

# Angels:

## Created Servants of the Living God

*A Biblical and Theological Position Paper*

*By The Elders of Grace Bible Church*

### Introduction

Few subjects in the Bible capture the imagination quite like angels. They appear at pivotal moments: guarding Eden’s gate, announcing Christ’s birth, ministering to Him in the wilderness, and standing ready at His return. Yet, for all their prominence, angels are often either ignored or misunderstood.

Some Christians rarely think about angels at all, assuming they are a distant relic of biblical times. Others swing to the opposite extreme, building a fascination with angels into a kind of obsession—chasing stories of angelic encounters, attributing every whisper of wind to an angel’s wings, or slipping into angel-worship, a temptation Paul warns against (Colossians 2:18).

Our task is to strike a biblical balance. Angels are not the centerpiece of our faith—Christ is. Yet, to neglect what God’s Word says about them is to miss a vital part of His revealed truth. Understanding who angels are and what they do helps us grasp God’s majesty, His care for His people, and the unseen spiritual realities that surround us.

This paper will explore angels as Scripture presents them: their origin, nature, ranks, roles, and even their fallen counterparts. We will also address misconceptions, and finally consider what angels mean for us as followers of Christ today.

## I. What Angels Are

### 1. Angels Are Created Beings

The Bible is clear: angels are not eternal. Unlike God, who is without beginning or end (Psalm 90:2), angels were brought into existence at a moment in time. The psalmist declares, “*Praise Him, all His angels; praise Him, all His hosts! ... for He commanded and they were created*” (Psalm 148:2, 5). Paul echoes this truth in Colossians 1:16: “*For by Him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things were created through Him and for Him.*”

This corrects a common misconception: while angels are **immortal**—they do not die as humans do (Luke 20:36)—they are not **eternal** in the same sense God is eternal. They are finite creatures, dependent upon God for their existence.

Theologian Wayne Grudem puts it plainly: “*Angels have not always existed; they are part of the universe that God created.*” (Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 1994).

## **2. Angels Are Spiritual in Nature**

The author of Hebrews calls them “*ministering spirits sent out to serve for the sake of those who are to inherit salvation*” (Hebrews 1:14). They do not have physical bodies by default. Yet, Scripture testifies that angels can take on physical form when God appoints it. Abraham and Lot both hosted angels who appeared as men (Genesis 18–19). Jacob wrestled with what seems to have been an angelic figure (Genesis 32:24–30). Even in the New Testament, angels appear to Mary, Joseph, Zechariah, and the shepherds, not as abstract beings but in visible form (Luke 1–2).

This dual reality—spiritual essence, yet capacity for physical manifestation—reminds us of the complexity of God’s creation. Angels are not bound by the same physical limitations as we are, but they are not omnipresent or omnipotent.

## **3. Angels Are Numerous and Organized**

The Bible describes angels as countless. Daniel, in his vision of the Ancient of Days, saw “*thousands upon thousands attending Him, and ten thousand times ten thousand standing before Him*” (Daniel 7:10). John echoes this in Revelation 5:11, describing “*myriads of myriads, and thousands of thousands*” of angels worshipping the Lamb.

Not only are angels many, but they are organized into ranks and orders (Ephesians 1:21; Colossians 1:16). We will examine these ranks more closely later, but for now it is enough to see that God has arranged the angelic host with order and purpose, reflecting His character as a God of order (1 Corinthians 14:33).

# **II. Orders and Classifications of Angels**

Scripture uses different terms and categories to describe angels. While we should be cautious not to speculate beyond what God has revealed, the Bible does show us distinctions within the angelic host.

## **1. Archangels**

The term “archangel” (meaning “chief angel”) is rare in Scripture. Michael is explicitly called an archangel in Jude 9, where he contends with the devil over the body of Moses. Michael also appears in Daniel as a defender of God’s people (Daniel 10:13, 21; 12:1), and in Revelation 12:7 he leads heavenly armies in battle against Satan. Gabriel, though not given the title “archangel,” serves as a principal messenger—appearing to Daniel, Zechariah, and Mary (Daniel 8:16; 9:21; Luke 1:19, 26).

## 2. Cherubim

First mentioned in Genesis 3:24, cherubim guard the entrance to Eden after Adam and Eve's expulsion, wielding a flaming sword. In Exodus, golden cherubim were crafted atop the Ark of the Covenant to signify God's throne (Exodus 25:18–22). Ezekiel 10 describes cherubim with complex forms—four wings, multiple faces, and radiant appearance—serving as bearers of God's glory. Rather than the chubby baby “cherubs” of artwork, the Bible's cherubim are fearsome guardians of holiness.

