

INTRODUCTION

I am very excited to begin today our series on angels. I am hoping that at the end of this series you will be much more informed about what God's word has to say about these special supernatural helpers. I first became informed about angels a few years ago when I read Billy Graham's excellent book, *Angels, God's Secret Agents*. In his book, Dr. Graham relates the story of missionary John Pollock and his wife, who went to the New Hebrides Islands in the South Pacific. As they arrived at the island, they were the first white missionaries the natives had ever seen. The witch doctor was afraid of them and told the tribe they were there to kill their babies. So, on that first evening, the natives surrounded the missionary's hut, preparing to kill them. All night long John and his wife stayed on their knees in prayer and the natives never attacked. As time went on, they learned the language and they won the trust of the people and many of them came to know Christ. The tribe's chieftain became a Christian and John asked him the following question. "We've always wondered why on that first night when you surrounded us with your spears you didn't attack." And the chief said, "Where did you get all those men?" John said, "It was only my wife and myself." The chief said, "Oh, no. All that evening we saw large men with swords in their hands, surrounding your hut and we were afraid so we never attacked." Billy Graham, others and myself believe this is just one of thousands of manifestations of God's special secret agents—his angels. This month we are going to learn what the Bible has to say about angels. I'm going to ask you to forget a lot of what you may have heard from folklore or Hollywood or just your imagination and let's focus on what God's word says about angels. Look with me here in Hebrews 1.

Hebrews is all about the superiority of Jesus; how He is superior to angels; how He is superior to Moses; how He is superior to the law and how He is superior to Melchizedek.

Hebrews 1:13-14. "To which of the angels did God ever say, 'Sit at my right hand until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet.'? Are not all angels ministering spirits sent to serve those who will inherit salvation?"

God told only His precious son, Jesus, that he would sit at His right hand. If you want a quick phrase that tells us who angels are and what they do "they are spirits sent to serve the saints." There's a few "s's" for you. They are spirits sent to serve the saints. Now if you ask me if I have you ever encountered an angel, I believe I have. If you ask me if I have ever physically *seen* an angel I have to say to you, "I'm not sure." I hope you would answer that you are not sure either. Why? Flip over to the last chapter of Hebrews, chapter 13. There is a fascinating passage of scripture that tells us we might have encountered angels and not even been aware of it.

Hebrews 13:2. "Do not forget to entertain strangers, for by so doing some people have entertained angels without knowing it."

The King James Version says, "entertained angels unawares." You may have encountered angels and not even known it and I might have as well.

When it comes to the topic and subject of angels, there seems to be two extremes, as with a lot of things. On one hand, many of us are ignorant about angels. On the other hand, some people are

obsessed with angels. Most of us would probably fit in this camp, because I want to confess to you that for much of my Christian life I was totally ignorant on the subject of angels. You have heard my testimony. I grew up in a southern Baptist church and have been going to one all of my life. I went to RAs and Sunbeams and Training Union and Wednesday nights and I don't ever recall one time hearing a sermon on angels. I went to a fine Baptist University where I received a good education. I don't ever remember hearing one teaching about angels—and I majored in religion! I did seven years of postgraduate work on the seminary level and I have to be honest. In the seven years that I was at seminary, I never heard *one* professor say anything about angels and I love my seminary. I even went back to my theology book and I looked in the index and there was not even a listing for angels. There seems to be what amounts to almost a satanic intent to keep God's people ignorant of the wonderful subject of angels.

A few years ago after reading Billy Graham's book, I became interested and I had done a study on angels a couple of times before and every time I would present it, I learned more about it. Some time ago I checked my Concordance software and printed out every verse that mentions angel, angels, spirits, cherubim and seraphim. There were about 40 pages, single-spaced printed out! I had all the scriptures in the Bible that mention angels, almost 500 scriptures. I was surprised and you may be too. I didn't know the Bible had that much to say about angels. Most of us have been ignorant about it.

On the other hand, there are some today who are so obsessed with angels that it becomes something that causes them to go overboard. There is a fascination in America today about angels. *USA Today* had a recent cover issue about angels. This month the *Ladies Home Journal* has an article on angels. There is tremendous interest in the secular world about angels. Sophie Burnham published two best-selling books secular books, *The Angel Book* and *Angel Letters*—and the secular world out there is fascinated. The problem is the New Age Religion has embraced the idea of angels, because New Age is “anything goes” anyway. They step over the line and start talking about “the angel within” and “getting in touch with your angel,” which to them is nothing but a channeling spirit they use—very satanic! There is a lot of misunderstanding and misconception about angels out there.

