



Angel Encounters in the Bible

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A Study of the Bible Stories
in which People Encountered Angels

Looking for Lessons About Real Angels
and Practical Applications for Ourselves



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Someone Better Than Angels

The book of Hebrews in the Bible has an explanation about angels. We are told there, not to worship angels, but to understand that Christ is far more important, He is the one to adore and obey.

God has never said to an angel, "You're my Son, my heir." But He did command all his angels to worship Christ when He was born on earth. He did say about the Son, that His throne would last forever, and that He, God, was anointing Him, Jesus, with the oil of joy.

Also, that Christ the Lord laid the foundations of the earth, and made the heavens with His hands. He will outlast everything!

Then in Hebrews 1:14 we read in an almost off-hand manner, "Are not all angels ministering spirits sent to serve those who will inherit salvation?"

We may not see angels in our daily lives, but God uses them to serve and protect and guide those who trust in Christ for our salvation.

It is nice to know, God has assigned them to look after us by His command and authority, isn't it?

So, rather than seek out angels, and go overboard in our fascination, I believe we are to accept them with good manners. They are God's swift and mostly invisible servants assigned to care for us, the way a rich father hires staff to care for the needs of his family.

I take to heart the teaching of Christ Himself, that we are to abide in Him, and He in us. For when we accept personally that Jesus died for our sins, we are born again spiritually, and have received the Holy Spirit to abide in us. It is by this Holy Spirit that Jesus is alive and real in our lives. We can walk and talk with Him all our waking moments! That turns out, in my mind, to be a far greater joy and help than a frightening encounter with a tall and glorious being that appears and vanishes just like that. (As most angel stories in the Bible indicate).

I've laid down my glasses, and turned out my light at bedtime, and thought I saw a flash of light swoosh up to the ceiling. I've amused myself with the theory that my eye was quick enough in that split second after it was dark, to see an angel skirt.

He has sent me people to help me in times of great need. Times stranded on the highway are most vivid.

If God were truly to send me an angel made visible, I will probably cry out to Him in shock for grace to know what to do. If He doesn't show me one until I arrive in Heaven, that's okay too. That's my point; I'm already in frequent daily dialogue with God via His Spirit abiding in me. Why settle for less?

I suspect that many who crave angel sightings and visits have a secret longing for what is holy and perfect, and for a thrill that makes them elite, but they are not ready to come to God on His own terms.

I urge you to be one who focuses on Jesus and an intimate, albeit invisible relationship with Him. You will be served by angels of course, but you will have Jesus Christ for your best and most gracious Friend and Counselor!

Eden's Enforcer Angel

Eve and Adam had eaten from the tree of knowledge of good and evil. God had allowed them that choice, but now to keep them from eating of the tree of life and living forever in their sin state, He drove them out of Eden and placed cherubim, a type of angel, at the eastern side, along with a sword that flashed back and forth to keep all mankind out.

What exactly did the cherubim (in some translations, cherubs) look like or do?

They are referred to a number of times throughout the Bible, but we have to go to Ezekiel's vision in Ezekiel 1:10, and 10:14 for a visual description. They are living heavenly creatures, servants of God, appearing in winged, human-animal form with the faces of lion, ox, man and eagle all in the same creature.

God did not breach his own commandment when He told the Israelites to make images of them for the tabernacle and temple, and to embroider these cherubim designs on the drapes. In fact two of them were bowed (as images) over the mercy seat of the ark in the Holy of Holies. In some passages God rode upon the cherubim as if they were His chariots.

They sure don't sound like cute little nude babies, do they?

What can we learn from this first appearance at Eden, that we might apply to our own lives? For God has told us to read and study His Word for our practical use.

God was very thoughtful when he banished Adam and Eve so they could not wander up to the Tree of Life, eat, and live forever in their chosen state of sin. Otherwise, the whole human race, including you and me would have been born locked into sin for eternity!

I'm glad God put that scary looking cherubim and the flaming sword at the entrance to the garden. It gave us all a chance at another choice - trusting God's plan for salvation. We can look at the meaning of the four faces another time, but for now our general impression can be of a mighty God, who has majestic and powerful servants, who don't overlook a thing. When they are given an assignment, they carry it out! Cherubim are God's enforcer angels.



The Angel of the Lord - Who Sees Us

Hagar, the Egyptian handmaid of Sarah, wife of Abraham, was running away in the desert because she wasn't getting along with her mistress.

It had been Sarah's idea to conceive a son by her husband through Hagar, but now that Hagar was pregnant, she thought less of Sarah. She despised her, the Bible says. Sarah in turn, was complaining to Abraham and mistreated Hagar.

The angel of the Lord found Hagar near a spring in the desert. He asked her what she was up to, and when Hagar answered that she was running away from her mistress, this angel told her to go back and submit to Sarah, and gave her some promises about the son she was carrying.

This is the second mention of an angel in the Bible, and the first of the Angel of the Lord. Many scholars and reference books indicate that this term applies to appearances of Christ before He was born as a baby in Bethlehem in human form. These are called theophanies. There are other references to visits from the Angel of the Lord, and a careful study of them reveals details that can only be attributed to God or His Son.

Here the angel is not just acting as a messenger but speaking to Hagar as the Lord God. He speaks kindly but firmly to her, and promises a future for her unborn son, all in the first person, not in the third voice as one delivering a message on behalf of another.

Hagar herself recognizes that she has been talking to the Lord personally, and in Genesis 16:13 names Him, Beer Lahai Roi, meaning the God who sees me. The well there is still known by that name today.

Does any of this apply to us?

Of course. The principles of God are consistent and eternal. I see several in this story that hearten and encourage me.

1. Christ, the Son of God has been active in the affairs of this world as an intelligent member of the Godhead long before He came to earth as a baby. He came as an angel before.
2. He cares enough to follow us when we've been picked on and hurt, and are running away. He knows how to find us.
3. He may give us directions we don't want to hear, but He will speak lovingly to us and give us a glimpse of our future and something to live for, so we can get up and go again.
4. God really sees us and knows exactly what we're going through. What a comfort!



Entertaining and Talking with Angels

Have you heard that expression, "entertain angels unawares"? It's from Hebrews 13:2, where it tells us not to forget to entertain strangers, for by so doing some people have entertained angels without knowing it.

It was Abraham and Sarah that first experienced this. He was sitting under a shade tree at his door, when Abraham looked up and saw three men standing nearby. He went to meet them and invited them to come wash up, rest, and have something to eat. They accepted.

Abraham must have shown this kind of hospitality before, as he quickly asked Sarah to bake fresh bread, and ran to his herd to select a tender calf. He gave it to a servant with instructions to slaughter and prepare it for a meal.

So far Abraham was doing what he would do for any stranger in his home. He had no clue that these were angels until one of the men, whom the Bible calls the LORD, asked about Sarah and promised them that they would have a son about this time next year.

Sarah heard from inside the tent and found that funny, for she thought she was too old for childbearing. But the visitor heard her inner laughter.

The LORD said to Abraham, "Why did Sarah laugh and say, 'Will I really have a child now that I am old?'" Notice this is not just an angel but the LORD Himself, the one that centuries later was later born as the baby Jesus.

Abraham went for a walk with the LORD as these angels made to leave. The LORD confided to Abraham that He planned to destroy Sodom and Gomorrah, which gave him opportunity to intercede and beg for the lives of his nephew Lot, and Lot's family.

By being hospitable to strangers, we may find the LORD Jesus is the one we are really welcoming. Tolstoy wrote a short story of a shoemaker who expected the Master to come visit him one day, but several others who were needy dropped by and he hurried them along, only to hear from God at the end of the day that He had showed up three times in these needy people.

Jesus said that every kindness we do for others as done unto Him, IS done unto Him, whether that is feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, or visiting shut-ins.

The LORD knows our silent thoughts and attitudes, so we may as well be honest with Him. He also wants to walk and talk with us, telling us what He plans to do. This includes an invitation to pray for others and beg for their salvation.

Abraham had long worshiped and obeyed the Lord, but perhaps it was at this time that he began to walk and talk with the Lord in a personal way. When he interceded for his nephew's family, he was praying. By praying in an intimate, conversational way that we too can walk and talk with the LORD even if we can't see Him in human form beside us.

This is a precious principle I've tried to live by since my early teens, when I discovered that I could imagine myself walking and talking with the Lord Jesus, when I prayed. Being familiar with lots of Bible stories and passages since my early childhood, and knowing much about Him, helps my intuitive spirit to quickly sense when He approves or disapproves, or encourages and rebukes me. Sometimes He simply reassures me of His love and that He is with me. When reading the Bible I often sense that He is speaking the words of a passage specifically to me too.

He especially encourages me to talk to Him about others, both from this story of Abraham, and other passages. The best way to know what God says on any subject is to read often and thoughtfully in the Bible. Yes, you and I can entertain and talk with angels too!

Sometimes Angels Rescue Idiots

The more I look at the story of Lot in Genesis 19 the more I lose respect for him. He was a fool, to put it mildly, and an idiot, to put it in today's vernacular.

When his Uncle Abraham had offered him a choice of directions to go with his flocks, Lot headed down to the lush, well-watered plains, where the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah were springing up. Eventually, he had become one of the important men who sat at the city gate, but apparently he had not won the respect of the other men.

This story starts when two angels, appearing as travelers came to the gate towards evening. Lot insisted on being their host, and took them home and made a meal for them. Suddenly the men of the city gathered at his door, demanding these guests for their homosexual lust. This is where it got ugly.

Lot stepped outside his locked door to reason with these men, and he offered his two virgin (engaged to be married) daughters as compensation. Is that stupid or what?

His guests pulled him back into the house and locked the door. They proved capable of better defenses by causing the men to go blind so they couldn't find the door. Rescue one.

The angels explained that they'd come to destroy these wicked twin cities, and he was to gather up his family to escape from the coming destruction. So Lot went to his daughters' betrothed husbands, but could not persuade them to come. They thought he was joking.

By dawn they had only Lot, his wife, and two daughters to hustle out of the valley. The angels urged them to flee away to the mountains. Perhaps Lot had grown flabby with the good life in the city, because now he panicked and implored them to let them run just as far as a tiny community called Zoar. The angels gave in, but warned them to get going and NOT to look back. Rescue two.

