

ANGELS
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Ann Cannady recalls the day when a third test result confirmed she had advanced uterine cancer. "Cancer is a terribly scary word", she says.

Her husband Gary, a retired Air Force master sergeant, had lost his first wife to the same type of cancer and did not know whether he had the strength to go through it again.

Ann said she and Gary spent the next 8 weeks praying and being scared and being scared and praying.

She begged God to either please heal her or let her die quickly.

The memory of what happened next is as vivid as if it had happened yesterday.

One morning, three days before she was scheduled to enter the hospital for surgery, Gary answered the doorbell.

Standing on the step was a large man, a good inch taller than Ann's 6'5" husband.

Ann said he was the blackest man she had ever seen and his eyes were a deep, deep, azure blue.

The stranger introduced himself simply as Thomas and then he told Ann that her cancer would be gone.

Ann and Gary both stammered asking how did he know Ann's name and how did he know she had cancer?

At that the stranger simply told them both to stop worrying.

He quoted Scripture but again Ann asked "Who are you?"

The man answered, "I'm Thomas. I am sent by God."

Next, the man held up his right hand, with his palm facing Ann and he reached toward her but did not touch her.

Ann said, "I suddenly felt my legs go weak and I slumped to the floor - As I lay there I felt something like a hot light go clear through my body.

In seconds she awoke with her husband leaning over her asking her if she was alright.

Thomas was gone.

Ann reached immediately for the phone and called her doctor telling him what had happened - knowing that she was healed.

He assured her that stress could cause such an experience but they reached a compromise - she would show up for surgery if before the surgery they would do another biopsy.

She would remain on the operating table and if the cancer was still there - they

would go ahead with the surgery.

The test came back and the doctor said, "I don't understand what's happened. Your test is clear."

There has been no reoccurrence of the cancer and her doctor now acknowledges that he has witnessed a medical miracle.

(From Dec 27,'93 TIME)

Who was Thomas?

Is this incident possible?

Was Thomas an angel?

Billy Graham in his book, Angels, God's Secret Agents recounts the story of missionary John Paton of what was then called the New Hebrides Islands - now called Vanuatu.

One night their mission home was surrounded by hostile natives intent on burning thier house down and murdering Paton and his wife.

The Paton's began to pray and they prayed throughout the night. The next morning as they peered into the early light they could see no natives at all.

About a year later, the chief of that tribe became a Christian and and when Paton asked him why they had not attacked that night, the chief was surprised by his question.

The chief asked, "Who were all those men you had with you?"

Paton said there were only him and his wife.

The chief said that he and his warriors had seen hundreds of men standing guard outside their home - we didn't dare attack.

Who were those men standing guard?

Is it possible they were angels?

According to Time Magazine of just two years ago (Dec 27, 1993)

69% of Americans said they believe in angels

According to a LIFE magazine issue of just two months ago:

100 new non-fiction books about angels were published in Spring of 95 double the number of 1994.

There are three glossy national magazines on the subject of angels.

I stopped at the Church of Religious Science on Alameda (the "spider" church as we refer to that white long-legged building) and they were all out of the magazines - they go quickly the attendant told me.

Television has picked up on the theme:

And not just with Clarence in the annual reruns of "It's A Wonderful Life" but with Michael Landon's program, "Highway to Heaven" and the current program called, "Touched by an Angel"

There are angel sites on the internet - I printed out just one of them and they listed 30 books on the subject.

There were also on-line auctions of Angel pictures and paraphenalia, an angel discussion room to share angel experiences questions and answers, and an angel botique where you can select from thousands of items on angels.

The Nicole Brown family wore angel pins at the Simpson trial.
300 Oklahoma children received stuffed angels to aid their healing.

It seems there are angels everywhere and many are trying to cash in on the idea. But angels are not just about money, good feelings or Christmas tree ornaments.

Eileen Freeman of New Jersey has written several books on angels and she said,
"One of the things God created angels to do was to be our friends." She talks to her angel friend Enniss and her other angels on a daily basis not just in her angel chapel but wherever she might be. (LIFE Dec '95 p65)

The author of the LIFE magazine article made an appointment with Cheryl Welsh-Charrier an "angel counselor".

"I introduce people to their guardian angel" she says, and then function as a channel so they can ask questions of their angel.

