

# The Truth About Angels

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## The Truth About Angels

An 1856 history book, once used in Maryland public schools, tells a story about one of our nation's founding fathers. When George Washington was 23 he led 1,300 British troops in the French and Indian War. His forces were ambushed and 714 of Washington's men lost their lives – 86 were officers. Only one officer remained on horseback, unscratched – George Washington. After the defeat he wrote a letter to his mother and brother in which he said:

*I had four bullet holes in my coat, but I was never hit. I brushed my hair and bullet fragments came out, but I was untouched.*

Fifteen years later, he revisited the battle site. Word of his visit reached the Indian chief who had led his tribe in that battle. The chief traveled a long way to meet George Washington. He told him:

*Sir, I personally shot at you seventeen times. I told my men to shoot at you because we knew you were a leader. We could not kill you and I wanted to meet the man that God refused to let die in battle.*

Were angels protecting the father of our country?

Mention angels today and people pay attention. Sixty-nine percent of adult Americans say they believe in the existence of angels.<sup>1</sup> In 1988, that number was fifty percent.<sup>2</sup> Gannett News Service reports that the number of books on angels jumped from five to two hundred in the past five years; many of these were best sellers.<sup>3</sup> In December 1993, the front cover to Time Magazine, Newsweek, The Washingtonian, and The Ladies Home Journal all featured articles on angels. Numerous angel groups have formed across the country; two of the most popular include the “Angels Watch” network and “Friend of Angels.” There’s even the “First Church of Angels” (formed where else but in California!). There are angel cards, plaques, pins, calendars, figurines, and thirty specialty shops producing

only merchandise relating to angels. One hot item is angel perfume, if you can't get in touch with yours at least you can small like one! The New Age movement gives angels lots of publicity. New Agers will tell you how to align with your angelic energy field, get in touch with your angel and even replace God with your angel!

With such growing interest in angels, four questions must be answered:

1. Do angels exist?
2. If they exist, what are they like?
3. If they exist, what do they do?
4. If they exist, what difference does it make in my daily life?

The Bible, history's most trustworthy book, provides the authoritative source for the answer to each of these questions.

### Do Angels Exist?

The Bible's clear and emphatic answer from Genesis to Revelation is: Yes! The Scriptures contain 273 references to angels – 108 in the Old Testament, 165 in the New Testament. Thirty-five of the sixty-six books of the Bible talk about angels. Revelation, the last book, mentions them 73 times!

Jesus Christ believed in the existence of angels. In fact, He referred to them 23 times.

Open your Bible and you will discover angels flying from cover to cover. According to the Scriptures, angels do exist.

### What Are Angels Like?

In the New Testament, Hebrews 1:14 says:

*Are they [angels] not all ministering spirits sent out to render service to those who will inherit salvation?*

<sup>1</sup>Time Magazine, Dec. 1993

<sup>2</sup>Ibid

<sup>3</sup>Newsweek, Dec. 1993

<sup>4</sup>Rev. 22:9; 2 Sam. 14:20;

Luke 15:10

<sup>5</sup>Luke 1:26-28

<sup>6</sup>Job 1; Dan. 10; Acts 1

<sup>7</sup>Luke 20:36

<sup>8</sup>Matt. 22:30

<sup>9</sup>Gen. 19; Num. 22; Heb. 13:2;

Rev. 19

<sup>10</sup>Isa. 14:12; Rev. 12:4;