Lot's wife had a nostalgia attack and paused to glance over her shoulder. Big mistake. She turned into a pillar of salt.

I talked with some people who have been to that area, and they say there are large quantities of bitumen, which make it tar sands. When God struck the cities, Sodom and Gomorrah, with fire and brimstone, it really torched the whole valley floor. The combination of burning tar and brimstone would very well coat everything with a kind of rock salt after the fire died down.

We read that Abraham got up that morning and went to the spot where he had last talked with the Angel of the LORD and pled for Lot's family. He saw huge billowing black clouds like from a furnace over those two cities, and he knew the angels had carried out their plans. His faith will have assured him that Lot was safe, and if he knew his nephew well, (which he probably did), Abraham may have wondered at the story of his rescue.

Let's look for a personal application in this story. So what should we know or do now?

What I learn is that sometimes God sends angels to rescue us, not because we deserve it, but because someone else is praying for us, or because God has some other reason for keeping us out of trouble despite ourselves. We are much smarter to trust and obey God than to try some of our crazy schemes which put our own family and loved ones at risk.

From Lot's wife we can learn not to get attached to the good life on earth. No matter how we are hustled off this earth, we're going to have to leave it all behind. So much as a wistful glance back will spell our doom.

Angel Holdups

Balak was the king of Moab (now Jordan), and when the Israelite people left Egypt and moved in to claim their promised land, their camp site just outside of Moab was so huge, with about a million people, that it scared King Balak into an utter panic. He knew of a prophet named Balaam who was supposed to have some connection to God. Balak sent some of his princes to ask him to come curse the Israelite people.

Balaam got a clear "no" from God, and sent them on their way. King Balak didn't want to hear no, so he sent a larger, more influential bunch of princes to ask again, with promises of bigger rewards.

That night God gave Balaam limited permission to go provided he would bless and not curse His people.

This is where the story gets odd. Balaam saddled his donkey and headed after these princes, but three times his donkey saw the Angel of the LORD, with a sword, that Balaam did not see. The first time the donkey veered off into a field in fright. Balaam beat her to get her back on the road.

The second time it was at a narrow path between two walled vineyards. The donkey shied into a wall, crushing Balaam's leg. Once more he beat his poor donkey.

The Angel of the LORD moved ahead, and met them in a more narrow place where there was no room to go right or left, or even to turn around. When the donkey saw the angel again, she laid down under Balaam. Once more he beat his poor donkey.

Then God gave the donkey the ability to speak. She said, "What have I done that you have beat me three times?"

Balaam complained, "You've made a fool out of me. If I had a sword I'd kill you!"

The donkey replied, "Am I not your own donkey, which you have always ridden? Am I in the habit of doing this to you?"

At this point the Lord opened Balaam's eyes to see the Angel of the LORD. He was asked again why he'd beaten the donkey. The Angel confirmed that the donkey was trying to save Balaam from his sword. If she hadn't turned he would've been killed by this sword.

Balaam repented. Well. I think Balaam still wanted the prizes. He said, "Now if you are displeased, I will go back." (What part of NO didn't he understand?)

You can read the whole dramatic story in chapters 22-24 in Numbers of the Bible. See how this turned out. But already I see some personal applications we can make.

Apparently animals can see angels even if we humans are too obtuse. This was an appearance of the Angel of the LORD again, which many scholars say is Christ before He came as baby Jesus.

The really interesting question however, is, how often has an angel, or Christ Himself, tried to keep me from doing something foolish, and despite the fact that catastrophes seemed to conspire to keep me from that goal, I still pressed on?

You've experienced it too, right? All because of some personal reward we hoped to get.

But sometimes we are to persevere regardless of all hindrances. How shall we know when it is an angel, and whatever is "our donkey," telling us to quit?

Balaam did right to ask the Lord when he got the invitation to go curse. His mistake was to desire the personal rewards more than to discern God's true will in the matter.

By holding our own desires apart when asking God what to do, and giving Him first preeminence, we can avoid Balaam's mistake, and keep from being held up by an angel..

Good Gideon's Courage

Life in Israel was scary and disheartening. Whenever they had a crop ripened for harvest in the field or gardens, their neighbours, the Midianites, came rushing in to steal it. The people were demoralized and some were starting to hide out in the caves in the hills.

But Gideon was smart, and had some spunk. He'd managed to harvest some grain, without the Midianites noticing, and he hid in a wine press (usually a pit) to thresh it. He had heard of the miracles God used to do for their ancestors in the long trek from Egypt, and Gideon was wondering why they couldn't have some appropriate miracles right now. Something to get rid of the Midianites.

Suddenly someone was sitting under the nearby oak tree, who greeted Gideon with, "The LORD be with you, mighty warrior."

"But sir," he replied respectfully, and started in with his questions as to why they didn't see deliverance miracles now.

This angel of the Lord, gave him a direct command, "Go in the strength you have and save Israel from Midian. I'm sending you."

Gideon addressed the man as Lord, so must have recognized him for a heavenly citizen, but he was full of excuses, about how he came from a weak family and he was the youngest, the runt of them.

The Lord promised, "I will be with you, and you will strike them down as if they were but one man."

Gideon wanted to believe, but needed a sign so he asked the man to wait while he went to fetch a meal as an offering.

This angel asked him to put it on a rock, where he touched the food with the tip of his staff, and fire flared up eating it all away. The angel disappeared with the smoke.

But Gideon kept on talking to the Lord, exclaiming that he had seen the angel of the Lord face to face. The Lord answered him, with a promise of peace and that he would not die. So Gideon built an altar of worship there.

That night they continued their running dialogue, for the Lord gave him the job of tearing down his father's idols first of all. Gideon did that under cover of night, and the next morning his father defended him against the villagers who were upset to find those things replaced with an altar to God and a bull sacrificed on it.

After that God led Gideon to call together a small army. Although he still begged further confirmation, (this Gideon was a super-cautious fellow), with a fleece of wool. The first night Gideon begged for a sign by having the fleece contain dew and everything around it dry. The next night Gideon wanted the fleece dry and all around it dew-covered. God gave him a both.

Gideon ended up giving his brand new army an eagerness test and sent home most of the volunteers, in answer to God's request that he watch how they drank water at a brook.

Eventually they did rout the Midianites enemy camp in one dramatic night-time stand by simply hiding torches in clay vessels until they surrounded the camp, then breaking the lights free and blowing hard on trumpets. That scared the daylight out of the Midianites army! They roused out of their bedrolls to fight each other! All Gideon's men had to do was chase the stray run-aways, and bring back the heads of the two leaders, Oreb and Zeeb.

Are you a super-cautious Gideon, longing for a miracle or two? Talk things over with the Lord, and get rid of sinful practices. Ask for confirmation if you're not sure of His will, but once you are, do it! Your courage will grow big enough to get your miracles started.

Solutions Like Samson

It would be a worthy study to look at all the great men in the Bible and see how many have a story that begins before their conception, with an infertile mother. God delights in impossible births for the people He chooses to use most dramatically.

Couples with infertility problems can take heart from the life of Samson. An angel appeared to Manoah's wife, (she is not named) to explain to her that she was sterile, but she was going to conceive a son who would be a Nazirite, and would deliver Israel from the hands of the Philistines.

When she told Manoah, he promptly prayed that this angel would come again to tell them how to bring up this boy. He wasn't doubting, he just wanted more details.

Sure enough, the same angel came again to the woman while she was working in the fields, and she quickly excused herself to go get her husband.

Manoah first confirmed that this was the same one who had talked to his wife before, then he plunged in to ask for parenting rules.

The angel simply repeated the instructions already given to the wife.

Manoah accepted this and offered to prepare a young goat meal, and wanted to know his name.

The angel didn't want to be detained to eat, but said they could offer this meal to the Lord. Nor did he think they would understand his name.

When they set it before him, the angel rose up in the flames of the burning food and disappeared to heaven.

Only at this point did Manoah realize this had been an angel. Instantly he thought they were doomed to die.

"How can that be?" his common-sense wife asked. "Our offering was accepted, and we have instructions for caring for a son."

Could an angel visit happen to you?

If you're in an impossible situation, like infertility, and if you pray and trust God, it is quite likely God will choose you for a miracle, the birth of something wonderful to solve your problems, and those of others.

You are not likely to recognize the angel in the solution - just as Moanoah didn't at first, but if you need help, check with your wife or a woman friend. She may have picked up on it.



Angelic Energy Food

Elijah, a bold prophet of God, had just had a mountain top experience, where he had triumphed with tremendous miracles over the enemy. He had challenged the 400 priests of Baal to a contest, and dramatically, he had won. Fire fell from heaven and ate up his sacrifice. The people had jumped on the 400 priests of Baal and killed them.

But now he was on the run. Not because he had done something bad, but because bad Queen Jezebel had sent word that she was going to get him!

Crazy, isn't it? We too can have a mountain top experience where we boldly speak out for the Lord, and do amazing things. Then along comes another matter, and it scares the daylights out of us. Like Elijah here, we tuck in our tail, so to speak, and run.

It seems at first his servant was keeping up with him, but Elijah left him at Beersheba, and he ran another day's journey into the desert. (Poor servant; he probably wasn't as scared as his master, so he didn't have the same motivation or adrenalin).

Finally Elijah got as far as he could go. He collapsed under a broom tree and prayed, "I've had enough, Lord. Take my life!" Then he fell asleep from utter exhaustion.

How do you suppose God felt about this coward? Did He tell him to turn around and head right back?

No. The Bible tells us in 1 Kings chapter 19, that an angel touched him and said, "Get up and eat." He looked around that there close to his head was a cake of fresh-baked bread and a jar of water. He ate and laid down again.

The angel of the LORD came back a second time and touched him and said, "Get up and eat, for the journey is too much for you."

So Elijah got up and ate and drank again. In the strength of that angel food he was able to travel another forty days and nights! He got all the way to Mount Horeb where God had given Moses the ten commandments. There he found a cave and hid in it.

You know, this moves me to tears. It tells me that when we are utterly exhausted and depressed, God will help us to get away and rest. In fact, it would be a good thing to plan ahead for a quiet few days right after we've been super-busy serving the Lord. We will be drained and need to refresh our spirit.

Notice that God sent an angel with special heavenly food for Elijah which gave him amazing strength to carry on.

