

Angels: God's Ministering Spirits The Various Classifications

I. The Angels Of God: Developing a Biblical Perspective

"Are they not all ministering spirits, sent out to render service for the sake of those who will inherit salvation." Hebrews 1:14 (NASB)

II. The Various Classifications Of Angels

A. "Ordinary" Angels – God's Obedient Servants.

1. "Ordinary" angels are those having no special designation in the Bible (as contrasted with the angels to be discussed later).
2. The term "ordinary" is not intended to classify these angels as of lesser importance than others (cf. Matthew 26:53).
3. It would seem reasonable to conclude that any of the activities of angels that are not described as being functions of specific angels would fall within the sphere of work of the general host of angels (Matthew 13:36-43; Hebrews 1:14; Revelation 5:11-12; 7:11-12).

B. Cherubim – Worshipful Guardians.

1. The word "cherub" is found 27 times in Scripture and the plural "cherubim" occurs 64 times (Genesis 3:24; Exodus 25:17-22; 26:1, 31; 1 Kings 6:23-28; 8:6-7; 1 Kings 6:29-35; 7:29, 36; Ezekiel 1:4-28; 10:1-22).
2. Based upon the Scripture references given above, it can be seen that these angels play a protective role in their relationship with God, their nature signifies the importance of worshipping God, and they magnify the holiness and power of God.

C. Seraphim – Purifying Agents Of Praise.

1. These angels are associated with the prophet Isaiah's vision of God in the Temple when he was called to his prophetic ministry (Isaiah 6:1-7). This is the only reference in the Bible to these creatures.
2. The work of these angels is much less exhaustive in scope but of great significance nonetheless.
3. The seraphim sang God's praises, called attention to His glory and majesty, and served as purifying agents in preparing Isaiah for his prophetic ministry.

D. Archangels – Messengers & Spiritual Warriors.

1. The term "archangel" is found two times in the Bible – 1 Thessalonians 4:16 and Jude 9. The latter references makes specific mention of Michael. While Gabriel is not referred to as an archangel, most Bible scholars believe that he was such an angel.
2. Both Michael and Gabriel played a unique role in the revelation of God's redemptive purpose (Michael – Revelation 12:7-9; Jude 9; Daniel 10:1-14, 20-21; 12:1; Gabriel – Daniel 8:15-19; 9:20-23; Luke 1:11-20, 26-37).
3. Based upon the preceding discussion, it can be concluded that the archangels have the following responsibilities:
 - a. They are special messengers sent to interpret God's revelation in times past and announce good news of future events (this is especially true of Gabriel).
 - b. These angels engage in spiritual warfare with Satan and his angels (this is especially true of Michael).
 - c. An archangel will herald the return of Christ.