



Perplexing Passages (Week 2/2) The Role & Identity of Angels

Small Group Discussion Questions

Connect *What does it look like each day to live in light of the glory of God?*

Warm-Up

1. Do you believe in angels? Why or why not?
2. What are some of the common cultural ideas about angels? *How does this compare to the biblical idea?*

Read Hebrews 1:1-4

3. Who is the main subject of Hebrews 1? How does that help 'frame' our understanding of angels?
4. What are the various ways that Jesus is described in these verses? Is there anyone greater?
5. How therefore do angels compare to Jesus? Why is this important for us to keep in mind?

Read Hebrews 1:5-14

6. What are some of your top questions about angels? Do you think it's possible to answer all of them?
7. As you scan through this chapter, what do we learn about the identity of angels? *Is anything a surprise?*
8. Who *made* the angels? What is the significance of this? How are humans 'made' different?
9. What type of being are they (cf. verse 14)? Why then are they 'sometimes' seen?
10. How does the presence of angels remind us that there is a realm unseen to us? Do you believe this?
11. What is the realm of Jesus' lordship? (cf. Colossians 1:15-20) Why is this such good news?
12. What does the word 'angel' actually mean? How does this relate to their role?
13. If angels are messengers, whose message do they bring? Can you think of examples throughout the Bible of the different ways in which angels have acted on behalf of God in the world?
14. What is significant about Jesus being *seated* but the angels being *sent*? Whose work is finished?
15. What does verse 14 say about the role of angels? Have you ever thought about this? Is it good news?
16. What should we not do in our approach to angels? Can you think of warnings in the Bible?
17. Every time we gather we join a song already in progress. How would it change the way you come to church next Sunday to know that you are joining heaven's worship, not starting it?
18. Read 2:14. What helps you to pay the *most careful attention* to the Gospel, *so that you do not drift away*?

Apply *What is one thing you are tempted to drift toward for security, comfort, or answers, instead of resting in the Son's finished work? What would it look like this week to "pay closer attention" to him instead?*

Pray *Almighty Lord, thank you that you have sent your holy angels to serve us. Help us never to drift from worshipping the only one who is worthy of our praise. Amen.*

GOING DEEPER

Perplexing Passages (Week 2/2) The Role & Identity of Angels

Small Group Discussion Questions

On Your Frontline this Week

Who do you long to come to know Jesus? Pray for their heart to be open and for opportunities to share the good news of Jesus.

For Families

- *Download:* some of the family resources to use at home: stbartskids.org

Listen, Watch, and Read

- *Listen (sermon):* “Christ: The Final Word” by Tim Keller:
<https://gospelinlife.com/sermon/christ-the-final-word/>
- *Listen (podcast):* “Holy Angels” by John Dickson and Graham Cole:
<https://undeceptions.com/podcast/holy-angels/>
- *Listen (sermon):* “Spiritual Warfare” by Tim Keller:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JcPlfM7w-ZE>
- *Watch (video):* “What Angels and Cherubim Reveal About God’s Presence” by the Bible Project:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-bMRxQbLUlg&t=5s>
- *Read (article):* “The Spirit World” by Thomas Sappington.
<https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/essay/the-spirit-world-angels/>
- *Read (book):* “Against the Darkness: The Doctrine of Angels, Satan, and Demons” by Graham Cole

Series Resources

- *Book:* “A Doubter’s Guide to the Bible” by John Dickson. 
- *Book:* “Against the Darkness: The Doctrine of Angels, Satan, and Demons” by Graham Cole.
- *Book:* “The Message of Ezekiel” by Christopher Wright.
- *Book:* “Reading the Bible for All It’s Worth” by Gordon Fee. 

