

Angels
Among Us

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Unless otherwise noted, all Scripture references are taken from the New King James Version of the Bible. Additionally, for the sake of clarity, all Scripture quotations and parenthesized Scripture references have been placed in italics.

I have always been fascinated by angels. The very thought of those heavenly beings rushing to our aid, protecting us from danger, and one day ushering us into heaven literally amazes me.

I learned at an early age that angels must be important because my mother's favorite verse in the Bible deals with them. That special verse says, "*For He shall give His angels charge over you, to keep you in all your ways*" (*Psalms 91:11*).

While I have never seen an angel, I have experienced their protection in my life. On more than one occasion, they have protected me while driving...keeping me out of what appeared to be an unavoidable accident. There have been other times in my life when I was in dangerous and even threatening situations and somehow came out unscathed. In retrospect, I am convinced that God sent His angels to keep me from harm.

When I was a child, I heard a story about angels that made an indelible impression on my mind. One night a young, female college student had been studying late in the library. Just before the library closed, she packed up her belongings, exited the building, and began

walking back to her dorm. She was walking through a dark alley all by herself when she saw a large, intimidating man approaching her. Scared out of her mind, she whispered a prayer for protection. After her prayer, the man suddenly turned away and began to run out of the alley. The next morning, the school newspaper reported that later that night another girl had been attacked by a man not far from that dark alley. Several arrests had been made. Anyone who knew anything about the incident was encouraged to go to the police station and help identify the suspect. When the first girl read the article, she went immediately to the station. She told the attending officer how she had seen a man in the alley and how fearful she had been that he was going to attack her. She described to the officer how when he got to within about ten feet of her, he suddenly ran away. The officer asked her to identify the man. When she saw him, she said, "That's the man. That's the man who was coming at me last night." She asked the policeman for a favor. She wanted to know if he would ask the man why he didn't attack her. What was it that made him run away? When the officer asked the man that question, he said, "Are you kidding? With those two big men on either side of her, I wasn't about to do anything to that girl."

Now who were those two men? There is no question in my mind that they were angels...dispatched by God to protect that girl in her moment of need. As soon as she prayed for protection, God's angels were there.

The purpose of this booklet is to explore what the Bible teaches about angels. Where do they come from? What do they do? Do we have guardian angels? In the pages that follow, these and other questions will be answered from a biblical perspective.

My prayer is that this booklet will be a blessing to you. As we learn more about the angels God has designed to protect us throughout our earthly pilgrimage, may we grow in our faith and dependence upon Him. After all, our confidence is not primarily in the angels. Our confidence is in the God of the angels...the God of heaven and earth...our God through faith in Jesus Christ.

An Overview of Angels

We don't know exactly how many angels there are. The Bible says that heaven is a city filled with "*an innumerable company of angels*" (*Hebrews 12:22*). In the book of Revelation, we read that there are "*ten*

thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands” of angels worshipping God right now (Revelation 5:11). Ten thousand times ten thousand equals a hundred million. Add thousands of thousands of angels to that number, and it is indeed innumerable. Praise God there is no shortage of angels!

Perhaps the clearest visualization we find in Scripture about the function of angels is in Genesis 28. Here we find Jacob at a place called Bethel. One night he had a dream. The Bible describes it like this: *“Then he dreamed, and behold, a ladder was set up on the earth, and its top reached to heaven; and there the angels of God were ascending and descending on it” (Genesis 28:12).* What a descriptive picture of what angels do. They go back and forth from heaven to earth. When they are in heaven, they worship God. When they are on the earth, they represent God in a number of ways. Sometimes they protect. Sometimes they execute judgment. Sometimes they deliver a message from God. Angels are God’s representatives. In fact, the word “angel” literally means “messenger.” When they are on the earth, angels are delivering God’s message, revealing God’s plan, carrying out God’s will, and protecting God’s people.

Angels are referred to either directly or indirectly almost three hundred times in the Bible.¹ As we study these references, we learn that angels were created by God. The Bible says, speaking of Jesus, *“For by Him all things were created that are in heaven and that are on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers”* (Colossians 1:16).

While God is eternal, the angels are not. They were created. And they were created by Jesus. Remember this: Jesus was born in Bethlehem, but He didn’t begin there. He has no beginning. He has always been. He said of Himself, *“I am the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last”* (Revelation 1:11). Think about this: The angel Gabriel announced the birth of Jesus. But Jesus created Gabriel.

So when were the angels created? We know that they were created sometime before the world was created. There is nothing mentioned in the creation account in Genesis about the creation of angels. They were already created by then. God said to Job, *“Where were you when I laid the foundations of the earth? Tell Me, if you have understanding. Who determined its measurements? Surely you know! Or who stretched the line upon it? To*

what were its foundations fastened? Or who laid its cornerstone, when the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy?" (Job 38:4-7). Most theologians are in agreement that "the morning stars and the sons of God" are indeed the angels.² The angels rejoiced when God created the world. It is actually quite logical that God would have created the angels before He created the world they would serve.

In the pages that follow, we will study several classifications of angels. We will begin with the fallen angels...the ones who had it all and lost it all.

Lucifer and the Fallen Angels

When God created the angels, He created one named Lucifer. We get the impression from the Bible that he was the most beautiful angel of all. We also get the impression that he was one of the highest ranking angels. We read about his rise and fall in Isaiah 14 and Ezekiel 28.

It was pride that got Lucifer banished from heaven. Five times in Isaiah 14 he said, "*I will.*" Lucifer's desire was to exalt himself, sit on the throne of heaven, and be like God. As

Lucifer sought to exalt himself, God brought him down (*see Isaiah 14:12-15*). The Bible is clear that “*pride goes before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall*” (*Proverbs 16:18*). And that is exactly what happened to Lucifer.