There's a great commercial interest in angels as well. There is a store called “Everything Angels” in Denver, Colorado that is ready to franchise across America. You'll probably be seeing them in malls here in Texas. All they sell are angel figurines and angel pins. Those things are selling like hotcakes. It's trendy. It's the fad and some people have become obsessed with it. As with a lot of spiritual issues, the truth remains between these two extremes. Let's not be ignorant. Let's learn what the Bible says about them but not become obsessed with them. Let's learn what's God's word says.

I am basically a biblical Christian. Where the Bible speaks, I believe it. Where the Bible is silent, I am silent. I want to ask you throughout this study of angels to commit yourself to believe what God's Word says about angels, not what you read in a magazine article, not what somebody says happened to them, but what God's Word says about it. So, today I want to give an informative teaching kind of message. I want to separate the fantasy from the facts. We're going to study five of the fantasies the world holds and compare and contrast them to the facts of the Word.

FANTASY #1: ANGELS ARE HUMAN BEINGS WHO HAVE DIED

Fantasy number one: Angels are human beings who have died. A lot of people out there think angels are people who have died and gone to heaven and somehow got wings and became angels. Here's the biblical fact: *Angels are spiritual beings created by God.* Where did we get the idea angels are human beings who died? From a lot of folklore and a lot of Hollywood. A lot of us got our doctrine on angels more from Hollywood than from God's word. This month I'm probably going to watch, "It's a Wonderful Life" again, because I love it don't you? In that movie Jimmy Stewart plays George Bailey, who gets in financial trouble and finds himself on the edge of a bridge. He has decided to jump into the icy water and take his life so his family can receive his life insurance policy. At just the right moment his "guardian angel" comes along. (played by Henry Travers) He is a bumbling kind of a guy whose name is Clarence. Clarence sets himself out to save George Bailey and to prove to him that life without George Bailey really wouldn't be very good at all.

You know the rest of the story; how at the end Clarence says he is trying to earn his wings—he is only an angel, second class. He has to earn his wings, because he is a guy who died in the 1800s and has been working for years to earn his wings. At the end of the movie, when everybody is gathered around the Christmas tree and the townsfolk bring in money to help George pay his debts, they are standing beside the Christmas tree singing—and this is about the time when it becomes a 2 or 3 tissue movie, if you know what I mean—and the bell at the top of the tree rings. And little Jujy says, "Teacher says every time a bell rings an angel gets its wings. Jimmy Stewart looks up and says, "Attaboy, Clarence!" Isn't that great? Folks, that's Hollywood, not God's word. Sometimes well-meaning Christians say something like that. They'll have a mother or a father who died and they'll say, "Well, God has another angel." I know what you mean; your loved one is in heaven, but God does not have another angel; He has another saint who's died and gone to heaven. Sometimes families have a baby who dies and they'll say, "God has another little angel." No. You have to separate your mind from the fact that angels are not human beings that died. You hear some of these so-called stories like, "I had an encounter with my Aunt Gertrude who died 12 years ago and she came to me as an angel." You can be sure when it is somebody they recognize, it is either a deceiving spirit or they are deceived, because angels are *not* human beings who died. They are, as the Bible says, "spiritual beings created by God."

Colossians 1:16 tells us (as many other scriptures do) that Jesus created everything. "For by him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities" That is a word, powers and principalities, that has to do with the angelic rankings and realms and divisions it says, "All things were created by him and for him." The Bible says God knows the number of the angels. We don't know how many angels there are but we believe there is a set number. How many? We don't know. John says in Revelation 5:11 he saw 10,000 x 10,000 angels—that's a hundred million—and then he said thousands upon thousands. There is a mind-boggling number of angels God has created but the Bible never speaks about an angel getting old or of an angel dying. You never see "baby angels." In fact, we know from what Jesus said that angels do not reproduce, because he said when we go to heaven we will be like the angels in the sense that we will not have to marry for human procreation. So, the angels are special spiritual beings created by God. Loose your mind from the fantasy that they are loved ones who died and are trying to earn their wings.

FANTASY #2: ANGELS APPEAR AS CHUBBY BABIES WITH WINGS

Fantasy number two: Angels appear as chubby babies with wings. That's the fantasy of Hollywood that they are chubby babies with wings. Here's the biblical fact: *Angels most often appear as ordinary men.* I don't know where we get the idea that angels are these precious little babies like "Cupid, draw back your bow and let your arrow go." Just this past week the ladies in our church got together and they showed their different angel figurines. My wife collects those too and we love them. I want to tell you there is nothing wrong with that but I think when we really get to see all the angels, we may be a little surprised. We all thought they were little babies with little wings when the Bible says most of the time they appear as ordinary men.