We probably won't have to ask for it either, but watch - an angel will likely come to minister to you in some unique, appropriate-to-you way, when you are spent to the nth degree. It may be a gift of food, it may be a kind word or compliment from someone that happens by.

It may be that you get into God's Word, that is our true spiritual, heavenly food. There precious promises inspire and enthuse you so you can rest, and instead of giving up to die, you eventually get up and go again.

Look! If you have a Bible, you have heavenly food. Eat! Drink deep of Jesus, the water of life, You'll be energized!

Your Avenging Angel

This starts out as one of those - why do bad things happen to good people - stories.

King Hezekiah followed his father King Ahaz, who had been very bad, as king of Israel. He was only twenty-five when he became king, but he set about purifying the temple, instituting proper worship, celebrating the Lord's holy days, and ensuring that qualified Levites were training and doing their jobs, all according to the instructions in the books of Moses.

Despite all this good Hezekiah was doing, Sennacherib, king of Assyria, showed up with his army around the city of Jerusalem, and blocked off their water supply.

Hezekiah got his men busy repairing broken sections of the wall, and unblocking wells. He went into the city square to speak encouragingly to his people. We read in 2 Chronicles chapter 32, that the people gained confidence from his words, and were with him.

Still Sennacherib's officers shouted threats up to the people on the city walls. They mocked their faith in God, and told of other nations they had overcome, and whose gods could not help. "So how much less do you think your God can rescue you from me?" Sennacherib taunted.

King Hezekiah and the prophet Isaiah cried out in prayer to God in heaven.

Just like that the LORD sent an angel, who annihilated all the fighting men and the leaders and officers in the camp of the Assyrian king.

Yes, really. Just like that!

Can you imagine the surprise and humiliation of that cocky king Sennacherib? He withdrew to his own land in disgrace, and when he went into the temple of his god, some of his sons cut him down with the sword.

By ourselves we can't cut our loudest taunters down like that, but we can do what King Hezekiah did – pray. God's angels are not cute babies. They are strong, powerful creatures, who can single-handedly wipe out the whole army scattered around us, and keeping us in bondage.

Let's make sure we are committed to God ourselves, and doing His will. Then we can unashamedly cry out to Him whenever we have enemy trouble, and He will send an angel, or as many as necessary, to avenge us. We won't lose!



Walking with An Angel in the Furnace

King Nebuchadnezzar had a huge statue of gold made. Once it was set up in the plains of Dura, he commanded everyone to come to the dedication, to worship this new idol.

The program was simple. The instant the orchestra started to play with pomp and ceremony, everybody, but ev-er-y-body was to fall down and worship this idol. If you did not, there was a large furnace nearby, and you would get chucked into it.

Three captured young princes found themselves in this crowd of command worshipers, but when they heard this announcement, they knew it would disgrace their God, the one true God, and Creator of all, if they obeyed the king. Normally, they were very careful to obey their authority figures, but here they drew a line. When the sea of others around them dropped to their foreheads at the first notes of music, these three stayed standing upright.

Seems there are always peekers when people are suppose to be praying and it didn't take long until someone tilted their head sideways and noticed the three sticking up like very sore thumbs. Some tattle-tails scurried off to tell king Nebuchadnezzar.

Furious, the king sent for them, and gave them another chance. (I think he knew their value to him, and was loath to dispose of them too quickly). He threw down a challenge, "If you do not worship the image, you will be thrown into the blazing furnace. Then what god will be able to rescue you from my hand?"

In unison, Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego replied, "O Nebuchadnezzar, we do not need to defend ourselves in this matter. If we are thrown into the blazing furnace, the God we serve is able to save us from it, and he will rescue us from your hand, O king. But even if He does not, know, O king, we will not serve your gods or worship the image of gold."

That riled the king. He had the furnace heated seven times hotter, and the three tied up and thrown into it. The soldiers who did the throwing died from the heat of the flames!

However! King Nebuchadnezzar, from his vantage point, could look into the furnace, and saw not three bound men roasting, but four men, free of all bondage, walking around in the fire as if strolling in a garden! Instantly he knew that the fourth one looked like an angel, or a son of the gods, to use the expression of their day.

He got as close to the opening of the furnace as he dared, and called out - "Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, servants of the Most High God, come out! Come here!"

So they strolled out of the furnace. All kinds of government officials witnessed this, and saw that fire had not harmed their bodies, nor was a hair of their heads singed! Their clothes were not scorched, nor was there even a scent of smoke on them!

King Nebuchadnezzar loudly praised God, and announced to all, "An angel has rescued these servants of God who refused to worship any but their own true God."

To make sure no one would ever even say a negative word about them, the king decreed that anyone doing so be cut up in pieces, and their houses demolished to rubble. Also, the three brave men were promoted in Babylon. Wow!

If you're having what for you is a furnace experience, wouldn't you like a thorough and complete deliverance on that scale? So what's the problem? Don't we worship and serve the same God? Or is it that we don't have the same kind of confidence in Him?

Actually, I have had really huge bad experiences, and the Lord Jesus Himself walked with me in the midst of them. I have come through and not been damaged at all. Only matured and more devoted to Him.

Do you have such a story too? Tell it. Someone will be encouraged to trust God as well.

A Mouth-Stopping Angel

Chances are fairly good that you have heard of Daniel in the lions' den, a familiar Bible story. It's not the most well-known, but it ranks right up there.

The bright captive boy from Jerusalem had been educated in the Babylonian palace, and trained for government leadership. He became one of only 3 administrators over 120 satraps (that would be like provincial or state governors). King Darius now had the throne, but he'd learned to really trust and admire Daniel.

This made the other satraps jealous and they sought for a way to undermine Daniel. Finally, these men said, "We will never find any basis for charges against this man Daniel, unless it has something to do with the law of his God." (Dan. 6:5 NIV).

So they sucked up to King Darius, and persuaded him to pass a new law that everyone should pray only to him for 30 days. The king was flattered at the idea of being a god for a month, so he signed and sealed the law without checking with any good advisor like Daniel. Persian laws could not be annulled.

When Daniel heard of this new law, he went back to his upper apartments, and just like before, kept on praying to his God. His usual spot was by his window open towards Jerusalem. On his knees he thanked God three times a day, and asked for help with the details of his work.

Spies were in place, and quickly they hustled off to the king to report that his beloved Daniel was praying to his own God still! "Didn't you just pass a law...?!"

Kind Darius was sick. He realized he'd been tricked. But his law had to stand.

As Daniel was led away to be thrown into the den of lions, the king's last words were, "May your God, whom you serve continually, rescue you!"

When the stone was put over the mouth of the den, and sealed with the king's own signet ring, he went back to his palace and spent a restless night, with no food and no entertainment.

At the first streak of dawn, King Darius was back at the den, and as he got closer he started calling out to Daniel, asking if his God had rescued him.

Sure enough Daniel answered, "O king, live forever! My God sent his angel, and he shut the mouths of the lions. They have not hurt me because I was innocent in His sight."

Was the king ever over-joyed. He had become a believer in the one true God over night, and this confirmed his faith.

He quickly issued new orders and decrees. Daniel was to be lifted out, checked for wounds, and his accusers - with their complete families - were to be thrown into the den.

(The Bible says the lions overpowered them and crushed all their bones, so they were hungry!)

When I study a Bible story I ask myself, what lesson can I take away from this?

Most obvious is that if we are faithful to pray to our God, and trust Him, we shall be kept safe no matter who is jealous and tries to undermine our position.

In fact, when it looks like we're lion-lunch, God has the stage set for a miracle. If we continue to pray and trust, we liable to see an angel shutting the mouths of whatever is suppose to eat us up. We may be surprised at who was cheering for us, and how our experience leads to their conversion when we come through.

The Angel with Answers

I'm not in Daniel's class when it comes to knowledge and wisdom, but we can learn to ask for explanations from God too, when we 'don't get it.'

In the book of Daniel there are several places, where angel is not used, but a "man" is described who looks like an angel and who helps Daniel understand his dreams with meanings in chapters 7, 8, 9, 10, and 12.

We won't go into the meanings of the colorful imagery in the vivid dreams, as that's too big a topic here. Suffice it to say they were awesome. Even Daniel with all his knowledge and wisdom, couldn't figure out the meanings.

In the first one about the four beasts symbolizing kingdoms, Daniel was extremely concerned and approached a man he saw in the vision to ask the true meaning of all this to be explained. The man did.

In the second one about the ram and goat with the very unusual horns, Daniel found himself before someone who looked like a man, but a voice from Heaven addressed the stranger as Gabriel and told him to explain the dream to Daniel. Gabriel did.

Chapter 9 tells of Daniel discovering the prophecy of Jeremiah relating to the current captivity of the Jews. He sees that the captivity will be over in 70 years, which is just up. The time is ready for their return to their homeland, so Daniel breaks into an earnest fasting prayer, confessing the sins of his people and asking for this promised deliverance.

While he is praying, Gabriel, the angel he'd met earlier, flew to him, and said he'd been sent in answer to his prayers. Gabriel explains a much longer timeline for history yet to come.

Daniel's life spanned the reigns of three Kings in Babylon, and in the third year of Cyrus, he was again fasting and praying at the river, when a man appeared in a vision, that was so stunning to look at, all those around Daniel fled.

The man, dressed in linen with a belt of fine gold, a body like chrysolite, eyes like flaming torches, and legs that gleamed like burnished bronze, also had a voice like a huge multitude. Daniel passed out, and this angel had to pick him up and give him strength to listen.

He assured Daniel that he was highly esteemed, and his prayers heard. In fact, he, Gabriel, had been sent from when Daniel started praying three weeks earlier, but he'd had to fight his way past the wicked evil prince of the air over Persia until the warrior angel, Michael, came to help him.

Then Gabriel explained the meaning or prophesies in the complicated dreams Daniel had just had, things that are happening and yet to happen in our future in 2004 and beyond.

Just think, God may be sending a messenger with answers to our prayers too, but we have to keep praying until that messenger can get past some spiritual war operations.

Don't give up! Gabriel may be on his way!



Angels on Guard for You

Although not described as specific angelic encounters with humans, there are at least two passages in the Psalms, the Bible's song book, that give us a vivid word picture of what the angels are assigned to do for us.

