

ANGELS AMONG US?

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Introduction:

A. Our religious world and even our secular has a great interest in angels!

1. Just think about all the movies, television shows, and books that focus on angels
2. The Catholic church paints beautiful pictures of angels and makes statues of them
3. The rest of the religious world abounds in discussion on angels and many books have been written speculating on their work in Christian's lives today

B. Angels play a major role throughout God's word – Even in the lives of Christians:

1. Because we do not totally understand them and because many have misconceptions about them, we often find ourselves running away from the subject!
 - a. It is good that we do not spend time focusing on what we can never know – But the Bible does speak a lot on the subject of angels
 - b. It's easy to get caught up in the speculation and conjecture (**I Tim. 1:3-4**)
 - c. We cannot allow the misconceptions the majority of people have on angels to keep us from studying them and understanding their work
2. Angels certainly played an important role in the lives of people under the Old Covenant and even serve an important role in the lives of Christians... but we ask...
 - a. What are angels? What is their nature like? Where did they come from?
 - b. What was their role like in people's lives under the Old Covenant?
 - c. Do angels still minister to Christians today? If so, how do they do so?
3. Let us look at these beings to clear up our misconceptions and gain appreciation for them

I. ANGELS, WHAT ARE THEY?

A. We gain a clearer understanding by looking at terms the Bible uses to describe them:

1. The term "angel" itself simply means "a messenger"
 - a. It was a word that was used to speak of Haggai the prophet and even the name of another prophet Malachi comes from the same word
 - b. The same Hebrew word describes both John the baptist and Jesus as they brought "messages" from God to men (**Malachi 3:1**)
 - b. Jesus in speaking to what appears to be preachers in various congregations referred to them as "angels" (**Rev. 1-3**)
 - c. So when applied to "heavenly beings" it simply means an agent who carries out the will of God or a messenger who brings God's will
2. There are other terms used to describe angels that give more insight into what they are:
 - a. They are called "sons of God" by virtue of God creating them (**Job 1:6**)
 - b. They are called "Saints" or "Holy Ones" signifying their being set apart for a particular purpose (**Psalms 89:5-7**)
 - c. They are referred to as "The Host" or "The Heavenly Host" showing their abode and the vast number of them (**Luke 2:13-14**)
3. One description deals with one "angel" in particular → "The Angel Of The Lord"
 - a. This "Angel of the Lord" is said to have guided the children of Israel, yet Paul says that this guidance was Christ! (**Ex. 14:19; I Cor. 10:4**)
 - b. This "Angel of The Lord" speaks as God Himself! It was this "Angel" who spoke from the burning bush and at other times
 - c. If Jesus, as "The Word," was present speaking at creation, why think He would have quit doing so until His birth? (**John 1:1ff**)
4. There are different types of angels spoken about in God's word:
 - a. Cherubim & Seraphims, though not called angels, are certainly heavenly beings
 - b. Michael who is referred to as being the arch-angel, or "great prince" (**Jude 9**)
 - c. Gabriel seems to be among a group termed "chief princes" of angels (**Dan 10:13**)
→ Announced the birth of John to Zachariah and Elizabeth
 - d. Finally, there is all the "heavenly host" that represent all the angels as a whole

B. Consider for a moment what the scriptures reveal about their nature:

1. First of all, angels are created spiritual beings – They have a beginning:
 - a. They are listed as part of God’s creation that praises Him (**Ps 148:2, 5-6**)
 - b. The scriptures are silent as to when God created them → If Satan was a “fallen angel” then it certainly must have been before the fall of Adam & Eve
2. Angels also have the ability to choose between good and evil: (**2 Peter 2:4; Jude 1:6**)
 - a. Jesus refers to Satan as “Falling from heaven” (**Luke 10:18**)
 - b. This “falling” seems to be used to signify the spiritual battle that was taking place during the First Century (**Rev. 12:7-9**)
 - c. Isaiah describes a conflict between “Lucifer” and God (**Is. 14**)
 - 1) Not directly Satan, but, it may be using the conflict between Satan’s forces and God’s forces as the picture of what the king of Babylon was doing
 - 2) If so, Satan’s fall was because he was trying to usurp the throne of God
 - d. It may be that Satan was once an “arch-angel” like Michael who challenged God and thus he and his angels were “cast out of heaven” (**Mt. 25:41**)
3. When angels appeared, they always took on the form of a man: (**Luke 24:4**)
 - a. Never do we find angels appearing as women or even little children
 - b. They’re always clothed – Sometimes as common men, sometimes in shining white
 - c. As far as the scriptures are concerned, they never had wings! Only the Cherubim and Seraphims had wings and it is uncertain whether or not they are angels
 - d. Sometimes, they took on the human form to the extent that one could not distinguish them as heavenly beings!
4. There are innumerable angels that make up the Heavenly host:
 - a. Men in the Bible spoke emphasizing their vastness (**Rev. 5:11; Psalms 68:17**)
 - b. In Gethsemane Jesus was telling Peter not to fight His being arrested because God could provide 12 legions of angels if it was His will! (**Mt. 26:53**)
 - c. It appears that no exact value can be determined for the number of angels but that they are “an innumerable host” (**Hebrews 12:22**)