Where do we get the idea of wings to start with? The Bible teaches there are different kinds of angels. There is one archangel: Michael. In John Milton's 17-volume epic, *Paradise Lost* that most of us have never read, he says there are *two* archangels Gabriel and Michael—but he is wrong. The Bible only says Michael is the archangel. Then, there are just what we would call—for lack of a better word—God's holy angels. You might want to call them "ordinary angels," except there is nothing ordinary about them. They don't have wings, they just appear as men. When Abraham encountered these three angels, they were just three men. In fact, he thought they were men. When Manoah, who was the father-to-be of Samson, encountered an angel, he thought it was a man. He did not know until later it was an angel. All throughout the Bible we see angels appearing simply as men and the only way we know they are angels is by the message they give from God or by the fact that sometimes either their clothing or their faces are shining with the Shekinah glory of God.

So where did we get the idea of wings to start with? I'm talking about different kinds of angels. There are certain kinds of angels in the Bible called "cherubim." *Cherub* is the singular and in Hebrew when you put an *-im* on it, that makes it plural. In Exodus 3, we are told that the figures of the cherubim were over the Ark of the Covenant and Ezekiel has much to say about the cherubim. They have four wings. In Isaiah 6, there is another kind of angel, seraphim. When Isaiah sees these seraphim in the Bible in the temple, they have six wings. Just because the cherubim and the seraphim have wings doesn't mean those ordinary holy angels have wings. So, don't get the idea that angels are little bitty, chubby babies with wings—most of the time they appear as ordinary men.

FANTASY #3: ANGELS ARE SWEET CREATURES WHO SING AND PLAY HARPS

Fantasy number three: Some people believe angels are sweet creatures who sing and play harps. Here's the biblical fact: Angels are most often warriors who hold swords. After the first service, a guy came up to me and said, "You really scared me on that point, because I thought you said 'angels were lawyers.'" I said angels are *warriors* who hold swords. If you learn anything during this series, I hope you will stop saying the phrase, "sweet as an angel." Have you ever noticed sometimes a parent will look at a newborn and say, "Oh, the sweet little angel." That's just not based on the Bible. We get the idea that they are real sweet creatures who sing and play harps.

First, the Bible never says they ever play harps. Are you ready for this? I'm going to burst your

bubble so get ready: The Bible never says angels sing. A few years ago I was reading W.A. Criswell's commentary on Revelation and I read that statement and the book of Revelation has more to say about angels than any book. I said, "That's just not true" and I set out to prove his statement was wrong. After research all through the scriptures, I did not, nor have I found to this day a verse that *ever* mentioned the angels singing. Now you are saying, "Why are you trying to spoil my Christmas spirit? We sing about 'Angels we have heard on high sweetly singing' Do you mean I have to change that to 'Angels we have heard on high sweetly speaking?'" Well, I just want to tell you the Bible never says angels sing.

Some people look at Job 38:7 at the Creation and say, "Well, the Bible says 'the morning stars sang at the Creation.'" Well some say that's the angels, but most commentators say it is just the personification of nature, just like when the Psalms say, 'the trees of the field shall clap their hands.' Job, 38 says in the very next section of that verse "and the angels shouted for joy!" I know what some of you are saying. "Well, Brother David, what about Luke chapter 2, when the shepherds are out there in the field and Jesus was born? Didn't the angels come and sing, 'Gloria on earth Glory to God in the highest and on earth peace, goodwill toward men?'" No. We always sing it in the musicals right? But the Bible says, "they spake that." Any student who took Greek knows one of the first Greek verbs you conjugate is the word, *lego* which means "to speak" and that's the very word used there. What's the significance of that? I believe, according to the scriptures, the only people who really sing and have the right and the responsibility to sing are God's saints, the born-again. Because angels have never been lost, they have never been saved; they don't know the joy of salvation. But we do! You say, "What about Revelation? Doesn't it say that the angels will gather around the throne and they will sing to the Lamb on the throne?" It says they *speak* their praise but the saints sing a new song. I believe sometimes there are angels in these worship services. I believe they are here. I think sometimes they might slip up to some of us knotheads who don't sing the way we should and nudge us and say, "C'mon sing! I wish I could sing!" What a privilege it is to sing praises to God! Based on everything I have just said to you, I cannot say categorically angels don't sing. If you can find a verse in the Bible, I'll be glad to believe it, but there is not one in there I have ever found! All I am saying is the Bible never says angels sing. We may get to heaven and they sing and if they do, I'll be the first one to come in here and say, "Folks, I apologize." All I am saying is in the word of God we have, it never says they sing. As I said earlier, where the Bible speaks, I speak; where the Bible is silent, I have to be silent. I believe the saints have the privilege of singing.