Since it is David singing about these services, we can assume he must have experienced these, probably more than once while he was still a shepherd boy, but also during the years King Saul pursued him and sought to kill him, and maybe even in the years after that. David sure had life long battles with enemies, but God always helped him.

The first passage is in Psalm 34:6-7 David describes the time he feigned insanity before Abimelech, who drove him away. He sings, "This poor man called, and the LORD heard him; he saved him out of all his troubles. The angel of the LORD encamps around those who fear him, and he delivers them."

In the very next Psalm David is asking God to contend with those who contend with him, and to fight against those who fight against him (David). He says, (vs.4-6), "May those who seek my life be disgraced and put to shame; may those who plot my ruin be turned back in dismay. May they be like chaff before the wind, with the angel of the LORD driving them away; may their path be dark and slippery, with the angel of the LORD pursuing them."

I believe God answered his prayer and David's enemies were blown away, with the angel of the LORD chasing them on his behalf.

From the first word picture I take it that the angel of the LORD, (remember in an earlier study we found that to refer to Christ), does not just come occasionally to assist us, but he camps around us, and is always at hand.

If we truly believe our Saviour is with us like that, and chases our enemies away on our behalf - if we believe that to the core of our soul and spirit – right to the center of our bones - it will give us a profound sense of security.

There is no need to fret over what others will do to us, or all the harm that might come to us. Those that belong to the LORD God are protected. Christ Himself, is encamped nearby. When we ask Him to contend with those that contend with us, He will chase them away. What more could we ask?



Angels with Gentle, Comforting Words

Zechariah was a common name in the Old Testament days; no less than 28 men had it. We'll zero in on the head of a priestly family who was a prophet among those that returned after Israel's 70 year exile in Babylon. The temple was being rebuilt, and the walls of Jerusalem going up again.

The second last book of the Old Testament tells of eight, very vivid, symbolic visions that Zechariah had to encourage the people and teach them about God's tender watch and care of them.

It seems to me, God likes to use angels to explain and teach things to His loyal servants. In this case Zechariah was to pass on the messages to the people.

God had told this prophet He was very angry with their forefathers, and now he wanted this generation here to come back to Him, and He would return to them as well. The people repented and confessed that the Lord was God and had done right.

Being very specific about the calendar date, Zechariah describes a night vision he had. A man riding on a red horse was among the myrtle trees in a ravine. Behind him were others on red, brown and white horses. When Zechariah asked what it meant, the angel at his side began to explain.

These spiritual riders were sent by the Lord to go throughout the earth, checking for rest and peace. The angel turns next to the man in the myrtle trees, and addressing Him as LORD, and asks, "How long until You show mercy to Jerusalem and the towns of Judah, after these seventy years?"

The Man in the myrtle trees answers the angel with soft comforting words, and the angel turns to Zechariah to explain God's promise to return to Jerusalem with mercy and to see that it and all the towns will overflow with prosperity.

The vision continues with more symbolic things like four horns, and craftsmen, and the questions and answers keep going back and forth.

There is a man with a measuring line, and a scene where a young high priest is given clean clothes for dirty ones, and he is anointed, and addressed as a symbol of the messiah yet to come. There is a flying scroll, a woman in a basket, four chariots and a crown for Joshua the young high priest.

This book has some fascinating imagery in it! This short article is not the place to analyze all of it, but I want to point out one main impression. It implies something very good for us.

It is this; God is willing to send angels to explain things to us when we humble ourselves, admit our wrongs and those of our ancestors, and when we really want to know the truth.

Sometimes we find ourselves in hard situations, and we rail out that we're trapped, and can't understand or get out, and some even renounce God, and blame Him for all our troubles.

He may well have allowed them to discipline us for past sins, but if we would repent and humbly start asking questions, we would be surprised at what gentle, comforting answers He gives - perhaps even through an angel - and how glad He is to explain what He is doing in the world, and why.

Great. I've got some questions to ask, don't you?

Escape to Egypt - Joseph's Travel-Agent Angel

The first angel incident in the New Testament is in Matthew (though in Luke we find the annunciation to Mary, which happened earlier), where after the Wise men left the Holy family at Bethlehem, an angel appeared to Joseph in a dream. The angel told him to rouse up the young child and his mother, and to flee to Egypt.

Why? Because their wicked king Herod is starting a search and destroy mission.

What I find amazing here is that Joseph didn't hesitate and think, "I wonder if this really from the Lord?"

Without a hint of debate, he woke Mary, explained, and they gathered a little bundle, the holy Child, Jesus, and the newly presented gifts, and they were off.

What perfect timing that the expensive gifts of gold, myrrh and frankincense were given them just hours before. God had provided for their journey!

It was urgent that they get as far away as possible before Herod's soldiers arrived to slaughter all those baby boys in Bethlehem.

We may marvel that the Son of God would risk coming down as a helpless baby for our salvation. Obviously, God is well able to direct human affairs, so that the infant Christ could be kept safe and provided for.

Joseph had another angel visit in a dream while they were in Egypt. The message was that he should take up the child and His mother, and return to Israel, for those that were trying to take the child's life were dead.

This reveals several lessons for me and you;

1. to obey immediately when we get direction, whether from an angel or a dream, or God's Word,
2. to believe God will provide for whatever tasks or journey He gives us; and
3. to rest assured that God is looking out for us even when we are utterly helpless. We can trust Him completely and sleep like a baby.

Surely, Jesus never had a restless thought cross His mind, and thoroughly enjoyed both trips.

What if angels are guiding your caregivers and authority figures to keep you safe? Can you trust your Heavenly Father to use them for your benefit - even if you don't understand certain moves or travel plans your family has made?

If you are the Lord's, it is quite possible Joseph's travel-agent angel has supervised your moves.



When You Meet a Bad Angel

Since Satan is a fallen angel, we could look at the time when Jesus was tempted in the desert for observations about angels, by focusing on Satan in that instance. I prefer not to dwell on him, but...

Quickly, we can see that he still has the ability to know the Scriptures quite well, and he has the power to whisk Jesus up to a high point on the temple in Jerusalem, and also to a mountain top to see all the world and all of history at once.

We would like to think we never get visits from such bad angels. But it can happen to us as well. Jesus was tempted so He would know what it is like to be us, and to show us how to respond to such winsome, tempting thoughts. Such as; providing for our own physical needs, or doing something to gain attention and popularity, or for that matter, worshiping Satan and the worldly trappings he can deliver.

These three temptations are essentially the three types of temptations we will ever face.

When we encounter Satan or one of his demons, (also fallen angels, that is, one-time angels that rebelled in Heaven), here's what we are to do - according to Jesus Christ's example; tell them what God's Word says, and cling to that. Believe it and obey it. This implies that it is crucial for us to know what God's Word says. If we don't, we have no argument to stand on.

Consider in what ways and situations Satan subtly tempts you to seek your own comforts and needs fulfillment. Ways that are contrary to God's Word. Find the appropriate answer in the Bible, and memorize the verse you need to throw back at Satan next time he tempts you to look out for # 1.

Do the same for the temptation to show off and draw attention to yourself, to gain popularity, or to impress people. Things of pride.

Do it again for the third temptation. The one where you look to Satan to supply you with all you desire and need, If you honour him, and the possessions he can cause to come your way, you are making Satan your god, and worship him instead of the One True God.

Now you have your supply of retorts or answers ready. You can make short work of any temptation that comes!

Another lesson we learn from this story in the Bible is that when we successfully refuse temptation based on God's Word, good angels will show up with some comfort and attention, just as they did for Jesus. This whole story is provided for our encouragement and instruction.



What Jesus Said About Angels

Let's sort out from all the things we think we know about angels, what exactly Jesus said and taught about them. When we read the four gospels in the New Testament, Matthew, Mark, Luke and John, we see He talked quite freely and naturally about angels.

For one, when Jesus comes again, He'll be accompanied by angels who will be sent to gather His chosen people from all over earth and Heaven.

This will be a "harvest of souls" time, and the angels will be the harvesters. They are sent to weed out everything that causes sin and all who do evil, and cast them into a fiery furnace. That is hell.

Not the angels, nor even Jesus, know exactly when this will be. Only God knows.

All unbelievers will be separated and cast into the place prepared for Satan and his rebellious angels, or demons.

Little ones, (children) have angels assigned to them, and they are always watching the face of God the Father as well, for any hint of an assignment to protect their little charges. Therefore, Jesus warned, we should not look down on the little ones. They have strong helpers.

Jesus could call on the Father, and have 12 legions of angels at His service. (There were 6000 to a Roman army legion unit).

If we are ashamed to be identified with Jesus now, He will not acknowledge us before the Father and the angels.

After the resurrection we will be celibate (single) - like angels.

In the parable of poor Lazarus who died, Jesus taught that angels carry our spirit away upon death to the place of the patriarchs, or believers who have already died.

The angels look on as Jesus and God and the Holy Spirit rejoice when a sinner repents.



The Christmas Angels

The Christmas story from the gospel of Luke has several angel encounters. Everyone likes the touch of wonder they add to that lovely story. Altogether I find four angel encounters if we start where Luke does with the angel appearance to Zachariah the priest.

The angel assured the elderly Zachariah, while he was doing his priestly duties, that his prayers, and of his wife Elizabeth's, had been heard. They would have a son and were to call him John. He would be a joy and a delight, he would be a Nazarite, filled with the Holy Spirit from birth, and he would announce the coming Saviour, calling people to prepare by repentance.

Luke describes the visit of the messenger angel, Gabriel, to Mary to tell her she will conceive and give birth to the Saviour anticipated by the Jewish people for hundreds of years.

Mary was startled and marveled at this message, but her response is to humbly consent. Later, when she went to visit Elizabeth to confirm what Gabriel had told about her cousin being pregnant, she sang there a song of worship and praise to God. We know it as the Magnificat for she magnified the Lord.

We have already covered in another study in Matthew, the angel that visited Joseph in his dreams to reassure him it was all right to take Mary as his wife, even though he knew it was not his child she carried.

Luke next describes the angel of the Lord and the hosts of angels that appeared to the shepherds on the hill side the night of Jesus' birth in Bethlehem. The angel of the Lord, (we've learned in the Old Testament accounts that this is the pre-incarnate Christ), gives the frightened shepherds the good news and gives directions to the manger where they will find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes.

At this the angel is joined by a great company of the heavenly hosts, all praising God and saying, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to men on whom his favour rests."

