in God's dramatic judgments on sinful people (Sodom, Ge 19:1; a plague decimating Israel, 2 Sa 24:17; 1 Ch 21:15; destruction of an Assyrian army, 2 Ch 32:21; Isa 37:36). Abraham reassured his servant by saying that God would send an angel to help the servant get a wife for Isaac (Ge 24:7, 40). Angels clearly are given assignments to guard and guide believers and to carry out God's judgments on sin. Also, the "angel of the Lord" is intimately linked with revelation.

**3. The angel of the Lord.** A number of references in the OT single out a being identified as "the angel of the Lord." This distinctive personage is especially active at critical times in OT history and is identified when contact with angels involves revelation of some special message from God to man.

The angel of the Lord is linked with key events in the lives of each of the patriarchs (Abraham and Isaac, Ge 22:11, 15-18; Jacob, Ge 31:11). The angel of the Lord called Moses to his mission (Ex 3), appeared to Gideon (Jdg 6), empowered Samson (Jdg 13), strengthened Elijah (1 Ki 19), and was the agent of revelation in a prophecy about Israel's future (Zec 1). He can be called on to protect (Ps 34:7) and to do battle against implacable enemies (Ps 35:5-6).

There has been much speculation about the identity of the angel of the Lord. Many suggest that he is actually the Second Person of the Trinity, appearing before the Incarnation. This interpretation is supported by the fact that the angel of the Lord not only serves as the agent of revelation in most contexts where he appears; he also speaks as the God of the covenant (Jdg 2:1-4). He is often viewed as God by those to whom he appears (Ge 16:9-13; Ex 3:2, 6; Jdg 13:20-22). Two conclusions seem evident: no clear distinction can be made between this angel and Yahweh, and where human beings encounter God in the OT, they meet him not in unmasked glory but in the person of the angel of the Lord.

**4. Daniel 10.** This chapter makes an important contribution to OT angelology. Daniel records that after three weeks of prayer and partial fasting, he was visited by an angel who brought an extended message concerning the far future. This angel, like others, was humanoid in form but burned with flame. The impact of the angel's presence was so traumatic that Daniel trembled, helpless and unable to move. The angel touched and strengthened Daniel and then explained that he was sent in answer to Daniel's prayers. But for twenty-one days this powerful being had been blocked from accomplishing his mission by a prince of the unseen universe, one who had been assigned [by Satan] to influence the course of the Persian Empire. The angel who spoke to Daniel had been able to break through only with the aid of Michael, one of God's faithful angels of even higher rank than this "prince of Persia." After delivering the message, Daniel's visitor returned to the battle he had just left, to struggle against added forces coming to the aid of the angel of Persia.

What this chapter adds to the OT's teaching on angelology is significant. It shows that angels were created by God with varying powers—or ranks—in angelic armies. Da 10 reveals that an invisible war is taking place

between the angel armies of God and those of Satan, fought with forces whose numbers and power we cannot begin to imagine. It shows that nations as well as individuals are participants in the invisible war and that one facet of the hidden battle is waged to influence political events in our world of space and time.

What we are shown here and in the rest of the OT is at best a glimpse—a hint of wonders hidden from us, trapped as we are in the material universe. But what we are shown is compelling evidence that there is a spiritual universe that exists alongside the universe we know through our senses. The angels and other spiritual beings are real. And our God is the ultimate ruler of the invisible as well as of the visible.

NT—The NT assumes all that the OT teaches about angels and goes on to add fresh information. The NT word *angelos* also means “messenger.” It is used some 175 times. The activity of angels in the NT concentrated around the birth of Christ (Mt 1-2; Lk 1-2) and will again be prominent at Jesus’ return and the judgment to take place then (cf. Mt 13, 24-25, 1 Th 1, Rev).

Jesus’ statement that those raised from the dead are “like the angels” (Mt 22:30; Mk 12:25; Lk 20:36) simply affirms that, like angels, the resurrected are not subject to the limitations of mortal life on earth.

**5. The angels, good and evil.** The NT makes explicit what is hinted at in the OT. Satan leads a host of angels (Mt 25:41). Like him, they fell from their original state; they choose not to “keep their positions of authority but abandoned their own home” (Jude 6) and as a result are condemned to eternal judgment (also 2 Pe 2:4). Many believe that fallen angels are the demons that are spoken of in the NT. → Demons/Evil Spirits The angels who remained committed in their allegiance to God continue to serve him and carry out the missions they are assigned.

**6. The role of angels in the NT.** As noted above, the NT associates angels closely with the first and second comings of Jesus. In the meanwhile, they are “all ministering spirits sent to serve those who will inherit salvation” (Heb 1:14). Angels seem to have a special ministry in relation to children (Mt 18:10). An angel was instrumental in releasing Peter from prison (Acts 12) and in preparing the way for the conversion of Cornelius (Ac 10-11). Most references to the present ministry of angels, however, are oblique, and little attention is paid in the NT to angels. When believers at Colosse turned aside to follow a heresy that stressed special honor given angels as divine intermediaries, Paul sent a stern warning (Col 2). Jesus came in person into man’s world and in the full majesty of his deity he brought us life. Jesus freed us from sin’s deadly grip so that we might share through him the fullness of all that God has for us. Angels in the unseen world are all under Jesus, “who is the head over every power and authority” (Col 2:10). Jesus, not angels, is the focus of our faith. He is the one in whom we find fulfillment (Col 3:1-4).