Angels are most often warriors who hold swords. Angels are not "sweet little creatures." They are mighty warriors. The first time we see angels in the Bible is in Genesis 3, when God places an angel at the gate of the Garden of Eden with a flaming sword to prevent Adam and Eve from coming back. All throughout the word of God we see them as soldiers. When Jesus talked about angels, He said, "I could call twelve legions of angels." Legion is a word for a military division. In Isaiah 37:36, it says that in one night one angel killed 185,000 Assyrian soldiers. These are mighty warriors we are talking about. If you enjoy reading, I would encourage every one of you to get Frank Peretti's first two novels *This Present Darkness* and *Piercing the Darkness*. They are very good reading based on the truth of invisible spiritual warfare going on around us. I encourage you to read them and your eyes would be opened to a whole new world of the role of God's mighty angels.

FANTASY #4: ALL ANGELS ARE GOOD AND OBEY GOD

Fantasy number four: Some people believe all angels are good and obey God, whereas the fact of the matter is some angels are evil and oppose God. There are only three angels named in the Bible: Michael, the archangel, Gabriel (by the way the Bible never says he is going to blow a trumpet that's out of New Orleans jazz not the Bible) and the third angel is Lucifer, who rebelled against God and was cast out. Now we call him Satan, the devil, and he has a lot of fallen angels we often call demons, evil spirits. So you have God's holy angels and you have the fallen angels. That's why in Matthew 25:41, Jesus said Hell was prepared for the devil and his angels. Angels have a will and they can choose and some of them chose to rebel against God. Everybody here has heard sermons on Satan and on demons. I just think it's not fair. Let's give attention to God and his holy angels! I will never preach a whole sermon on Satan, because he is not worth it. Let's focus instead on God's good messengers, His angels.

FANTASY #5: ANGELS MUST BE SEEN TO BE REAL

Here's fantasy number five. Some people think angels must be seen to be real. The Bible says they are usually invisible and it is only at times we are enabled to see them. I'd like to see an angel and you probably would too. I heard a funny story about a pastor who was studying about angels and he said, "Lord, I'd just like to see an angel. Can you send me one?" POOF! There was an angel in his study. The angel said, "Well, here I am. Would you like to take my picture?" The pastor looked around there and pulled out his old camera and took a picture of the angel. He rushed the pictures down to the drugstore and couldn't wait until they got developed. He got his pictures back and looked at them and he was so disappointed because the pictures were all dull and blurred and you couldn't see a thing. The moral of that story is, "The spirit was willing, but the flash was weak!" I know that's a groaner, but the point is I think the spirits are sometimes more willing than we are.

I'll tell you why I believe we don't see angels more often with our visual eyes than some people do: It's because I'm afraid I would do (and you would do probably) what the apostle John did in the book of Revelation. He fell down to worship an angel! The angel said, "Oh, no! Don't worship me! Worship God only!" I'm afraid if you saw an angel, you would be so obsessed, that you would want to fall down and worship that angel. While we study angels, our attention must completely be drawn back to the Lord Jesus Christ and to God the Father, who has blessed us with his angels. You don't have to see them. The fact is angels usually work as invisible helpers.

Why we can't see angels? Let's face it. Our human perception is not all that highly developed, even when you compare it to God's other creatures. For instance, most of us don't smell very good—I don't mean personally—I mean our sense of olfactory perception is not as highly developed as other animals. If there was a dog in this room, he would be able to detect every person's individual odor. Aren't you glad you are not a dog! I'm just saying our sensory perception is not as good as even a dog when it comes to smelling. Our sensory perception is not as good as other creatures when it comes to hearing. There are other creatures that can hear ultrasound we just cannot hear. There are animals that can hear infrasound, which are low sonic waves we can't hear. Our hearing range is limited to a narrow band. The same is true visually. There are some of God's creatures that can see so much better than we can, even with our

glasses. A hawk, an eagle, even a housefly, which has over a hundred eyes is able to detect things differently than we can. Just because we can't see them with our eyes, that's not our fault. It's just the way we are made.

