

No Dark Clouds - Educational Study Guides

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The Ministry of Angels

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Angels appear throughout the Bible more than 300 times from Genesis to Revelation, and they play a significant role in God's work in the world. The Hebrew word *malak* and the Greek word *angelos* both mean "messenger," "envoy," or "one who announces." In the New Testament, the meaning becomes even clearer: angels are divine messengers sent by God. They are not vague spiritual forces or imaginary symbols. They are real beings created by God, and Scripture shows them actively involved in human history. They guarded the Tree of Life in Genesis, ministered to Jesus during His earthly life, and appear again in Revelation as warriors who fight against the forces of Satan. Their presence stretches across the entire biblical story.

The Bible gives us many important truths about angels. First, angels are created beings. They are not eternal like God, nor are they glorified humans. Job 38:7 describes the angels rejoicing when God laid the foundations of the earth: "*When the morning stars sang together and all the sons of God shouted for joy.*" This means angels existed before the creation of the world and witnessed God's creative power. They are part of God's heavenly order, designed to serve Him and carry out His will.

Second, angels are superior to humans in strength, ability, and glory. Psalm 8:5 says, "*Yet You have made him a little lower than the angels, and You crown him with glory and majesty.*" Humans are made in the image of God, but angels have abilities we do not possess in our earthly bodies. They do not suffer from sickness, weakness, or aging. They move with incredible speed and power. Ezekiel 1:14 describes them as appearing "*like bolts of lightning.*" At Jesus' empty tomb, the angel's appearance was described as "*like lightning, and his clothing as white as snow*" (Matthew 28:3). These descriptions show their heavenly nature—radiant, powerful, and awe-inspiring.

However, angels are not always overwhelming in appearance. Scripture also shows that angels can appear as ordinary people. In Genesis 18, Abraham welcomed three visitors who looked like normal men, yet two of them were angels. Genesis 18:2 says, "*When he lifted up his eyes and looked, behold, three men were standing opposite him.*" Hebrews 13:2 even warns us, "*Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for by this some have entertained angels without knowing it.*" Angels can blend into human society when God sends them for a specific purpose.

Angels are also incredibly strong. Their power is far beyond anything humans can imagine. When the Assyrian army threatened Israel, one angel destroyed 185,000 soldiers in a single night.

Second Kings 19:35 records, *“Then it happened that night that the angel of the Lord went out and struck 185,000 in the camp of the Assyrians.”* This was not a myth or exaggeration. It was a demonstration of God’s ability to protect His people through His heavenly servants.

Angels also have direct access to God’s throne. Revelation 5:11 gives a glimpse into heaven: *“Then I looked, and I heard the voices of many angels around the throne and the living creatures and the elders; and the number of them was myriads of myriads, and thousands of thousands.”* Angels worship God continually, serve Him faithfully, and carry out His commands without hesitation.

Because of their glory and power, some people in Scripture were tempted to worship angels. But angels firmly reject worship. In Revelation 22:8–9, when the apostle John fell at the feet of an angel, the angel said, *“Do not do that... Worship God.”* Angels are servants, not gods. They point all glory to the Lord.

Jesus also taught that angels watch over children. Matthew 18:10 says, *“See that you do not despise one of these little ones, for I say to you that their angels in heaven continually see the face of My Father who is in heaven.”* This verse suggests that angels have a protective role, especially over the vulnerable.

Hebrews 1:14 summarizes their purpose beautifully: *“Are they not all ministering spirits, sent out to render service for the sake of those who will inherit salvation?”* Angels are sent by God to help His people. They are not distant or uninvolved. They are active participants in God’s care for humanity.

Scripture gives many examples of angels ministering to people:

- To Abraham — In Genesis 18:1–16, two angels and the Lord Himself visited Abraham to deliver promises about Isaac’s birth.
- To Lot in Sodom — In Genesis 19:1, two angels rescued Lot and his family from the destruction of the city.
- To Elijah — In 1 Kings 19:5–8, an angel provided food and water to Elijah when he was exhausted and ready to die.
- To Elisha and his servant — In 2 Kings 6:8–23, an entire army of angels surrounded and protected them. Elisha prayed, and God opened the servant’s eyes to see the heavenly army.
- To Daniel — In Daniel 10, an angel strengthened Daniel and gave him wisdom before he appeared before a king.
- To Peter — In Acts 12:1–17, an angel freed Peter from prison and led him past guards and locked gates.