**7. Jesus and the angels.** Jesus Christ, the Son of God, ranks far above the angels by virtue of his nature (Php 2:6; Heb 1:4-14). In the Incarnation, Jesus took on human nature. In the Resurrection, Jesus the God-Man took his place as Lord, being set in authority over angelic beings of every rank and title (Eph

1:20-22; Php 2:9-11; Col 2:10-11). The superiority of Jesus to angels is developed in the first chapter of Hebrews. This book was written to converted Jewish believers who were steeped in OT lore and needed to be reminded that Jesus and the new covenant he inaugurated were superior to the system that existed under the old (Mosaic) covenant. → Covenant The writer of Hebrews begins by comparing Jesus with angels, because the angels were viewed by the first-century Jew as mediators of revelation and as higher beings who deserve great respect. The writer launches his argument by affirming Jesus as “the radiance of God’s glory and the exact representation of his being” (Heb 1:3), that is, as God himself. The new revelation is given, not by angels, but by the God of the angels!

The superiority of Jesus is demonstrated by the following facts: (1) God calls Jesus “Son”—a title not shared with angels (1:5); (2) the angels offer the Son worship (1:6); (3) whereas angels are referred to as servants, Jesus is given a throne and a kingdom (1:7-8); (4) the angels were witnesses to the Creation, but Jesus both shaped and will outlast all of creation (1:10-12; cf. Job 38:7; Pr 8); and (5) Jesus is now seated at the Father’s right hand, while angels are serving saved human beings (1:13-14). Since Jesus as the Son of God is so vastly superior to the angels, who were communicators of the old revelation (Heb 2:2), it is clear that the new revelation must be vastly superior to the old. The Jewish convert thus can rest secure in his Christian faith.

**8. Humanity and the angels.** It is clear from the Bible that angels are superior to human beings in many ways. As direct creations of God, these beings have unlimited lifetimes and unusual powers. Yet the writer to the Hebrews points out, in awed tones, that “it is not to angels that he [God] has subjected the world to come” (Heb 2:5). Jesus chose to share our humanity so that he might free us from sin’s grip. “Surely it is not angels he helps,” the writer says in wonder, “but Abraham’s descendants” (2:16). Alive now in Jesus, we will be brought to glory and lifted far above the angels.

Angels, then, are not only God’s ministers, assigned to serve the heirs of salvation; they are also eager witnesses to all that God is doing in this world (Lk 15:10; 1 Co 11:10; 1 Ti 3:16). Ultimately human beings will be called on to judge the angels (1 Co 6:3).

What we glimpse about angels is intriguing and stimulates speculation. But the thrust of the OT and NT is clear. Human beings, not angels, are the focus of God’s concern. In return, God invites us to fix our thoughts and our faith on Jesus—not on angels. We can trust Jesus as Lord to supervise the unseen universe for his good purposes and for our benefit. We can concentrate our efforts on coming to better know and love the one who truly is Lord of all.

The angels are the dispensers and administrators of the divine beneficence toward us; they regard our safety, undertake our defense, direct our ways, and exercise a constant solicitude that no evil befall us.

John Calvin

*13 But to which of the angels has he ever said, "Sit at my right hand until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet"? 14 Are they not all ministering spirits, sent out to serve those who will inherit salvation?*  
AMP

(1:14) Here the writer sums up the function of the angels as compared to that of the Son. He is the highest dignity, a co-ruler with God. They are His servants, appointed to minister to the heirs of redemption.

**Translation.** Are not they all ministering servants sent on a commission for the sake of those who are about to inherit salvation?

Wuest, Kenneth S. *Wuest's Word Studies from the Greek New Testament: For the English Reader*. Eerdmans, 1997, p. 50.

From the throne of God and from the seat of honor, commands are given to angels to work in behalf of and for the benefit of the believers, who will inherit salvation. Whereas Jesus sits enthroned in majesty and grandeur, angels are ministering spirits. They must obey and serve. Not a single angel is excluded. Even archangels, including Gabriel and Michael, are sent by God to work in the interest of the saints (Luke 1:11-38; Jude 9).

Scripture teaches that angels are ministering spirits, "sent to serve those [the people of God] who will inherit salvation." Angels announce the law of God (Acts 7:53; Gal. 3:19; Heb. 2:2); deliver messages to God's people (Isa. 6:6-7; Dan. 8:18-19; 9:20-23; 10:12, 14; Luke 1:18-19); minister to the needs of the people of God (1 Kings 19:5, 7; Ps. 91:11-12; Matt. 18:10; Acts 7:38; 12:15; 1 Cor. 11:10); are appointed guardians of cities and nations (Ezek. 9:1; Dan. 10:13, 20-21; 11:1; 12:1); and will gather the elect at the time of Christ's return (Matt. 24:31; Mark 13:27). However, the angels have not been commissioned to teach or preach to the elect.

Kistemaker, Simon J., and William Hendriksen. *Exposition of Hebrews*. Baker Book House, 1953-2001, pp. 49-50.

**1:14 But angels are only servants.** They are spirits sent from God to care for those who will receive salvation. Christ possesses the right to sit at God's right hand (1:13), while the angels are his servants. Jesus is much greater than the angels, who serve him. The angels are ministering spirits who are sent from God to care for those who will receive salvation. The angels' purpose is to serve; Christ's purpose is to reign. Angels are higher than people in creation's hierarchy (see Psalm 8:4), being created first and with higher function. But God has reversed the order and instructed the angels to serve his people. The fact that angels serve us should encourage us when we feel unloved or forgotten. Because God loves us, he dispatches his angels to help us.

Barton, Bruce B., et al. *Hebrews*. Tyndale House Publishers, 1997, p. 13.