

The Heavenly Realm

Ryan Pfeiffer | September 13, 2026

INTRO. Sarah Part 1: A dream... It had eyes all over it... What did I see?

ACTS pulls back the curtain on a much bigger world... an unseen realm:

1. An angel frees Peter from prison... Acts 5:19
2. An angel guides Philip to share the gospel... in Acts 8:26
3. An angel speaks to Cornelius... in Acts 10:3
4. Satan fills Ananias' / Sapphira's hearts to lie... Acts 5:3
5. Impure spirits are stopped from tormenting people... Acts 5:16
6. Paul kicks a demon out of a slave girl... Acts 16:16
7. An evil spirit overpowers fraudulent exorcists ... Acts 19:13.

Our goal isn't to obsess... worship or overly focus on angels/ demons...

But clearly the Bible wants us to have some understanding of these beings:

- In ACTS... 30+ references to spiritual beings...
- The NT makes 176 references
- The Bible makes over 400 references to heavenly beings.

The Bible's helping us understand what Paul calls the heavenly realms

Ephesians 2:6 And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus....

FOCUS. What is this heavenly realm and Why does it help us to know it?

WHAT IS THE HEAVENLY REALM? Psalm 82: 1 God presides in the great assembly; he renders judgment among the "gods": 2 "How long will you defend the unjust and show partiality to the wicked? 3 Defend the weak and the fatherless; uphold the cause of the poor and the oppressed...6 I say, 'You are gods; you are all children of the Most High. 7 But you will die like mere mortals and fall like every other ruler.'"

First... The heavenly realm is where God is enthroned as the unrivaled King, surrounded by an ordered community of created heavenly beings who worship, serve, and participate in His rule.

- Other examples of this realm... Job 1, Isa 6, Eph 6, Rev 4–5.
- This heavenly realm intersects w/ human affairs... v3 defend the weak...

Secondly- it's inhabited by created spiritual beings... called gods, sons of God

In the Hebrew... gods = elohim (אֱלֹהִים) refers to spiritual beings... & YHWH.

So is Christianity polytheistic? NO. We worship 1 GOD— YHWH- Creator God!

Other general terms... host of heaven, holy ones, spirits, rulers, powers...

Then there are more specific terms, Angels, Archangels (Michael Daniel 10)

Seraphim, Cherubim (they are not cute and chubby) PPT, Watchers, Fallen angels and Demons.

Bible gives us a surprisingly robust taxonomy of spiritual beings— 23+ terms!

Thirdly- not all these spiritual beings are loyal to God.

Rev 12:7 Then war broke out in heaven. Michael and his angels fought against the dragon, and the dragon and his angels fought back. 8 But he was not strong enough, and they lost their place in heaven. 9 The great dragon was hurled down—that ancient serpent called the devil, or Satan, who leads the whole world astray. He was hurled to the earth, and his angels with him.

There is a war but not between equal powers... God reigns supreme...

CS Lewis— God has no opposite...Satan... is the opposite, not of God, but of Michael.

Evidenced by Jesus' authority (and his disciples) over demonic spirits...

So what are demonic spirits?

1. Rebellious spiritual beings obedient to Satan- hostile to God & you.
2. We'll look at the nature of their activity in a minute.

One thought about their nature... some see them simply as fallen angels others as the disembodied spirits of the Nephilim.

Genesis 6.4 The Nephilim were on the earth in those days—and also afterward—when the sons of God went to the daughters of humans and had children by them.

They were the heroes of old, men of renown.

- What does the term sons of God refer to? בְּנֵי־הָאֱלֹהִים — bene ha'elohim.
- Some think human kings... yet used to refer to spiritual beings... Job 1:6
- Ancient Jewish/ Christian trad 1 Enoch, quoted by 2 Peter 2:4 / Jude 6...
- Offspring were the Nephilim... judged/ flood... demonic spirits...

Most important thing to know... is that they must submit to Jesus' authority.

WHY DOES IT HELP US TO BETTER UNDERSTAND THE HEAVENLY REALM?

1) It's an essential part of our Identity in Christ. Ephesians 2:6 And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus....

In Jesus you're relationship with the heavenly realm is restored...

Ephesians 1:3 Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ.

- Spiritual Authority- I have given you authority... to overcome all the power of the enemy.

Luke 10:19.

- Spiritual Identity- Do not rejoice that the spirits submit to you, but rejoice that your names are written in heaven. Luke 10:20.

2) It strengthens us in a Biblical World View.

- When we don't see the world as both spiritual/ material...
- We get swept into a Secular Naturalist world view...
- Why Pray? Why forgive? And a healthy apprehension toward sin!
- A more robust expectation of our eternal destiny when this body dies!

ILLUS. We're created for dominion over creation... in loving/ wise leadership.

- This earth was meant to be our training ground... for what?
- James Webb has shown us there are over 2 Trillion Galaxies... What if...?

