

The Bible opens with the sentence:

- *In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. (Genesis 1:1)*

The creation of the world is discussed extensively in a separate study.¹

How God created heaven is not revealed in the Bible.

What is known is that heaven is populated by beings created by God.

We come across them in the Bible with three names:

- Angels
- Cherubs
- Seraphs

Angels.

More is known about the angels than about the others.

The Hebrew word '**malak**', which is translated as 'angel', appears in 197 verses of the Bible.

The Greek word '**aggelos**', which is translated as 'angel', appears in 173 verses of the Bible.

The translation from both languages is: messenger, angel.

It is rather special that the words '**malak**' and '**aggelos**' are translated both as **angel** and as **messenger**.

The translations 'messenger' and 'ambassador' do in fact appear frequently in the Old Testament.

Two examples of **the translation 'messenger'**:

- *Then Saul sent **messengers (malak)** to Jesse and said, "Send me your son David, who is with the sheep." (1 Samuel 16:19)*
- (Jesus said of John the Baptist) - *This is the one about whom it is written: I will send my **messenger (aggelos)** ahead of you, who will prepare your way before you.' (Luke 7:27)*

This emphasizes the fact that angels act as God's messengers.

Angels are heavenly messengers.

Angels act frequently as God's messengers in the Bible.

- *On the twenty-fourth day of the first month ... I looked up and there before me was **a man dressed in linen**, with a belt of fine gold from Uphaz around his waist. His body was like topaz, his face like lightning, his eyes like flaming torches, his arms and legs like the gleam of burnished bronze, and his voice like the sound of a multitude. ... **He said**, "Daniel, you who are highly esteemed, consider carefully the words I am about to speak to you, and stand up, for I have now been sent to you." (Daniel 10:4-6, 11)*
- *(Zechariah the priest offered a sacrifice in the temple) Then **an angel of the Lord appeared to him**, standing at the right side of the altar of incense. When Zechariah saw him, he was startled*

¹ Study: The origin of the World.

and was gripped with fear. 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 call him John.”
(Luke 1:11-13)

- In the sixth month of Elizabeth’s pregnancy, God sent the angel Gabriel to Nazareth, a town in Galilee, to a virgin pledged to be married to a man named Joseph, a descendant of David. The virgin’s name was Mary. ... But **the angel said to her**, ... “You will conceive and give birth to a son, and you are to call him Jesus.” (Luke 1:26-27,30-31)

Angels are also warriors.

God is called **the Lord Almighty** in 246 verses of the Bible in the Old Testament.

Almighty is translated as: **that which is going out (to war), army, waging war.**

- God told the prophet Nathan: “Now then, tell my servant David, ‘This is what **the LORD Almighty** says: I took you from the pasture, from tending the flock, and appointed you ruler over my people Israel. (2 Samuel 7:8)
- (The angel said to Daniel) But the **prince of the Persian kingdom** resisted me twenty-one days. Then **Michael, one of the chief princes**, came to help me, because I was detained there with the king of Persia. (Daniel 10:13)
(see also: Ezekiel 28:11 – The king of Tyre)²

Angels play an important role on the world stage.

The angel who spoke to Daniel said:

- ... Soon I will return **to fight against the prince of Persia**, and when I go, **the prince of Greece will come**; ... (Daniel 10:20)
- And in the first year of Darius the Mede, I (the angel Michael) **took my stand to support and protect him**. (Daniel 11:1)

The result of this was that, at the political level, the king of Persia gave orders for the resumption of the reconstruction of Jerusalem and of the temple, and for the return of the temple treasures. He confirmed this with the words:

- I **Darius** have decreed it. Let it be carried out with diligence. (Ezra 6:12)
- Then **war broke out in heaven**. Michael and his angels fought against the dragon (that ancient serpent called the devil, or Satan – verse 9), and the dragon and his angels fought back. But he was not strong enough, and they lost their place in heaven. (Revelation 12:7-8)

Angels are in submission to Jesus.

Jesus, as the Son of God, is above the angels, for:

- To which of the **angels** did God ever say, “Sit at my right hand until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet?” (Hebrews 1:13)

² Study: Ezekiel 28:11 – The king of Tyre.

Angels are at God's and Jesus' command.

They carry out God's and Jesus' commands:

- *Praise the LORD, you **his angels**, you mighty ones **who do his bidding**, who obey his word. (Psalm 103:20)*
- *For he will **command his angels** concerning you to guard you in all your ways. (Psalm 91:11)*
- *(Jesus said:) Do you think I cannot call on my Father, and **he will** at once put at **my disposal more than twelve legions of angels**? (Matthew 26:53)*
- *The Son of Man (Jesus) will **send out his angels**, and they will weed out of his kingdom everything that causes sin and all who do evil ... (Matthew 13:41)*

Angels have their own will.

Angels are able to choose freely whether to obey God or not.

