

How Many Angels Can You Name?

Read Time: 5 Minutes 16 Seconds

In a previous article, we considered angels and the First Advent, the coming of Jesus as the promised Messiah of the Jews and the Redeemer of all mankind (John 3:16).

We reviewed how angels are created as celestial spirit-beings. These usually invisible, heavenly assistants of God are spoken of in the Bible over 250 times, often as “messengers” or “ministering spirits” (Heb. 1:14) who perform His will and ways.

Jesus and Angels

Angels were a significant part of the First Advent. From announcing Jesus’ future birth to the virgin Mary and her fiancé, Joseph (Luke 1:26-38; Matt. 1:18-24), to His actual birth in Bethlehem, when heavenly messengers filled the sky and spoke with the amazed and alarmed shepherds (Luke 2:8), angels were intimately involved.

Angels protected baby Jesus and His family from King Herod’s jealous wrath and efforts to kill the babe (Matt. 2:13-22). Decades later, as Jesus was starting His earthly ministry, Jesus was tempted by Satan at the end of His 40-day fast, when He was hungry and humanly vulnerable. Jesus used scripture as a defense in resisting the evil-one. When the devil left Him, “angels came and ministered to Him,” (Matt. 4:11).

Repeatedly, throughout our Lord’s earthly ministry, angels provided protection and providential assistance. Later, during His agonizing struggle on the night in which He was betrayed, an angel strengthened Jesus in preparation for the troubling events leading to and on the cross (Luke 22:39-46).

As our Lord willingly laid down His own life (John 10:17-18)

in His death and burial, an angel was directly involved, following His supernatural resurrection, by rolling the stone from the borrowed tomb (Matt. 28:1-8). The angel did not remove the stone to let Jesus out of the tomb, but so he could defiantly declare our Lord's triumphant resurrection: "He is not here; for He is risen, as He said. Come and see the place where the Lord lay."

The Promised Second Coming

Forty days after the miraculous resurrection, angels were involved at the event of our Lord's supernatural ascension to heaven from the Mt. of Olives, just east of Jerusalem. As the disciples watched, "He was taken up, and a cloud received Him out of their sight" (Acts 1:9-11).

Immediately, two angels manifested themselves to the disciples as "men...in white apparel" and declared, "This same Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will so come in like manner as you saw Him go into heaven." Jesus had promised them He would go away and prepare a place for them in heaven and would return for them, so they would spend eternity with Him (John 14:1-3). Now, the two angels reminded them of these words and promised a "like-manner" [literal and physical] return of our Lord to that very mountain, as prophetically foretold in Zachariah 14:3-4.

It is this promised Second Coming, or Advent, which we are to anticipate and eagerly desire (Heb. 9:28)! Jesus told the disciples they should expect to take up their own crosses and follow Him. This spiritual devotion would not be without future reward, which will involve the service of angels. "For the Son of Man will come in the glory of His Father with His angels, and then He will reward each according to his works" (Matt. 16:24-27).

We Shall Behold Him!

The apostle Paul augmented our understanding of angels'

involvement with the Second Coming when he taught the Thessalonians “the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel and the trumpet of God,” (1 Thess. 4:16).

Archangels appear to be at the top of an organized structure or hierarchy of angelic authority or power, according to God’s creative order and purposes. Apparently a “warring angel” named Michael (Dan. 10:13; Rev. 12:7-9) is an “archangel” (Jude 9) who rules over other angels, including the six-winged seraphim (Isa. 6:2,6) and the guarding cherubim (mentioned 57 times in the Old Testament and in Heb. 9:5 in the New Testament). These fill a leadership role in worship in heaven. Some believe the seraphim are the praising angels of Psalm 148:1-6, while the cherubim are positioned around the throne of God to guard it and the Mercy Seat (Ps. 99:1-5; Rev. 4:6).

While there is a select group of “seven angels who stand before God” (Rev. 8:2), they are not named nor mentioned as archangels. Some speculate the angel Gabriel may be of that category, due to his prominence as a special messenger at the first advent.

Our Future Contact with Angels

As we approach the end of this age, we are warned that many false messiahs and fake prophets will arise to deceive many, “even the elect” (Matt. 24:23-27). Paul warned: “But even if we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel to you than what we have preached to you, let him be accursed,” (Gal. 1:8). Even supposed angelic messages must be judged by God’s eternal word of truth and discerning men and women of God.

However, the Bible does say that when the Lord comes from heaven to gather up those believers who are alive and those who “sleep in Jesus” (1 Thess. 4:13-18) it will be with the archangel of God, implying other angels he leads may be involved in escorting us into everlasting joy in the Lord’s

presence, at our deaths or transitions to our heavenly bodies.

Paul said, "While we are at home in the body we are absent from the Lord. For we walk by faith, not by sight. We are confident, yes, well pleased rather to be absent from the body and to be present with the Lord," (2 Cor. 5:1-8).

The very next verse tells us to "make it our aim, whether present or absent, to be well pleasing to Him" (2 Cor. 5:9). The reason is our future accountability for every thought, word and deed in our service to Him: "For we must all appear before the judgment [Gr. bema; tribunal] seat of Christ, that each one may receive [regarding] the things done [practiced] in the body, whether good or bad" (2 Cor. 5:10).

Worship Christ the Coming King

In our holy quest for holy living in these last days, our holy God has sent angels to us as "ministering spirits" to protect, guide and assist us in building the body of Christ and advancing His kingdom!

Let us watch and wait with hope-filled joy and holy anticipation of Christ our Coming King. Have a holy and happy Christmas!

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