

ANGELS

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We have been bombarded in recent years by what some have called “Angelmania.” In his 1990 book, *Angels: An Endangered Species*, Malcolm Godwin estimates that over the last 30 years one in every ten pop songs mentions an angel.” I looked in my music program and found over 16,000 songs with the word “angel” in them.

Our culture takes angels seriously. In the last few years *Time*, *Newsweek*, *Ladies’ Home Journal*, *Redbook*, and a host of other popular magazines have carried articles About Angels. In 1994, ABC aired a two-hour, prime time special titled “Angels: the Mysterious Messengers.”

According to a *Time Magazine/CNN* poll, 69% of American adults believe in the existence of angels, and 46% believe they have their own Guardian Angel. TV shows like *Touched By An Angel* and “Highway to Heaven” were popular a few years back.

If there is such thing as a universal idea that cuts across cultures and religions and which has been common through the centuries, it is the belief in angels. Not only do Christians, Jews, and Muslims (the monotheistic religions) have angels, but religions like Buddhism and Hinduism also have them. In addition, winged figures appear in primitive Sumerian carvings and Egyptian tombs. The belief in angels goes from ancient times to the present.

QUESTIONS ABOUT ANGELS

1. Where do angels come from?

It seems to be a common idea that angels were once human beings. Many movies portray someone dying and becoming an angel. Some of those movies have the angel coming back to earth to do good deeds in order to prove himself. In the old classic, “it’s a wonderful life,” Clarence, the angel, comes back to earth in order to try and to earn his wings. One popular children's book on angels includes this quote: “Heaven is a place where girls get turned into angels...and then God tries to do the best He can with the boys.” That may be cute, but the Bible never says anything like that.

According to the Bible, people don't “evolve” into angels when they die. Angels are spiritual beings created by God to serve Him.

Psalm 148:1-2,5, "Praise the LORD. Praise the LORD from the heavens, praise him in the heights above. Praise him, all his angels, praise him, all his heavenly hosts. "Let them praise the name of the LORD, for he commanded and they were created."

The time of their creation is never stated, however, but we know from the book of Job that they were present when the earth was created (Job 38:4-7), so their creation was before the creation of the earth.

2. What do angels look like?

(Interview with small children video clip)

Do angels have long blond hair? Do they wear white robes? Do they have halos and strum harps while sitting on clouds?

Hebrews 1:14, "Are not all angels ministering spirits....?"

Angels are spiritual beings, and as spiritual beings, they have no bodies. It is true that when God has sent them to earth to speak to people, they have sometimes taken on the form of a person, but in their natural state they are purely spiritual-no flesh and no bones. There is also no indication in Scripture that angels age. There are no "little angels" going through their growing up years in the clouds. The angel Gabriel who appeared to Daniel was the same unchanged angel Gabriel who appeared more than five hundred years later to Mary and Zechariah.

3. Can angels be trusted?

That is all according to which angels you are talking about. While all the angels were originally created holy and without sin, there was a rebellion by Satan, who sought to exalt himself above God, and he took with him many angels who became demons. Those fallen angels now work against the plan of God.

Prophesying of a future angelic conflict that will occur in the middle of the Tribulation, John wrote,

"And there was war in heaven, Michael and his angels waging war with the dragon. And the dragon and his angels waged war" (Rev. 12:7).

1 Peter 5:8, "Be self-controlled and alert. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour."

Satan, along with his evil angels, use all their powers against people.

If you were to name 1 thing that most characterizes this unholy army, it would be deception. Deception has been the devil's tactic from the very beginning when he deceived the first two people. 2 Corinthians 11 tells us that Satan masquerades as an angel of light. He seeks to make evil look good.

Martin Luther well described Satan in his hymn, "A mighty fortress is our God" by saying, "For still our ancient foe doth seek to work us woe; his craft and power are great, and armed with cruel hate, on earth is not his equal."

4. What's an angel to do?

The good angels are the servants of God who constantly serve him and do His will. The Psalmist described them as, "Bless the LORD, you His angels, Mighty in strength, who perform His word, Obeying the voice of His word! Bless the LORD, all you His hosts, You who serve Him, doing His will" (Ps. 103:20-21).

a) Angels Protect

Psalm 91:11-12, "For he will command his angels concerning you to guard you in all your ways; they will lift you up in their hands, so that you will not strike your foot against a stone."

Psalm 34:7 says, "The angel of the Lord encamps around those who fear Him, and He delivers them."

We know that when Daniel was thrown in the lion's den, God sent an angel to shut the mouths of the lions. When Peter was in prison, God sent an angel to free him.

A more current instance is seen in a story told by Corrie ten Boom of rebels with hundreds of troops advancing on a school in Africa where 200 children and missionaries lived. The rebels planned to kill both children and the missionary teachers. The missionaries went to their knees in prayer asking for God's intervention, and when the rebels got close to the school, they suddenly turned around and ran away. The next day they came back and the same thing happened, and it happened again on the third day. A few days later, one of the rebels was wounded and was brought to the mission hospital. When the doctor dressed his wounds, he asked him: "Why did you not attack the school as you planned?" He replied, "We could not do it. Each time we attacked, we saw hundreds of soldiers in white uniforms and we became scared." No one, including the missionaries, knew anything about hundreds of soldiers in white uniforms.

I am not a spooky kind of guy. I don't see a demon behind every rock, and I do not hear an angel singing in my ear in the morning, but I have had several occasions in my life

when I was in extreme danger when I seemed to sense the presence of something spiritual taking care of me.

b) Angels Provide

Angels were sent by God to provide food for the Lord at the end of his forty days in the wilderness (Matt. 4:1-11). It was an angel who woke up Elijah in the desert and told him to get up and eat.

