

Chapter 2

Classification and Appearance Of Angels

Generally, angels are classified as either good or evil. Scripture indicates various ranks, functions and orders of angels. Their exercise of power or authority differs greatly by their office, mission, or assignment from God. They adore, rebuke, reprove, comfort, instruct, chastise, prophesy, destroy, protect, assist, guard, interpret, advise, announce births, locate the lost, and deliver messages of God; they also intercede and pray for us, they afflict, punish, and even kill. The attributes of their physical appearance, status, and position are ordained by God.

There are at least five different offices or degrees of authority among angels: thrones, dominions, principalities, authorities and powers, (Ephesians 1:21; Colossians 1:16; 1 Peter 3:22). The variation in appearance, might and glory of angels appears to be relative to their closeness to God, assignment, and rank. The entire angelic realm encompasses all classes and ranks, from angels and cherubim to seraphim and archangels. In Jewish rabbinical literature and in the Talmud there are ten to thirteen angelic classes: the Malakhim, Erelim, Seraphim, Chayot Ha Kodesh, Ophanim, Hashmallim, Elim, Elohim, Bene Elohim, Ishim, Cherubim, Shinanim, and Tarshishim.

We will only be considering the classes or orders of angels that are clearly presented in the Bible.

Angel (Hebrew - malak / Greek —angelos)

As we have seen, the malak and angelos incorporate all of the angelic host. It's unclear if this is a separate order of angels or a general term for all angelic beings. We are not told the exact number of angels, but Scriptures indicate there is an innumerable host of millions of angels.

Daniel 7:10 NIV Thousands upon thousands attended Him; ten thousand times ten thousand stood before Him. The court was seated, and the books were opened.

Revelation 5:11 NIV Then I looked and heard the voice of many angels, numbering thousands upon thousands, and ten thousand times ten thousand. They encircled the throne and the living creatures and the elders.

Few of the millions of angels are described in detail. They are said to have wings and at times resemble humans when they encounter ordinary people, and may engage in human activities like eating. They

appeared as human visitors to Abraham and Lot, (Genesis 18:2, 19:1). It is possible to entertain angels without recognizing that they are indeed angels, (Hebrews 13:2). At times, angels show up in heavenly glory, clothed in white and shining linen, with a golden belt around their waists. When they do, their faces appear as bright as lightning, their eyes burn like torches, and their arms and feet gleam like burnished bronze, (Daniel 10).

Cherubim - plural of cherub

Cherubim are guarding and covering angels. Although not supported in Scripture, secular art depicts them as a sweet innocent chubby child with wings. They are a high order of being that are below the seraphim. They are seen around, near and below the throne of God. They are referenced over ninety times in the Old Testament.

- God placed them at the east of the Garden of Eden with a flaming sword to guard the way to the "Tree of Life," (Genesis 3:24).
- Moses was instructed to place replicas of two cherubim on the Mercy Seat above the Ark of the Covenant where God met with His people (Exodus 25:18-22, Psalm 80:1). The Mercy Seat was a type of God's throne and the divine holiness was guarded by the cherubim. They were also represented in the design of the inner curtain of the tabernacle and the veil, (Exodus 26:1)
- They are seen around the throne of God, (Exodus 25:18; Psalms 80:1; Psalms 99:1; Isaiah 37:16; Hebrews 9:5).
- Solomon made two cherubim for the inner sanctuary of the Temple that were 15 feet tall and made of olive wood overlaid with gold, (1 Kings 6:23-28).
- God is seen riding on a chariot carried by four cherubim, (2 Kings 2:11-12; 2 Samuel 22:11; Psalms 18:10, Ezekiel 1).

Appearance of Cherubim

Again, it is unclear if the various orders and classes of angels indicates a special position or exalted service. Cherubim are exotic and beautiful beings that are covered with precious stones and presented in various forms. Ezekiel describes Satan who was a guardian anointed cherub before his fall.

Ezekiel 28:13 NKJV You were in Eden, the garden of God; Every precious stone was your covering: The sardius, topaz, and diamond, beryl, onyx, and jasper, sapphire, turquoise, and emerald with gold. The workmanship of your timbrels and pipes was prepared for you on the day you were

created.

Ezekiel 28:14 NKJV You were the anointed cherub who covers; I established you; You were on the holy mountain of God; You walked back and forth in the midst of fiery stones.

The reference to “timbrels and pipes” suggests his role included leading worship of the Most High. The fiery stones represents the radiant glory around the throne of God.

The four living creatures that Ezekiel saw below the throne of God were cherubim.

Ezekiel 1:5-6 NKJV Also from within it came the likeness of four living creatures. And this was their appearance: they had the likeness of a man. Each one had four faces, and each one had four wings.

Ezekiel 1:7-8 NKJV Their legs were straight, and the soles of their feet were like the soles of calves’ feet. They sparkled like the color of burnished bronze. The hands of a man were under their wings on their four sides; and each of the four had faces and wings.

The four living creatures (cherubim) have two wings on each side of their body. Two wings touched another being and two wings covered their own body, (Ezekiel 1:11). Beside the four cherubim were wheels that looked like a wheel in the middle of a wheel, (Ezekiel 10). These four living creatures are most likely the same ones John saw around God’s throne in heaven.