## 3. Seraphim

Isaiah 6:1–7 gives us the only biblical description of seraphim. They stand before the throne of God, each with six wings: two covering their faces, two covering their feet, and two for flight. Their cry of “Holy, holy, holy is the LORD of hosts” (v. 3) shakes the temple. Their role is primarily worship, and their very name means “burning ones,” reflecting their purity and fiery devotion.

## 4. “The Heavenly Host”

When the shepherds heard the announcement of Christ's birth, they saw “*a multitude of the heavenly host praising God*” (Luke 2:13–14). The phrase “host” carries military overtones—angels as God's armies, ready to carry out His will.

## 5. Thrones, Dominions, Rulers, Authorities

Paul often refers to unseen spiritual orders using these terms (Ephesians 1:21; Colossians 1:16). Scholars debate whether these refer to angelic hierarchies, demonic powers, or both. What is clear is that even the most exalted spiritual powers are created by and subject to Christ.

Angels differ in rank and role, but all are united in purpose—to glorify God and serve His will.

# III. What Angels Do

The Bible does not leave us guessing about angelic activity. Their roles are clear and consistent throughout both Testaments.

## 1. Angels Deliver God's Messages

The most basic role of angels is to serve as God's messengers. The very word *angelos* in Greek and *mal'ak* in Hebrew means “messenger.” Gabriel announces John the Baptist's birth to Zechariah (Luke 1:11–20), Jesus' conception to Mary (Luke 1:26–38), and Christ's resurrection to the women at the tomb (Matthew 28:5–7).

## **2. Angels Worship God**

Isaiah saw seraphim crying out “Holy, holy, holy” (Isaiah 6:3). John heard countless angels saying with a loud voice, “*Worthy is the Lamb who was slain*” (Revelation 5:12). Angels are never the focus of worship—they are models of worship, pointing all glory back to God.

## **3. Angels Minister to Believers**

Hebrews 1:14 describes angels as “*ministering spirits sent out to serve for the sake of those who are to inherit salvation.*” They strengthened Jesus after His temptation (Matthew 4:11) and in Gethsemane (Luke 22:43). In Acts 12:7–10, an angel frees Peter from prison. Their ministry is real but always under God’s direction, never independent.

## **4. Angels Wage Spiritual Battle**

Scripture portrays angels engaged in warfare against demonic forces. Daniel 10 depicts angelic conflict delaying the delivery of a message until Michael assists. Revelation 12:7–9 records Michael and his angels defeating Satan and casting him to earth. Paul reminds us that “*we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against ... the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places*” (Ephesians 6:12).

## **5. Angels Enact God’s Judgment**

At Sodom, angels struck the men with blindness and carried out destruction (Genesis 19). In 2 Kings 19:35, one angel strikes down 185,000 Assyrians. In Revelation, angels blow trumpets and pour bowls of wrath upon the earth. Their power is not autonomous; they act as God’s agents of justice.

Angels serve God’s purposes—proclaiming His Word, protecting His people, praising His name, warring against evil, and executing His judgment.

# **IV. Misconceptions and Imagery**

Whenever the topic of angels comes up, most people immediately picture wings, white robes, and glowing halos. Some imagine pudgy babies with tiny wings, others picture tall warriors with flaming swords. Still others treat “guardian angels” like private bodyguards assigned to each person. While there are kernels of truth in some of these ideas, much of what our culture imagines about angels is a distortion.

## **1. Angels and Wings**

Do angels have wings? Sometimes. The seraphim of Isaiah’s vision (Isaiah 6:2) and the cherubim in Ezekiel’s visions (Ezekiel 10:5–21) are described with wings. But when angels appear to Abraham, Lot, Zechariah, Mary, or the shepherds, they are never described as winged. In fact, they are usually mistaken for ordinary men (Genesis 18:2; Hebrews 13:2).

This suggests that the winged descriptions are likely symbolic, fitting the apocalyptic and poetic genres of Isaiah and Ezekiel. The wings may represent swiftness to obey God, or reverence as they cover themselves before His holiness.

## **2. Angels and Halos**

The idea of halos around angels (and saints) is not biblical but artistic. Early Christian art borrowed the “halo” motif from Greco-Roman depictions of gods and emperors. Scripture never once describes an angel with a glowing circle over the head. Angels are described as radiant or dazzling in appearance (Luke 24:4), but this comes from reflecting God’s glory, not from a permanent light fixture hovering over them.