 Available to borrow from the St Bart’s Library (Toowoomba): stbarts.com.au/library

PERPLEXING PASSAGES

*Week 2/2 “The Identity & Role of Angels”
by the Rev’d Adam Lowe (27/09/2026, Toorwoomba)*

천사들의 정체와 역할 | Cöök dē Mälikäii ku Luöi dën
天使的身份与角色? | தேவதூதர்களின் அடையாளமும், பணியும்

Bible Passage: Hebrews 1

Heart of Sermon: *As mighty and powerful as angels are, they pale in comparison to the greatness and truth of who Jesus is. God alone is worthy of our worship, and the Lord has given us a special place amongst his creation and in New Creation through Christ.*

*Almighty Lord, thank you that you have sent your holy angels to serve us.
Help us never to drift from worshipping the only one who is worthy of our praise. Amen.*

When the Australian theologian, Graham Cole was asked if he believed in angels, his response was simple: *“I believe in angels, for one reason, Jesus did. And I take my cues from him!”*

- It is certainly possible to make too much of angels,
but it’s also possible to make an equal and opposite error: which is to not believe in them at all!
- Jesus spoke of angels as real, present, and active:
Rejoicing over repentant sinners, watching over God’s people, *and* ready at his command.
- And of course, it’s not just Jesus: there are references and appearances of angels, some 300 of them (depending on how you count it), dotted all throughout the Bible.
- Allusions to angels. Appearances of angels. Announcements from angels.
- Not the fluffy, white, winged chubby cherubs that our culture is quietly obsessed with, but more-often-than-not they are mighty and intimidating, and necessitated the greeting: do not be afraid because people were afraid when they encountered them.
- There’s no avoiding angels in the Bible. / *But what are we to make of them?*
There’s no place where you can go in the Scriptures to find a systematic angelology.
- But Hebrews 1 is a pretty great place to start!! /
- In many ways, there’s nothing perplexing about Hebrews 1! In fact it is very clear: it’s all about the superiority of the Son — *Jesus —through whom God has spoken.* //
- Verse 1...

¹ In the past God spoke to our ancestors through the prophets at many times and in various ways, ² but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, and through whom also he made the universe. The Son is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of his being, sustaining all things by his powerful word. // Jesus is supreme!

- This week, our church has been packed full of kids and leaders for holiday kids club, They've been singing and learning about how great Jesus is! Not angels. They've been rejoicing that Jesus is out of this world!
- He's the best! / Yet incredibly, as the writer makes that *very* case about Jesus here, we also learn a thing or two about these *other-worldly* creatures. //

But before we get started let me just clear the deck of a few questions to help us focus!

- We can't of course cover everything about angels mentioned in the Bible today.
- *I'm probably not even going to get to whatever YOUR favourite question about angels is, either.*
- But in quickfire fashion, let me try and address a few.
These are the questions that we're not focusing on today. Ready?
- Where are angels from? *Other than being made by God, before us, the Bible tells us little.*
What is the deal about angels falling? *The Bible is pretty reserved on how it happened.*
Do we each have a guardian angel? *I think the biblical case for that is pretty weak.*
Do we become angels when we die? *Absolutely not.*

- So...
Angels are made by God.
Some angels fell but we don't know all the ins and outs of that.
There's not a strong biblical case that everyone has a guardian angel.
And in New Creation we're glorified humans not angels...
- We don't know everything about angels, because the Bible is addressed to humanity!
- We must not get distracted by that which we do not know.
But can trust that what we *need to know*, God has revealed to us.
- So let's find our focus there. /
- Not filling in the gaps *nor ignorant about that which God has revealed to us.*
- Hebrews chapter 1 helps us to understand:
- **The Identity of Angels;**
The Role of Angels; and
Our Relationship with Angels.

