

Introduction

Holy Angels is the first of four Essentials teachings that will cover the gamut of celestial beings. The subsequent three teachings will cover the (1) higher orders of holy angels (seraphim and cherubim), (2) unholy or fallen angels and (3) Satan, who was originally the highest ranking celestial being. Unless specified otherwise, “angels” in this teaching refers to holy angels. Holy angels and unholy angels are the more common, lowest order of angels.

Due to the imagery of artwork and fictional books and movies, most people tend to have Biblically incorrect ideas concerning angels. Notably, angels only appear as young men. There is no such thing as female angels, childlike angels, or angels appearing as older men. Additionally, angels do not have wings.

The following verse succinctly details what angels are and what their role is in God’s order:

Are they [angels] not all ministering spirits sent out to serve for the sake of those who are to inherit salvation? (Hebrews 1:14)

The Hebrew word for angel, *mal’ak*, and the Greek word for angel, *aggelos*, both mean “messenger”. Angels primary role is that of messengers commissioned by God to serve His people.

As we proceed with this Essentials teaching on holy angels, we are talking about holy messengers of the lowest order of celestial beings that do not have wings and only appear as young men.

Not the Angel of the Lord

In the Old Testament books of the Bible, it is critical to distinguish regular angelic beings from the angel of the Lord (also referred to as the angel of God). The angel of the Lord was not an angelic messenger, but God Himself. He was the second person of the [triunity](#) or Jesus Christ appearing pre-incarnate. In the 18th chapter of Genesis, He is simply referred to as the Lord. Notice that the angel of the Lord never appeared again in the Bible once Jesus Christ came on the scene as the God man. In the Old Testament, roughly two-thirds of all the uses of the word

“angel” and almost all references to an angel appearing was the angel of the Lord. The appearance of regular angels is far more frequent in the New Testament.

Many Christians are simply not even aware that Jesus was in the Old Testament many times. [The Word of Promise](#) audio Bible got it right, because Jim Caviezel who plays Jesus speaks for the angel of the Lord. You here people say that Jesus never condemned homosexuality. Really? Then why did He pay a personal visit to Abraham in Genesis 18 to oversee the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah? People talk of the Old Testament God being different than the New Testament God in a negative sense. Really? Perhaps they have a different Jesus.

In the future I plan on tackling a specific study on the angel of the Lord in the Old Testament—a study I am very much looking forward to.

The Nature of Angels

It is interesting to note that angels are unique personal beings. Throughout the Biblical record we see them display intelligence, will power, and emotions—the same capacities of the human soul. Like the resurrected Jesus Christ, angels have spirit bodies not consisting of flesh and bones (Luke 24:39), but they can eat our food (Genesis 18:8). They are generally not visible, but they are able to appear in bodily form and when they do, they *always* appear as young men. Jesus told us that angels “neither marry nor are given in marriage” (Matthew 22:30) so we know they do not reproduce. There is a finite number of them originally created by God (more on that later).

As the denotation “holy” implies in the name, holy angels are without sin. Various Biblical passages depict them wearing white, often radiant, clothing which is symbolic for their holiness. Revelation 12:4 reveals that Satan (the dragon) took one-third of the angels with him when he sinned. This time of decision on sin was a one time event for the angels. In [Angelology: The Doctrine of the Elect Angels](#), Dr. Arnold Fruchtenbaum explains this:

But two thirds of the angels chose not to follow Satan, and they have been confirmed in their holiness. “Confirmed holiness” means is that they are no longer capable of falling; the period of testing and probation is over, and they are no longer capable of sinning. When believers receive their resurrection bodies, they will also be confirmed in their holiness; and, in their resurrection bodies, they will not be capable of sinning either. God Himself has always been confirmed in His holiness; He is incapable of sinning. These unfallen angels are no longer capable of sinning, so they are called *elect angels*.

This “confirmed holiness” is demonstrated by the fact that there is not one example in the Bible of a holy angel being tempted after the fall, yet alone sinning. Furthermore, the apostle Peter referred to the angels sinning as a one time event when he wrote, “when they sinned” (2 Peter 2:4). Angels continually conduct themselves in perfect holiness. Examples are the fact that angels do not speak blasphemous judgments against those in authority (2 Peter 2:11) and they always resist even the appearance of being worshipped (Revelation 22:8-9). They rejoice in the things that God rejoices over (Luke 15:10).

Names for Angels

Angel is by far the most common name used in the Bible to refer to these heavenly messengers, but there are several other names given to them that are worth reviewing because doing so provides insight into their position and function in God’s order.