The prophet Ezekiel sheds even more light on this fallen angel (*see Ezekiel 28:11-13a, 14-19*). While this Old Testament prophecy is against the king of Tyre, there is obviously a double meaning in this passage of Scripture. The king of Tyre was a picture of Lucifer. And both fell. In fact, when Lucifer fell from heaven, he became the devil. Interestingly enough, Lucifer didn’t leave heaven by himself. The Bible says that he took a third of the angels with him (*see Revelation 12:3-4*). So when we think about the fallen angels, we’re talking about an incredibly large number of angels who have been demoted.

Many of the fallen angels are now in some sort of a demonic underworld, a place the Bible calls Tartarus. In II Peter 2:4 of the NKJV, “Tartarus” is translated as “hell.” This is a bad translation. Tartarus is not hell. Tartarus is the place where many fallen angels are currently confined. Tartarus is lower than Hades. Hades is the holding cell for the unsaved dead who will eventually go to hell. One day, these fallen

angels will also go to hell. At the present time, though, they are in *“chains of darkness, to be reserved for judgment” (II Peter 2:4)*.

Other fallen angels are evidently on the loose. We know that the devil himself, whose name means “slanderer,” is running wild because the Bible says that *“the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour” (I Peter 5:8)*. Eventually Satan, which is the formal name for the devil and means “adversary,” and all of his demonic angels will be sentenced to an eternity in hell. The Bible actually describes hell as *“the everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels” (Matthew 25:41)*. If you reject Christ and end up in hell, you will be an intruder. Hell wasn’t created for people. It was created for the devil and his evil minions. Sadly, though, many people will go to hell because they were deceived by Satan, and they never saw their need for the salvation that can only be found in Jesus Christ. The Bible says that *“anyone not found written in the Book of Life”* will one day be *“cast into the lake of fire” (Revelation 20:15)*. I cannot imagine anything worse than spending eternity in hell, separated from God, in the evil presence of the devil. How awful. How tragic. How final. How unnecessary. You can be saved today!

Michael...the Archangel

God is a God of order. He created the world in an orderly fashion. And He has organized His angels into orderly ranks. One pastor says that the angels “are organized into ranks and offices, a massive army marching at God’s command.”³ While the Bible is not crystal clear as to how God has organized His angels, it is clear that Michael is the leader of the angelic band. He is the only archangel identified in the Word of God (*see Jude 9*).

If we could only use one word to describe the archangel Michael, it would be the word “warrior.” Whenever we read about Michael, we read about a spiritual battle. And, thankfully, this special angel always comes out victoriously.

Michael is either specifically named or referred to in four different books of the Bible. The first time we encounter him is in the Old Testament book of Daniel. The prophet Daniel had been seeking a fresh word from God. He had prayed for God to reveal to him some things about the future, but no answer came. Then an angel appeared and told Daniel that he had been sent by God to deliver God’s message but that he had been impeded by the evil prince of Persia for twenty-one days. At the end of

those days, God sent Michael to the rescue. Michael defeated the prince of Persia, and the other angel was then able to deliver God's message to Daniel (*see Daniel 10:10-14*).

There are times in our lives when we are in a spiritual battle, and we don't even know it. Daniel had no idea why his prayer wasn't being answered. He couldn't see the spiritual conflict that was taking place. When we find ourselves in a stalemate spiritually, we should continue to pray. We should continue to wait. We should continue to trust. At just the right time, God will intervene on our behalf. And He may even use the archangel Michael to come to our aid!

We also read about Michael in the New Testament epistle of Jude. We read that after Moses died a dispute took place between Michael, the leader of heaven's angels, and Satan, the leader of the fallen angels. The dispute had something to do with the body of Moses. Most likely, Satan wanted the body of Moses so that he could have him buried in a public place. Satan knew that if he could do that, many within the Jewish community would build a shrine at that location, worship Moses, and be guilty of idolatry. Michael, on the other hand, wanted the body of Moses so that he could present it to God so God could bury

Moses in a secret place where no shrine could be built. Michael, of course, won this battle, and the Bible says that God buried the body of Moses in the valley of Moab, “*but no one knows his grave to this day*” (Deuteronomy 34:6).

The interesting thing to me about this episode is that while Michael was contending with the devil for the body of Moses, he refused to argue with the devil. In fact, he didn’t even rebuke the devil. Instead, he said, “*The Lord rebuke you*” (Jude 9)!

Many Christians spend a lot of their time rebuking the devil. I know some sincere Christians who seem to be more focused on the devil than they are on the Lord. I cannot find anywhere in the Bible where we are instructed to rebuke the devil. Now to be fair, I cannot find anywhere in the Bible where we are forbidden from rebuking him either. So while I certainly don’t think it is wrong to *rebuke* the devil (I sometimes do it myself), I think it is much more biblical to *resist* the devil. After all, the apostle James said, “*Resist the devil and he will flee from you*” (James 4:7). The word “resist” literally means “to set against.” In other words, when we are in battle with the evil one, we need to set something against him

that will stop him. That something is actually a Someone. Michael knew that. And he set God against the devil. He simply said, “*The Lord rebuke you*” (*Jude 9*)! And the Lord did.