THE IDENTITY OF ANGELS | VERSES 4-12

천사들의 정체 | Cōk dē Malikaī | 天使的身份 | தேவதூதர்களின் அடையாளம்

First, **the IDENTITY of angels**: *they are created servants — not the eternal Son. Verse 3...*

3 *The Son is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of his being, sustaining all things by his powerful word. After he had provided purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty in heaven.* 4 So he became as much superior to the angels as the name he has inherited is superior to theirs. 5 For to which of the angels did God ever say, "You are my Son; today I have become your Father"? Or again, "I will be his Father, and he will be my Son"? 6 And again, when God brings his firstborn into the world, he says, "Let all God's angels worship him." 7 *In speaking of the angels he says, "He makes his angels spirits, and his servants flames of fire."*

We're not entirely sure who wrote the letter to the Hebrews.

We're not even sure who it was precisely addressed to.

- But we are left without a doubt of WHO this letter is primarily about. It's about Jesus!
- And not just *anything about Jesus* — but it's all about his supremacy.
- The entire thread of the letter is an argument that runs from lesser to greater, in order to show this Son's superiority and why we should have an *enduring faith in him*.
- Working backwards (from the end of the letter)... *we see the superiority of Jesus to the tabernacle & sacrifices. (cf. ch.8-10)... The superiority of Jesus to Aaron's priesthood. (cf. ch.4-7) The superiority of Jesus to Moses. The superiority of Jesus to Joshua's rest.*

- *And here, in the opening chapters: the superiority of Jesus to angels.*
- Maybe that's never been a worry for you...
but don't miss the opportunity to let the greatness of Jesus come to bear on you...
- Jesus is God's final word.
Jesus is the radiance of God's glory.
Jesus has been appointed heir of all things.
Jesus is the exact representation of God's being.
Jesus sustains all things by his powerful word.
Jesus provided purification for all sins.
Jesus is alive and has sat down at the right hand of the Father. / (That's quite the CV!) /
- The verses which continue are actually a chain of seven quotes from the OT.
Each and every one of them point to Jesus' royal or divine nature. /
- When we read — verse 4 — so, or even "*therefore*", "*he became as much superior to the angels...*"
That doesn't mean that there was a time in which the Son was not superior to the angels *and finally graduated! NO. He is God. The Son is eternal. Through him all things were made. And now he sat down victorious.* /
- When v.4 adds... *he became as much superior to the angels,*
as the name he inherited is superior to theirs...
- It's not just saying that Jesus has a snazzier name than the angels do!
It's because of how he related to the Father — he's God's Son.

- In the OT, angels are sometimes known collectively as *sons of God*. But God only has ONE “Capital ‘S’” Son. *Jesus is unique: One God, three persons: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.*
- We need to let the weight of this bear — *even before we look at what we know about angels, because* followers of Jesus aren’t just at risk of the temptation to reject Jesus, but more likely: quietly drifting back to something lesser. Something safer.
- Maybe angels. Maybe — a myriad of other things.
- You might laugh at the idea of people having greater adoration for angels than Jesus. If you saw when you might be tempted to... But let’s not fool ourselves. We can be tempted to put all sorts of things first. At least angels were holy and sent by God. Don’t worship them, of course.
- But don’t settle for anything — *or anyone* — less.

So, the headline is that angels are lesser than Jesus — got it! But what do we also know?

- Angels are real. / Angels belong to God. *Verse 6... refers to ALL GOD’S angels...*
Angels are to worship the Son. AND Angels are created — they are *made* by God. // Verse 7...

In speaking of the angels he says, “He makes his angels spirits, and his servants flames of fire.”

- When the author uses the word MAKES (actually quoting Psalm 104 a creation hymn) no doubt part of that is about the role that has been assigned to angels. They’re sent.
- We’ll get to that. *But don’t miss the bigger implication: angels are made — by the Son who makes.*

- Whatever else angels are — they’re made. They are creature not Creator. The Son who makes them is the one who remains — he is unchanging and has never not been.
- But as verse 14 makes it unambiguous — they are also *ministering spirits*.
The word used here for ‘spirits’ means that angels don’t naturally have bodies. They can appear visibly but they are spiritual beings. Out of sight to us. They’re not divine — after all they have been made by God.

