

STUDY TWO – DISPELLING MISCONCEPTIONS ABOUT ANGELS

“And no wonder! For Satan himself transforms himself into an angel of light.” (2 Corinthians 11:14)

Introduction

People have been intrigued by angels for thousands of years because of interest in the supernatural. The idea of invisible beings who make things happen behind the scenes has resulted in many stories, movies, and works of art.

Many of the ideas that we have accepted about angels have come from man's imaginations. Some are fantasies, misconceptions, and others deliberate deceptions. The prevailing secular view of angels and the misconceptions surrounding them has hindered many from studying them from a Scriptural viewpoint. As Believers, we should not neglect the subject, but we cannot allow the world to define angels for us.

The Bible reveals much about angels, but there is also much we do not know. We must be careful to accept only what God's Word reveals regarding these amazing spiritual beings. Before commencing to study what the Scriptures says about angels, we need to dispel some deceptions regarding them. That is the purpose of this study this week.

Common Misconceptions

Here are some common misconceptions regarding angels.

1. **Angels do not exist.**

Some people claim angels do not exist, but the Bible provides ample proof of their existence and spiritual functions. Angels are mentioned 108 times in the Old Testament and 187 times in the New Testament.

The Bible confirms their existence and states:

“And of the angels He says: “Who makes His angels spirits and His ministers a flame of fire.”” (Hebrews 1:7)

According to the Biblical record, angels exist and were created by God.

“The denial of the existence of angels springs from the materialistic and unbelieving spirit, which in its most terrible form denies the existence of God.” Merrill Unger

2. **Angels are flesh and blood.**

The Bible reveals that angels are not flesh and blood but are spirits (Hebrews 1:14; 1 Corinthians 15:40). They can, however, take on the form of humans such as when two angels visited Abraham (Genesis 18). In this form. They apparently can eat and drink and communicate as humans do.

3. **Angels look like as they are portrayed in art.**

Angels are often depicted as cute cherubs or effeminate beings with long hair and wings. The idea comes from "Cupid", a Roman mythological god of love and it is not scriptural. Since angels do not marry or reproduce, there are no baby angels. What we do know about their appearance is that: Some angels are described as appearing in dazzling white clothing and blazing glory (Matthew 28:2-4; Acts 1:9-11). Angels may be present and yet unperceived (2 Kings 6:15-17).

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Some angels in the book of Revelation are described as being clothed in pure white linen with their breasts girded with golden girdles (Revelation 15:6). John also saw an angel clothed with a cloud, with a rainbow on his head, a face that looked like the sun, and feet like pillars of fire (Revelation 10:1). Some have the appearance of men, like those who came to visit Abraham and Sarah (Genesis 18).

We are instructed: “Do not forget to entertain strangers, for by so doing some have entertained angels unaware” (**Hebrews 13:2**) –so you may have encountered an angel and not know it.

4. Angels, all have wings.

The Bible reveals that some angels have wings—such as the cherubim and seraphim—but others appear as ordinary men without any wings (Genesis 18-19 and Hebrews 13:2.) An angel is seen flying through the midst of heaven in Revelation 8:13, but there is no validity to the belief that all angels have wings and/or that angels must earn their wings, as depicted in the popular movie “It’s A Wonderful Life.”

5. Angels wear halos.

This has often been depicted in art, but the Bible never mentions angels having halos. The halo is a symbol of the sun gods of ancient religions. The kings from Syria and Egypt wore halo-like crowns to symbolize their connection with these gods.

6. Angels have the same attributes as God.

This is not true, as angels are not self-existing (without origin). They are created beings. Angels are not omnipotent (all powerful); omnipresent (present everywhere); or omniscient (knowing everything)—all of which are attributes of God. In Psalm 103 David refers to angels as “mighty ones who do his word.” This provides evidence that angels are submissive to God and not all-powerful in themselves.

7. Angels are passive beings.

Because of how they have been portrayed by artists, angels are sometimes considered passive beings who float around on clouds all day and play harps. But the Bible reveals many instances of angels serving as mighty warriors of God. See 2 Kings chapter 19 and Revelation 9:15 for examples. When an angel appeared to Daniel, he apparently wasn’t a cute little Cherub, because Daniel fell prostrate and was terrified (Daniel 8:17). The angels at Christ’s tomb terrified the Roman Soldiers (Matthew 28:2-4). Nowhere in the Bible do angels appear as sweet little spirits fluttering around.

8. We should pray to angels.

We pray to God through Jesus Christ (1 Timothy 2:5). Seeking communication with angels risks opening the door to demonic influences. God’s angels communicate with mankind at the direction of the Lord. Nowhere are we told to pray to them or ask them to communicate with us. We are to pray to God the Father through Jesus Christ as empowered by the Holy Spirit. Angels are one-way messengers to us from God, not from us to God.

9. We should seek guidance from angels.

The Bible records many instances where angels guided people, but this was at the command of the Lord not because people sought guidance from them. You have a spiritual GPS system: The Bible and the Holy Spirit (John 16:13; Acts 16:6).

10. Angels were once humans.

Some people believe that humans become angels when they die. This idea was perpetrated by Joseph Smith, founder of the Mormon religion, but angels were created by God. Humans do not become angels when they die. If a person is a Believer, his soul and spirit go immediately into the presence of the Lord (2 Corinthians 5:1-5; Philippians 1:21-23). It is only the earthly shell of their body that is buried, eventually to be resurrected again to new life (Romans 8:11; Philippians 3:21).

