

Ranks and Numbers of Angels

*The helmed Cherubim,
And sworded Seraphim,
Are seen in glittering ranks with wings display'd.*

—John Milton (1608–1674), *Hymn on the Nativity*

Martin Luther once suggested that there were ten trillion angels, one thousand for each and every person on earth. Other Christians have debated the number of angels that could sit on the head of a pin. Ultimately, any speculation as to the number of angels would not reach a valid conclusion. Neither would a debate about the amount of angels in a certain location at a certain time.

23. Based on what we've already learned about angels, why is it futile to speculate about the exact number of angels that exist or that that can occupy a certain physical space at one time?

Name, Rank, and Serial Number

24. Read Deuteronomy 33:2; Job 25:2–3; Psalm 68:17; Daniel 7:10; Hebrews 12:22; and Revelation 5:11. How do these passages describe the number of angels?

25. Read Matthew 26:53. How many angels could Christ have summoned to His aid in the garden of Gethsemane? What does this imply about our Savior?

26. Read Romans 8:38–39; Ephesians 1:21; 3:10; Colossians 1:16; and 1 Peter 3:22. Some Christians find in these and other passages as many as twenty-seven ranks (divisions) of angels. Is there perhaps a better way of interpreting these passages?

27. Read Daniel 10:13; 12:2; 1 Thessalonians 4:16; and Jude 9. The Bible clearly teaches only two ranks or divisions of angels. What is the rank of the angel mentioned in these verses, and what is his name?

28. Read Isaiah 6:2–6. We meet a specific kind of angel in this passage. Describe their appearance and activities.

29. Read Genesis 3:24; Exodus 25:10–22; 26:31; 36:8. What did this kind of angel do in the Garden of Eden? How were they artistically portrayed in Moses' wilderness tabernacle?

The Throne of God

The God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob is King of kings and Lord of lords. It is only fitting then that He should have a throne.

30. Read 1 Samuel 4:4; 2 Kings 19:15; and Psalm 80:1; 99:1. What do these passages infer about God's throne, the mercy seat (cover) on the ark of the covenant, and the golden cherubim?

31. Read Genesis 3:24; 2 Samuel 22:11; and Psalm 18:10. According to these passages, what is the function of cherubim? What work do they perform? Why do you think God is described as riding them?

We're In Heaven

Not only were artistic representations of cherubim prominent in Moses' wilderness tabernacle, they also figured in the Jerusalem temple. These representations were highly significant of an unseen spiritual reality rarely seen by the human eye.

32. Read 1 Kings 6:23–35; 7:29–36; 2 Chronicles 3:14. Where did additional artistic depictions of cherubim appear in Solomon's temple? What is significant about these angelic representations?

33. Read Ezekiel 9:3; 10:1–22; and 11:22–23. What kind of creatures are named in these verses? What does the presence of cherubim depict?

34. Read Exodus 25:20. Why are the golden cherubim looking at the mercy seat? What did this emphasize to God's Old Testament people? What should this fact emphasize for us today?

Comparisons

Verbal Inspiration: The Holy Spirit led the prophets, evangelists, and apostles to write the books of the Bible. He guided their writing, inspiring their very words, while working through their particular styles of expression. Therefore, the Bible's words are God's Word. Conservative Christian churches hold this view. Many also maintain that the original writings of the Bible were without error (inerrancy) but that some mistakes entered the text as the scribes copied, edited, or translated the Scriptures over the centuries.

Partial Inspiration: Christians affected by theological liberalism hold different views of the inspiration of the Bible. For example, some would assert that the Bible is God's Word but that the authors erred in some factual details. Others would say that the Bible contains God's Word and that the Spirit leads people today to determine which parts of the Bible God wants them to follow. Still others would say that the Bible is one testimony to God's Word along with writings used in other religions.

Inspired Translations: Some churches hold that God inspired certain translations of the Bible. For example, the Eastern Orthodox Church holds that the Greek Septuagint translation of the Old Testament was inspired by God. Some English-speaking Protestants hold that God inspired the King James translation of the Bible.

Point to Remember

"Then I looked, and I heard around the throne and the living creatures and the elders the voice of many angels, numbering myriads of myriads and thousands of thousands." Revelation 5:11

To prepare for "Good and Evil Angels (Demons)," read Matthew 4:1–11.