A handful of times in the Old Testament, a multitude of angels are referred to as the *holy ones*, *heavenly beings*, the *sons of God*, the *sons of might*, *stars*, or a *host*. For example, Ethan the Ezrahite declared:

Let the heavens praise your wonders, O LORD, your faithfulness in *the assembly of the holy ones*! For who in the skies can be compared to the LORD? Who among the *heavenly beings* is like the LORD, a God greatly to be feared *in the council of the holy ones* and awesome above all who are around him? O LORD God of hosts, who is mighty as you are, O LORD, with your faithfulness all around you? (Psalm 89:5-8; emphasis mine)

This Psalm implies that the angels form an assembly or council around the throne of God. In the first two chapters of Job we are told that there are times when the *sons of God* present

themselves before the Lord. This is also amplified in the apostle John's account of his visit to the throne of God where he witnessed the multitude of angels worshipping God:

Then I looked, and I heard around the throne and the living creatures and the elders the voice of many angels, numbering myriads of myriads and thousands and thousands, saying with a loud voice, "Worthy is the Lamb who was slain, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing!" (Revelation 5:11-12)

The heavenly assembling of angels around the throne of God provides insight into their function in His order. Psalm 103 adds to this understanding:

Bless the LORD, O you his angels, you mighty ones *who do his word, obeying the voice of his word!* Bless the LORD, all his hosts, his ministers, *who do his will!* (20-21; emphasis mine)

Holy angels are servants of God who "do his word" and "do his will". Their participation in the council around the throne of God is related to this service. This aspect can be seen in what Jesus said concerning children:

"See that you do not despise one of these little ones. For I tell you that in heaven their angels always see the face of my Father who is in heaven. What do you think? If a man has a hundred sheep, and one of them has gone astray, does he not leave the ninety-nine on the mountains and go in search of the one that went astray? And if he finds it, truly, I say to you, he rejoices over it more than over the ninety-nine that never went astray. So it is not the will of my Father who is in heaven that one of these little ones should perish. (Matthew 18:10-14)

Jesus revealed that the guardian angels of children report to God in heaven. Angels are actively engaged in God's loving plans for protecting His own and seeking out those who go astray. Psalm 91:11 tells us that God commands His angels to guard those who live in Christ.

Host of Heaven

When Jacob departed from Laban in the hill country of Gilead we are told:

Jacob went on his way, and the angels of God met him. And when Jacob saw them he said, "This is God's camp! So he called the name of that place Mahanaim. (Genesis 32:1-2)

The Hebrew word translated here in English as "camp" is *machaneh*. It is a military term and the usage here in connection with angels reveals that large groups of angels often form as an army of God to execute His purposes. More commonly, a large number of angels, either holy, fallen, or both, are frequently referred to as a *host*. The Hebrew word translated "host" in English is *tsaba'* which means "army". God was frequently referred to in the Old Testament as the Lord of Hosts as the prophets acknowledged that He is the Head of this army. Zechariah referred to God this way forty-six times in his prophetic book where the Lord is accompanied by an angel that He gives commands through. Finally, the Lord told us that He is going to return with this holy army to set things right (Mark 8:38, Matthew 16:27 and 25:31).

This relationship was amplified by the prophet Micaiah when he stood before King Ahab and declared:

"Therefore hear the word of the Lord: *I saw the LORD sitting on his throne, and all the host of heaven standing beside him on his right hand and on his left*; and the LORD said, 'Who will entice Ahab, that he may go up and fall at Ramoth-gilead?' And one said one thing, and another said another. Then a spirit came forward and stood before the LORD, saying, 'I will entice him.' And the LORD said to him, 'By what means?' And he said, 'I will go out, and will be a lying spirit in the mouth of all his prophets.' And he said, 'You are to entice him, and you shall succeed; go out and do so.' Now therefore behold, the LORD has put a lying spirit in the mouth of all these your prophets; the LORD has declared disaster for you." (1 Kings 22:19-23; emphasis mine)

Here we see the host gather before the throne of God for a heavenly meeting. This passage, along with Job 1:6-12 and 2:1-6, implies that fallen angels also routinely meet before the throne of God. God is in absolute control over the entire host of angels—both good and evil—and they can do nothing beyond His will. The scene that Micaiah saw in heaven is even more revealing because it shows that God will use fallen angels—in this case a "lying" spirit—to execute His judgements. This is a significant realization. King Nebuchadnezzar once extolled this aspect of God's glory:

At the end of the days I, Nebuchadnezzar, lifted my eyes to heaven, and my reason returned to me, and I blessed the Most High, and praised and honored him who lives forever, for his dominion is an everlasting dominion, and his kingdom endures from generation to generation; all the inhabitants of the earth are accounted as nothing, and *he does according to his will among the host of heaven* and among the inhabitants of the earth; and none can stay his hand or say to him, "What have you done?" (Daniel 4:34-35; emphasis mine)



The Heavenly Host

Of significance is the fact that the "host of heaven" also has other meanings in the Bible. It is commonly used to describe the totality of the celestial bodies—the sun, moon, planets, stars, etc. The following verse enhances this fact:

And beware lest you raise your eyes to heaven, and when you see the sun and the moon and the stars, *all the host of heaven*, you be drawn away and bow down to them and serve them, things that the LORD your God has allotted to all the peoples under the whole heaven.
(Deuteronomy 4:19; emphasis mine)

Angels are symbolically referred to as "stars" a handful of times in the Bible. As I studied "host of heaven" in the Scriptures I discovered that the use of the phrase to describe both celestial bodies and celestial beings becomes so intertwined that there seems to be almost a mystical relationship between the two. I subsequently found this interesting note on the host of heaven in the [Tyndale Bible Dictionary](#) which reinforced my thinking: "In the astrological cults of antiquity, it was believed that celestial bodies were animated by spirits and thus constituted a living army that controlled heavenly destiny." This adds color to God's warning to Israel to not "bow down to them and serve them."