It costs \$75 for 90 minutes. During the session Cheryl goes into what she calls a "light trance" and then takes dictation from the angel she says belongs to George. She then teaches George how to contact the angel by meditating and visualization

Terry Lynn Taylor has also written several books on angels.

I picked up one entitled Messengers of Light - The Angels Guide to Spritual Growth.

In her book she writes that angels work for God but don't let the word "God" turn you off.

Whenever you see that word in my book you can substitute words that make you more comfortable like "universe" or "mother nature" or the "great spirit".

Just remember, angels belong to a loving higher order.

(p 13)

She also writes that each person on earth has been assigned a guardian angel.

"Your guardian angel," she writes, "has been with you throughout time and was there when you decided to come into this world as the special human you are today."

In her book, like so many of the others, she teaches how to meditate on the angels, pray to the

angels, set up an altar for the angels and hear from the angels.

From the back cover of yet another book on angels I read:

"in these pages you will discover heavenly opinions on gratitude, ego, sorrow, friendship, death and prayer. You will learn, from the angels themselves, how to find your soul, how to understand the language of angels, and how to talk to your body about healing..." (Angel Answers)

But this is not the teaching of the Bible about angels.

Even the authors and editors of the LIFE and TIME articles recognize the great difference between the angels of the Bible and the angels of this New Age interest.

One wrote: "In their modern incarnation, the mighty messengers and fearless soldiers (of the Bible) have been reduced to bite-size beings, easily digested. The terrifying cherubim of the Bible have become Kewpie-doll cherubs. For those who choke too easily on God and his rules, theologians observe, angels are the handy compromise, all fluff and meringue, kind, nonjudgmental.... Only in the New Age would it be possible to invent an angel so mellow that it can be ignored. (TIME)

Malcolm Warford, president of Bangor Theological Seminary said, "When you don't believe in God, you believe in every god that comes along - a tame, domesticated one with a small "g"...When you trade mystery for security you end up with a trivialization." (TIME)

Instead of all the hype and fluff of the popularization of angels what does the Bible teach about them?

Please open your Bible to the book of Hebrews chapter 1

In our study of the book of Hebrews we found that in the very first chapter the author refers to angels.

The point he is making is that Jesus is infinitely superior to the angels - but it raises the question - "what are angels?"

V. 5 "To which of the angels did God ever say"

V. 6 "Let all God's angels worship him"

V. 14 "Are not all angels ministering spirits sent to serve those who will inherit salvation?"

This past week I did a thorough search of every O.T. and N.T reference to angels.

In addition to my own study I was assisted by the extensive reserach Dave Laube did on the same subject.

Dave has taught a short course on this subject and will be doing so again.

I'd like to set forth the Bible's teaching on angels by asking answering several questions about

them - questions that I hope you have had about angels.

1. What are angels?

Both the Hebrew O.T. and the Greek N.T. use a word that in English means "messenger" to refer to these creatures.

In that well known account from Matthew 1 Joseph engaged to be married to Mary was visited by what the Bible calls "an angel of the Lord".

It seems self-evident that the word "messenger" is used to describe these creatures because what we find them doing most often is relaying a message from God.

In Genesis, an angel messenger tells Abraham not to kill Isaac.

In Zechariah, an angel messenger gives him the message he is to speak to the people.

So what are angels? They are messengers from God.

2. Are angels "real" or are they just thoughts?

I have already called them "creatures" but are they really "beings" or are they just apparitions, visions, mental images in dreams?

In the Bible we see that they have intelligence:

In most cases in the Bible the angels speak intelligibly and they are understood in the language of the hearer.

Mary, Joseph, Abraham, Peter and others talked to them.

They also have emotions - in Rev 5:13 they worship Jesus.

They also have a will. Not all angels, as we will see in a few minutes, chose to worship God - thus it is clear they have a will.

Intelligence, emotions and will are characteristics not of things but of beings, of creatures, of persons.

Angels are not just figments of imagination but are real persons, not human persons (beings) but nonetheless persons.

The Bible also tells us these angels live forever.

Jesus said so in Luke 20 and we also see that the same angel, Gabriel, appeared to Daniel and then several hundred years later to John the Baptist's father.

We also learn from Jesus that angels don't marry or have children.

The Bible doesn't say they are sexless but all appearances of angels are as men.

We know that at least some of the angels have names but we only learn the names of two -

Michael and Gabriel.

Any other names of angels is purely speculation.

We learn that angels are strong and awe inspiring creatures as when they fought against the Assyrians and killed 172,000 in one night.