Angels are a reminder, that if you pull back the curtain of the physical world, that there’s a whole other world out-of-sight to us. / No less real. But not visible to us.

- Not out-of-sight like UV light which just requires us to have the right type of equipment. But out-of-sight because the spiritual realm is known by *revelation* not *instrumentation*. //
- In 2 Kings when the king of Aram had sent a mighty army by night to surround the city and capture Elisha, Elisha’s servant panicked when he saw the force and he asked Elisha what they should do. Elisha answered that those with them were more than those of the enemy. Then he prayed that God would open the servant’s eyes, too. And he did!
- We can so easily forget that there is more than what we see. We can feel spiritually lagging. But there is an unseen reality that should give us cause for courage. *We don’t know how every situation is going to play out — but we do know how things will end, because there is one who has dominion over all. There is — as Paul writes to the Colossians only one who is the author, sustainer, and LORD of every throne, every dominion, every power — seen and unseen.*

THE ROLE OF ANGELS | VERSES 13-14

천사들의 역할 | Luai dē Malikäii | 天使的角色 | தேவதூதர்களின் பங்கு

So angels are part of a bigger spiritual reality, but they're not gods.

They are mighty but they are made. And if they worship the Son, how much more should we. /

That's their IDENTITY. Second, **the ROLE of angels**: *They are sent, not seated. Verse 14...*

¹³To which of the angels did God ever say, "Sit at my right hand until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet"? ¹⁴Are not all angels ministering spirits sent to serve those who will inherit salvation?

- We often think of the word ANGEL to be a descriptor of a particular type of creature. Like a dog, cat, or a dinosaur. But actually, the meaning of the original word is more concerned with the *office* they have and the role with which they have been entrusted.
- In the original language — be it in Hebrew or Greek, "Angel" means "one who is sent — a messenger!"
- The fact that we don't know too much about angels, is kind of an indicator that they've been good at what they are meant to do!
- They're not meant to reveal stuff about themselves, but deliver someone else's message and point back to the sender!
- We witness examples of that all throughout the Bible.

Angels deliver God's call. / Angels declare God's judgement.

Angels guide in God's ways.

Angels strengthen God's people. / Angels announce God's Good News!

- It's really interesting that in Greek, the words behind *angel*, *evangelist*, and *gospel*, all come from the same root meaning announcement!

10 ... "Do not be afraid. I bring you good news that will cause great joy for all the people. (Luke 2:10)

AND note — in verse 14 — the particular type of *ministering* that they are sent to do: *they are ALL SENT to SERVE THOSE* who will inherit salvation.

- Calvin (Institutes 1.14.6) put it like this:
angels are dispensers and administrators of God's kindness towards US!
- ALL OF THEM! Not some, not just those in lesser ranks.
The Bible seems to suggest there is an ordering of sorts amongst the angels.
But they ALL have been dispatched for the same purpose. For our benefit.

Billy Graham put it like this: I am convinced that these heavenly beings exist, and that they provide unseen aid on our behalf. I do not believe in angels because someone has told me about a dramatic visitation from an angel, impressive as such rare testimonies may be. I believe in angels, because the Bible says there are angels, and I believe the Bible to be the true word of God. We face dangers every day, of which we are not even aware. Often, God intervenes on our behalf through the use of his angels.

- *That doesn't mean that every person has one angel assigned and nothing bad happens to us.*
The Bible doesn't make that promise. Angels are dispatched for the sake of those who will inherit salvation. Not your angel. God's angels sent on your account.
- Which *also* means that angels are at NOT at OUR beck and call ready to do our bidding.
Sure, Jesus said he could command twelve legions of angels — but he's God and we're not. They're his angels! There's nothing in Scripture that gives us that mandate.
- Angels serve us according to God's purposes for us, *because God is the one WHO sent them.* /
- *It's totally perplexing that in the New Age Movement, people can have a real fixation with angels,*
but completely ignore who has sent them and the message that they have brought.
It would be kind of like getting a letter from the King and obsessing over the postman!
- Angels are awesome but play a supporting role.
- The most important thing about angels is not the angel, *but the one who sent them. God!*

Maybe that makes you think that angels got a better gig than us!