When we find ourselves in spiritual warfare, we certainly need to be aware of our enemy, but we need to stay focused on our God. If you find yourself thinking and talking more about the devil than you do about God, perhaps you have something to learn from Michael. And that is this: *The battle is not between the devil and you. The battle is between the devil and God. Let God fight your battles. That way you will always win.* Even Jesus, when He was tempted by Satan, just quoted the Word of God. Eventually Satan departed from Him. When Satan comes to tempt, intimidate, or accuse you, don’t argue with him. Just tell him he will need to take that up with the Lord. We are no match for Satan. But Satan is no match for God. Satan is not co-equal with God. He is not, as many people seem to think, the opposite of God. God has no opposite. He has no co-equal. The evil powers of Satan cannot match the divine powers of God. God is eternal. Lucifer was created, and he is now a fallen angel who has been defeated by Jesus’ crucifixion and resurrection. So resist the devil

by setting God and God's Word against him. That is the pathway to victory!

We read about Michael again in the last book of the Bible. In Revelation 12, we read about a time that is yet to come. At some point in the future, the Bible says that the archangel Michael is going to cast Satan and his evil angels out of heaven and down to earth (*see Revelation 12:7-12*). You may be thinking, "Now wait a minute. I thought God had already booted Satan and those rebellious angels out of heaven. We read about that in Isaiah 14 and in Ezekiel 28. What is this about Michael casting the devil and his demonic angels out of heaven?"

And that is an excellent question. God has indeed already banished Satan and a third of all the angels from heaven. He did that long ago...sometime before the devil tempted Eve in the Garden of Eden. The fallen angels can no longer call heaven their home. But understand this: Satan still has access to heaven. He goes back and forth from earth to heaven. And whenever he is in heaven, he is always accusing the children of God. He accused Job to God (*see Job 1:6-12*). He accused a high priest named Joshua before God (*see Zechariah 3:1-5*). And rest assured that he accuses you

before God, too (*see Revelation 12:10*). Remember, the devil is the accuser. But there is coming a day when he will no longer have any access to heaven. Michael will kick him out once and for all!

Not only does Satan accuse us to God, he accuses our consciences, too. We can overcome him, though, “*by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of*” our “*testimony*” (*Revelation 12:11*). When the devil accuses you of all the things you have done wrong, don’t argue with him. Don’t defend yourself. Just say, “The blood of Jesus has forgiven that sin.” Let that be your testimony. Again, the battle is not between the devil and you. It’s between the devil and the Lord.

The only other time we read about the archangel Michael is in the book of I Thessalonians. In this familiar passage, we read about the rapture of the church...that glorious event in which Christians will be caught up “*in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air*” (*I Thessalonians 4:17*). The Bible says that this remarkable happening will take place like this: “*The Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God*” (*I Thessalonians 4:16*). Who is this archangel? It

is none other than Michael...the only archangel mentioned in the Bible. Think about this: One day, we will hear Michael's voice. He will call us up to meet the Lord in the air. He will call us into the very presence of Jesus. May we ever be listening for that voice, looking for that day when, finally, we'll see Jesus face to face. What a day that will be!

Gabriel...God's Most Well-Known Angel

While Michael is God's most powerful angel, Gabriel is certainly God's most well-known angel. Gabriel is God's "announcing angel." Every time he appears in Scripture, he has an announcement to make. And it is always a good word.

We read about Gabriel four times in the Word of God. His first two appearances are in the Old Testament book of Daniel. We read about these appearances in Daniel 8:15-27 and Daniel 9:20-27. In these two passages, Gabriel revealed to Daniel God's plan for the end of the world. Billy Graham said it was as though God had instructed Gabriel to "convey the message from the 'situation room' of heaven" that described God's plan for future events.⁴ As Gabriel explained to Daniel the "procession of earthly kingdoms," he also "assured Daniel that

history would culminate in the return of Christ.”⁵

Gabriel’s remaining two appearances are in the Gospel of Luke. Here, he brings a message of hope and good news about two very important births.

He first appeared to a man named Zacharias while he was serving God in the temple in Jerusalem. Zacharias and his wife, Elizabeth, were a godly couple, but they had no children. And they were well past the age of childbearing. Gabriel appeared to Zacharias and explained to him that he and Elizabeth would soon be the parents of a baby boy named John (John the Baptist). Instead of thanking Gabriel and praising God, Zacharias doubted the truth of this message. He questioned Gabriel by saying, *“How shall I know this? For I am an old man, and my wife is well advanced in years”* (Luke 1:18). Gabriel responded by declaring, *“I am Gabriel, who stands in the presence of God, and was sent to speak to you and bring you these glad tidings. But behold, you will be mute and not able to speak until the day these things take place, because you did not believe my words which will be fulfilled in their own time”* (Luke 1:19-20).

For the next nine months, Zacharias was unable to speak. But after his son was born, he regained that ability. When everyone was asking what the little boy's name would be, Zacharias got a writing tablet and wrote these words: "*His name is John*" (Luke 1:63). As soon as he wrote that, he was able to speak again. The Bible says, "*Immediately his mouth was opened and his tongue loosed, and he spoke, praising God*" (Luke 1:64). When Zacharias lined his words up with the Word of God, he was liberated from his muteness and once again free to speak.

There is a lesson here for us. When we receive a Word from God, we should never question it. Zacharias received a Word from God through Gabriel. In the day in which we live, we receive a Word from God primarily through the Bible. And when God gives us a Word, we must believe it, stand on it, and live accordingly. We learn from Zacharias that *doubting* God's Word leads to bondage while *believing* God's Word leads to freedom. God wants you to be free. So take a step of faith and believe His Word!