## **3. Angels as “Cute” or Harmless**

One of the most misleading portrayals of angels is the “cherub” as a chubby baby with wings. In reality, biblical cherubim are mighty guardians who guard God’s presence (Genesis 3:24; Exodus 25:20). When angels appear in Scripture, people usually fall down in fear (Daniel 10:9; Luke 2:9). Their first words are often “Do not be afraid!” Angels are awesome and fearsome—not “cute.”

## **4. Guardian Angels**

Do we each have a personal guardian angel? Psalm 91:11–12 says, “*He will command his angels concerning you to guard you in all your ways.*” Jesus also speaks of little ones whose angels “always see the face of my Father” (Matthew 18:10). These verses affirm God’s care through angelic protection, but they stop short of promising each believer a one-to-one assigned angel. The better truth is that God commands His entire angelic host on behalf of His people. We are never outside His care.

## **5. Angel Worship and Fascination**

Paul warns the Colossians not to be “disqualified by delighting in false humility and the worship of angels” (Colossians 2:18). John, overwhelmed by his heavenly visions, twice fell down to worship the angel showing him the vision, and both times the angel rebuked him: “*Do not do that! I am a fellow servant of yours ... Worship God*” (Revelation 19:10; 22:9).

The danger is real: if we give angels the honor that belongs to God, we distort their purpose. Angels never draw attention to themselves—they always point to the glory of God.

Angels are not the soft, sentimental figures of popular culture. They are mighty, fearsome, humble servants of God. They do not receive worship; they give it. They do not replace God’s care; they reflect it.

## V. Fallen Angels and Demons

If angels are God’s servants, what are demons? Scripture presents them as fallen angels—beings originally created good who chose rebellion. Just as angels help us grasp God’s holiness, fallen angels remind us of the reality of evil and spiritual opposition.

### 1. The Rebellion

The Bible gives glimpses (though not a full timeline) of a heavenly rebellion. Revelation 12:7–9 describes war in heaven: “*Michael and his angels fought against the dragon ... and the great dragon was thrown down, that ancient serpent, who is called the devil and Satan, the deceiver of the whole world—he was thrown down to the earth, and his angels were thrown down with him.*”

Isaiah 14:12–15 and Ezekiel 28:11–19 are often interpreted as symbolic references to Satan’s fall, describing pride and ambition to rival God. While these passages primarily address human kings, their language stretches beyond earthly rulers, hinting at a spiritual rebellion behind them.

Jude 6 also tells us: “*The angels who did not stay within their own position of authority, but left their proper dwelling, He has kept in eternal chains under gloomy darkness until the judgment of the great day.*”

### 2. The Role of Satan

Satan (“the adversary”) stands as the chief of fallen angels. He appears in Genesis 3, tempting Eve. Job 1–2 portrays him as the accuser of the righteous. Jesus calls him a murderer and liar from the beginning (John 8:44). Peter warns that “*your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour*” (1 Peter 5:8).

Satan does not rival God in power—he is a creature, not a creator. His defeat is certain, sealed at the cross (Colossians 2:15) and awaiting final judgment in the lake of fire (Revelation 20:10).

### 3. Demonic Activity

Demons—fallen angels—continue Satan’s mission of deception, temptation, and destruction. In the Gospels, demons afflict people with possession and torment (Mark 5:1–13). Paul connects demonic influence with idolatry: “*What pagans sacrifice they offer to demons and not to God*” (1 Corinthians 10:20).

Not all fallen angels are free; some are already bound (2 Peter 2:4; Jude 6). Yet enough remain active that Paul warns believers to “put on the whole armor of God” against their schemes (Ephesians 6:11–12).

## 4. Our Response

Believers should neither dismiss nor obsess over demons. C. S. Lewis put it well: *“There are two equal and opposite errors into which our race can fall about the devils: one is to disbelieve in their existence. The other is to believe, and to feel an excessive and unhealthy interest in them”* (*The Screwtape Letters*).

Scripture calls us not to fear but to resist: *“Resist the devil, and he will flee from you”* (James 4:7). Christ has already triumphed, and in Him we share victory.

Fallen angels are real, active, and dangerous, but they are defeated. Our focus should not be on their power, but on Christ’s authority.

## VI. Angels in the End Times

The story of angels does not end with Old and New Testament history. Scripture tells us they will play a significant role in the final chapters of God’s plan. From Christ’s return to the final judgment, angels are active participants in God’s unfolding redemption.

### 1. Announcers of Christ’s Return

When Jesus ascended into heaven, two angels told the disciples, *“This Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will come in the same way as you saw Him go into heaven”* (Acts 1:11). Their words link Christ’s departure to His promised return.