Revelation 4:6 NIV Also before the throne there was what looked like a sea of glass, clear as crystal. In the center, around the throne, were four living creatures, and they were covered with eyes, in front and in back.

Revelation 4:7 NIV The first living creature was like a lion, the second was like an ox, the third had a face like a man, the fourth was like a flying eagle.

Revelation 4:8 NIV Each of the four living creatures had six wings and was covered with eyes all around, even under his wings. Day and night they never stop saying: “Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God Almighty, who was, and is, and is to come.”

The Cherubim or living creatures may vary in form or appearance. They are seen abiding near the throne of God and at the entrance to the Garden of Eden.

Seraphim

Seraphim is a plural of the word seraphs and means “burners.” They are often presented in a form similar to a man and are identified with the six winged living creatures that are above the Throne of God, (Revelation

4:6-8).

Isaiah 6:1-2 NIV In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord seated on a throne, high and exalted, and the train of his robe filled the temple. Above him were seraphs, each with six wings: With two wings they covered their faces, with two they covered their feet, and with two they were flying.

Isaiah 6:3-4 NIV And they were calling to one another: “Holy, holy, holy is the LORD Almighty; the whole earth is full of his glory.” At the sound of their voices the doorposts and thresholds shook and the temple was filled with smoke. ...

Seraph means “burning ones” because they are radiant and appear to be “fiery ones.” The seraphim, God’s celestial servants, encircle the throne of God, singing praises and are perpetually prepared to fulfill His divine commands. They guard the holiness of God declaring, “Holy, holy, holy is the LORD Almighty; the whole earth is full of his glory.” While the cherubim are below the throne of God, the seraphim stand above the throne. (Isaiah 6:1-4) When the seraphim cried holy, the post of the door of the temple in heaven was shaken.

Archangels

The term archangel occurs twice in Scriptures. The seven angels that stand before God in Revelation 8:2 are believed to be archangels. So now we see cherubim below the throne, seraphim above the throne and archangels before the throne of God. No description is given for their appearance.

Only three angels are named in the Scriptures: Michael, Gabriel, and Lucifer.

Michael is the only angel named as an archangel, (Daniel 10:3, 21; 12:1; Jude 9, Revelation 12:7). Lucifer is a cherubim. Although Gabriel’s order of class is not defined, he is generally believed to be an archangel, (Daniel 8:16; 9:21; Luke 1:19, 26).

1 Thessalonians 4:16 NIV For the Lord Himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first.

Jude 9 NIV But even the archangel Michael, when he was disputing with the devil about the body of Moses, did not dare to bring a slanderous accusation against him, but said, “The Lord rebuke you!”

Revelation 12:7 NIV And there was war in heaven. Michael and his angels fought against the dragon, and the dragon and his angels fought back.

Michael the archangel, who has his own angels, is one of the chief princes among angels. He is a valiant warrior who fights the battles of Jehovah against the enemies of Israel and against the evil powers of the spirit-world.

Revelation 8:2 NIV And I saw the seven angels who stand before God, and to them were given seven trumpets.

These seven angels are believed to be archangels. The apocryphal book of Enoch 20:1-8 enumerates the seven angels of power.

(The apocryphal books are not inspired Scripture, but are traditional writings. The Book of Enoch is not accepted as part of the official Biblical text. These are only quoted to show the names of archangels mentioned in Rabbinic traditional and historical text.)

Enoch 20:1-5 And these are the names of the holy angels who watch.

Uriel, one of the holy angels, who is over the world and over Tartarus.

Raphael, one of the holy angels, who is over the spirits of men. **Raguel**, one of the holy angels who takes vengeance on the world of the luminaries.

Enoch 20:6-7 Michael, one of the holy angels, to wit, he that is set over the best part of mankind and over chaos. **Saraqael**, one of the holy angels, who is set over the spirits, who sin in the spirit.

Enoch 20:8 Gabriel, one of the holy angels, who is over Paradise and the serpents and the Cherubim. **Remiel**, one of the holy angels, whom God set over those who rise.

Tobit 12:15 reads: "I am **Raphael**, one of the seven holy angels who offer up the prayer of the saints and enter in before the glory of the Holy one."

What Gabriel said of himself in Luke 1:19, is said here of the seven angels, "*who stand before the presence of God.*"

Michael, the Archangel, is one of the seven princes of angels or angels of power.

Since his name means "*who is like unto God*," some have falsely attributed deity to him. Scripture that mentions Michael by name five times, makes it clear that he is a messenger of God. The angel that appeared to Daniel said "*Michael, one of the chief princes, came to help me*," (Daniel 10). In Daniel 12, Michael is the great prince that watches over Israel during times of trouble. In contending with the devil over the body of Moses, Michael the archangel said, "*The Lord rebuke you!*" (Jude 9) In Revelation 12:7, Michael and his angels fight against the

dragon (Satan) and his angels.

Gabriel means "man of God" or "hero of God."

He is named four times in Scripture. Gabriel was given important messages from God to be delivered to Daniel, Zacharias and Mary, the mother of Jesus.