By the way, notice something; the Luke 2 account, verse 13, says they were saying, but many of us have been led to believe through various storytellers and artists that they were singing. (This could make another interesting study).

Naturally, the shepherds lose no time in going to see for themselves this wonder as it was told them. Would you and I not do the same?

What do these advent angel encounters teach us?

The first thing I notice is that God sent a messenger angel, Gabriel to announce and prepare the people for what He was going to do. He did not just spring this great event on them. Yet not everyone would believe right away.

Zachariah had trouble believing, so he had to be mute until John was born and named.

Mary was astonished and asked questions, but she believed and accepted this news very humbly. She said, "Let it be to Your handmaiden as You say."

Joseph was quick to obey too, when the angel explained Mary's situation to him.

Even the shepherds, hurried off to go see for themselves.

Our main lesson: be quick to obey when God tells us something. Not getting a personal angel visit is not to exclude us. We have the Bible. Just seek Him through that living and powerful book, God Himself will speak to us!

We need not wait for angels to visit us - we can claim the glad news they brought in the Christmas story as given to us as well, and promptly rejoice in our dear Lord Jesus. All God would assign the angels to do is to point us to Jesus. Adore Him!

The Most Thrilling Angel Message of All Time

When Jesus the Christ was crucified, He could have called upon thousands and thousands of angels to be instantly there for His rescue. They could have wiped out Jesus' persecutors with one small blast of heavenly power. But He didn't call.

God held the angels back. Instead He raised Jesus from the dead on Easter morning! Then He gave the Angel of the Lord, the glad duty of telling the good news to Jesus' friends from the tomb. (See the last chapter of Matthew).

Since this angel told the women about Jesus being raised from the dead as He had foretold in the third person, I'm not sure if this is another instance of the Angel of the Lord being Christ Himself, as we saw in the old Testament stories, or whether this is Gabriel, the messenger angel.

Nevertheless, it is the most important event to Christians, for without a resurrected Saviour, our faith is but a fantasy. A dead Christ could not save us or take us to Heaven. Even Christians do not always seem to catch the greatness of this wonderful resurrection news.

I'm pondering here why for centuries we've made so much fuss over the birth of Christ, and neglected this greater cause for celebration.

Perhaps it's because almost everyone can respond to a poor, helpless baby. One doesn't have to be a Believer in the Son of God to do so. To agree that the resurrection of Christ happened implies that we agree He is the Son of God, and that Jesus really died for our sins.

Accepting the resurrection forces us to decide whether to reject him and carry on in our own ways, or to repent and confess we receive Him as our personal Saviour.

For those who choose the latter, Easter becomes the most wondrous fact of all history and our lives.

So why do I observe that many sincere believers still make a greater thing out of Christmas? I can only conclude that we are like sheep, and do like the majority around us without thinking. Christmas has its lovely traditions.

Think! This angel in the tomb had the most thrilling message of all time. Let's believe that too!



After Jesus' Ascension

Here were this bunch of grown men, standing on a hillside, gazing up into the clouds. They had just seen a miracle. They must have wondered if it was finished, or if there was to be an act two in just a matter of moments.

Only 43 days before their beloved teacher and friend, Jesus, had died on a cruel Roman cross as their Messiah. But He rose up from the grave just three days later! Then He spent 40 days meeting with them in miraculous ways in various places, often materializing out of thin air or through locked doors. He had shown them many convincing proofs that He was really alive, and had eaten with them.

When they asked Jesus if now at last, He was going to establish His kingdom in Israel, He answered, "Only God knows that. You don't need to know the exact dates."

But then He broke some other news to them. The very Spirit of God was going to come upon them, giving them great power and boldness to talk about Him not only in their city, Jerusalem, but also their province or state, Samaria, and on throughout the world. When He left for Heaven, they should stick together and wait in prayer until that happened.

Right there on the Mount of Olives, immediately after Jesus told them that, He began to lift up and rise into the clouds until He was out of sight.

You and I would have had our mouths hanging open in astonishment too, had we stood there. I'm sure of it!

While they were taking in this very new, original miracle, one they had never seen before, two strangers, dressed in white, suddenly were standing with them. They said, "Hey, you men of Galilee, - why do you keep looking up in the sky?" At that their heads swung around. "This same Jesus who has gone up into Heaven, will come back in the same way."

That explanation will have helped, but we can only imagine the disciples pounced on these two angels with questions - if they had the nerve, for they had been rather shy since Christ's passion on the cross. Or the angels may have vanished as quickly as they appeared.

The account of this event in Acts chapter 1, only says the men returned to Jerusalem from the Mount of Olives, and they began an earnest prayer meeting. They were joined by Jesus' mother and brothers, and still more believers. They kept on praying until the Holy Spirit came upon them and gave them a marvelous boldness to preach or tell what they knew - in many languages.

The coming of the Holy Spirit appears to have cut down on the number of angel encounters in the New Testament. But God doesn't hesitate to use angels, as in this instance, to swing our stunned minds and gawking faces to what we are suppose to do next. If a stranger reminds us of what Jesus has told us, it's safe to believe that stranger. Get to work.



Jail-Breaking Angels

In Acts there are two recorded instances of an angel helping the disciples to break out of jail. It is quite possible they did this on other occasions as well in that era, and I believe many stories could be told of other Christians in the centuries since, who have walked out of locked cells. (I recently read a book by a Chinese believer alive today, who did this!)

Let's see what we can learn from the first instance recorded in Acts 5:19-42.

After the believers had experienced Pentecost, the arrival of the HOLY Spirit to dwell in each of them to give them power and wisdom for spreading the gospel of Jesus Christ, the apostles performed many miracles and grew so popular that the public brought their sick and demon-possessed to the streets so that Peter's shadow could fall on them. Even in that they were healed.

All the believers met regularly in Solomon's Colonnade in the Temple, and they were not bothered there. Until, that is, the high priest and his associates got so jealous they put them in jail.

But during the night an angel of the Lord opened the doors of the jail and brought them out. "Go stand in the temple courts," the angel said, "Tell the people the full message of this new life."

At daybreak they entered the temple courts and began to teach the people as they arrived.

When the high priest and his rulers gathered for their court case to try the apostles, they sent for their prisoners. Their officers soon reported that they'd found the jail locked, and the guards on duty, but no prisoners inside!

Someone else came running to say, "The men you put in jail are in the temple courts, teaching the people!"

They were quickly brought before the Sanhedrin to be questioned.

Peter, the spokesman, replied, "We must obey God rather than men!" and he launched into a sermon on the spot, in which he charged these rulers with killing Jesus, but how God had raised him and exalted Him to His own right hand, to be a Saviour for the whole world.

At this the Sanhedrin was furious, but an older, wiser teacher of the law, Gamaliel, stood and reasoned that if this was of God they could not fight it, and if it was not the whole thing would die out soon. His speech persuaded them, and after strict warnings not to speak in the name of Jesus, they released the apostles.

These bold men headed right back to their preaching and sharing the good news from house to house, wherever they got invited.

So if you're busy spreading the Good News, and someone tries to hush you up - legally, don't be surprised if a jail break angel comes to walk you out again. Not just to escape, but so you can get back sharing the gospel. That's the priority!

Of course, sometimes troubles are meant to scatter us away to new places, just as with the Believers in Jerusalem, so our good news can reach untold others.

A Search Assistant Angel

God doesn't send angels to tell the gospel story. Instead, He sends them to tell where to find a key person who will share that good news.

A Roman centurion stationed at Caesarea in Israel, was in charge of 100 soldiers. Unlike other Romans he had learned to devoutly and regularly pray to God, he taught his household to do the same, and he supported the local Jews by giving them money for a synagogue. The Jews respected this man, though they generally hated all Romans for occupying their country.

One day at about three in the afternoon, this man named Cornelius, had a vision. An angel who addressed him by name, told him, "Your prayers and gifts to the poor have become a remembrance before God. Now send some men to Joppa for a man called Simon Peter. He is staying with Simon the tanner, whose house is by the sea."

Immediately Cornelius called two servants and a soldier, who was also a devote man, and sent them off on this errand.

Meanwhile, God was preparing Peter for this uncommon experience with Gentiles. He was praying up on the roof of his host's house, waiting for lunch, and getting hungry. Peter fell into a trance and saw the heavens open up and a large sheet being lowered down (held up by the four corners), and in it were riding all kinds of four-footed animals, reptiles, and birds. A voice told Peter to rise up and kill and eat."

Peter's answer was a clear, "No way, Lord!" He knew those creatures as all on the Jewish do-not eat list. "I've never eaten anything unclean, and not about to start!"

This scenario happened three times before the sheet disappeared finally into the sky. Peter was pondering the meaning of this vision when he heard Cornelius' envoys at the gate, calling out, asking if Simon Peter was staying there.

God's Spirit said to Peter, "Three men are looking for you. Get up, go down, and don't hesitate to go with them, for I've sent them." So Peter went down to ask what they wanted.

They told him of Cornelius' angel visitation and his invitation to come and tell his household whatever God wanted him to say.

The next day Peter went with them. He arrived to find the centurion's home tight full of servants, relatives and close friends, all waiting to hear Peter out.

Cornelius tried to show reverence to Peter, but the burly fisherman turned preacher refused to allow it. "I'm only a man," he said. Then he told of his own vision which he now understood to mean that he should no longer think of Gentiles as impure or unclean. This broke Peter's a long-standing Jewish practice of having nothing to do with Gentiles.

Cornelius repeated his story of the angel visit and instructions.

At that, Peter realized that God accepts people from every nation, and the good news of Jesus Christ, about His death and resurrection, was meant for everyone. He went into an impromptu and enthusiastic sermon.

While he was talking, the Holy Spirit came upon these people just as He had at the Pentecost the disciples had experienced in Jerusalem. This convinced Peter they were ready for water baptism and he stayed with them a few days to teach them.

Do we brand certain people as untouchables? Do you need help searching for the answers to your big questions?

We need to regard all races and classes as worthy of our respect and the good news too.

If we need answers to life's serious questions, we need to ask God in prayer. If we don't get direct access to His answers, He will guide us to trustworthy sources.

Angels Know the Shortcuts

Another marvelous angel story in Acts (of the Apostles) is of Philip, one of the disciples of Jesus, turned apostle-preacher.