At the second coming, angels will accompany Christ: *“The Son of Man is going to come with His angels in the glory of His Father”* (Matthew 16:27). Paul writes that the Lord will be *“revealed from heaven with His mighty angels in flaming fire”* (2 Thessalonians 1:7).

### 2. Gatherers of God’s People

Jesus said that at His return, *“He will send out His angels with a loud trumpet call, and they will gather His elect from the four winds”* (Matthew 24:31). This recalls harvest imagery—the angels are God’s reapers, bringing in His people for eternal life.

### 3. Instruments of Judgment

Angels will also separate the wicked from the righteous. In the parable of the weeds, Jesus explained: *“The Son of Man will send His angels, and they will gather out of His kingdom all causes of sin and all law-breakers, and throw them into the fiery furnace”* (Matthew 13:41–42).

In Revelation, angels pour out bowls of God’s wrath (Revelation 16) and announce final judgments (Revelation 14:6–11). They are not acting on their own, but carrying out God’s decrees with precision.

## **4. Eternal Worshipers of the Lamb**

Beyond judgment, angels join in eternal worship. John saw them encircling the throne, crying out: *“Worthy is the Lamb who was slain”* (Revelation 5:11–12). In Revelation 7:11–12, *“all the angels were standing around the throne ... and they fell on their faces before the throne and worshiped God.”*

Angels will forever celebrate God’s victory and Christ’s reign. Their worship anticipates our own, reminding us of the ultimate purpose for which all creation exists: the glory of God.

In the end times, angels will not only accompany Christ’s return but will gather God’s people, execute judgment, and worship the victorious Lamb for eternity.

## **VII. Why This Matters for Us**

Studying angels is not just an intellectual exercise. Scripture includes angelic activity for a reason—it strengthens our faith, deepens our worship, and reminds us of unseen realities. Here are three key lessons for us today:

### **1. Christ Is Greater Than Angels**

The letter to the Hebrews emphasizes that angels are mighty, but Christ is superior: *“For to which of the angels did God ever say, ‘You are my Son, today I have begotten you’?”* (Hebrews 1:5). Angels serve; Christ reigns. Angels are creatures; Christ is the eternal Creator. A proper understanding of angels protects us from misplaced awe and keeps our worship centered where it belongs—on Jesus.

### **2. Angels Model Obedience and Worship**

Whenever angels appear in Scripture, they act instantly and reverently. They never hesitate to carry out God’s command. They never draw attention to themselves, but direct all glory to Him. This challenges us: do we obey God’s Word as swiftly? Do we worship with the same wholehearted devotion?

### **3. Angels Assure Us of God’s Care**

Psalm 91:11 declares, *“He will command His angels concerning you to guard you in all your ways.”* While this does not mean we each have a personal guardian angel, it does mean God employs His heavenly host to care for His people. We are never abandoned. The presence of angels reminds us that God’s hand is always at work—often in ways we cannot see.

Angels point us to Christ, inspire our obedience, and reassure us of God’s sovereign care.

## VIII. Conclusion

The Bible gives us a picture of angels that is both majestic and humbling. They are countless, powerful, and glorious. They guard God’s holiness, proclaim His messages, protect His people, wage war against evil, and will one day accompany Christ at His return.

Yet for all their greatness, angels are not to be worshiped. Twice in Revelation, John fell at an angel’s feet and was rebuked: “*Do not do that! ... Worship God*” (Revelation 19:10; 22:9). Angels themselves model this truth—they exist not to draw attention, but to magnify the glory of the God who made them.

For us, then, the study of angels should not produce speculation or fascination, but the worship of God. If even the mightiest heavenly beings fall on their faces before the throne, how much more should we, redeemed by the blood of Christ, give Him glory?

Angels remind us that the unseen world is real, that God’s purposes are sure, and that His majesty stretches far beyond what our eyes can perceive. They point us not to themselves, but to the Savior. And in that, they are our fellow servants, urging us to join them in the eternal cry:

*“Worthy is the Lamb who was slain, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing!”* (Revelation 5:12).

### Recommended Reading

- Billy Graham, *Angels: God’s Secret Agents*.
- Randy Alcorn, *Heaven*
- Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology (chapter on angels)*.
- Michael Heiser, *The Unseen Realm*.
- Millard Erickson, *Christian Theology*.
- Scot McKnight, *Open to the Spirit: God in Us, God with Us, God Transforming Us*
- Peter Kreeft, *Angels (and Demons): What Do We Really Know About Them?*