Matt. 25:41

<sup>11</sup>Isa. 6:3; Rev. 5:12

<sup>12</sup>Isa. 14:12; Luke 10:18; Rev. 20:2

<sup>13</sup>Dan. 10:13; 12:1

<sup>14</sup>Dan. 8:16; 9:21, 26; Luke 1:11,

19, 26, 27

<sup>15</sup>Gen 22:11-12; Ex. 3:2-4

<sup>16</sup>Josh. 5:13-15

<sup>17</sup>Judges 2:1-16

<sup>18</sup>Gen. 22:11-12

<sup>19</sup>Gen. 19:24

<sup>20</sup>Gen 19:17-24

<sup>21</sup>Num. 20:16; Judges 2:1

<sup>22</sup>Ex. 3:2-4

<sup>23</sup>Num. 22:31-33

<sup>24</sup>Dan. 3:25, 28

<sup>25</sup>Judges 13:3, 16-22

<sup>26</sup>Luke 1:26-33

<sup>27</sup>Matt 2:13

<sup>28</sup>Matt. 4:11

<sup>29</sup>Luke 22:43

<sup>30</sup>Matt. 26:53

<sup>31</sup>Matt. 28:2-6

<sup>32</sup>Acts 2:11

<sup>33</sup>Matt. 25:31

<sup>34</sup>Dan. 6:22

<sup>35</sup>1 Kings 19:5

<sup>36</sup>Acts 5:19; 12:7

<sup>37</sup>Job 1:10

<sup>38</sup>1 Cor. 11:10

<sup>39</sup>Luke 15:7, 10

<sup>40</sup>Luke 16:22

<sup>41</sup>Adapted from A Rustle of Angels,

by Marilyn Carlson Webber &

William D. Webber, pgs. 79-80

<sup>42</sup>Adapted from Loving God, by

Chuck Colson, pgs. 51-52.

<sup>43</sup>Adapted from Angels: God's

Secret Agents, by Billy Graham,

pgs. 127-128

<sup>44</sup>Ps. 34:7; Matt. 18:10; Heb. 1:14

<sup>45</sup>1 Peter 1:12

<sup>46</sup>Luke 15:7, 10

<sup>47</sup>Matt. 13:39-43

<sup>48</sup>Luke 16:22

to repent of our sins and worship God. 1 Timothy 2:5 says, *“there is one mediator between God and man, the man Christ Jesus.”* Therefore, angels are never mediators between us and God. They are neither to be worshiped nor prayed to. The book of Hebrews declares that Christ is greater than angels in six ways and that He alone is the mediator between us and God. Paul says in Galatians 1:8, *“But even though we, or an angel from heaven, should preach to you a Gospel contrary to that which we have preached to you, let him be accursed.”* The Gospel of Christ is never to be perverted. We are to be discerning. Beware of those urging you to “get in tune with your angel and find wholeness.”

Angels are a great encouragement to the believers in Christ. As the Bible declares, your loving God has sent His angels to protect, watch over, and minister to you.<sup>44</sup> Angels are a tremendous example. They are constantly worshiping God. Angels watch our worship because they are interested in us worshiping God.<sup>45</sup> They rejoice when someone comes to know Christ.<sup>46</sup> They bring glory to Christ, not to themselves. They are always helping and serving God’s people.

If you don’t know Jesus Christ personally as your Savior, the Bible says you are going to have an encounter with angels, but not the kind you would expect. At the final judgment, the Bible says that angels will bring all unbelievers before God to be judged for rejecting Christ.<sup>47</sup> If you do place your faith in Christ, the Bible says that the angels of heaven rejoice and they will escort you at death into God’s loving presence.<sup>46</sup> If there is a hunger in your soul to know God, it is because God is seeking you. In John 6:44, Jesus said, *“No one can come to me, unless the Father who sent Me draws him . . .”* Do you sense that God is drawing you into a loving relationship with Him? Will you respond to His loving pursuit of you by placing your faith in Jesus Christ as your Savior? Will you right now shift your trust from yourself to Jesus Christ – believing that He died to pay for all of your sins and rose to give you eternal life? He has sent His holy unseen angels to provide for and protect you so that you might come to know and love Him. The angels are waiting to rejoice over you.

**Come to Christ today!**

This verse, commonly called the “Guardian Angel” verse, explains that angels are spirit beings whose major purpose is to render service “to those who will inherit salvation”, namely, people who receive Jesus Christ as their personal Savior.

The Bible also teaches that angels have will, intellect and emotion.<sup>4</sup> They can communicate<sup>5</sup>, travel at lightning speed between heaven and earth<sup>6</sup>, and wield tremendous power. In the Old Testament, Isaiah 37:36 reports that a single angel destroyed 185,000 Assyrian soldiers in one night!

According to the Bible, angels:

- **do not** “earn their wings.”
- **do not** die.<sup>7</sup>
- **do not** marry.<sup>8</sup>
- **do not** reproduce.
- **do not** grow old.
- **do not** get sick.
- **are not** gods.
- **are not** ghosts.
- **are not** babies.
- **are not** omnipresent.
- **are not** all-knowing.