Not long after Gabriel prophesied to Zacharias about the birth of John the Baptist, he went to Nazareth and appeared to a young girl

named Mary. He explained to her that she would soon be the mother of the Messiah. His exciting announcement included these words: *“Rejoice, highly favored one, the Lord is with you; blessed are you among women! ... Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bring forth a Son, and shall call His name JESUS”* (Luke 1:28, 30-31).

While Mary was certainly honored by Gabriel’s words, she was at the same time confused. She asked the angel, *“How can this be, since I do not know a man?”* (Luke 1:34). Gabriel explained to her that her pregnancy would be a miraculous one indeed, made possible by the Holy Spirit of God. Even though she was a virgin, she would become the mother of the Messiah. Gabriel told Mary that *“with God nothing will be impossible”* (Luke 1:37). Mary responded by saying, *“Let it be to me according to your word”* (Luke 1:38).

We learn from Mary that we should always accept *God’s Words* even when we do not understand *God’s ways*. Zacharias questioned the truthfulness of God’s Word, and he became mute as a result. Mary didn’t question God’s Word at all, but she did question how it would actually come to pass. And that was okay.

When God gives you a promise about something, receive it by faith...even if you don't understand how it could possibly happen. Asking God *how* He is going to accomplish His Word is one thing. Asking God *if* He is going to accomplish His Word is something else. Asking God *how* He is going to accomplish His Word involves faith. Asking God *if* He is going to accomplish His Word involves doubt. Let's be like Mary. Let's be people of *faith* and not people of *doubt*. Perhaps this is the greatest lesson we can learn from the appearances of God's announcing angel Gabriel. Believe God's Word! It is always true!

The Cherubim...God's Royal Guards

There is a special group of angels known as the cherubim. Some scholars think that the word "cherub" (which is the Hebrew singular of "cherubim") literally means "guardian."⁶ That would certainly make sense because we often find them guarding things that are near to the heart of God. We first read about them in Genesis 3:22-24 as they guarded the entrance to the Garden of Eden. Adam and Eve had eaten the forbidden fruit, forfeited their home in the beautiful garden, and were forbidden re-entry by the cherubim. Why would God have sent these angels to keep Adam and Eve from going

back into the garden? Well, inside the Garden of Eden there was a tree called “*the tree of life*” (Genesis 3:24). Anyone who ate from that tree would live forever (see Genesis 3:22). God knew that if Adam and Eve ate from that tree they would live forever in a fallen, sinful state. They would live forever in aging bodies. They would live forever in an imperfect world. And God didn’t want that. He wanted them to live forever in heaven, the ultimate paradise, with Him. And so, in an act of grace, He sent the cherubim to guard *the tree of life* so that Adam and Eve couldn’t make a bad situation even worse. Sin had made the world a different place in which to live, and God didn’t want them or us to be in this sinful world forever. David Jeremiah said it well when he said that “sin can never be a part of paradise.”⁷ The cherubim protected Adam and Eve, along with the remainder of the human race, from disaster.

We next encounter the cherubim in Exodus 25. God gave Moses very clear instructions for making the ark of the covenant for the tabernacle. The ark of the covenant represented the presence of God. The top of the ark was called the “mercy seat” (referring to the “lid” or “covering”). God told Moses to make two images of the cherubim...one for

each side of the ark of the covenant (*see Exodus 25:17-22*).

Inside the ark of the covenant was the law of God (*The Ten Commandments*). But above the ark was the mercy seat. Each year the high priest would offer up sacrifices for the sins of the people. He would sacrifice those animals and then sprinkle the blood on the mercy seat. One scholar explained it by saying that the “blood from the sacrifices stood between God and the broken law of God!”⁸ That mercy seat is a picture of Jesus. We have all broken God’s laws. But Jesus’ blood stands between us and a holy God. His blood covers our sins! That’s what the mercy seat is all about.

In the tabernacle, and later in the temple, we see images of two cherubim, one on each side of the ark of the covenant. They are facing each other with the mercy seat between them. They are focused on the place of sacrifice, the place of mercy, the place of salvation. While it is true that heaven’s angels have never been saved because they have never been lost, it is also true that the angels are fascinated with our salvation. The preaching of the gospel, the call for repentance and faith, and the miracle of salvation are “*things which angels desire to*

look into” (*I Peter 1:12*). Their focus is on Jesus. And ours should be, too!

Not only did the cherubim guard *the tree of life* in the Garden of Eden. Not only did they symbolically guard the ark of the covenant in the tabernacle and later in the temple, the cherubim actually guard the throne of God in heaven today. Remember, Satan still has access to heaven. But it is limited access. The cherubim keep God’s throne protected and safe. Let me add that God doesn’t have protection because He needs it. He just has protection to keep Him from fighting! The cherubim are there just in case there is a problem.

How do we know that the cherubim guard the heavenly throne of God? One day King Hezekiah was praying, and he said, “*O LORD of hosts, God of Israel, the One Who dwells between the cherubim*” (*Isaiah 37:16*). God literally lives between the cherubim.

It is interesting to me that the fallen angel, Lucifer, was once a cherub. He once lived in close proximity to God. In fact, the Bible says he was “*the anointed cherub*” (*Ezekiel 28:14*). Oh, how the mighty have fallen. Instead of being satisfied with God’s presence, he sought for something more. Friend, there is nothing

more than the presence of God. There is nothing sweeter. The Scriptures tell us that in God's presence we find "*fullness of joy*" (*Psalm 16:11*). And at His "*right hand*" we discover "*pleasures forevermore*" (*Psalm 16:11*).

