

ST. JOHN'S LUTHERAN CHURCH

Red Bud, Illinois

Adult Bible Study

“Angels, Angels Everywhere”

V. B. The Ranking of Angels

In the first section of this lesson we learned from Scripture that there are a great number of angels (“ten thousand times ten thousand”). Our God is not a God of disorder, but a God of detail and orderliness. The Bible hints at the fact that God’s angel army is not a disorganized mob with little purpose or direction but has its own ranks, or better, classes, of angels. In this section we will examine the Biblical evidence for the classification of angels as well as a post-biblical ranking of angels.

See Hebrews 1:1-5. Who is the unequaled leader of God’s angel host? _____

What distinction is given to the angels mentioned in these passages in Revelation? _____

5: 2 And I saw a mighty angel proclaiming in a loud voice, “Who is worthy to break the seals and open the scroll?”

10:1 Then I saw another mighty angel coming down from heaven. He was robed in a cloud, with a rainbow above his head; his face was like the sun, and his legs were like fiery pillars.

18:21 Then a mighty angel picked up a boulder the size of a large millstone and threw it into the sea and said: “With such violence the great city of Babylon will be thrown down, never to be found again.”

Seraphim (Hebrew plural; the singular is *Seraph* meaning “burning ones”)

See Isaiah 6:1-8. This is the only reference in the Bible to this class of angels. What do we learn about this class of angels in this passage? _____

Cherubim (Hebrew plural; the singular is *Cherub* meaning “one who intercedes”)

Unlike the seraphim, the cherubim appear often in the Bible. All of these references are in the Old Testament except for Hebrews 9:5. These angels are not messengers, but instead serve to protect the glory of God where He makes Himself present. Today our image of cherubim has been damaged by cute paintings of chubby little baby-types flying around. These notions of angels come more from folklore than from the Bible.

What purpose do the cherubim serve in their first appearance in the Bible? _____

Genesis 3:24 After God drove the man out, He placed on the east side of the Garden of Eden cherubim and a flaming sword flashing back and forth to guard the way to the tree of life. (This tree reappears in Rev. 22:2.)

What function do the images of cherubim serve here in Exodus 25:17-22? _____

King Solomon enlisted Hiram of Tyre to make furnishings for the temple he was building in Jerusalem.

What kind of company do the cherubim have on the movable stands in the temple? _____

1 Kings 7:29, 36 On the panels between the uprights were lions, bulls and cherubim—and on the uprights as well...He engraved cherubim, lions, and palm trees on the surfaces of the supports and on the panels, in every available space, with wreaths all around.

What position do the cherubim take in regard to God in these passages? _____

1 Samuel 4:4 So the people sent men to Shiloh, and they brought back the ark of the covenant of the Lord Almighty, who is enthroned between the cherubim.

2 Kings 19:15 And Hezekiah prayed to the Lord: “O Lord, God of Israel, enthroned between the cherubim, You alone are God over all the kingdoms of the earth. You have made heaven and earth.”

Psalms 80:1-2 Hear us, O Shepherd of Israel, You who lead Joseph like a flock; You who sit enthroned between the cherubim, before Ephraim, Benjamin and Manasseh. Awaken Your might; come and save us.

Psalms 99:1 The Lord reigns, let the nations tremble; He sits enthroned between the cherubim, let the earth shake.

How does God make use of the cherubim in David's song of praise? _____
Psalm 18:10 He mounted the cherubim and flew; He soared on the wings of the wind. (also in 2 Samuel 22:11)

Archeological evidence suggests that cherubim were represented in pictures as winged creatures having a human head and a lion's body.

Archangels This term is mentioned only two times in the Bible

What purpose does the archangel serve here? _____
1 Thessalonians 4:16 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.

Who is the archangel here? _____ (The name means "who is like God?")
Jude 9 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!"

What function does Michael perform in these passages? _____
Daniel 12:1 At that time Michael, the great prince who protects your people, will arise. There will be a time of distress such as has not happened from the beginning of nations until then. But at that time your people—everyone whose name is found written in the book—will be delivered.
Revelation 12:7-8 And there was a war in heaven. Michael and his angels fought against the dragon, and the dragon and his angels fought back. But he was not strong enough, and they lost their place in heaven.

The only other angel named in the Bible is introduced in Daniel 8:15-19 and 9:20-23. His name means "hero of God." Who is he? _____ What function does he perform? _____

Gabriel appears to Zechariah in Luke 1. What is the message that he gives? _____
Luke 1:13 But the angel said to him: "Do not be afraid, Zechariah; your prayer has been heard. Your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you are to give him the name John."

Gabriel appears to Mary in Luke 1:26f. What is the message that he gives? _____
Luke 1:30-31 But the angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, you have found favor with God. You will be with child and give birth to a son, and you are to give Him the name Jesus."

A Post-biblical Ranking of Angels:

A very influential ordering, or ranking, of angels appears in the 5th or 6th century writing by an author who claimed to be the Dionysus of Acts 17:34. This false Dionysus was a Neo-Platonic philosopher who used human imagination more than the Bible to develop his three-level ranking of angels. This ranking was accepted by the church until the 16th century Reformation when Martin Luther swept aside this notion as unscriptural. He saw people putting too much emphasis on angels and not enough emphasis on Christ.

- 1) Highest Rank: Counsellors- Made up of the Seraphim, Cherubim and Thrones
These angels stand around the throne of God and receive glory from Him. Their color is red, symbolizing love. They sometimes are shown bearing lighted candles.
- 2) Middle Rank: Governors of the Stars and Elements- Made up of Dominions, Virtues and Powers
These angels receive divine illumination from the first hierarchy and communicate it to the third rank, but they remain aloof from humans. Their color is blue which symbolizes light and knowledge.
- 3) Lowest Rank: Messengers- Made up of Principalities, Archangels and Angels
These angels are the ones who intervene in the affairs of humans.

Luther's Morning Prayer: I thank You, my heavenly Father, through Jesus Christ, Your dear Son, that You have kept me this night from all harm and danger; and I pray that You would keep me this day also from sin and every evil, that all my doings and life may please You. For into Your hands I commend myself, my body and soul, and all things. Let Your holy angel be with me, that the evil foe may have no power over me. Amen.

Next Lesson: Guardian Angels