

## Angels in Different Cultures and Religions

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In Judaism, angels, or malachim, serve as God's messengers and "workers" here on Earth. It was for example, an angel who stopped Abraham just as he was about to kill his beloved son as a sacrifice to God. The angel Michael on the other hand, is viewed as the guardian and protector of the people of Israel.

With the roots of Christianity closely linked to Judaism, it comes as no surprise that Christians also hold angels in high-esteem. As in Judaism, angels also played great roles in many events viewed with great importance by Christians. It was the angel Gabriel who appeared to Mary and told her of how she was chosen by God to give birth to his son Jesus, who Christians believe is the savior of mankind. The Bible also recounts that Christ's resurrection from the dead was announced by angels. Angels, Christians believe, are God's link to man.



Angels also figure prominently in the Islam faith, one of their basic articles of faith being the "belief in angels". Muslims believe that each person has four angels (which they call Malaa'ika, meaning, messengers) assigned to him who tallies his good and bad actions (two record the good while the other two take not of the bad). They also assign souls to newborns and are responsible for taking care of the environment.

One main difference between the Islamic and Christian/Jewish views on angels, is that for Muslims, it is not possible for angels to fall from grace, as they do cannot commit sin.



Hindus have their angels too. Called “devas”, these entities are responsible for natural elements like water, earth and fire. While angels are viewed as God’s workers in Christianity, Islam and Judaism and are not worshipped, the distinction between angels and the lesser gods are blurry.

Like these major religions, many minor belief systems also profess a belief in angels. Followers of Zoroastrianism (estimated at just around 200,000 worldwide), also believe that each one of us has a guardian angel—a Fravashi--- that protects and guides us.

In the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints meanwhile, angels are heavenly beings in human form that help spread the work and word of God on earth. The church was established after an angel allegedly appeared to its founder Joseph Smith.

So why the ubiquity of these heavenly entities? Because the idea of angels—beings that guide us, protect us from harm and give us a more personal link to God—is comforting, reassuring and one that is thoroughly welcomed.

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