On one hand, I envy the cherubim. What a blessed life they have. On the other hand, I have something better than they do. They have God at their side. As a Christian, I have God in my heart. I cannot see Him like they can. But they cannot experience and appreciate Him like I do. He has given me forgiveness, salvation, and His indwelling Holy Spirit. For that reason, it is actually better to be a Christian than it would be to be an angel.

In Ezekiel 10, we gain some additional insights about the cherubim. We learn that they have faces, wings, hands, and feet. We also discover that they are "*full of eyes all around*" (*Ezekiel 10:12*). While this is a very sobering passage of Scripture about the glory of the Lord departing from the temple, we gain a very practical piece of information from this portion of God's Word. We read that "*the glory of the LORD...stood over the cherubim*" (*Ezekiel 10:18*). We then read that "*the glory of the God of Israel was above them*" (*Ezekiel 10:19*).

This says to us that as important as the cherubim are, they are not the most important beings in heaven. The most important Figure in heaven is God Himself. The cherubim just help us to see and understand Him more clearly.

The Seraphim...God's Shining Angels

While the cherubim are *beside* the throne of God, the seraphim are *above* it. For that reason, it would appear that the seraphim would actually be ranked slightly higher than the cherubim.

While we read about the cherubim in several passages of Scripture, we only read about the seraphim in Isaiah 6. In this classic chapter of the Bible, we find some valuable nuggets of truth about the seraphim. Interestingly enough, the name “seraph” (which is the Hebrew singular of “seraphim”) literally means “burning one” or “shining one.”⁹ In Isaiah 6, we see that they are burning with a deep love and reverence for God (*see Isaiah 6:1-8*).

From Isaiah 6, we learn three things about the seraphim. First, they are *worshipping* angels. Each seraph has six wings. The Bible says that with two wings each seraph covered

his face, with two wings he covered his feet, and with the other two wings he flew. David Jeremiah points out that by covering their faces, the seraphim were showing their reverence for God. By covering their feet, they were showing their humility...waiting for God to tell them what to do next. With their other two wings, the seraphim flew. Dr. Jeremiah has warned us that there is something to be learned from how the seraphim used their six wings. He stated, “Four wings for worship and only two for work--twice as much attention to being in God’s presence as compared to carrying out other responsibilities. It seems like we today often reverse this ratio. We would do well to be more like the seraphim.”¹⁰ We often spend too much time in busy activity and too little time in the worship of God. Before we attempt to do any work for God, we must first spend ample time in His presence...worshipping Him for Who He is and for all that He has done.

Not only are the seraphim worshipping angels, they are also *witnessing* angels. The seraphim cried out, “*Holy, holy, holy is the LORD of hosts; the whole earth is full of His glory*” (Isaiah 6:3)! We normally think of this as a song they sang to God. But actually, the Bible says that “*one cried to another and said,*

'Holy, holy, holy is the LORD of hosts'' (Isaiah 6:3, *emphasis mine*). That tells me that the seraphim are witnessing angels. They share with one another what God means to them.

And we should be witnessing Christians. What is a witness? A witness is someone who tells what he has seen or experienced. Jesus said to His disciples, *"You shall be witnesses to Me"* (Acts 1:8). He hasn't called us to be His attorneys...arguing a case. He has called us to be His witnesses...telling our story. When we tell our "faith story" to others in a genuine way, they are touched. Remember, you have something to say that someone else needs to hear. Never underestimate the power of a witness!

Not only are the seraphim worshipping angels and witnessing angels, they are also *working* angels. When Isaiah saw this heavenly and holy vision of God, he cried out, *"Woe is me, for I am undone! Because I am a man of unclean lips"* (Isaiah 6:5). When that confession of sin was heard in heaven, one of the seraphim flew to Isaiah *"having in his hand a live coal which he had taken with the tongs from the altar"* (Isaiah 6:6). The seraph took that live coal and touched Isaiah's lips with it. He then said to Isaiah: *"Behold, this has*

touched your lips; your iniquity is taken away, and your sin purged” (Isaiah 6:7). Think about this: With the live coal from the altar in his hand, the seraph carried forgiveness to Isaiah. Notice that the seraph didn’t forgive Isaiah’s sin. The coal from the altar provided the forgiveness.

What a beautiful picture of how we, the servants of God, are called upon to carry the message and meaning of salvation to others. The live coal from the altar is an Old Testament picture of Jesus. He was sacrificed on God’s altar for our sins, and He is alive today. He is the Living Sacrifice. As we, in our own words and ways, carry Christ to others, we are bringing them into contact with the only Person Who can cleanse their sins and change their lives. After Isaiah received forgiveness, he surrendered his life to the Lord’s work. But it all began when the seraph took the live coal and touched Isaiah’s lips with it.

When we witness for Christ, we share with others what He has done for us. But when we actually share Christ with others, we are letting them know what He can do for them. It is our duty and privilege to carry Christ to our family members and friends just like this seraph carried the live coal from heaven’s altar to

Isaiah. May we, like the seraphim, be worshipping, witnessing, and working servants of the Lord. And may our hearts burn with a deep love for Him.

The Angel of the LORD

There are millions, perhaps hundreds of millions, of angels. But there is one Angel Who is in a league all of His own. Michael is powerful. Gabriel is fascinating. The cherubim are royal. The seraphim are shining. But this one Angel, the Angel we will deal with here, is unique in every way.

In the Bible, He is simply referred to as “*the Angel of the LORD*” (*Psalm 34:7*). Who is this Angel? Why do some Bible translations capitalize the word “Angel” when referring to Him? Is He just a special Angel? Or is He God Himself?