3) Knowing about these spiritual beings helps us discern spirits.

DEMONIC ACTIVITY (ACTS)	ANGELIC ACTIVITY (ACTS)
Deceives	Reveals God's purposes- Cornelius
Torments	Encourages- Paul in the storm
Oppresses	Delivers- Peter, Paul, apostles from prison
Enslaves	Guide- Philip and the Ethiopian
Opposes the gospel	Advance the gospel- Angels at the tomb
Exploits	Support- guiding, encouraging, revealing

ILLUS. Sarah Story... Pt 2... Dad... Rev 4... What did it say...

1. Don't be afraid. I have come to give you a message from God.
2. God still has many plans for you.
3. It's not your time yet. You still have lots to do.

INIVTE WORSHIP TEAM OUT.

DEMONIC ACTIVITY (ACTS) ANGELIC ACTIVITY (ACTS)

Deceives Reveals God's purposes- Cornelius

Torments Encourages- Paul in the storm

Oppresses Delivers- Peter, Paul, apostles from prison

Enslaves Guide- Philip and the Ethiopian

Opposes the gospel Advance the gospel- Angels at the tomb

Exploits Support- guiding, encouraging, revealing

ANGELIC APPEARANCES & ACTIVITY IN ACTS

Bible	What the angel(s) did	Key descriptor of angelic role
Acts 1:10–11	Two heavenly messengers appear at the ascension and tell the disciples that Jesus will return as they saw him go.	REVEAL — clarify God's purposes
Acts 5:19–20	An angel of the Lord opens the prison doors, brings the apostles out, and commands them to return to the temple and preach.	DELIVER — intervene to protect God's servants
Acts 8:26	An angel directs Philip to take the desert road toward Gaza, positioning him to meet the Ethiopian eunuch.	GUIDE — direct God's people toward His purposes
Acts 10:3–6	An angel appears to Cornelius, tells him God has noticed his prayers and gifts, and instructs him to send for Peter.	DIRECT — facilitate God's mission
Acts 11:13–14	Cornelius recounts the angel's appearance and instruction to summon Peter, through whom the gospel would be explained.	CONNECT — bring people into contact with God's messengers
Acts 12:7–11	An angel appears in Peter's cell, wakes him, causes his chains to fall off, leads him through the prison, and delivers him from Herod.	RESCUE — supernatural protection/deliverance
Acts 12:23	An angel of the Lord strikes Herod after he accepts divine praise rather than giving glory to God.	JUDGE — execute God's judgment
Acts 27:23–24	During the storm, an angel stands beside Paul and assures him that he will stand before Caesar and that those sailing with him will be spared.	ENCOURAGE — strengthen God's servants with God's promises

DEMONIC APPEARANCES/ ACTIVITY IN ACTS

Bible	What the demonic spirit/power did	Key descriptor of demonic activity
Acts 5:3	Peter says Satan “filled” Ananias's heart to lie to the Holy Spirit about the money from the property.	DECEIVE — promotes lies and hypocrisy
Acts 5:16	People are described as being tormented by impure spirits; through the apostles' ministry they are healed.	TORMENT — afflict human beings
Acts 8:7	Impure spirits inhabit/afflict people and come out with shrieks through Philip's ministry.	OPPRESS — exercise destructive spiritual control
Acts 10:38	Peter summarizes Jesus' ministry as healing those “under the power of the devil.”	OPPRESS — hold people under destructive power

Acts 13:6–12	Elymas the sorcerer opposes Paul and Barnabas and attempts to turn Sergius Paulus from the faith; Paul calls him a “child of the devil.”	OPPOSE — resist the gospel and distort truth
Acts 16:16–18	A slave girl has a spirit associated with divination/fortune-telling that generates profit for her owners; Paul commands the spirit to leave in Jesus' name, and it does.	ENSLAVE — exploit and spiritually control
Acts 19:11–12	Evil spirits leave afflicted people through extraordinary miracles God performs through Paul.	AFFLICT — bring spiritual bondage
Acts 19:13–16	An evil spirit recognizes Jesus and Paul, rejects the unauthorized exorcists, and through the possessed man violently overpowers them.	OVERPOWER — exercise destructive supernatural power
Acts 19:17–20	The defeat of evil spiritual power contributes to fear of God, confession, abandonment of magic, and exaltation of Jesus' name.	SUBMIT — ultimately powerless before Jesus' authority
Acts 26:17–18	Paul describes conversion as turning people “from the power of Satan to God.”	DOMINATE — hold humanity in a realm of spiritual darkness

COMPARISON/ CONTRAST

ANGELIC ACTIVITY	DEMONIC ACTIVITY
Guides	Deceives
Protects	Torments
Delivers	Oppresses
Encourages	Enslaves
Reveals God's purposes	Opposes the gospel
Advances God's mission	Exploits
	Destroys