Daniel 8:16 NIV And I heard a man's voice from the Ulai calling, "Gabriel, tell this man the meaning of the vision."

Gabriel delivered to Daniel a revelation of the vision of the "seventy weeks" and explained its meaning.

Daniel 9:20-21 NIV While I was speaking and praying, confessing my sin and the sin of my people Israel and making my request to the LORD my God for his holy hill — while I was still in prayer, Gabriel, the man I had seen in the earlier vision, came to me in swift flight about the time of the evening sacrifice.

Daniel 9:22-23 NIV He instructed me and said to me, "Daniel, I have now come to give you insight and understanding. As soon as you began to pray, an answer was given, which I have come to tell you, for you are highly esteemed. Therefore, consider the message and understand the vision:

Gabriel announced to Zacharias the birth of John, the forerunner of Jesus.

Luke 1:19 NIV The angel answered, "I am Gabriel. I stand in the presence of God, and I have been sent to speak to you and to tell you this good news."

Gabriel announced the birth of the Savior to Mary.

Luke 1:26-27 NIV In the sixth month, God sent the angel Gabriel to Nazareth, a town in Galilee, to a virgin pledged to be married to a man named Joseph, a descendant of David. The virgin's name was Mary...

Guardian Angels

Psalms 91:11-12 NIV For He will command His angels concerning you to guard you in all your ways; they will lift you up in their hands, so that you will not strike your foot against a stone.

Matthew 18:10 NIV See that you do not look down on one of these little ones. For I tell you that their angels in heaven always see the face of my Father in heaven.

It is difficult to know if guardian angels are a class of angels or one of their functions and ministries. According to this text, all angels are sent to minister to protect and guide each believer or those who will inherit salvation, (Hebrews 1:14).

Psalm 34:7 NLT For the angel of the LORD is a guard; he surrounds and defends all who fear him.

Psalm 34:7 HCSB The Angel of the LORD encamps around those who fear Him, and rescues them.

These angels that guard are not usually visible.

Psalm 91:11-12 NKJV For He shall give His angels charge over you, To keep you in all your ways. In their hands they shall bear you up, Lest you dash your foot against a stone.

Those who witnessed the ministry of guardian angels have seen them in different forms. Sometimes they appear in white clothing with wings and other times they appear as a man. When they are manifested, there is a sense of God's holiness and power. They only minister according to God's command and will and not at the desire or prayer of individuals. Elisha prayed that the Lord would open the eyes of his servant so that he could see the horses and chariots of fire and the angels of the Lord all around them, (2 Kings 6). The numbers of those who were present to support Elisha and his servant was more and greater in number than those who were against them.

The Ministry of Holy Angels

The functions and ministries of angels is entirely governed by God. Their service is diverse and is not limited to their order or class of angel. Before they can take action, angels must have God's permission and direction in relation to the events and activities on earth.

They praise and worship God.

Their primary function is to praise God night and day, (Job 38:7; Isaiah 6; Psalms 103:20; Psalms 148:2; Revelation 5:11).

Hebrews 1:6 NIV God says, "Let all God's angels worship him."

All angels worship God audibly with singing and other forms of praise.

Ministry to the heirs of salvation

- Rejoice at the salvation of a sinner, Luke 15:10.
- Protect from harm, Psalms 34:7; Psalms 91:11; Matthew 18:10.
- Observe the activities of the church, 1 Corinthians 11:10; 1 Timothy 5:21; Ephesians 3:10; 1 Peter 1:12.
- Encourage in times of extreme trial, Genesis 28:12-13; Genesis 32:1-2; Acts 5:19-20; Acts 12:5-15; Acts 27:23-24
- Minister to the saints of God, 1 Kings 19:5-7; Acts 10:3-7; Hebrews 1:14.
- Deliver and keep from enemies, Psalms 34:7; Psalms 91:11-12; Daniel

6:22; 2 Kings 6:16;

- Convey and confirm the Word, Galatians, 3:19; Hebrews 2:2; Revelation 14:6
- Give guidance and wisdom, Matthew 1:20; 2:13,19,20; Acts 8:26; Acts 10:3-5
- Involved in conveying believers into the afterlife, Luke 16:22.
- Angels are heavily involved in the Day of Judgment, Matthew 13:30, 39; 49, 50; 2 Thessalonians 1:7. They are mentioned more than fifty-seven times in relation to the judgments between Revelation 7 and 20.

The ministry of angels is as diverse as God's command and will.

They mediate the special revelation of God, communicate His blessings to individuals, and execute judgment on the wicked. Angels minister as God has directed throughout the ages of mankind. We are instructed to never pray for angels or request their help. Our detection of the ministry of angels is always after they have been dispatched by God. Angels are present before we recognize a need.

Psalm 91:11 NKJV For He shall give His angels charge over you, To keep you in all your ways.

Psalm 34:7 NKJV The angel of the Lord encamps all around those who fear Him, And delivers them.

Hebrews 1:14 NKJV Are they not all ministering spirits sent forth to minister for those who will inherit salvation?

When we look at the fallen angels, we will consider the thrones, dominions, principalities, powers, and rulers of darkness.