The Angel of the LORD makes approximately 20 appearances in the Old Testament. We cannot explore all of these passages here, but we will look at enough of them to make it clear that this Angel is none other than the pre-incarnate Christ. The Angel of the LORD is an Old Testament picture of Jesus. Jesus said that no one has ever seen the

Father except for the Son (*see John 6:46*). So the Angel of the LORD couldn't be God the Father because no one has ever seen the Father. But a lot of people saw the Angel of the LORD. And as we read about Him, it is obvious that this Angel is God Himself...not God the Father...but God the Son...appearing in the Old Testament before He was born in Bethlehem. Interestingly, we never read about the Angel of the LORD in the New Testament. By that time, Jesus had come in the flesh.

In Genesis 16, we read an interesting story about Hagar, Abraham's maidservant. Abraham and Sarah were well past the age of having children, but God had promised them a son. After many years of waiting, Sarah suggested that Abraham have relations with Hagar. Sarah thought that maybe the promised son would come through her. Well, Abraham and Hagar had relations, Hagar became pregnant, and Sarah became jealous. Sarah then "*dealt harshly*" with Hagar, and Hagar "*fled from her presence*" (*Genesis 16:6*).

When Hagar was alone in the wilderness, a very special Visitor appeared. It was the Angel of the LORD (*see Genesis 16:7*). He said to Hagar, "*I will multiply your descendants exceedingly*" (*Genesis 16:10*). Only God could

multiply her descendants. Thus Hagar recognized that this Angel was God. She plainly said, “*You-Are-the-God-Who-Sees*” (Genesis 16:13). She then said, “*Have I also here seen Him Who sees me?*” (Genesis 16:13).

A few years later, Abraham and Sarah had a son of their own. They named the little fellow Isaac. Several years later, God gave Abraham the ultimate test. He instructed Abraham to offer Isaac as a sacrifice on Mount Moriah. God was testing Abraham to see what he treasured most...*the blessing of God* (his long-awaited son) or *God Himself*. Abraham was determined to obey. He took Isaac to the appointed place, strapped him to the altar, and was about to sacrifice him to God when a special Person spoke from heaven. Again, it was the Angel of the LORD (see Genesis 22:11). He told Abraham that the sacrifice of his son, Isaac, was no longer required. He commended Abraham for being willing to offer his son and went on to say, “*Now I know that you fear God, since you have not withheld your son, your only son, **from Me***” (Genesis 22:12, emphasis mine).

Notice that the Angel of the LORD commended Abraham for not withholding his son “*from Me*” (Genesis 22:12). The sacrifice

was to have been made to God. The Angel of the LORD thus referred to Himself as God.

Several years later, we find the Angel of the LORD appearing to Jacob in a dream. Here, He is referred to as the Angel of God (*see Genesis 31:11*). In this conversation, it is even clearer. The Angel actually said that He was God. His words make it crystal clear. The Angel of God explained, “*I am the God of Bethel, where you anointed the pillar and where you made a vow to Me. Now arise, get out of this land, and return to the land of your family*” (*Genesis 31:13*).

We see that the exact same thing happened in the life of Moses. The Angel of the LORD appeared to Moses at the burning bush (*see Exodus 3:2*). And He left no room for Moses to wonder Who He was. The Angel of the LORD made His identity obvious. He clearly said, “*I am the God of your father--the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob*” (*Exodus 3:6*).

For thousands of years, consensus biblical scholarship has identified the Angel of the LORD with the pre-incarnate Christ. But what can we learn about Jesus from these various Old Testament appearances?

We learn from the Hagar incident that Jesus knows where we are, and He knows what we're going through. Nothing escapes His all-seeing eyes.

We learn from His appearance to Abraham on Mount Moriah that every act of obedience is actually a love offering to the Lord. When we obey, God receives that as an act of worship.

We learn from what the Angel of God told Jacob that Jesus remembers the commitments we have made to Him in the past. And we also learn that He has great things planned for our future.

We learn from what He told Moses at the burning bush that it is never too late to serve the Lord. Moses had been on the back side of the desert for forty years. Earlier in his life, he had known that God had placed a calling on him. He knew that he was the one to lead the children of God out of Egyptian bondage. But as a young man, he took matters into his own hands. He killed an Egyptian. And he became "*The Most Wanted Man in Egypt*" for that crime. So he left Egypt. He tended sheep in the desert for the next forty years. He thought God could never use him again. But he was wrong. Ours is a God of second chances. So

when the Angel of the LORD appeared to Moses, Moses knew that his best days weren't behind him. He knew that his best days were still in front of him. And he made the most of his second chance.

Isn't that just like Jesus? He is always coming to us in our time of need...our time of distress...our time of testing...our time of regret. And His presence changes everything.

Special Angelic Appearances in the Bible

Angels play a prominent role in the biblical narrative. Often we find them protecting the people of God. When Daniel was thrown into the lions' den because of his faith in God, it was an angel who kept him safe. After a night with the lions, King Darius came to check on Daniel. He looked down into that lions' den and asked, "*Daniel, servant of the living God, has your God, Whom you serve continually, been able to deliver you from the lions?*" (*Daniel 6:20*). Daniel responded by saying, "*My God sent His angel and shut the lions' mouths, so that they have not hurt me*" (*Daniel 6:22*). Such is the responsibility of angels...to keep God's people safe.