2 Kings 6, is a story all of you need to learn as we are studying angels. It's the story of Elisha, the prophet, who gathered out his servants against the Aramean army. Here are Elisha and his servants and a whole army of Assyrian soldiers against them. The servant was very afraid and he said, "Oh, what are we going to do, master?" Elisha said, "They that be with us are more than they that be with them!" I can imagine the servant said, "What?? It's the two of us and look at all of them hundreds and thousands of them. What are you talking about?" Elisha prayed a prayer. He said, "God, open the eyes of my servant and the Bible says that his eyes were opened and the Bible says he saw that the mountains were full of flaming chariots and horses and warriors. Those angelic warriors were there all along right? It was just that in that moment God granted Elisha's servant the ability to see them. I don't want you to develop angelic paranoia, but I happen to sincerely believe that even as we are gathered right here, if God opened our spiritual eyes, we would be amazed at what we could see even in this room! I believe there are angels here. Our eyes just aren't open to them. The Bible says in Psalm 91:11, "God shall give his angels charge over you." God sends his angels to help you and protect you and to sometimes deliver messages but they usually do it as invisible helpers.

Some of you have been sending me stories and I will be sharing them this month. I hope others of you will write down your stories. We have a man in our church who said, "Brother David, there is no doubt in my mind that angels exist. They are real. I have experienced their presence. My wife and I were on our way home from visiting our daughter and her family in Rapid City, South Dakota. We were returning through Wyoming, Colorado and New Mexico and the scenery was breathtaking. My wife would occasionally ask me, "Where are we now?" I had the map on the car seat between us and when I picked up the map to show her where we were, I took my eyes off the road and the car ran off the pavement toward a canyon. When I looked up all I saw was a steel road sign post in front of me. At that moment some force turned the steering wheel to get us back on the pavement. The car stood up on two wheels and then came back down on all four wheels as I straightened out on the highway. Just as I regained control, a truck came over the hill and had it been three seconds earlier, we would have been broadsided. Had it not been for my guardian angel, the force that took control of the car, I would have run off the road into a canyon or been broadsided by a truck."

Do I believe in angels? I sure do! One reason, I have seen the way some of you drive and you are alive today. If you will just start looking around, God's angels are there.

There was a lady in my church in Gardendale, Alabama, who worked in downtown Birmingham in a big office building. She pulled in to the parking garage one afternoon and there was a car in front of her and a car behind her and her car was on the sidewalk in downtown Birmingham. She had her window down with her parking card in her hand, waiting to pull up to put it in to activate the gate. She heard a commotion and on the sidewalk in front of a bank, a man had run out apparently after a robbery, and there were some people who were trying to tackle him and he was fighting with them. The man had a gun in his hand and he shot down into the pavement. The sound of the gunshot got everybody's attention. The man turned and started running down the

sidewalk, and of course her car was right there on the sidewalk. She couldn't go forward she couldn't go back she was frozen with fear! She said the man looked at her with her window down and the parking card in her hand and he must have thought she had a weapon in her hand because he ran up to the open window of her car, pointed the gun in her face and pulled the trigger three times. Click! Click! Click! Then, he jumped over the hood of her car and started running down the street. By that time some Birmingham police officers caught up with him. They arrested him and as one of the police officers was taking her statement she told him what happened. He examined the gun and he said, "Ma'am, I don't understand. There are six bullets in this gun. One of them has been discharged and the other bullets seem to be okay." He said, "Lady you are the luckiest lady I have ever met!" She said, "Sir. Luck had nothing to do with it." She believes somehow God's angels protected her.

Do you want to know how to make the angels of God really celebrate today and rejoice? Jesus said, "There is joy in the presence of angels over one person who repents." If you are here today or you are watching on television and you have never accepted Jesus as your personal Savior, if today you will say "No" to your sin and "Yes" to Jesus and trust him, there will be a holy celebration that takes place!

OUTLINE

Fantasies we have about Angels:

1. ANGELS ARE HUMAN BEINGS WHO HAVE DIED
2. ANGELS APPEAR AS CHUBBY BABIES WITH WINGS
3. ANGELS ARE SWEET CREATURES WHO SING AND PLAY HARPS
4. ALL ANGELS ARE GOOD AND OBEY GOD
5. ANGELS MUST BE SEEN TO BE REAL



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To put it in Texas terms, “You’re mighty welcome to use any and all of my ingredients; just make your own chili!”

For the Joy...
Pastor David Dykes