The angel of the Lord, (that would be Jesus in angelic form), told Philip to take a certain road that went down from Jerusalem, through a desert to Gaza. Obediently he went off on this walk.

On the way he met the official in charge of all the treasury of Queen Candace of Ethiopia, for ever since Queen Sheba had visited King Solomon, there had been Jews in Ethiopia. This man had come on a pilgrimage to Jerusalem, and was reading in his chariot, the scroll of the prophet Isaiah.

I'm supposing somehow he'd missed out on Peter's famous first sermon after the Holy Spirit came upon the disciples. Many others from other countries had heard the good news and believed on Jesus. Thousands had been baptized. Somehow this man was on his way home without hearing all this, but he was seeking for more.

The Spirit of God told Philip to go closer and stay with that chariot. As he did, he heard the man reading a prophecy, so he asked, "Do you understand what you're reading?"

The Ethiopian said, "How can I unless someone explains it? Jump in."

Philip did. They looked together at the place where he was, "He was led like a sheep to the slaughter, and as a lamb before the shearer is silent, so he did not open his mouth. In his humiliation he was deprived of justice."

"Is the prophet talking about himself or someone else?" the man wanted to know. Starting from that passage, Philip explained all about Jesus, who had been crucified like a lamb for the sins of the whole world, and who had silently borne it all for us. Naturally, Philip was able to fill in the exciting news of His resurrection and ascension too.

When he told the Ethiopian about water baptism representing the spiritual baptism of true believers, the man was ready. As soon as he saw some water beside the road he exclaimed, "There's water. What's to prevent me from being baptized on the spot?"

Philip didn't hesitate. It was the right thing to do.

When they came back up out of the water hole, since Philip had finished his assignment, the Spirit of the Lord, picked him up and transported him instantly away to Azotus, where he traveled about preaching this gospel in all the small towns up to Caesarea.

The foreign officer seemed to understand and went on his way rejoicing, eager to tell his people back in his country. He was turned into a preacher too!

So if the Lord, perhaps through an angel, asks us to take a walk, let's not hesitate. There's likely a divine appointment on the way. Nor do we really have to worry about how we'll get back, or how this will interfere with all the other things we ought to be doing. The angels know all the shortcuts. We'll make up the lost time. Just obey.



Angel on a Shipwreck

Paul, (who was once Saul on a holy jihad to rid the world of Christians), was now a fine articulate Christian, and the best of his generation at understanding and preaching the truths of Christ.

This put him at loggerheads with the established religion and governments. He was passed from prison to prison and from one court hearing to another. Although a Jew he was born a Roman citizen, and this gave him immunity from the death sentence in the lower courts.

At one point Paul appealed to be heard before Caesar in Rome. That meant the judiciary was obligated to get him there at their expense. Eventually they put him on a ship to Italy.

They put out to sea after the winter winds had begun, not a safe season for sea-faring. Before long everyone on that ship knew it. They lost time trying to travel on the lea side of some small islands, and had to start throwing cargo overboard. When a hurricane force, called the Noreaster, swept down on them from an island things got worse. They passed ropes underneath the ship to wrap around it and try to hold it together. They threw more cargo and the ships tackle or equipment overboard. For many days they saw neither sun or stars, just wrestled with this storm.

After going without food for a long time, Paul stood up and said, "You should have taken my advice not to sail from Crete at this time of year. But now I urge you to keep up courage because not one of you is going to be lost. Last night an angel of God, whose I am, came and told me, 'Do not be afraid, Paul. You must stand trial before Caesar, and God has graciously given you the lives of all these with you.'" Paul assured them that he had faith it would happen that way. The ship would run aground on an island, and break up, but all their lives would be saved.

Some sailors tried to escape secretly with the lifeboats, but Paul alerted the captain, who cut off the ropes, letting those boats go empty. They had to stick together.

Before dawn Paul urged them all to eat something for strength for a harrowing swim to land. Paul prayed over the bread, and blessed it, and they all broke into it and ate. Altogether they were 276 souls on board. When they had eaten as much as they wanted they threw the rest of their grain and food overboard.

The soldiers had a mind to kill all their prisoners so they couldn't escape, but the centurion, wanting to save Paul's life, kept them from carrying out that plan.

At daylight they ran aground not too far from a sandy beach and as the ship broke apart, the centurion ordered all who could swim to head for the beach, and those who couldn't, to grab a piece of wood, and the tide would carry them to the shore.

The natives of the island came to help them build a large bonfire to dry off by, and when the captain did a head count, all 276 people were present from the ship.

When God tells us what to do to be rescued in a crisis, whether by an angel, His Word, or a knowing in our spiritual intuition, it's best to obey.

Furthermore, if God has a plan for our life, and He does, He will see that we get there. It doesn't matter how impossible the situation appears.

The Quick Executioner Angel

Many people wanted King Herod dead, and his succeeding sons too, who were called Herod when they took the throne. Their reigns were messy with ugly politics and murders.

In the Bible we read of the murder of the baby boys in Bethlehem after Jesus was born, although God led Joseph and Mary and baby Jesus to Egypt in a well-timed escape. There was the murder of John the Baptist, and many other gruesome events in other history books. The day came when God used an angel to destroy King Herod Agrippa I.

The cities of Sidon and Tyre had sued for peace with Herod because they needed a food supply. On the signing day Herod dressed in a dazzling royal robe made of reflective material, and when the people saw how he shone they shouted, "This is the voice of a god, not a man!"

Acts 12:23 says that because he did not immediately give God the praise and defer to Him, the Angel of the Lord struck him down and he was eaten by worms and died. Notice the order; he was eaten first by the worms, and then he died. Generally worms and flies feed on a decomposed body, making this a very fast death.

The next verse says, "But the word of God continued to increase and spread."

The implied application for us would seem to be, if someone allows himself to be worshiped as God, the One True God will dispose of him very quickly. Our own focus is to see that the word of God continues to increase and spread.

Sometimes we do waste a lot of time fretting over those who do evil or hinder us in our God-assigned agenda. Really, God has close tabs on them, and can take them out of the picture in an amazing hurry, when they cross His boundaries, with His super quick executioner angel. So we can leave 'destroying the enemy' up to Him, and give our attention solely to the work given us to do, promoting the glory of our God.



The Letter-writing Angel-Jesus

The elderly apostle John was visited by an angel, (which was Jesus Christ) while exiled to a barren island called Patmos. This Angel told him to write down for the churches, descriptions of the future, which he was to share with the seven key churches.

John wrote a first person account of all he saw and heard. It began with a loud, trumpet-like voice behind him telling him to write down all he saw, and send it on scrolls to the seven churches (named after their cities), Ephesus, Synrna, Pergamum, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia and Laodicea.

John turned around and saw what looked like seven large lamp stands and in the midst of them stood this angelic creature that looked like a human, dressed in a robe reaching to his feet, with a golden sash around his chest, his head and hair were white like pure wool or snow. His eyes were like blazing fire, and his feet were like bronze glowing in a furnace.

Whoa! John fell down on his face in worship!

This angelic man-Jesus placed His right hand on John and said, "Do not be afraid. I am the First and the Last. I am the Living One; I was dead, and behold I am alive for ever and ever! And I hold the keys of death and Hades."

Then he proceeded to tell John what to write, and what all these symbolic images of lamp stands, stars, and the angels assigned to each church meant. He dictated an exact, specific message to each of the seven churches. Some scholars now believe these also show the seven epochs or church ages we have come through since then, and/or the seven types of churches that exist.

I am one of those who also believes that the seven messages can apply to us as individuals as well. If our spiritual condition is similar to; Ephesus - remember and return to your first love for Christ.

Smyrna - don't be afraid of the period of suffering you face. Pergamum - don't be led astray by false teaching. Thyatira - don't tolerate immorality; be an overcomer. Sardis - a good reputation, but dead - so wake up and repent! Philadelphia - you've kept My commands, so I'll keep you from the greatest trial coming to the whole world. Laodicea - you're lukewarm and complacent; repent or I'll discipline you!

All this is in the first three chapters of Revelation. Next Jesus invites John up for a tour of Heaven. Shall we go along?



Angel Activity in Heaven

John, who had often leaned on Jesus, and later described himself in his gospel, as the disciple whom Jesus loved, was exiled to the island Patmos for his faith in his old age. While there he had the most glorious visions and introduction to Heaven that we find in the Bible.

He saw a door standing open in Heaven, and the voice he had heard earlier invited him to come up and see what is yet to happen.

First thing he saw was God on His throne with the appearance of jasper and carnelian, and an emerald kind of glow, or rainbow surrounding Him. (It seems John knew gemstones; he used them as the names of colours). From God's throne came flashes of lightening and peals of thunder.

All around this throne were twenty-four other thrones on which were the twenty-four elders with white robes and golden crowns. Before the throne were seven blazing lamps representing the seven spirits of God, and also, what looked like a sea of clear crystal glass.

John began to notice other creatures like the four near God's throne that were covered with eyes but had the four shapes of a lion, an ox, a man, and a flying eagle. Each had six wings. Day and night they never stopped saying, "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God Almighty, who was, and is, and is to come." And whenever they glorified God, the twenty-four elders fell on their faces to worship God, and laid their crowns before Him.

A drama happened before John's eyes. It was a search to find someone worthy to open the scroll of seven seals in God's hand, Only the Lamb slain for the human race, Jesus was worthy, and He was worshiped with much rejoicing.

The powerful Lamb, Jesus, who won the right by His crucifixion and resurrection, opened the seals one by one, revealing to John what was going to happen in each of these stages of earth's history.

We won't go into the details of prophecy now, but focus on the amazing activity of the angels.

The first four seals involved riders on different horses, each representing in turn, a conqueror, wars, famine, and death. The fifth is about the cries of the martyrs waiting to be avenged. (They are given robes and asked to wait a little longer).

After the sixth seal, a great earthquake, the sun turning black, the moon to blood, and stars falling to earth, and the people on earth begging in their terror the mountains to fall on them and kill them - four angels at the four corners of the earth, hold back the winds, while another angel tells them not to harm the land and sea until 144,000 from all the tribes of Israel are marked with God's seal. They will have a special assignment and protection.

Back around God's throne a great multitude of redeemed ones, together with all the angels worship God with songs of praise.