We also find angels carrying out judgment against the enemies of God. On one occasion, an Angel (in fact, it was the Angel of the LORD) killed 185,000 Assyrians in a single night (*see II Kings 19:35*). On another occasion, God sent an Angel (again, the Angel of the LORD) to destroy the entire city of Jerusalem. At the last minute, though, God mercifully called the judgment off. The Bible reports it this way: *“And when the Angel stretched out His hand over Jerusalem to destroy it, the Lord relented from the destruction, and said to the Angel Who was destroying the people, ‘It is enough; now restrain Your hand’” (II Samuel 24:16).*

In the book of Revelation, we discover that God will use the angels to carry out judgment on His enemies during *The Great Tribulation*. (*see Revelation 5:1-7; 7:1-4; 8:2; 12:7-12; 14:6-20; 15:1*). At the end of the tribulation period, we read about an angel binding Satan with a great chain and casting him into the bottomless pit for a thousand years (*see Revelation 20:1-3*). Think about that. Satan will spend a thousand years in a bottomless pit. He will then be released for a brief time before being cast (presumably by God Himself) into *“the lake of fire and brimstone”* to *“be tormented day and night forever and ever”*

(*Revelation 20:10*). Satan, the tormentor of our souls, will ultimately be eternally tormented in hell. There is coming a day when God will punish Satan. And He will use, at least in part, an angel to carry out some of that punishment.

Of particular interest to me is the role that angels played in the life and ministry of Jesus. After His birth, an angel announced the good news to the shepherds (*see Luke 2:8-20*). Angels ministered to Jesus after He had resisted Satan's temptations (*see Matthew 4:11*). An angel strengthened Jesus as He agonized in prayer in the Garden of Gethsemane the night before He was crucified (*see Luke 22:39-46*).

Angels watched from heaven as Jesus was betrayed, arrested, beaten, and killed. Had God given the order, they would have gladly rescued Jesus. In fact, Jesus said as He was being arrested that if He petitioned His Father for deliverance that He would send "*more than twelve legions of angels*" to liberate Him from His enemies (*Matthew 26:53*). A Roman legion consisted of six thousand soldiers. Twelve legions would be seventy-two thousand soldiers. Jesus was saying that His Father would send more than seventy-two thousand angels to rescue Him if only He would ask. But Jesus didn't ask, and the angels didn't

rescue Him. That's not what angels do. The heavenly angels never act independently of God. They carry out His will and His will only. Had the angels rescued Jesus on that night, we could never be saved. Thank God for the restraint and obedience of the angels.

Three days after the crucifixion, an angel *“rolled back the stone”* from Jesus' tomb (*Matthew 28:2*). He then sat on the stone. The angel, in his bright countenance, happily said to the women who had come to visit the tomb, *“Do not be afraid, for I know you seek Jesus Who was crucified. He is not here; for He is risen, as He said. Come, see the place where the Lord lay”* (*Matthew 28:5-6*).

Forty days later, two angels were on the Mount of Olives when Jesus ascended and returned to His Father in heaven (*see Acts 1:9-11*). And when He returns to earth one day, *“all the holy angels”* of heaven will accompany Him (*Matthew 25:31*).

Not only do the angels have a special love for Jesus, but they also have a special love for those who belong to Jesus. As the early church began to grow, we discover that the angels played a major role in the lives of the earliest followers of Christ. After the early apostles

had been imprisoned for their witness for Christ, “*an angel of the Lord opened the prison doors and brought them out*” (Acts 5:19). It was an angel who told Philip to go to Gaza and share Jesus with the Ethiopian eunuch (see Acts 8:26-40). An angel struck and killed evil King Herod (see Acts 12:20-24). And when Paul was in a serious storm at sea, it was an angel who assured him that he would not lose his life because God still had work for him to do (see Acts 27:22-26).

Friend, we’re not going to die until it’s our time to die. And when we die, the angels will be there to take us to heaven. The apostle John got a glimpse of heaven when God revealed the celestial city to him. An angel, in fact, the last angel mentioned in the Bible, gave him a first class tour of heaven. John was so overwhelmed by what he had seen that he actually “*fell down to worship before the feet of the angel*” who had shown him around heaven (Revelation 22:8). But the angel said to John, “*See that you do not do that. For I am your fellow servant, and of your brethren the prophets, and of those who keep the words of this book. Worship God*” (Revelation 22:9).

The last angel mentioned in the Bible wanted John to understand that he was only the

tour guide of heaven, not the main attraction. The main attraction of heaven, of course, is Jesus. And the angels are always pointing people towards Him.

Angels in Our Lives Today

Angels are no less real today than they were in Bible times. God hasn't changed. And neither have the angels. The Bible says that *"He shall give His angels charge over you, to keep you in all your ways"* (Psalm 91:11). That word "keep" can also be translated "guard." In other words, the angels are our guardians. They are our protectors.

Some people believe that each one of us has one, specific guardian angel. They base that on something Jesus said. One day Jesus was talking about little children, and He said that *"in heaven their angels always see the face of My Father Who is in heaven"* (Matthew 18:10). Some people believe Jesus was saying that everyone has a guardian angel. And maybe we do. But that's not exactly what Jesus said. He simply said that children have angels in heaven who have been assigned to them. Maybe we do have one, specific angel assigned to us. Maybe we have more than one angel assigned to us. Maybe all of the angels are assigned to us. But

we can rest assured that angels are watching us. And they are waiting on God to issue the command that would put them at our aid in a split second. Praise God for our guardian angels.

When a person gets saved, we know that the angels rejoice. Jesus said that *“there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents”* (Luke 15:10). Angels have never experienced salvation, but they do rejoice over ours.

And one day, as our lives on earth come to an end, God will send His angels to come and carry us home. Jesus told a story about two men. One was a believer, and one wasn't. When the unbeliever died, he went to Hades (see Luke 16:23). But when the believer died, Jesus said that he *“was carried by the angels to Abraham's bosom”* (Luke 16:22). That is just another way of saying that the angels took his soul to heaven.