According to the Bible, angels **are** created beings who exist to worship and serve God and to minister to His people.

Can angels take on human form? The Bible says “yes,” and gives many examples.<sup>9</sup> Interestingly enough, these examples occur primarily during two eras of Biblical history: the time from Abraham to Moses, and the period from the first coming of Christ to the formation of the early church.

The Bible identifies two distinct kinds of angels: evil angels, called demons, and good angels, referred to as holy or elect. The book of Revelation says that Satan, an angel once named Lucifer, led a rebellion against God and took one third of the heavenly angels with him. Today he heads up this force of fallen angels or demons who strive continually against the good forces of God.<sup>10</sup> Happily, the Bible provides three times more references to good angels than to demons, and therefore

our primary focus should be the work of God among His holy angels.

The Bible also shows that angels are organized. Medieval scholars identified nine categories of angels in Scripture and called them the nine angelic choirs. For example, Ephesians 3:10 lists three:

*“The wisdom from God is made known through the church to rulers, to principalities, and to authorities in the heavenly places.”*

Do angels have names? Only three are mentioned. The first is Lucifer, who became Satan when he rebelled against God.<sup>12</sup> The second is Michael. Michael is also called the Archangel, which means the first, or highest, angel. He appears in the Old Testament and is always associated with protecting and preserving the nation of Israel.<sup>13</sup> The third angel specifically named in Scripture is Gabriel. Gabriel appears in both the Old and New Testaments and is always associated with the coming Messiah, Jesus Christ. In the New Testament, he announces the births of both John the Baptist and Jesus.<sup>14</sup>

Do angels have wings? Only two places in the Bible mention angels with wings, these angels are called cherubim and seraphim. Cherubim appear in Genesis 3. After Adam and Eve were cast out of the Garden of Eden, God put cherubim there to guard the Tree of Life so they could not eat from it and be locked in sin forever. The seraphim, found in Isaiah 6, are the angels in the presence of God calling out, *“Holy, Holy, Holy, is the Lord of Hosts, the whole earth is full of His glory.”* These angels are dedicated to the worship, praise, and service of God.

The Old Testament makes reference many times to “The Angel of the Lord.” The is an important word in His title which distinguishes Him from angels in general. In fact, the Angel of the Lord is unlike any other angel. Notice the following truths concerning Him:

- “The Angel of the Lord” alone is called God.<sup>15</sup>
- “The Angel of the Lord” alone is worshiped as God.<sup>16</sup>
- “The Angel of the Lord” does what only God can do.<sup>17</sup>

Had an angel whispered those words to one of the most influential saints of all time: *Take up and read, take up and read, take up and read . . . ?*

Billy Graham tells the story of angels ministering to a group of GIs cut off behind enemy lines in the Korean War:

*When I was visiting the American troops during the Korean War, I was told of a small group of American marines in the First Division who had been trapped up north. With the thermometer at twenty degrees below zero, they were close to freezing to death. And they had had nothing to eat for six days. Surrender to the enemy seemed their only hope of survival. But one of the men, a Christian, pointed out certain verses of Scripture, and taught his comrades to sing a song of praise to God. Following this they heard a crashing noise, and turned to see a wild boar rushing toward them. As they tried to jump out of his way, he suddenly stopped in his tracks. One of the soldiers raised his rifle to shoot, but before he could fire, the boar inexplicably toppled over. They rushed up to kill him only to find that he was already dead. That night they feasted on meat, and began to regain their strength.*

*The next morning just as the sun was rising they heard another noise. Their fear that an enemy patrol had discovered them suddenly vanished as they found themselves face to face with a south Korean who could speak English. He said, “I will show you out.” He led them through the forest and mountains to safety behind their own lines. When they looked up to thank him, they found he had disappeared.*

### **“What difference does all this make to me?”**

Warning! The Bible says in 2 Corinthians 11:14 that Satan appears as an “angel of light.” He seeks to deceive by drawing attention to himself and distorting the truth about Christ. He appeals to our ego and pride. The holy angels of God point people to Christ, warn of God’s righteous judgment, and urge us