When Jesus opens the seventh seal there is silence in Heaven for about half an hour. Then God gives seven trumpets to seven angels standing before Him. Another angel steps forward carrying a golden censor, or large dish, with all the prayers that believers have prayed on earth over the centuries.

We'll continue next time with the actions of these eight angels.

Michael Makes War in Heaven

The only reference to war in Heaven is in Revelation 12:7-9, where the angel Michael and his warrior angels make war against the dragon. Those verses explain that the dragon is also known as Satan and the devil, and that he and his angels have been leading the whole world astray.

This may be an astonishing revelation to you, if you've always assumed all angels are good and feminine, or fat little babies. (I've not found any baby angels in the Bible; in fact, the ones in Revelation are much larger than humans, swift to obey, and extremely powerful creatures!)

Apparently, Satan, the dragon, still has some access to Heaven, but when the archangel, Michael and his angels fight Satan and his bad angels, they overcome them, and will hurl them down to earth.

John, who is experiencing all these dramas as prophetic visions of what is to come, hears a loud voice in Heaven saying, "Now have come the salvation and the power and the kingdom of our God, and the authority of his Christ."

The voice goes on to say that the Accuser of the brethren (believers), who accused them before God day and night, has been hurled down; that in fact, he was overcome by the blood of the Lamb, and by the testimony of those that were not afraid to die for their faith.

So everyone who lives in Heaven, including the Believers that have arrived, are to rejoice. But woe to those still left on the earth. The devil is down there in person from that time on, and he is furious! He knows his time is short. He has just three and a half years left.

The scene shifts to earth where the dragon chases the woman who had just given birth, but the earth helps her by opening up and swallowing the river of hate spewing from the dragon's mouth. She is given eagle wings and flown into hiding in the desert.

A terrifying beast arises out of the sea, and another beast out of the earth. They wreck tremendous havoc, especially against those who have refused the mark of the beast, and who choose to trust in God even when all the earlier Church age believers have been raptured up to Heaven.

We also see the Lamb (Jesus) with the 144,000 redeemed and pure Jews He brings up into Heaven from Mount Zion. They sing a new song there that no one else can sing.

What do these revelations have to do with us?

I rejoice that evil is finally going to be overcome! God will deal with the Wicked One quite thoroughly. Hallelujah!

In the meantime, we can practice the advice given twice in this book; "This calls for patient endurance and faithfulness on the part of the saints." (Rev.13:10b). And again, "This calls for patient endurance on the part of the saints who obey God's commandments and remain faithful to Jesus." (Rev.14:12).

Let's hang on, keep on believing and obeying, even if it should mean being killed for our faith. For sure the battle will be won, and the bad angels put away forever!

The Beasts and the Harvest Angels

In the visions that John saw, the beast that rose out of the sea, and the beast that came out of the earth seem to merge into one. The second took on the authority of the first, and to act on behalf of the first, who had been mortally wounded but came to life again.

The second is given power on behalf of the first beast to deceive the inhabitants of the earth and to force them to worship the image, or idol, of the first beast. Those who refuse are killed outright. Everyone is commanded to receive the mark of the beast or they can't sell or buy a thing.

Many Bible scholars have concluded that the second beast is a human man, who is fully possessed and indwelt of Satan, who is the first beast. This is the anti-Christ.

John's attention is drawn away again to the 144,000 who had been fearless missionaries on earth, but who are at that point worshipping the Lamb in Heaven, singing their new song.

Then he sees an angel flying in mid-air over the earth and calling out the gospel with a loud voice, reminding people to worship and trust God.

(Isn't that great? When there are no humans left or able to evangelize, God sends an angel! Not that this should make us complacent).

A second angel follows crying out, "Fallen! Fallen is Babylon the Great, which made all the nations drink the maddening wine of her adulteries!"

A third angel follows with a longer speech, warning that those who worship the beast or accept his mark in their hand or forehead, will also drink the wine of God's fury." This angel continues to describe hell, where there will be no end to their torment with burning sulphur. Those who do believe God are to endure patiently; they will be rescued.

John looks up again, and there, seated on a white cloud is yet another angel, with a crown of gold on his head, and a sharp sickle in his hands. He looks like the son of man, which tells us this is the Christ as we've seen in other angel appearances throughout the Bible.

As soon as a loud voice from the temple in Heaven calls out to go harvest the earth, this angel takes one swing over the earth with the sickle and the earth is harvested.

Another angel comes out of that temple with a sickle. Still another comes who has charge of the fire on the altar, and calls out in a loud voice to harvest the grapes on earth and put them into God's wine press of wrath. This second harvest then would not involve any God-fearing believers.

However, there must be some people left on the earth, because in the next scene we find seven angels with the last seven plagues for the earth.

You and I may have thought that those who do wicked things are getting away with it. These prophecies remind us that when that wickedness reaches its zenith, God will deal with evil in a very final, thorough way. All past evil will be dealt with too.

When the Heavens seem like cold brass to your prayers, it does not mean there is silence, or nothing there. Revelation shows there is a lot going on up there! We need to trust God with utter abandon, and patiently endure our small trials, for compared to what the evil people shall suffer - we don't know what pain is!

7 Angels with 7 Bowls of Plagues!

John's continuing vision now revealed a large number of people standing beside a sea that was as calm as glass. They were the ones who had been victorious over the beast and his image; they had a special song to sing, giving God glory.

But then John saw the Heavenly temple open up again, and seven angels came out wearing clean white linen and golden sashes around their chests. One of the four living creatures (with all those eyes), gave each of them a golden bowl filled with the wrath of God. His glory filled His temple so that no one could enter the temple until the seven plagues in those bowls were completed.

A loud voice from the temple sent them to pour out God's wrath on the earth. By now, of course, only the very wicked beast and those with his mark were left.

The first angel poured out his bowl on the land, and ugly, painful sores broke out among the people that had the mark of the beast.

The second angel poured out his bowl on the sea, and it turned to blood like that of a dead man (which is thick and coagulated, or gelled, right?) Every living thing in the sea died.

The third angel poured out his bowl on the rivers and springs of water, and they became blood. Then John heard the angel in charge of all the waters say to God, "You are just in these judgments, You, who are and were the Holy One, for they have shed the blood of Your saints and prophets and You have given them blood to drink, as they deserve." (So this is how the blood of the martyrs is avenged!)

John heard the very altar of God respond, "Yes, Lord God Almighty, true and just are Your judgments."

With no water to evaporate from earth and to form clouds and rain, the next judgment seems a natural consequence.

The fourth angel poured out his bowl on the sun, and it had power to scorch people with fire. They were seared by the intense heat, but they just cursed God and refused to repent.

The fifth angel poured out his bowl on the throne of the beast, and his kingdom was plunged into darkness. People gnawed on their tongues for agony, and cursed God, but refused to repent.

The sixth angel poured out his bowl on the great river Euphrates, and it dried up. This created a causeway along which the kings from the east (China and perhaps other countries of Asia) came marching in.

Next John saw three evil spirits, in the form of frogs come out of the mouths of the dragon, the beast and the false prophet. They went out to the kings of the whole earth to put it into their minds to gather together for the great world battle on God's appointed day, at the place called Armageddon.

Now the seventh angel pours out the final bowl of God's wrath. He poured it out in the air, and out of the throne in the heavenly temple came a loud voice saying, "It is done!"

There were flashes of lightning, rumblings, peals of thunder, and a severe earthquake such as never had happened before. The great city split into three parts, and all the cities of all the nations collapsed. Every island fled and no mountains could be found. All were leveled! From the sky huge hailstones of about a hundred pounds each fell on the people.

Besides being majestic in holiness, all-powerful, all-knowing, all-wise, AND perfectly just, God is very thorough. We shall see Him finishing off His judgments with a few more angels, - who obey God unquestioningly, as do they all.

The Angel Guide to Babylon's Future

One of the seven angels who had emptied their plagues on the earth, offered to show John what would happen to the political systems, particularly what was represented by the mysterious mother of all prostitutes and evil, called Babylon the Great.

This may be the sum of all the wickedness that ever happened in that ancient city; this woman appears to stand for false religion which has made political deals with the kings of the earth. John sees her as a seductive woman riding on a scarlet beast. She is dressed in purple and scarlet and glittering with gold and precious jewels, and drinking from a gold cup the blood of the martyred saints. She sits on seven hills. Some take it to mean Roman, or the Vatican.

The angel explained this astonishing mystery to John. The beast with the seven heads and ten horns stands for a political union formed by ten kings, or national leaders, who will form a confederation for a short while. (Sounds like the European Common Market, doesn't it?)

They will give their authority to the beast for the purpose of overcoming the Lamb. At first, the woman (organized religion) will ride on or use them, but then these leaders will turn on her, eat her up and burn her. All because God puts this into their hearts.

After this John saw another angel coming down from heaven. One who had great authority and illuminated the whole earth by his splendor. With a mighty voice this angel announces, "Fallen! Fallen is Babylon the Great!"

The merchants of the earth will weep and mourn; they did lots of business with Babylon.

Another mighty angel picks up a boulder the size of a millstone and throws it into the sea, pronouncing that with such violence that great city of Babylon will be finally and thoroughly destroyed.

I get the impression - when God deals with evil He is complete, and the end matches the depth of the depravity: when God commands His angels, they have His tremendous strength and power. Knowing I am on His side, that draws hope and security into my being.

Another angel comes to tell John to write down, "Blessed are those who are invited to the wedding supper of the Lamb!" (John falls down to worship this angel but is quickly reminded that he is just a fellow-servant of God. Worship only God!)

Then Heaven opens and there comes a white horse with a Rider called Faithful and True. His eyes are blazing like fire, and He wears many crowns, with a robe dipped in blood. His name is the Word of God, and the armies of Heaven follow Him, all wearing clean white linen. This Rider comes to carry out the fury of God's wrath on disobedient nations, and over His robe and thigh is a sash with His name; KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS.

Another angel standing against the sun calls out to the birds of prey in the air to come gather for a feast of flesh as the beast and the kings of the earth gather to make war against this Heavenly Rider and His armies in white.

It isn't a long battle. The beast and the false prophet are captured and thrown alive into the lake of burning fire. All their armies are killed with swords, and the birds gorge themselves on the plentiful carrion.

