

# Entertaining Angels



## LESSON 1: An Introduction to Angels

### Suggested Responses

1. Angels are like God because they are pure spirits, as God is a pure spirit. Unlike God, however, they are created beings, limited in their power, and all that they have is contingent. Like God they are immortal. Unlike God, they had no beginning. Only God is eternal, without beginning or end. Pope Blessed John Paul II wrote: “the angels, inasmuch as they are purely spiritual creatures, are presented for our reflection as a special realization of the ‘image of God,’ the most perfect Spirit, as Jesus himself reminds the Samaritan woman in the words: ‘God is spirit’ (John 4:24). From this point of view the angels are creatures closest to the divine exemplar” (General Audience, July 9, 1986). When angels assume a human form (as in the Book of Tobit), it is quite unlike the incarnation of the Lord. Angels may take on the appearance of a human being, but they are not truly human. Jesus is true God and true man, as we profess in the creed.
2. Angels are like us because they are created and because they are spiritual beings, with minds and free will. But their minds are vastly more powerful than ours. The holy angels are truly free because their will is firmly fixed in God’s service from the moment of their testing, their trial. Their intellect apprehends the choice — for or against God — perfectly, and their will responds definitively.
3. Jacob’s dream shows God’s constant, provident care for his people on earth. He administers this care through the service of angels.
4. Jacob’s dream gave him a vivid impression of God’s power. He learned that God was with him (Genesis 28:20), and had confidence in his vocation. He makes a commitment to tithe from his possessions, from that moment onward, as a sign of his devotion and his trust that God would always provide. He named the place Bethel, which means House of God, and he returned there eventually (Genesis 35), established an altar there, and offered sacrifice to God in the presence of the holy angels, thus prefiguring the Mass of Our Lord Jesus Christ.

5. In St. John's Gospel, Jesus identifies himself as the definitive "ladder" connecting heaven and earth — repairing what had been damaged in the fall of Adam and Eve. He promises that his disciples (in this case, Nathanael) would see more clearly the truth of Jacob's vision.
  
6. Genesis 28:13 tells us that "the Lord stood above" the ladder. God alone is God. He has no equal, only he is all-powerful and all knowing, though he shares some portion of his power and knowledge with his creatures, the angels and human beings. All creatures, however, are shown to be "under" God. This fact — of God's transcendence — sets the religion of Israel apart from its ancient contemporaries. Other religions believed there were many gods, more or less in competition and contention. Biblical religion shows God as one, transcendent, self-sufficient.