Sue Bohlin gives the following account: In 1944, the penniless wife of a pastor and evangelist in Switzerland, Susie Ware prayed, "God, I need five pounds of potatoes, two pounds of pastry flour, apples, pears, a cauliflower, carrots, veal cutlets for Saturday, and beef for Sunday." A few hours later, someone knocked on the door, and there was a young man carrying a basket, who said, "Mrs. Ware, I am bringing what you asked for." It was precisely what she'd prayed for—down to the exact brand of pastry flour she wanted. The young man slipped away, and even though pastor and Mrs. Ware watched at the window to their building, the man never exited. He just disappeared.

c) Angels Provide Guidance from God

The word, "angel" literally means, "messenger." Angels are heavenly mailmen." For example, the angel of God was sent to Hagar after she had run away from Abraham and Sarah and told her to go back to Sarah and submit to her. It was an angel who told the wife of Manoah that she would have a son named Samson. It was an angel who appeared to Zechariah and the temple and told him that his wife Elizabeth was to have a child in her old age that we now know of as John the Baptist. It was an angel who appeared to Joseph and told him that the baby Mary was to have was begotten by the Holy Spirit. It was an angel who told Mary the same thing and described the greatness of the child.

d) Angels Carry Out God's Judgments

The Bible repeatedly shows that throughout history angels have worked to carry out God's judgments on nations and individuals who were disobedient to Him. For example God used angels in bringing judgment on Sodom and Gomorrah and eventually on Babylon and Nineveh. It was an angel that God sent to kill the first born of Egypt to force stubborn Pharaoh to free the people of Israel. Acts 12 says that an angel of the Lord killed the wicked King Herod Agrippa because he did not give God the glory when his people said he spoke as a god. Prophecy tells us that God will use angels to bring judgment on the earth during the Tribulation as described in Revelation.

Revelation 7:1-2, "After this I saw four angels standing at the four corners of the earth, holding back the four winds of the earth to prevent any wind from blowing on the land or on the sea or on any tree. Then I saw another angel coming up from the east, having the seal of the living God. He called out in a loud voice to the four angels who had been given power to harm the land and the sea."

God has used angels in the past to bring judgment, and he will do so in the future. That tells me that he is probably using angels to judge evil today. It could be that some of the so called "natural disasters" that we experience are really the work of angels sent by God to try to get people's attention.

5. Do I have one?

What about guardian angels? Some people believe that each person is assigned a special "guardian angel" at birth. Jesus in Matthew 18:10, speaking of little children, says, "their angels in heaven always see the face of my Father in heaven." When Peter came to the door in Acts 12, the disciples didn't believe it was him. They thought it was "his angel." We do know from Hebrews 1:14 that angels are "ministering spirits" sent to serve Christians. But whether or not we each have an assigned angel, the Bible does not specifically say.

6. Where do they live?

Angels are a part of the invisible world around us. The bible often alludes to this invisible world. It is called "the heavenly realms" in the book of Ephesians. It is a different dimension that we cannot perceive with our physical eyes but which is nevertheless there. It could be that there may be one or more angels in our presence today. The bible is also clear that some angels surround the throne of God and worship Him. Angels are described as serving in heaven and on earth.

Responding to the reality of angels

1. Base your faith on the Bible, not human experience

The only reliable source of information on angels is the Word of God. Unfortunately, many people turn to human experience to get their information. That is a serious mistake because you end up with an elaborate theory of angels and demons that doesn't come from the Bible.

Much that is written by Christian writers comes more from occult theology than the Bible. The Bible says nothing about ancestral spirits. The Bible says nothing about a demon of lust, a demon of depression, a demon of anger. The Bible never encourages us to blame demons for our personal sin, yet it would appear from certain popular writers that virtually all sin comes from demonic influence. Some people seem to gravitate toward the spectacular. We must resist that temptation at all costs. We want to believe everything the Bible says about the spirit world, nothing more, nothing less.

2. Do not try to contact angels.

Some teachers tell us that angels are trying very hard to contact us, so they can give us deeper knowledge of the spiritual. There are now books available with titles like “Ask Your Angels.”

There is no example in Scripture where someone tried to contact an angel. When people start calling on angels, it’s not the holy angels who answer. They’re demons, disguising themselves as good angels to people who don’t know how to tell the difference. For example, Naomi Albright teaches about the deep meanings of colors, and numbers and letters of the alphabet which she claims is “knowledge given from above and brought forth by angels. These same beings told Mrs. Albright to stress two main teachings: first, that God accepts all religions, and second, Reincarnation. Where is that coming from?

Angels are never the primary subject in Scripture. They are only mentioned to inform us about God, what He does, and how He does it. If we need wisdom, we go to God, not angels.

3. Give thanks for a God as great as ours

Angels are powerful beings. Once in the Old Testament, one angel wiped out 185,000 soldiers. And yet, as powerful as these beings are, God is their creator and rules over thousands or millions of these powerful beings.

4. Give thanks for a God who cares

A study of angels shows that God didn't just create the world and then sit back in His celestial rocking chair to watch what would happen. No-God is actively involved in our world. Angels are a sign of God's interest in us, of God's desire to guide us and protect us.

5. Anticipate the glory that is to come

1 Corinthians 2:9, "However, as it is written: "No eye has seen, no ear has heard, no mind has conceived what God has prepared for those who love him."

The existence of angels is only one proof that there is laid up for us in heaven things beyond our ability to conceive. Our mind is too small to wrap them around all that God has for us. One day, faith will be turned into sight. What we have believed through the pages of scripture, we will see with our eyes and experience forever.