Peter speaks of the Gospel message which angels long to look into. If angels wish they could hear this message, then they were not once human or they would already have heard it. Hebrews 12:22-23 makes a distinction between the innumerable company of angels and the spirits of just men made perfect. Resurrected Believers will be like angels in that they will be immortal and no longer marry, but they won't be angels.

11. Angels are both male and female.

This myth has arisen from artistic renditions of both male and female angels. The Bible reveals, however, that angels are not human and so there are no such thing as sexual divisions among them. All angels throughout the Bible are referred to in the masculine sense with the exception of Zechariah 5:9 that may be a reference to a feminine angel. In the Bible, both male and female Believers are referred to as "sons of God" and "the Bride of Christ." So, it is possible that angels may be both male and female in appearance, although they do not marry or reproduce.

12. Angels can reproduce.

The Bible states that angels do not marry, hence they cannot reproduce (Matthew 22:30).

13. The angel of death has the power to take lives.

There is no actual "angel of death". Angels were sent to cause death in events such as the Passover in Exodus 11:4-5 and the deaths of the Assyrians in 2 Kings 19:35, but there is no actual "angel of death" referred to in the Bible. The angels who cause death are just that: Angels carrying out God's orders, as He is the only one with the power of life and death (2 Timothy 1:10). The Bible does reveal, however, that angels escort Believers into the presence of the Lord at the time of death (Luke 16:22; 1 Corinthians 15:26).

14. Angels can heal you.

There is no direct reference to angels being involved in healing other than the angel who troubled the waters for healing at the pool of Bethesda. Scriptures do indicate that angels struck people with sickness, and as Roy Hicks comments: "If angels can strike people with sickness as they did in the Old Testament when God's judgment was carried out, then why can't angels assist with healing of diseases?" While this is possible, we need to walk in the Biblical knowledge of healing that is factual. The Scriptures reveal that Jesus provided the way for us to receive healing (Isaiah 53:5; Matthew 8:17; 1 Peter 2:24). The Holy Spirit provides the power for healing through spiritual gifts (1 Corinthians 12:4-11; Acts 10:38).

Healing comes in answer to prayer and the laying on of hands (Mark 16:17; Hebrews 6:2; James 5:14-15). If angels are involved in healing, it is only to assist as they did at Bethesda.

15. A message given by an angel is always from God.

Not true! Satan appears as an angel of light, and fallen angels can appear as ministers of righteousness. Paul warned that Satan's evil apprentices show up in the form of false prophets and false apostles (2 Corinthians 11:13-15).

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They are deceivers, seducing people away from faith in Christ to the doctrines of devils (1 Timothy 4:1-2; 1 John 2:18-22). The fact we are warned against angels who preach another gospel (evil angels) means that there are true angels who preach the true gospel.

16. Angels are mediators between God and man.

There is only one mediator, and that is Jesus Christ (1 Timothy 2:5).

17. Angels no longer ministered after the coming of the Holy Spirit.

Angels ministered after the coming of the Holy Spirit as clearly demonstrated in the book of Acts, the Epistles, and the Revelation as well as documented accounts of modern times.

18. Angels are to be worshipped.

Only God is to be worshipped (Exodus 20:3). Angels themselves refuse the worship of men (Revelation 19:10; 22:8-9). The Apostle Paul warned Believers in the Colossian church about their worship of angels (Colossians 2:18). The angels who desire worship are actually demonic angels that disguise themselves as angels of light (2 Corinthians 11:13-14). We can learn about the good angels, respect them, appreciate their ministries, and admire their example of worship, but we are not to worship them. As you will learn later in this study, angels are sometimes referred to as “stars”. Just as stars in the natural world are not to be worshipped, neither are these “stars” in the spiritual world.

19. Jesus is an angel.

Jesus, as part of the Trinity of God, is creator of all things, including the angels (John 1:3; Colossians 1:16; Hebrews 1:2,10). Jesus is not an angel but is worshipped by the angels (Hebrews 1:6; Revelation 5:13-14.; 19:10). We see Jesus on the throne and the angels gathered around it (Revelation 22:1-3; 5:14). Jesus has a name above all names—including the angels (Ephesians 1:20-21; Philippians 2:9-11; Hebrews 1:4,7,14).

Some people claim Jesus is Michael, the archangel, but Daniel 10:1 describes Michael as a chief prince, a high-ranking angel but not the ruler of all the angels. An archangel will announce the Lord's return, so Michael can't be Jesus. Also, in Jude 9 Michael refused to pronounce judgment on the devil, whereas the Lord judges him and his fallen angels as well as all other creatures (Matthew 25:31-33; Revelation 20:7-15).

DISPELLING DECEPTION

Here are some important guidelines that will dispel deceptions regarding angels:

- Does the angel perform acts contrary to the Bible?
- Does the angel draw attention to himself or to God?
- Does the message from the angel appeal to your pride and flatter you?
- Does the angel claim to be the spirit of a dead friend, family member, or ancestor?
- Does the angel accuse you and cause shame?
- Is the message from the angel unscriptural and anti-Christ?

... If so, reject the revelation. This is an “angel of light”, a deception of Satan (2 Corinthians 11:14).

The Biblical standard by which to judge whether or not an angel is truly communicating a message from God is analyzing what the angel has to say about Jesus Christ. See 1 John 4:1-3.