*Tomorrow and tomorrow? Why not now? Why not in this very hour an end to my uncleanness?"*

*Then . . . a voice.*

*He heard a voice . . .*

*A childish, piping voice so high-pitched he could not tell whether it was male or female.*

*The voice seemed to come from a nearby house.*

*It chanted tunelessly, over and over . . . "Take up and read. Take up and read. Take up and read."*

*What did the words mean? Were they part of some children's game?*

*"Take up and read. Take and read . . ."*

*Augustine ran and snatched up the book Ponticianus had noticed and began reading the page to which the book was open, Romans 13. The words burned into his mind: "Not in orgies and drunkenness, not in sexual immorality and debauchery, not in dissension and jealousy. Rather clothe yourselves with the Lord Jesus Christ, and do not think about how to gratify the desires of the sinful nature."*

*Instantly, as if before a peaceful light streaming into his heart, dark shadows of doubt fled. The man of unconquerable will was conquered by words from a book he had once dismissed as a mere fable lacking in clarity and grace of expression. Those words suddenly revealed that which he had so long vainly sought. Now he knew with assurance he had confronted truth. Those very words, "clothe yourself with the Lord Jesus Christ," had settled it; whatever it cost, he would give his life to Christ.*

Furthermore, the Angel of the Lord was personally active in the affairs of Israel, God's chosen nation, in the Old Testament.

- "The Angel of the Lord" stopped Abraham from sacrificing Isaac.<sup>18</sup>
- "The Angel of the Lord" called down judgment on Sodom and Gomorrah.<sup>19</sup>
- "The Angel of the Lord" pulled Lot out of Sodom and Gomorrah before it was destroyed.<sup>20</sup>
- "The Angel of the Lord" conducted the exodus for the children of Israel.<sup>21</sup>
- "The Angel of the Lord" appeared to Moses in the burning bush,<sup>22</sup> to Balaam and his donkey,<sup>23</sup> and to the three Hebrew youth in the fiery furnace.<sup>24</sup>
- "The Angel of the Lord" announced the birth of Sampson.<sup>25</sup>

Many theologians believe that the Angel of the Lord was the appearance of the pre-incarnate Christ, sometimes called a "Christophany," and that is why He is referred to, acts as, and is worshiped as God. Interestingly enough, you never once find "the Angel of the Lord" in the New Testament, there are references to an angel of the Lord, but never to the Angel of the Lord. Why? Because Jesus Christ has now come in the flesh!

## What Do Angels Do?

Angels worship and praise God. They are His servants. They protect and preserve His people. They execute God's judgment and justice. Angelic activity can be broken down into four general categories.

First, angels were active in the life of Jesus Christ. In fact, angels were involved throughout His entire earthly existence. An angel predicted and announced His birth.<sup>26</sup> An angel gave the message to Joseph to take the infant Jesus into Egypt.<sup>27</sup> Angels ministered to Christ after His temptation.<sup>28</sup> Angels appeared to Him in the Garden of Gethsemane and comforted Him before He went to the Cross.<sup>29</sup> Jesus Himself said, "I can

call forth twelve legions of angels to protect me.”<sup>30</sup> An angel moved away the stone from Christ’s grave and announced His resurrection.<sup>31</sup> An angel reported His ascension into Heaven and described His return,<sup>32</sup> and Jesus Himself said that He will come back with legions of angels.<sup>33</sup> Notice that the true angels of God always exalt Jesus Christ and never simply draw attention to themselves.

Second, angels are active in the life of believers in Jesus Christ. Angel’s ministry to Christ-followers is a source of great comfort and the Bible mentions it often. Hebrews 1:14 says:

*“Are they not all ministering spirits, sent out to render service for the sake of those who will inherit salvation?”*

It was an angel who closed the lions’ mouths for Daniel when he was in their den.<sup>34</sup> It was an angel who came and ministered to Elijah in the wilderness.<sup>35</sup> An angel delivered Peter out of prison two times.<sup>36</sup> And angels surrounded Job as a hedge of protection so that Satan could not touch him.<sup>37</sup> Numerous New Testament passages speak of the angels’ involvement in the lives of Christ-followers:

- 1 Corinthians 11:10 says angels come and watch our worship.<sup>38</sup>
- 1 Peter 1:12 states:  
*It was revealed to them [Angels] that they were not serving themselves, but you, in these things which now have been announced to you through those who preached the Gospel to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven – things into which angels long to look.*
- Luke 15 tells us that whenever someone comes to Christ, the angels in heaven rejoice.<sup>39</sup>
- Luke 16 recounts the story of a believer dying and the angels carrying him into the presence of God.<sup>40</sup>
- Psalm 34:7 says:  
*The angel of the Lord encamps around those who fear Him, and rescues them.*

*“First of all, then, I urge that entreaties and prayers, petitions and thanksgivings, be made on behalf of all men, for kings and all who are in authority in order that we may lead a tranquil and quiet life in all godliness and dignity.”*

The Bible teaches that the prayers of God’s people influence the direction of nations and that God uses angels to help in the task.

Fourth, angels have a ministry to unbelievers, those who don’t know Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior.

Acts 8 tells the story of Philip and the Ethiopian eunuch. The eunuch had journeyed to worship in Jerusalem and was on his way back home. Meanwhile, an angel appeared to Philip the Evangelist and sent him down the road that led directly to the Ethiopian, who was riding in his chariot reading the Scriptures. The Spirit of God told him to overtake the chariot. Philip did, and led the Ethiopian to faith in Jesus Christ.

Acts 10 tells us that a man named Cornelius was seeking God diligently when suddenly an angel appeared to him. The angel commanded him: “Dispatch some men to Joppa, and send for a man named Simon, who is also called ‘Peter’; he is staying with a certain tanner named Simon, whose house is by the sea.” Peter came, preached the Gospel, and Cornelius and his household believed in Jesus Christ and we were saved.

Chuck Colson relates the amazing story of Augustine’s coming to faith in Jesus Christ.<sup>42</sup>

*So he [Augustine] sat in the garden . . . utterly silent in the stillness of the summer heat. Only inside did the storm rage. Misery heaped up, until finally it seemed his chest would burst. He threw himself under a fig tree, sobbing, unable to stop.*

*“O Lord, how long? Will I never cease setting my heart on shadows and following a lie? How long, O Lord? Will you be angry forever? How long? How long?”*

*informed the congregation of the incident, the man who had interrupted me told this story:*

*“When it is night in Africa, it is day here. On this night of your incident in Africa, it was morning here, and I was preparing to go play a game of golf. As I was putting my golf bag in the car, I felt the Lord leading me to pray for you. In fact, the urging of the Lord was so strong that I called several of the men in this church together to meet with me here in the sanctuary and pray for you. Would all of those men who met with me on that day please stand up?”*

*The men who met together to pray that day stood. When all were counted, the number was 26!*

Clearly, angels take an active interest in the lives of believers!

The third thing angels do is influence national affairs. In Daniel 10:11-13, Daniel was praying for the nation of Israel, which was at that time in captivity in Babylon. God sent an angel to Daniel to give him a vision concerning Israel’s future. The angel appeared to Daniel and said:

*“Oh Daniel, man of high esteem, understand the words that I am about to tell you and stand upright, for I have now been sent to you.” And when he had spoken this word to me, I stood up trembling. Then he said to me, “Do not be afraid, Daniel, for from the first day that you set your heart on understanding this and on humbling yourself before your God, your words were heard, and I have come in response to your words.” [Now here is the key verse] But the prince of the kingdom of Persia was withstanding me for twenty-one days; then behold, Michael, one of the chief princes, came to help me, for I had been left there with the kings of Persia.”*

This passage clearly reveals the unseen angelic battle going on in response to Daniel’s prayers for his nation! No wonder 1 Timothy 2:1-2 says:

- In Matthew 18:10, Jesus teaches that angels minister to the little children, their angels beholding *“the face of My Father who is in heaven.”*

There are many documented stories today that support the Scriptural truth that angels minister to believers in Christ. The following four are fascinating:

- *In October 1991, two years before my father passed away, my parents were visiting in Atlanta. On their afternoon drive back to Young Harris, Georgia, their car engine started smoking. Dad stopped, opened the hood, and saw one of the radiator hoses had broken. A man in a flatbed truck pulled up and offered him a ride to get help; unfortunately, the man only had room for one in the cab. Dad didn’t want to leave Mom alone, so he thanked the gentleman, who then drove off. Immediately, a younger man walked up from the opposite direction of the departing vehicle. He was very handsome, my mom said, and held in one hand a radiator hose and in the other a jug of water. Dad, seeing the exact two items he needed, offered to buy them. “No,” the man said, “you can have them.” Dad started to work on the car and when he turned back around, the man was gone!*
- *One Saturday morning in November, 1993, A.W. Jackson and his wife, Dorothy, were on the way to Bethel Baptist Church in Great Falls, Virginia. Hard rains over the weekend had swelled Difficult Run, the tributary of the Potomac over which they had to cross. At the far end of the little one-lane bridge, the overflowing current grabbed their car and carried them thirty yards downstream into a tree and some brush. “If it hadn’t been for that tree,” Pastor Jackson says, “we would have been swept away!” The front end, bearing the weight of the engine, began to sink. Cold water flowed around the Jacksons, rising to their chests. Pastor and Mrs. Jackson held their Bibles to the ceiling, while Mrs. Jackson prayed aloud. Suddenly, a man who identified himself as Ed Brooks waded towards their sinking car and yelled*

*that help was on the way. Brooks stood by them in the cold, driving water as they waited. The Jacksons passed their Bibles to him through a back seat window and he protected them on the roof of the car. Soon, a rescue team from Great Falls arrived and helped the Jacksons escape through the rear window. But Ed Brooks was gone. The Jacksons were never able to find him again. Both they and the members of their congregation believe he was an angel.*

- *Two young women worked as missionaries in a clinic outside Port-au-Prince, Haiti. They shared a small house in a high crime area infiltrated with Voodooism. Though living modestly by American standards, their belongings were worth significant value to Haitian thugs. And then there were the imminent dangers that women living alone in such neighborhoods faced. But they were convinced that God had called them to serve there, so each night as the voodoo drums beat out, they would pray for those caught under their spell, and for their own safety. Every night the drums beat, every night violence erupted around them, and every night they prayed and were untouched. Finally, after a long period without incident, one of the missionaries asked an elderly patient why he thought no one every bothered them. He responded quite matter of factly: "No one would ever enter your yard. Everyone knows about the guards you have."*

*"The guards?" the woman replied. "What guards?"*

*"The guards you have on duty every night. There are four of them. Big, big men. Dark, very dark men. One stands on each corner of your property . . . lady, nobody will cause you any trouble."<sup>41</sup> Angels?*

- Tom Horn, one of Cherrydale Baptist Church's missionaries, sent us a letter in 1992 which related the following story shared by a medical missionary home on furlough:

*While serving at a small field hospital in Africa, I traveled by bicycle through the jungle to the city every two weeks for supplies. This was a journey of two days, which required camping overnight at the halfway point.*

*On one of these journeys, I arrived in the city to collect money from a bank, purchase medicine and supplies, and begin my two-day journey back to the field hospital. Upon arrival in the city, I observed two men fighting. One man had been seriously injured,. So I treated him for his injuries, while at the same time witnessed to him of the Lord Jesus Christ. I then traveled two days, camping overnight, and arrived home without incident.*

*Two weeks later I repeated my journey. Upon arriving in the city, I was approached by the man I had treated two weeks earlier. He told me that he had known that I carried money and drugs. He said, "Some friends and I followed you into the jungle, knowing that you would camp overnight. We were waiting just outside of your campsite for you to sleep. We were going to kill you and take your money and drugs, but just as we were about to move into your campsite, we observed and counted 26 armed guards standing around."*

*At this I laughed, and said that I was certainly all alone out in the jungle campsite. The young man pressed the point and said, "No, sir, I was not the only person to see the guards. My five friends also saw them, and we all counted them. It was because of those guards that we were afraid and left you alone."*

*At this point in the church presentation in Michigan, one of the men in the church jumped to his feet and interrupted the speaker. He asked me, "Sir, can you tell me the exact day that this incident happened?" It took me a moment to recall, but I could. When he [sic]*