But we know they don't know everything - for in Lk 24:36 and I Pt 1:12 we read they don't know when Jesus is coming.

And furthermore they can't be in two places at the same time - they are not omnipresent like God. In Dan 9 (21-23) and Dan 10 (10-14) it says that the angels went from one place to another over a period of time - thus they are localized.

We learn that angels can appear and disappear - they are not limited by physical bodies.

They are spirit-beings not human beings.

As certainly as God is real and we are real - so angels are real.

3. Where do angels come from?

Look in your Bible please to Colossian 1:16.

In Hebrews we have already seen these creatures referred to as "the angels of God" Elsewhere they are called "His angels" Ps 104:4; "elect" I Tim 5:21; and "holy ones" Job 5:1)

But how are they "his"? Col 1:16 make it clear that they are created: READ (See Psa 148:2,5 also)

AND not only are they created by God but they are under God's direction: I Pt 3:22 says all angels, authorities, and powers are in submission to him.

4. How many angels are there? In Mt 26:53 Jesus said God could put 72,000 at his disposal right then if he wanted the Father to.

In Rev 5:11 we learn that 10,000 times 10,000 angels surround the throne - meaning many, many - almost countless.

5. What do angels look like?

First of all, remember, they don't look like anything. - they are non-physical beings so only when God makes them so and only when he opens human eyes to see them do they appear as physical.

But when they do appear what do they look like?

a. They sometimes appear in human form like when an angel appeared to the non-Christian Cornelius telling him to send for the Apostle Peter. Even though they appear in human form, we must remember, they are not humans.

b. There is no indication of angels taking the form of animals.

c. Sometimes angels will speak in a human language without taking any form that can be seen as when the angel of the Lord spoke to Phillip and told him to go to Gaza to meet the Ethiopian.

d. Often their appearance is dazzling and awe inspiring as when the angel appeared to shepherds in the field (Luke 2) or when they appeared to Samson's parents in Judges (13:3).

Do angels have wings?

Ezekial, Isaiah, and John saw creatures with wings but most appearances of angels were without.

Contrary to Clarence's statement - It is not true that every time a bell rings it means an angel gets its wings.

Angels don't have wings because angels are spirit-beings - not physical beings.

6. Is there an hierarchy of angels? Privates, lieutenants, captains, majors, colonels, generals.

The Bible does seem to hint at a ranking of angels when in three passages (I Thess 4:16, Jude 9, Rev 12:7) there is reference to an "archangel" - "arch" meaning a higher rank. Another hint is in Dan 10:13 where the angel Michael is called "one of the chief princes". The language of Eph 6:12 might likewise suggest a ranking of angels BUT it is very risky to speculate beyond that.

7. What do angels do?

Look again please at Hebrews 1:14 for the most direct statement of the role of angels. READ They serve God's people at God's command.

A. They serve (Guiding, instructing, and protecting):

Abraham, Lot, Jacob, Joseph, Moses, Joshua, Gideon, Elijah, Mary, Peter and Paul were given instructions from God by angels.

Several times in the Bible we see that God's people were protected by angels as when an angel shut the lions' mouths when Daniel was in the lions den.

As when the angel of the Lord killed the Assyrians.

As when the angels physically took Lot and his family by the hands and led them out of Sodom.

We have an example of divine guidance when Abraham's servant was sent to find a wife for Isaac.

The angel of the Lord was sent before the servant to arrange the circumstances - and did so.

Something very important to notice about the Biblical examples of angels giving instruction, guidance and protection:

No instance of an angel acting independently of God's command - God issues the commands and the angels respond (Psa 103:20).

ALSO we don't ask the angel - we ask God.

After Abraham's servant learned that an angel would go with him to help him find a wife for Isaac - you will notice in the Gen 24 passage that he asks God to help him - he doesn't ask the angel to do so. There is no instance of person in Bible asking for an angel.

B. Not only do angels give protection and guidance but they execute judgment.

Contrary to the angels of the New Age teachings, God's angels are not always just there to help.

They brought God's judgment on Israel when it sinned (Num 16)
(2 Sam 24:16ff) AND on Israel's enemies (II Kings 6)(II Kings 19:35)
(Psa 78:49)

In Mt 13:39 we find that angels will bring God's judgment on unbelievers.