II. THEIR WORK BEFORE CHRISTIANITY:

A. Angels served as ministering spirits during the time of the patriarchs:

1. The Lord sent two angels to Abraham to bring him news of a son (**Gen. 18:2ff**)
 - a. These two angels took the form of any other man – They walked with Abraham, talked with Abraham, and they even ate with them
 - b. Here the work of these angels were to simply relay a message from the Lord
 - c. The same to angels appeared to Lot, ate with him in his house, and even spent the night with him in his house: (**Gen. 19:1ff**)
2. The Angel of the Lord appeared to Abraham at the sacrifice of Isaac stopping Abraham from killing Isaac – In a sense, working as an intercessor (**Gen. 22:18ff**)
3. Jacob as well had several experiences with angels:
 - a. You might remember a dream Jacob had where angels were ascending and descending upon a ladder reminding Him that God was with him (**Gen. 28:12**)
 - b. The Angel of the Lord appeared to Him in a dream telling him that he’d be blessed materially and he needed to return to his family in Canaan (**Gen. 31:11-13**)
 - c. Angels met Jacob as he was about to meet Esau for the first time since Esau was trying to kill him – Again, reassurance that God was with him! (**Gen. 32:1-2**)
 - d. Jacob later wrestled with an angel – Representative of his struggles with God and with man and God there changed his name to Israel (**Gen 32:24-32**)
4. It was “The Angel of the Lord” who appeared to Moses and told him to go back to Egypt and tell Pharaoh that the Lord says, “Let My people go!” (**Exodus 3:2**)

B. Angels served as ministering spirits during the time of the Old Law:

1. The children of Israel were led through the wilderness and eventually led them all the way into the land of Canaan: (**Exodus 23:20-23**)

- This “Angel” guided them on their journey and even fought for them
- 2. When Elijah needed strengthened angels ministered to him (**I Kings 19:4-8**)
 - a. Jezebaal was pursuing Elijah in order to take his life – Elijah had become so discouraged that he was ready to just give it all up!
 - b. Here the angel provided him much needed nourishment and encouragement
- 3. Angels weren’t always visible! Elisha learned that God’s forces were with him!
 - a. The king of Syria had surrounded the city with chariots, horses, and a great army in order to take Elisha’s life → Israel didn’t have near that large of an army
 - b. Elisha’s servant feared the worse and Elisha prayed that God would open his eyes that he could see what Elisha could see! (**2 Kings 6:16-17**)
 - c. Lesson to be learned? God’s forces are mightier and more numerous than any force of man! They are there to fight for those who are God’s children!
- 4. Angels protected and encouraged Daniel during a very trying time in his life!
 - a. When thrown into the lions den the angels shut the lions mouths (**Dan 6:22**)
 - b. Later angels ministered to Daniel by touching him causing him to regain his physical strength and then encouraged him spiritually (**Dan. 10:17-19**)