- *Praise the LORD, you his angels, you mighty ones who **do his bidding**, who obey his word. Praise the LORD, all his heavenly hosts, you his servants who **do his will**. (Psalm 103:20-21)*
- *And the angels who **did not keep their positions of authority but abandoned their proper dwelling** - these he has kept in darkness, bound with everlasting chains for judgment on the great Day. (Jude 1:6)*

Angels are of a lower order than mankind.

Paul wrote:

- *Do you not know that **we will judge angels**? How much more the things of this life! (1 Corinthians 6:3)*

Angels are at man's service.

Angels are active in the visible world.

- *Whoever dwells in the shelter of the Most High will rest in the shadow of the Almighty. I will say of the LORD, "He is my refuge and my fortress, my God, in whom I trust." ... For **he will command his angels** concerning you **to guard you in all your ways**; ... (Psalm 91:1-2,11)*
- *Are not all angels **ministering spirits** sent to serve those who will inherit salvation? (Hebrews 1:14)*
- *See that you do not despise one of these little ones. For I tell you **that their angels** in heaven **always see the face of my Father** in heaven. (Matthew 18:10)*
- *At that time **Michael**, the great prince **who protects your people**, will arise. (Daniel 12:1)*

Cherubs.

Cherubs are mentioned in 66 verses of the Bible.

Very many of these texts refer to the construction of the tabernacle, and, later, of the temple in Jerusalem. There were two cherubs on the atonement cover that covered the ark and cherubs were also to be worked into the multicoloured woven fabric.

Only Ezekiel saw cherubs in a vision, as he describes in chapter 10 of his book. He had apparently seen cherubs previously, as he writes in 1:1 and 3:23, and, later, in 43:3.

The OLB translates the **Hebrew for cherub (keruwb)** as: angelic being, as guardian of Eden, as standing beside the throne of God.

A description of the two cherubs on the atonement cover of the ark is given with the **Greek for cherub (cheroubin)**.

A more detailed explanation of cherubs is to be found in a separate study.³

Seraphs.

Seraphs are only mentioned in the Old Testament.

The **Hebrew for seraph (saraph)** is to be found in 7 verses of the Bible.

The OLB translates as follows:

- **Saraph** – is derived from the verb '**saraph**' (translated as: (to burn (up))).

- **Saraph** is translated as:

→ Serpent, fiery serpent – venomous snake (fiery, because of the burning sensation of the poison)

→ Seraph, seraphim – majestic beings with six wings, human hands and/or voices, who serve God.

Only Isaiah describes seraphs he has seen in the vision, in which he was called to be a prophet of God.

- *In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord, high and exalted, seated on a throne; and the train of his robe filled the temple. Above him were **seraphim**, each with **six wings**: With two wings they covered their faces, with two they covered their feet, and with two they were flying. **And they were calling to one another: "Holy, holy, holy is the LORD Almighty; the whole earth is full of his glory."** At the sound of their voices the doorposts and thresholds shook and the temple was filled with smoke. "Woe to me!" I cried. "I am ruined! For I am a man of unclean lips, and I live among a people of unclean lips, and my eyes have seen the King, the LORD Almighty." Then one of **the seraphim** flew to me with a live coal in his hand, which he had taken with tongs from the altar. With it he touched my mouth and said, "See, this has touched your lips; your guilt is taken away and your sin atoned for." Then I heard the voice of the Lord saying, "Whom shall I send? And who will go for us?" (Isaiah 6:1-8)*

Other verses in the Bible where the Hebrew word **saraph** appears, which is also translated as seraph.

- *... they spoke against God and against Moses, and said, "Why have you brought us up out of Egypt to die in the wilderness? There is no bread! There is no water! And we detest this miserable food!" Then the LORD sent **venomous (seraph)** snakes among them; they bit the people and many Israelites died ... (Numbers 21:5-6)*
- *The LORD said to Moses, "Make a **snake (saraph)** and put it up on a pole; anyone who is bitten can look at it and live." (Numbers 21:8)*

³ Study: Ezekiel 28:14 – A guardian cherub.

- *then your heart will become proud and you will forget the LORD your God, who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery. He led you through the vast and dreadful wilderness, that thirsty and waterless land, with its **venomous (saraph)** snakes and scorpions. He brought you water out of hard rock. (Deuteronomy 8:14-15)*
- *Do not rejoice, all you Philistines, that the rod that struck you is broken; from the root of that snake will spring up a viper, its fruit will be a darting, **venomous** serpent (**saraph**). (Isaiah 14:29)*
- *A prophecy concerning the animals of the Negev: Through a land of hardship and distress, of lions and lionesses, of adders and darting **snakes (saraph)**, the envoys carry their riches on donkeys' backs, their treasures on the humps of camels, to that unprofitable nation. (Isaiah 30:6)*