C. What else do angels do? They worship God:

Many passages of Scripture describe their standing before God honoring him for who he is.(Psa 103; 148; Heb 1:6; Rev 4:5; Rev 5:4)

D. What else do they do? They accompanied Jesus at the crucial times of his earthly life:

At his birth (Luke 2:9)

Near the time of his death when he was in the Garden of Gethsemane (Lk 22:43)

At his resurrection and ascension (Mt 28:2) when they rolled the stone away and (Mt 28:5) when they told the two Marys that Jesus was risen;

They were also present at his ascension when he told the disciples that Jesus would come again (Acts 1:10)

And they will be present at his second coming when with thousands of angels Christ will come in power and glory. (Mt16:27; 24:31; 25:31; Mk8:38; Lk9:26; 2Th 1:7)

E. There is also some indication from the book of Daniel that angels are involved in the political affairs of nations but it is difficult from those passages to be certain of exactly how that works out.

(Dan 10:1ff and Dan 12:1 both seem to indicate that angels are somehow involved at God's command in what is happening in the nations of the world. cf especially 10:13)

F. And there is one passage that at least suggests that an angel accompanies the souls of the dead into God's presence (Lk 16:22)

When Jesus told the story of the Rich man and Lazarus he said that angels carried the soul of Lazarus to Abraham's side.

What do angels do?

They protect, they guide, they instruct, they execute judgment, they worship God - They do whatever it is God tells them to do.

8. Do people become angels when they die?

I Cor 6:1-3 God's people will judge angels (therefore it is obvious we don't become angels) See also Heb 12:22-23 where angels and people are clearly distinguished

9. What is our relationship to angels?

No indication that we are to seek angels appearance or help.

We are to address God, seek God's help and let God take care of how he does it.

Thank God for his help however he chooses to give it.

Whether we ever see or hear from or consciously experience an angel's help is entirely up to God.

In fact it appears from the Scriptures that most people were probably not aware of it.

In over 2000 years of history the Bible records only about 35 individuals including the disciples who "saw" an angel. It also says the Israelites heard an angel on one occasion.

AND only a couple of those 35 people ever saw an angel more than once.

Hebrews 13:2 says "some have entertained angels without knowing it." - That is not only true in the Bible but obviously true today.

I want you to look in your Bible at Col 2:18

One thing the Bible is very clear on is that angels are not to be worshipped - READ Col 2:18

In Rev 19:10 when John sees an angel he bows down to worship it but the angel tells him to stop it and worship only God.

10. Does everyone have a guardian angel?

Psa 91:11 "For he will command his angels concerning you to guard you in all your ways."

In Matt 18:10 Jesus spoke of "These little ones' angels"

If you were to study these two verses you would also have to conclude that there is not enough information here to believe that everyone has a guardian angel.

That concept grew out of medieval speculation.

And furthermore the issue is not whether everyone has a guardian angel but whether our God is sufficient to meet the needs of his people - however he chooses to do it.

Our trust is in God not in an angel.

11. ARE there FALLEN ANGELS?

7 books of the O.T. specifically teach the existence of Satan

Every N.T. writer and 19 N.T. books make specific reference to him. Jesus refers to Satan at least 25 times

Not only is Satan referred to but so are his demons

In Mt 12:24 Satan is called the prince of demons

In Jude 6 and II Pt 2:4 we learn that demons are angels who sinned.

When that happened we don't know.

But that there are evil angels we do know.

What do they do?

Their purpose is to tempt and destroy God's people.

They can afflict people with disease (speechlessness Mt 9:33; blindness Matt 12:22; epilepsy 17:15-18; mental disorders Mk 5:4-5 etc;

(SPECIAL NOTE: NOT ALL ILLNESS IN THE BIBLE IS ATTRIBUTED TO DEMONIC ACTION)

They can even bring about the death of people.

BUT they can only do what God allows - he is sovereign.

Can demons be made visible?

Only one clear reference to Satan or his demons being visible and that is in Zech 3:1 when Zechariah is said to see both an angel of the Lord and Satan. AND THAT WAS IN A VISION

No biblical evidence that evil angels can appear in human form.

What will finally happen to Satan and his demons?

Jesus has triumphed over them at the cross and in Matt 25:41 Jesus said demons are morally responsible and destined for lake of fire.

Are there angels? Absolutely! God's Word declares it.

There's a whole other kind of being that God has created and he created them to provide for his people.

READ Hebrews 1:14

PRAYER thanksgiving for God's care, provision, even angels