I certainly don't know everything about angels, but I know three things for sure. They rejoiced when I got saved. They will protect me as long as I live. And they will carry my soul to heaven when my body dies. Knowing

those three things gives me a deep peace in my heart.

Do you have that peace? Has there ever been a time when you caused the angels to rejoice because you gave your heart to Jesus? If not, you can do that right now. If you will repent of your sins, ask Jesus to save you, and trust Him to do it, there will be a celebration in heaven...and there will be a new peace in your heart. Just pray this prayer now:

“Dear Jesus,

I don't know everything, but I know that I have sinned. I need to be forgiven. I know that You died on the cross to make forgiveness possible. And I believe You rose from the grave conquering death. I ask You now to come into my heart, forgive my sins, and make me a Christian. I ask You to save me, and I trust You to do it. Welcome to my heart. Begin now to make me the person You want me to be.

*In Your Name I pray,
Amen.”*

Friend, if you just prayed that prayer, Jesus Christ just came into your life. He will never leave you. Today is the day of your salvation. And the angels in heaven are rejoicing!

Additional Questions About Angels

Question: When we get to heaven, will we become angels?

Answer: No. We don't become angels. But we will be "*like angels*" (*Matthew 22:30*). In heaven, we will be like angels in the sense that our sole focus will be on serving God. We will have new bodies. We will no longer have earthly distractions. But we will be unique from the angels in that we are the redeemed children of God.

Question: If an angel comes to my aid, will I see him?

Answer: Not necessarily. In the Bible, sometimes angels are visible and sometimes they are invisible. Balaam could not see the Angel of the LORD but his donkey could (*see Numbers 22*). Only when Balaam's eyes were opened by God could he see the Angel of the LORD.

Question: If an angel appears to me, will I recognize him as an angel?

Answer: Not necessarily. The Bible says that sometimes we entertain angels without even knowing it. Sometimes they appear in disguise (*see Hebrews 13:2*).

Question: Do angels watch what we are doing?

Answer: Yes. I Corinthians 4:9 makes it clear that the angels are watching us. It is as though we are in a theater, and they are the spectators. I Timothy 5:21-22 emphasizes this same truth. We should try to never do anything that would make an angel feel uncomfortable. The fact that angels watch us should motivate us to live lives of integrity and purity.

Question: Can Satan and the other fallen angels ever be saved?

Answer: No. There is no provision for their salvation. Jesus came to save sinful humanity, not fallen angels. The angel told Joseph that Jesus would “*save His people from their sins*” (Matthew 1:21, *emphasis mine*). Additionally, there is nothing in the Bible that would make us think that Satan and the other fallen angels want to be saved. They hate God. They have no desire to submit to God. And their end is described in Scripture. Their doom in hell is a decided fact. And they will go there hating God.

Question: Is it possible for the angels in heaven to “fall” today?

Answer: No. There is nothing in the Bible that indicates that an angel today could ever

fall. One theologian said, “Evidently the angels today are confirmed in their position and, therefore, cannot fall anymore.”¹¹ The position of both the angels in heaven and the fallen angels is forever fixed.

Question: Does the Bible teach that we will one day judge angels?

Answer: Yes. In I Corinthians 6:3 we read that we will one day “*judge angels.*” The word “judge” literally means “rule” or “govern.” While it is not perfectly clear what this means, we do know that God created the angels, at least in part, to minister to us. The Bible says that the angels are “*ministering spirits sent forth to minister for those who will inherit salvation*” (*Hebrews 1:14*). Since the angels serve us on earth, one scholar points out that “it seems reasonable that they will serve us in glory.”¹² In that sense, we will one day govern them.

Question: Is there anything an angel cannot do?

Answer: Yes. An angel cannot share a testimony of how God saved him and changed his life. He cannot tell others what it is like to be saved because an angel has never been saved. He has never been saved because he has never been lost. But we have. We were lost,

but now we are found! We, the children of God, are the only ones who can share with others how wonderful it is to be saved. That is our duty. That is our responsibility. That is our privilege. And we can rest assured that as we share our testimonies with others the angels listen in...rejoicing when we lead another person to Christ!

¹ Billy Graham, *Angels*, Word Publishing, Dallas, 1994, p. 23.

² Bob Glaze, *Angels*, Bible Belt Publishing, Oklahoma City, 1998, p. 30.

³ Jack Graham, *Unseen-Angels, Satan, Heaven, Hell and Winning the Battle for Eternity*, Bethany House Publishers, Minneapolis, 2013, p. 61.

⁴ Billy Graham, p. 58.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ David Jeremiah, *Angels*, Multnomah Books, Colorado Springs, 2006, p. 138.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ John MacArthur, *The MacArthur Study Bible*, Thomas Nelson, Inc., Nashville, 1997, p. 132.

⁹ David Jeremiah, p. 146.

¹⁰ Ibid., p. 147.

¹¹ Herbert Lockyer, *All the Angels in the Bible*, Hendrickson Publishers, Peabody, 1995, p. 126.

¹² John MacArthur, p. 1736.

Other Booklets by Jon Redmond

- *How to be a Happy Christian*
- *Riding Out the Storms of Life*
- *Finding Freedom Through Forgiveness*
- *Never Alone*
- *How to Make Heaven Your Home*
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- *When God Says, 'Wait'*
- *How to Have a Peaceful Heart*
- *In the Twinkling of an Eye*
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- *Bible Reading Plan*

*These booklets can be read online at www.fbp.org.
They are also available at First Baptist Church in
Pasadena, Texas.*

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