

What Does The Bible

Say About Angels?



Introduction. Recent years have seen a surge in interest in the subject of angels. A *Time Magazine*, December 27, 1993 article “Angels Among Us” reported that a Time/CNN poll of 500 Americans found that: 69% of American believe in the existence of angels; 46 % believe they have their own guardian angel. This same poll revealed that there is less consensus regarding the nature of angels; 55% said they are higher spiritual beings created by God with special powers to act as His agents on earth; 15% said they are the spirits of people who have died; 18% said they are important religious symbols but merely symbolic and 7% said they are merely figments of the imagination. When asked if they had ever personally felt an angelic presence in their life? – 32% said “Yes.”

What Does The Bible Teach About Angels? We must acknowledge that little is revealed about the subject. Thus we must remember... “The secret things belong unto Jehovah our God; but the things that are revealed belong unto us and to our children for ever, that we may do all the words of this law.” (Deuteronomy 29:29, ASV).

I. What Is An “Angel?” There are two (possibly three) meanings of the word “angel.”

Hebrew - *Malak* (מַלְאָךְ) - “1. One sent, a messenger, 2. Specifically a messenger of God, a. an angel, b. a prophet, c. a priest, d. Once of the people of Israel, as the teacher of the nations - Isaiah 42:19” (*A Hebrew & English Lexicon of the Old Testament*, by William Gesenius, Eleventh ed. 1860. p. 570)

Greek - *Angelos* (ἄγγελος) - “messenger – 1. of human messengers: an envoy, one who is sent a. by men, b. by God, 2. of supernatural powers, a. angels, b. intermediary beings generally with no reference to their relation to God, c. evil spirits” (*A Greek -English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*. by Walter Bauer. Second Edition, 1958. p. 8)

A. A Messenger. (I Samuel 11:1-4) (*Malak*) – (Luke 7:18-27) (*Angelos* - vs. 24 & 27). These are humans. Sent by men or God.

B. An Apparition. (Uncertain usage- Jewish Tradition). An apparition is defined as “The act of appearing; appearance;...that which appears, especially a strange or supernatural sight or thing...” (*New Century Dictionary*. Vol. I p. 61). The Jews held the notion (whether true or not) that supernatural beings sometimes appeared in the image of human beings.

The Jewish Talmud speaks of angels “in the shape of Moses” or “in the shape of Solomon.” Some associate this notion with Acts 12:15 - (Acts 12:13-15) (*Commentary on the New Testament from the Talmud and Hebraica*. by John Lightfoot. Vol. IV. p. 106-107)



C. Divine Messengers.

1. Heavenly Beings. Matthew 24:36 speaks of “angels of heaven.” When the stone was rolled away from Jesus’ tomb the text says an angel “descended from heaven” (cf. Luke 2:8-15) Note: *Hosts*=Angels
2. Greater than Man but Inferior to God. Man is made “a little lower than the angels” (Hebrews 2:7, 9; Psalm 8:5). II Peter 2:11 says angels “are greater in power and might.” Yet, Matthew 24:36 tells us that there are some things that they don’t know.
3. They are Created Beings (Colossians 1:16). There are “Principalities and Powers” in Heaven created by God through Christ. Some have argued from Hebrews 12:22 that angels are created rather than generated (as man is). The text refers to “a company of angels” whereas man is referred to as a “generation.” I don’t know if this is a fool-proof conclusion or not but it is an interesting argument
4. They Cannot Die - Do Not Marry. (Luke 20:34-36) They are referred to as “Sons of God” = Angels (cf Job 1:6 - Sons of God present themselves before God).

Conclusion. We have seen that the words used in reference to angels can have different meanings. We have also seen that the divine messengers referred to as “angels” are created beings, greater in power than man with an eternal nature. In our next lesson we will consider different classifications of angelic beings.