- To the apostles — In Acts 5:17–19, an angel opened the doors of the jail and told them to continue preaching.
- To Philip — In Acts 8:26–40, an angel directed Philip to meet the Ethiopian official who would become a believer.
- To Cornelius — In Acts 10:1–8, an angel appeared to Cornelius and prepared him to hear the gospel.
- To Paul — In Acts 27:23–24, during a violent storm at sea, an angel assured Paul that everyone on the ship would survive.

Even Jesus received ministry from angels. After He resisted Satan’s temptations in the wilderness, “*angels came and began to minister to Him*” (Matthew 4:11). Later, in the Garden of Gethsemane, when Jesus was in deep anguish, Luke 22:43 says, “*Now an angel from heaven appeared to Him, strengthening Him.*” If the Son of God received help from angels, it should not surprise us that God sends them to help His people today.

The Bible also reveals that angels have names and ranks. Gabriel is one of the most well-known angels. He appeared to Zechariah to announce the birth of John the Baptist and later appeared to Mary to announce the birth of Jesus. Michael is another named angel. He appears in Daniel as a protector of God’s people and in Revelation as the leader of God’s armies. Jude 9 calls him “*the archangel Michael,*” suggesting he holds a position of authority among the angels.

How many angels exist? The Bible does not give a specific number, but it does give us clues. When Jesus was arrested in the Garden of Gethsemane, He said He could call “*more than twelve legions of angels*” (Matthew 26:53). A Roman legion was about 6,000 soldiers, so twelve legions would be more than 72,000 angels. Revelation 5:11 describes “*myriads of myriads, and thousands of thousands*” of angels around God’s throne. The number is beyond human counting.

Angels have been active throughout human history, and they continue to serve God today. Many people may have encountered angels without realizing it. Hebrews 13:2 reminds us that this is possible. Angels are not always visible, but they are always obedient to God’s commands.

Here are several Scripture nuggets that deepen our understanding:

- 1 Corinthians 6:3 — “Do you not know that we will judge angels?” This verse shows that redeemed believers will one day share in Christ’s authority, even over angels.
- 1 Corinthians 13:1 — “If I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, but do not have love, I have become a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal.” Paul uses angels to emphasize the importance of love.
- Hebrews 13:2 — “Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for by this some have entertained angels without knowing it.” Angels may appear in ordinary ways.

- Revelation 1:20 — “The seven stars are the angels of the seven churches.” Angels are connected to God’s work in the church.
- Revelation 3:5 — “He who overcomes will be clothed in white garments... and I will confess his name before My Father and before His angels.” Angels witness the faithfulness of God’s people.

In the end, angels are reminders of God’s power, protection, and presence. They are not the focus of our worship, but they are part of God’s loving care for His people. They serve Him perfectly, carry out His commands, and minister to those who belong to Christ. Their ministry is one more way God shows His faithfulness throughout history and in our lives today.

Fill In the Blank Worksheet

1. The Hebrew word *malak* and the Greek word *angelos* both mean “_____,” “envoy,” or “one who announces.”
2. According to Job 38:7, angels were created _____ the creation of the earth and humans.
3. Psalm 8:5 teaches that humans were made “a little _____ than the angels.”
4. Ezekiel 1:14 describes angels as appearing like “the appearance of a _____ of lightning.”
5. Angels can appear in overwhelming glory, but they can also appear as _____ human beings, as seen in Genesis 18.
6. When the Assyrian army threatened Israel, one angel struck down _____ thousand soldiers in a single night.
7. Revelation 22:8–9 shows that angels must never be _____ by humans.
8. Matthew 18:10 teaches that angels watch over and protect _____.
9. Hebrews 1:14 says angels are “ministering spirits” sent out to render _____ for those who will inherit salvation.
10. Two angels rescued _____ and his family from the destruction of Sodom (Genesis 19).
11. In the Garden of Gethsemane, Jesus said He could call more than twelve _____ of angels to help Him.
12. Revelation 5:11 describes “myriads of myriads, and thousands of thousands” of angels surrounding God’s _____.

ANSWER KEY

1. messenger

2. before

3. lower

4. flash

5. ordinary

6. 185

7. worshiped

8. children

9. service

10. Lot

11. legions

12. throne