Yet another angel comes down out of Heaven with the key to the Abyss. He seizes the dragon, Satan, and locks him up for a thousand years. (After that he will be freed a short time to test new generations born during that time).

In our final article we will join John in touring the golden crystal city, the New Jerusalem, the future home of all repentant, true believers in Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

A Tour of and Invitation to the Holy City

Have you ever heard, "Strike Three! You're out!"?

God made the world, but the people sinned, so He sent a flood. Strike one.

In the Last Days described in Revelation, Jesus will come down, after many plagues and warnings, to destroy the wicked at the battle of Armageddon. Strike two.

Satan is put into the Abyss and held captive for one thousand years, while Jesus reigns in total peace on the earth. Everyone obeys Him. People see what real peace on earth is like! It's chance number three.

Then Satan will be released a little while to tempt those born and alive during that millenium, to see whether they choose God. He will gather the nations from Gog to Magog to camp around the city of God, but fire will come down from Heaven to destroy them, and Satan will be cast into the Lake of fire, along with all who choose him. Strike three for this earth.

God will burn up this earth and it's skies, and create a new Heaven and earth. (Whether out of the charred remnants, I don't know). A new Holy City, Jerusalem will come out of Heaven and settle on this new earth. It will sparkle like a perfect cube, golden and crystal clear. John saw it in the final revelation of the Bible.

One of the angels who'd had one of the bowls of plagues, offered to show John that perfect city on this new earth. The angel took him to a high mountain for a better perspective, and called this Holy City, the Bride, the wife of the Lamb.

It's brilliance was like a jewel, like jasper (said to be the same as our diamond). It had a great high wall, as high as the city was wide, and each side had three large gates, each was like a huge pearl, with the name of a tribe of Israel on it, and guarded by a mighty angel.

The city was laid out square, and the angel measuring the city for John showed it to be 12,000 stadia (that is about 1,400 miles, or 2,200 kilometers) in length, and also in width. The wall was 144 cubits (200 feet or 65 meters) thick by man's measurements, which was what the angel was using. The wall was of such pure gold it was like transparent glass.

This Holy City has twelve layers to its foundation, each decorated with different gemstones. The first is jasper (or diamond), then sapphire, chalcedony, emerald, sardonyx, carnelian, chrysolite, beryl, topaz, and amethyst. (I once studied those gems to be able to draw a sketch for a lesson I was teaching, and together those gems have rainbow colours!)

The angel explained to John that there was no need of a temple in this city because the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple. Nor does it need a sun and moon to shine, for God and Jesus are the Light. The gates are never be shut; people can come and go continually.

The glory and honour of the nations will be brought into it, but nothing impure will ever enter. Nor anyone who does what is shameful or deceitful, only those whose names are written in the Lamb's book of life.

The angel showed John the river of life which flows from the throne of God and of the Lamb, right down the central street. On each side of the river grows the tree of life bearing, not one, but twelve kinds of fruit, and the leaves are a healing remedy.

In closing the angel assures John, "These words are trustworthy and true," and that God sent him to show God's servant John what must soon take place.

John fell down to worship and thank this angel, but the angel quickly asked him to worship only God. "I'm just a fellow-servant of His, like you are."

"Don't seal up the words of this prophecy," the angel said in parting.

Then John heard Jesus' urgent voice, "Behold, I am coming soon! My reward is with Me, and I will give to everyone according to what he has done. I am the Alpha and the Omega,

the First and the Last, the Beginning and the End." He describes those who will be able to enter this Holy City, and those who must stay out.

He adds more, "I, Jesus, have sent my angel to give you this testimony for the churches." He invites people to Come! Whoever is thirsty may come now yet, to believe on Him. The full text of this urging speech of Jesus' is at the very end of the Bible. You ought to read it for yourself. It is so full of love and promise!

My Summary Thoughts

What have I learned from our study of the encounters with angels in the Bible?

I found no cute chubby infants with flowers in their hair. They seem to be asexual but most often appeared as a tall, strong man, dressed in dazzling white robes, or the ordinary clothes of another human.

They were message-bearers, delivering announcements and helpful information which the human individuals had to carry out. Sometimes they were rescuers, and helped individuals to escape sure death. In Revelation they were tour guides and also the ones who cast God's judgements down on the earth. More than once, the angel in the encounter turned out to be Jesus. In some instances that was before He was ever born on earth as a Baby. It is reassuring to know He was active and present here often throughout the existence of the earth He created!

I do not know if every time someone gets unexpected help from a stranger, who seems to vanish quickly, that they encountered an angel. It is quite possible. It is also possible that God sends His own children, those who have trusted Christ's finished work on the cross to save them, and who have become adopted into God's family through Jesus' name, to assist those who are in a crisis. I did see in this study that those who met up with an angel generally were frightened enough to fall on their faces. They have great power. Because they come in obedience to God's commands, they also show forceful authority.

Angels do not want to be worshipped. Except for Satan, they deflect all worship to God. So personally, I don't seek out angel experiences. Rather, I focus on my daily, spiritual walk and talk with the Lord Jesus. If He thinks I need an angel – He'll send one to do His bidding.



These articles were first written for the bi-monthly ezine, **Angel-Watch**. They will be appearing soon on the web site, <http://HeavenlyDaze.biz> All copyright still belongs to the author, Ruth Marlene Friesen. Please contact her for permission to publish or use any article(s).

About the Author, Ruth Marlene Friesen

Ruth Marlene Friesen is a Canadian writer, who returned in 1983 to Hague, a prairie town in Saskatchewan, to be a full-time caregiver to her aged parents.

Her mother's frail health made Friesen more or less house-bound until her mother's death in November 1997, but this gave her time to write. Her creative imagination and broad interests leads me to try many things, including crafts, making gift books by hand, family history books, tile-laying... you name it, she's not afraid of work.



Sometimes Friesen compares herself to the Rebecca in the Bible, who not only gave a cup of water when asked, but watered all the camels too!

Friesen loves to read and write, and finds working on the Internet and by email custom-made for her. It's a place where she can finally be prolific and share out of her very brim-full heart and lively and informed mind.

It took four days to drive to London, Ontario, all by herself in 1971 in pursuit of her publishing dream. There she became busy in Church and Children's ministries. Besides working as a receptionist and switchboard operator at Philips Electronics, she was the part-time church secretary at West London Alliance, and the first woman on her church's Executive Board.

Friesen taught Sunday School from age 17, and was the Superintendent of Sunday School four years at her current church at Neuanlage Grace Mennonite in Saskatchewan, (near Hague), where she lives now.

Her current priorities are, caring for her father, who is 90, and her many Internet ventures, including publishing her novel, and a weekly blog/ezine, *Rosebouquet*, which keeps fans and friends updated on the the novel and website, and which provides inspirational articles and closeups of her friends. She also designs budget web sites professionally for others, and gives away a lot of her time volunteering for missions. Also, the *eAction*, *Linux Learning Curve*, and *Updates* on her genealogy discoveries.

She has worked full-time since January 1999, at learning to explore and use the Internet, designing web sites, making friends, all with the ultimate goal of publishing her book, *Ruthe's Secret Roses*, and is working on the next one in that series. Her goal is to be a generous giver like God, as she awaits the Lord's return and morning glory.

Writing Credits:

Though *Ruthe's Secret Roses* is her first novel, Friesen has written and self-published a number of family histories and genealogies, including; *A Godly Inheritance* (1988), *Grandpa's Stories* (1996, 1998), *A Network of Neudorfs* (1998), *Our Friesens & Assorted Friesens* (2001, 2005).

Friesen has also translated some old diaries from the old handwritten Gothic German script, and accepts some jobs to do this for others.

From 1977-1997 Friesen freelanced articles and short stories and was a correspondent for The Mennonite Reporter. From 1991 to the 2001 she wrote book reviews for the Provident Bookfinder.

A Bouquet of Enterprises by a very enterprising and prolific Christian Business Woman.

Ruth Marlene Friesen always knew that she would write lots and lots some day. Her mind has always been teeming with ideas! Learning to put her thoughts and ideas on a web site and thus publishing it to the world has been a major turning point. In fact, if anyone wants to interview her or give her advice, she likes to ask them to first go read all her web sites, and her books, to get a better grasp of a composite of what she is all about.

Ruth's Sites, Books, and Services;

<http://Ruthes-SecretRoses.com> – About her novel by that name, and for and about friendship with Jesus, and with other people, which is the theme of her novel. (This site has over 500 pages already). Read the novel online, find articles and book reviews in the Sharing Library,



Wish a miracle-working angel would rescue you from your family problems? Wouldn't a friend be great who knows what to say or do in every crisis? Ruthe is that kind of miracle-working friend. But having so many friends creates a few problems for her, especially since she doesn't want her family back in Kleinstadt to know about her wonderful city friends, friends like Darlin' Bonne and the girls at the Shoppe, Lisa the former prostitute, or Phyllis, known to her high school students as the Fire-spitting Dragon, to name a few.

Ruthe is one complicated person, winning friends easily, and helping them, and yet blind to her own short-comings. Watch as her deception and double life set a trap for Ruthe.

Print copies from <http://Ruthes-SecretRoses.com/RSR.html>

e-books from <http://Ruthes-SecretRoses.com/rsr/orderpage.html>

<http://BouquetofEnterprises.biz> – Where Ruth focuses on her business ethics and ventures and offers helps to those who want to start an online business. You'll find her Web design service there under Azaleas.

<http://AgodlyInheritance.com> – About her genealogy hobby, and where she offers her family histories, genealogy reports, and GEDCOMs for sale. This is an incidental site, to which she just gives her Saturday evenings, when they are free.

Her main life's principles are;

That Jesus Christ, (who is also God), is her BEST Friend. She does things for His sake.

That whatever she takes on, she will throw more than 100% of herself into it.

The longer she works at something, the better she gets at it.

People should come before Programs – but you need discernment to help people wisely.

To forgive others is crucial to one's health, happiness and productivity.

Saturate everything you do with prayer; "I can't do anything right without the Lord's help!"

Fantasy is fun, but you don't get anything to hold in your hands until you plan and go DO it.

Don't throw ideas/learning out – in about seven years it will be just the very thing you need.

You may reach Friesen for interviews via email: <mailto:Ruth1@Ruthes-SecretRoses.com> or by telephone: (306)225-2138. She lives at 110 4th Street, Hague, Saskatchewan, Canada.