



A QUICK GUIDE TO: {Angels}

There are nearly 300 references to "angel" or "angels" in the Bible. At least 15 references are found in the words of Jesus. Without a doubt these special beings were created (Colossians 1:16) for a special purpose. They are described as "ministering spirits sent to serve those who will inherit salvation" (Hebrews 1:14).

But that raises other questions. **Does every person have a guardian angel?** Do unbelievers have angels watching over them, or do only born-again Christians benefit from the watchful care of angels? The Bible's wording, "Ministering spirits sent to serve those who will inherit salvation" suggests that followers of Jesus Christ receive special attention through the ministry of angels. But in God's sovereign dealings with unbelievers, it's possible that angels could be sent to make them aware of God and of His desire for a personal relationship with them.

Can we, or others see angels?

Most artistic renditions of angels show them as creatures with wings. But, angels are spirit beings. So normally they are not seen as physical beings. There are, however, instances in Scripture when angels took on a human form as men (e.g., Genesis 19) or as radiant, glowing figures (e.g., Luke 2:9). One should also note, that there appears to be a hierarchy of spiritual beings separate from angels in the generic sense; i.e., cherubim, seraphim, and archangels. Unlike angels, the cherub figures on the Ark of the Covenant had wings (Exodus 25:20, 37:9), as do the seraphim and the living creatures described in prophetic passages of Scripture. But appearances of angels to Old and New Testament saints seldom mention wings on the angels. Even the familiar Christmas story of the angels appearing to the shepherds (Luke 2:15) does not mention wings. It might be that wings are simply an accommodation to our earthly frame of reference, as a spirit doesn't need wings to move about. However, it is not necessary to change all the artistic renditions of angels, as long as we understand that angels are spirit creatures.



In reference to gender, many Christmas and Easter renderings use women to play the part of angels. Yet the angelic appearances in Scripture mention a man rather than a woman. Human attempts to portray spirit beings typically find it necessary to portray them as either a male or a female. But the Bible clearly settles the issue for us. Jesus, describing our spiritual bodies after the resurrection from the dead, said when we rise from the dead, we will "neither marry nor be given in marriage; [we] will be like the angels in heaven" (Mark 12:25). So references to angels in Scripture as men probably reflects an accommodation to our human limitations and understanding.

Should believers look to angels for divine help?

Scripture records numerous accounts of angels interacting with people. In these accounts they were involved with leading and rescuing believers from danger (Gen. 19:15-17, Dan. 3:28, Dan. 6:22, Acts 12:5-10), bringing assurance and comfort to believers in times of distress and fear (e.g., Judges 6:11-12, Luke 1:28-31, Acts 27:23-24), and providing God's children with short-term guidance and instruction (e.g., Judges 13:3-5, 2 Kings 1:15-16, Act 8:26).

Psalm 91:11-12 is a precious promise often quoted by Christians. "He will command his angels concerning you to guard you in all your ways; they will lift you up in their hands, so that you will not strike your foot against a stone." We can be assured that God's angels are at His command to meet us in times of need as well as to protect us from the wiles of "the devil and his angels". However, the Bible makes it clear that these heavenly entities are not to be worshipped (Colossians 2:18,19) or prayed to (1 Timothy 2:5). Instead, we are to look to God as the one who can save us in the day of our distress (Psalm 55:17, 86:7, 107:6,13,19,28, 120:1) keeping in mind the beginning of Psalm 91:12..."**HE** will command his angels concerning you..."

As John records, when he got down to worship at the feet of an angel after a revelatory encounter, the angel's response was: "Do not do it! I am a fellow servant with you and with your brothers the prophets and of all who keep the words of this book. Worship God!" (Revelation 22:8,9; see also Revelation 19:10).