C. Angels are ministered to Christ throughout His life:

- 1. They were very present and played a vital role surrounding the birth of Jesus:
 - a. God sent Gabriel to be a messenger to Mary to tell her the news about her being chosen to be the mother of the Son of God (**Luke 1:26-38**)
 - b. Joseph was naturally “concerned” about Mary being pregnant since he had not “known her” – An angel was sent to inform & comfort him (**Mt. 1:19-21**)
 - c. It were angels who were sent to “bring good tidings of great joy to the shepherds outside of Bethlehem and were praising God (**Luke 2:8-10, 13-15**)
 - d. An angel appeared to Joseph in a dream telling Joseph to flee Israel for Egypt and then told him when it was safe to return (**Mt. 2:13; 19-20**)
- 2. During some of Jesus’ toughest times, the angels were present to strengthen Him:
 - a. Immediately following the temptation of Jesus by Satan in the wilderness, the angels came and ministered to Him → He’d been fasting 40 days! (**Mt. 4:11**)
 - b. When Jesus was suffering, praying in agony in the Garden, an angel came from Heaven and strengthened Him (**Luke 22:43**)
- 3. Angels were at work during the resurrection: (**Matthew 28:1-7**)
 - a. It was an angel that descended from heaven to roll away the stone, and then, interestingly enough, he is found just sitting there on the stone (Why? One reason may be that there’d be no denying who rolled it away!)
 - b. Two appeared and so terrified the guards that they just stood there as dead men!
 - c. Once again we find angels serving as messengers – They are reminding the disciples of the words of Jesus Christ and how this was the fulfillment of them
- 4. When Jesus ascended back into Heaven, two angels appeared in white instructing the disciples what do next (**Acts 1:10-11**)

III. THEIR WORK IN THE LIVES OF CHRISTIANS:

A. Angels were very active in the lives of Christians in the New Testament:

- 1. Angels were used to bring providential deliverance for the apostles from prison:
 - a. Very early on the apostles (apparently all of them) they were arrested and in prison when an angel from God came and released them (**Acts 5:17-20**)
 - b. Peter was asleep under arrest when, during the night, an angel came and freed him (**Acts 12:7-11**)
- 2. God used an angels to bring those who needed the gospel together with those who knew the gospel of Jesus Christ!
 - a. When the Etheopian Eunuch was traveling along reading confusedly Isaiah 53, the Lord sent an angel to bring Philip to him to preach the gospel! (**Acts 8:26**)
 - b. It was an angel who came to Cornelius telling him to send for Peter (**Acts 10:3-8**)
- 3. An angel was used to bring judgment from the Lord upon Herod! (**Acts 12:21-23**)

- a. Herod failed to correct the crowd of people who were giving him the praise that was only due the Lord → He failed to give God the glory
- b. An object lesson! He was struck by an angel with worms that ate him to death!
- 4. We read of an angel appearing to Paul giving Him encouragement: **(Acts 27:22-24)**
 - a. The angel did not do anything “supernatural” but brought a message from God
 - b. This is like what happened to Daniel when he was strengthened & encouraged
- 5. So we see throughout acts angels providing protection, bringing people together for the sake of the gospel, bringing judgment, and encouraging

B. So the next natural question is, “What about angels and Christians today?”

- 1. What has changed to makes us think angels would no longer work in men’s lives today?
 - a. Some have contended that since miraculous gifts have ended and God’s revealed word has been completed, that they no longer are involved in people’s lives
 - b. Neither angels nor their work are not tied to the existence of spiritual gifts
 - c. Spiritual gifts ceasing doesn’t mean God doesn’t work in miraculous ways today, answers prayers, or ministers through angels!
- 2. The Hebrew writer encourages us to be hospitable based upon angels **(Hebrews 13:2)**
 - a. This passage really does not make much sense if you take the position that angels do not work in the realm of our lives today!
 - b. This wording doesn’t just tell us that it used to happen – But is an admonition because the same thing could happen in the lives of Christians!
 - c. What, concerning angels, has changed from then to today? They were Christians!
- 3. Angels have rejoiced over all of us who have turned to the Lord and will rejoice over anyone else who will do so **(Luke 15:10)**
- 4. Little children are said to have angels that go before the Father **(Matthew 18:10)**
 - a. This is the passage used by most people to establish that we have guardian angels
 - b. Whether this teaches that children have their own individual angels looking out for them or whether angels look out for them in general is not important
 - c. What we need to see is the comfort in knowing angels are working on their behalf!
- 5. The Hebrew writer summed up the work of angels in our lives by saying they minister to those who will inherit salvation **(Hebrews 1:14)**
 - a. God’s providence for His children under both the Old Covenant and the New Covenant involved at times the work of angels
 - b. How God goes about doing that today we can only guess at – But it is meant for our comfort and assurance to know that they are there
 - c. **Ps. 91:11:** “He shall give His angels charge over you, to keep you in all your ways”
- 6. Just because we do not fully understand them and people misconstrue them doesn’t mean we need to deny their existence or work! (Like many do the Holy Spirit)

Conclusion: God’s heavenly host have always played a major role in man’s existence – Let’s not forget that they are there for us as well; however, let’s not get caught up in the misconceptions man have of them.