- But we ought to remember that:
only humans are described in the Bible as being made in God's image;
only humans are described as co-heirs with Christ;
only humans are described as sharing in Christ's rule; *only for humanity's sins did Christ die.*
- In fact, we're told in Corinthians that we will outrank the angels in the age to come,
for we, will judge them.

- It's no wonder, we're told in 1 Peter 1:12... that angels *long* to look into the gospel. /
They never get tired of leaning into the gospel. Isn't that amazing!
- Well, if they don't get tired looking into the gospel.
The gospel which they have had a key role in announcing.
Then how much more should we — as the recipients —
never tire of looking into the Gospel, either.

You might be wondering what angels are doing right now.

- Broadly — we're left without a doubt!
- They're continuing the work of ministering to us on behalf of God.
In a particular sense I don't know what that looks like.
But I'm thankful — that in God's extraordinary kindness that *that* would be the case. /
- The Lord is at work, in both the seen and unseen — *for our benefit.*

OUR RELATIONSHIP WITH ANGELS

우리와 천사들의 관계 | Mëët dä wuõ'në Malikaii | 我们与天使的关系 | தேவதூதர்களுக்கும், நமக்கும் உள்ள தொடர்பு

Finally, briefly, **what therefore should our relationship with angels be?**

Three things...

- **#1 Don't worship angels.**

In fact, don't worship anyone except the LORD!

There are many things — even lesser than angels — many material things

That we can readily make into idols — make into objects of our worship.

We have to head the warning of not to drift into that situation,

but ensuring that the Son remains the object of our adoration.

Scripture is full of warnings.

Even angels tell people to stop worshipping them when they do!

Join in worshipping the LORD alone, whom the angels themselves also worship.

- **#2 Remember that we are BOTH servants of the Lord.**

All of creation exists in service to the Lord.

The Son is seated, *for his work of salvation is complete.*

We—like the angels—are *sent* out by God, for God, because our work continues.

- **#3 Look forward to sharing New Creation with the whole company of heaven.**

We won't have the same role, but WE WILL BE gathered around the same throne.

- **Even though we cannot see in full,
we can be confident that whenever we proclaim the greatness of the Lord,
even in our weakness, even if it is incomplete and clunky,
we're joining in with the whole company of heaven.**

- That's what we proclaim every time we celebrate the Lord's Supper together.

- Therefore with angels and archangels, and with all the company of heaven,
we proclaim your great and glorious name, for ever praising you and saying:

Holy, holy, holy Lord, God of power and might,

Heaven and earth are full of your glory.

Hosanna in the highest.

- Every time we sing, every time we worship the Lord,
we're joining in with something already in progress.

- We need to remember that whenever we gather as God's people.

I can't pull back the curtain, but I can tell you what the angels are doing right now.

- They're gathered around the throne worshipping God.

They're waiting for the trumpet call and the Archangel's voice,
which will announce Christ's return. /

- That's out of sight to us — but that doesn't make it any less real.

But one day that entire reality will be laid bare. Every eye will see.

- Myriads of myriads will gather around the throne, singing:
Worthy is the Lamb who was slain.
- Worthy is the one who is out of this world, *but came into our world to save us*.
Worthy is the one who will return to set things right.
- That's the chorus of heaven.
And it's a song that we are invited to sing. //

Lord, thank you for all of the ways in which you are at work that we may know the greatness of your Son. For your Word revealed, for messengers sent, for your Spirit you give — all who point us to Jesus. Give us courageous hearts to see that there is a reality beyond our sight but no less real. Help us to join in with heaven's chorus, in anticipation of your Son's return. In Jesus' Name, Amen.