

## Understanding the Bible

### Angels

Angels are the “messengers” of God. The Bible tells us all we need to know about them. In the Old Testament, the original word translated “angel” simply means “messenger”. There is also a corresponding word in the original of the New Testament which has a similar meaning. Simply they are the messengers of God.

We are given some important facts about these “messengers” of God in the following verse: “*Bless the LORD, ye his angels that excel in strength, that do his commandments, hearkening unto the voice of his word.*” Psalm 103:20.

In most places when we read of Angels we are reading about God’s immortal Heavenly messengers, as in this verse. The Angels of God are powerful glorious spirit beings. They have spiritual bodies just like Jesus has now since he rose from the dead and was made immortal, Luke 24:38, 39. Angels are equipped with God’s power, the Holy Spirit, and are able to perform all manner of miracles including the ability to make themselves unseen. The Angels act on God’s behalf to communicate with mankind. God, as Creator of the universe, is so glorious and powerful that He cannot be approached by mere men. God dwells “*in light which no man can approach unto, whom no man hath seen nor can see*” 1 Timothy 6:16. Angels do not have this limitation because they are immortal beings that live in the presence of God. They were present at the Creation of the world and have appeared many times to people on earth with a message from God.

Sometimes they showed a glorious aspect like the Angel who visited Jesus’ tomb at his resurrection. “*And behold, there was a great earthquake: for the angel of the Lord descended from heaven, and came and rolled back the stone from the door, and sat upon it. His countenance was like lightning, and his raiment white as snow; And for fear of him, the keepers did shake, and became as dead men.*” Matthew 28:2-4

At other times, they simply appeared as ordinary men. Abraham and Sarah did not recognise the three “men” who visited them as being Angels (Genesis 18), nor did Samson’s parents recognise who their visitor was (Judges 13).

On just a few occasions, the word “angels” refer to messengers who are different. These are mortal men who during earth’s history have been appointed to positions of responsibility among God’s people. The context of such verses makes it possible for us to determine if they are God’s Heavenly Angels or not. Eg. In 2 Peter 2:4 we read of “*angels that sinned*”. These are not God’s Heavenly Angels because it is impossible for there to be immortal [never-dying] sinners in God’s presence. God is “of purer eyes than to behold evil” Habakkuk 1:13.

The elders of the seven churches were called “angels” Revelation 1:20, but some of these were criticised by God, (Revelation 3:1, 2), which could not happen to God’s immortal Angels.

Sometimes Angels are called “God” when they are doing God’s work and carrying out His purpose because they work by God’s power and are God’s agents. His Name is in them. When Moses lead the Children of Israel out of Egypt, God gave him a promise of protection... “*Behold, I send an Angel before thee, to keep thee in the way, and to bring thee into the place which I have prepared. Beware of him, and obey his voice... for my name is in him*” Exodus 23:20,21. The Angel led the Children of Israel through the wilderness in a pillar of cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night, Exodus 14:19, and “*the angel of his presence saved them*”, Isaiah 63:9.

There are very many Angels. A host of them sang when Jesus was born (Luke 2:13). When Jesus was being arrested in the Garden of Gethsemane, he told Peter to put up his sword because: “*Thinkest thou that I cannot now pray to my Father, and he shall presently give me more than twelve legions of angels?*” Matthew 26:53. [‘legion’ = about 3000 to 6000]

The Angels are still at work today though unseen by man. We are given some comforting words in Psalm 34:7... *The angel of the LORD encampeth round about them that fear him.*” Their work is spoken about in Hebrews 1:13, 14... “*Unto which of the angels said he at any times, Sit on my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool? Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation?*”

The Angels have a future role when Christ returns to the earth... “*For the Son of man [Jesus] shall come in the glory of his Father with his angels; and then he shall reward every man according to his works.*”

To be made like the Angels is part of the reward in prospect for those who please God: “*They which shall be accounted worthy to obtain that world, and the resurrection from the dead, neither marry, nor are given in marriage; Neither can they die any more: for they are equal unto the angels*” Luke 20:35,36.