

Angels Among Us

Angels are God's messengers. There are many examples in the Bible of angels bringing messages to people, such as God's promise to Abraham, to the virgin Mary, and to the shepherds caring for their flock by night.

More than two thousand years ago, the angel Gabriel appeared before Mary, a young believing woman, with an astonishing proclamation. God had selected her for a very special role, unique in all the history of humankind. She, a virgin, would give birth to a son who "shall be called the Son of God," of whose kingdom "there shall be no end."

Be Not Afraid

Humans can be startled and even afraid when an angel appears. That is why the angel first says, "Do not be afraid." But when the angel departs, the believer is reassured and comforted. Our daughter Katie was the bravest person I've ever known. She was diagnosed with cancer at seven years of age. She endured many surgeries, radiation treatments, medication and therapy in her short life. During the day she enjoyed lots of attention from family and friends, but at night she was lonely and fearful. An angel kept her company through the long nights, she reported. To her, congregational singing sounded like "the angels in heaven."

Angels exist not only in Bible stories; they also protect and guide us in our daily life. Martin Luther related that angels are truly around us in this life, providing for and guiding our affairs, if only we would believe it. "For he shall give his angels charge over thee, to keep thee in all thy ways" (Ps. 91:11).

We can be assured that God's angels are protecting us every moment, from that first spark of life in our mother's womb to, indeed, "all thy ways." This is so even beyond our last breath, when we finally reach our destination in heaven.

Shining and Clad in White

The stereotypical mental image I have of an angel is a tall, handsome figure clad in pure white, with a graceful aura of quiet majesty. A typical artist's rendering would perhaps show the angel with wings, hovering above the ground. Wings or no, angels appearing in this way are mentioned in the Bible. When the women found Jesus' grave empty on Easter morning, an angel dressed in white with a face shining like lightning was sitting on the stone that had once blocked the door. The angel relayed a message of hope to the women: "He is not here: for He is risen" (Matt. 28:6).

At times, however, we may not recognize an angel for what they are. I think the Ethiopian eunuch would agree, puzzling over the book of Isaiah in his chariot by the side of the road. The Holy Spirit led Philip to talk to him, a conversation which led the seeking eunuch to see the way to heaven and believe.

After the eunuch's baptism, "when they were come up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord caught away Philip, that the eunuch saw him no more: and he went on his way rejoicing" (Acts 8:39). From the eunuch's perspective, Philip certainly must have been an angel! "Be not forgetful to entertain strangers: for thereby some have entertained angels unawares" (Heb. 13:2). These angels on earth – our brothers and sisters in living faith – are escorts that help keep us on this narrow pathway to our mutual destination. With words of encouragement, comfort or rebuke, they bring the most comforting of all messages, that of the living gospel of Christ: "Believe all your sins forgiven in Jesus' name and precious blood!"

Angels of All Ages

Human reason might lead us to think that a guiding angel would be an adult, perhaps an elder with advice formed from many decades of life experience. This may be the case, but just as often the angel comes as a little child with a simple comment or reminder. Perhaps it is your own child, or perhaps it is the youngster in the next bench over.

Jesus reminds that a child is the most important in His kingdom on earth and has a special link to the Heavenly Father: "Take heed that ye despise not one of these little ones; for I say unto you, That in heaven their angels do always behold the face of my Father which is in heaven" (Matt. 18:10).

Our heavenly Father uses his angels in heaven and those angels that live among us to bring messages, support and comfort as we travel through our temporal life. We thank Him for this and all the gifts He bestows!

Brent Huhta

God Cares for His Own through Angel Escorts

The clay road was red and dusty under my feet. The tropical sun's morning rays were already warming the earth, edging the day toward the hot afternoon ahead. I was not alone. My believing African escort, who had labeled himself my bodyguard, walked alongside me.

As we ambled along, we visited. Sometimes we were trailed by laughing children, other times it was just the two of us. I was more than 7,000 miles from home in a country and culture that was strange and new. Yet in the midst of my worries and uncertainty, it was comforting to have my African escort nearby. We uplifted each other. Even though the label of "bodyguard" had been assigned lightheartedly, to me he felt like an angel. In his company, I was secure.

Intermediaries between Heaven and Earth

The Bible comforts us with the fact that angels do indeed exist both as intermediaries between the realms of heaven and earth, and also as earthly escorts on our journey (cf. Heb. 13:2). Although experiences in our time with angels of the “supernatural” type are exceedingly rare, there are numerous accounts of such throughout the Bible, from the book of Genesis to the Revelation of John. For example, many experiences with heavenly angels during the dawning moments of the New Covenant are described in the Gospels and in the Book of Acts. These confirm to us that God, in certain times and in certain places, has accomplished His work through heavenly angels according to His purposes.

As travelers in faith, we often hear and sing about another kind of angel. These angels are our earthly companions who, through faith and mutual endeavor, take steps hand in hand with us on our journey. Have you, dear child of God, met such an angel? When doubts were heavy and sin pressed on you, were there angels nearby? Can we not rejoice that earthly angels were able to relate greetings from heaven?

God Sent an Angel Escort

Time passes, bringing a ceaseless flow of change to creation. Yet even after a decade, faded thoughts of that walk over reddish-clay earth still come to me. I lay on a hospital bed, hoping and praying for recovery after life-threatening, emergency surgery. My wife has been by my side every moment, day and night, but has finally taken a few hours to go home to see the children.

In life, moments of worry, sorrow or despair occur along the way. This is one such moment: I’m alone now, and I’m down, way down. The room is so chilly. I close my eyes and try to doze.

A moment later, I hear someone enter the room. I open my eyes, and though my vision is dim, I see a nurse approaching my bedside. The nurse gently and quietly spreads some heated blankets over my legs and feet, the warmth quickly penetrating. It feels good, but I’m still down.

I look up at the nurse. His face lights with the joy of serving. In weakness, I beg the nurse to reassure me with the gospel, and vivid memories of the dusty road come flooding back. Through no strength of his own, the same angel who walked with me along those dusty African roads ten years earlier, preaches uplifting words: “All your sins are forgiven in Jesus’ name and blood.” Joy and peace return. God cares for His own through angel escorts.

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John Stewart

Discussion Points:

1. Psalm 103:20 says: “Bless the LORD, ye his angels, that excel in strength, that do his commandments, hearkening unto the voice of his word.” Whom do you suppose the angels are, in the writer’s eyes, and why?
2. The writer to the Hebrews speaks much of angels. Read the first two chapters. How does the writer compare Jesus with angels?
3. What other examples of angels are there in the Bible?
4. Have you ever experienced help or a message from an angel in your life?