

SE011308

CROSSING OVER

2. Angels and Demons

Look at our culture's fascination with angels.

On TV:

- There was Touched By An Angel.
- And a while back Michael Landon's Highway to Heaven
- Recently the HBO show "Saving Grace" has Holly Hunter visited by a tobacco chewing angel named "Earl".
 - o angels are good for ratings!

In Movies:

- In City of Angels (Nicolas Cage, Meg Ryan), we realize angels can decide to be human if they fall in love.
- Michael John Travolta played an overweight, crabby, chain-smoking, beer-bellied being that can do miracles.
- In Dogma, two angels who have been banished to Wisconsin try to escape to New Jersey in hopes of finding a loophole that will let them back into heaven.
- The Preacher's Wife featured an angel who is a recycled human.

In Media: Newsweek reports that

- 13% of us claim to have seen or felt the presence of an angel.
- 69% of Americans believe in the existence of angels and
- 46% believe they have a guardian angel.

In Religion:

- Angels are universally acknowledged.
- Angels appear in every culture and religion in the world from ancient times to modern.

So, do angels really exist? Billy Graham once said,

- I am convinced that heavenly beings exist.
 - o I do not believe in angels because someone has told me about a dramatic visitation from an angel...
 - o I do not believe in angels because I have ever seen one - because I haven't.
 - I believe in angels because the Bible says there are angels; and I [have others reasons to believe] the Bible to be the true Word of God.

That summarizes my view pretty nicely – I don't have any expertise to talk about this today. I mean, I could put forward a smorgasbord of the culture's theories about angels and we could all just sort of pick and chose at random:

- Most might choose the idea that angels exist.
- Some would choose to believe dead people turn into angels.
- Some would choose to believe that angels are impersonal psychic "forces".

- Some might even accept the idea that angels are really aliens from another planet.

But rather than do that, today we're going to talk about angels from the Bible. Some ask what an ancient book has to do with your experience of the supernatural in the here and now? Well, I'm not denying anyone's experience... but the question is how do you UNDERSTAND your experience?

My actual, lived experience of the world I live on is that the earth is flat. If in reality, it is not flat. So, do I want to base all my beliefs on my experiences? See,

- maybe the truth of any matter is in direct contradiction to what I've experienced.
- Maybe my experience doesn't tell the whole story.
- Maybe my experiences could mislead me into a false conclusion.

To know, I have to rely on more than just experience. I have to investigate outside authority to get the full picture.

OK, why would we consider the Bible an authority on the topic of angels? Well if you want to find out if there's good reasons to trust the Bible, come to Investigations and we'll talk about it. But for our discussion today, that'll be our starting point. (If you want to explore this further, we're having a little Q & A called, "This May Sound Weird But..." on Tuesday, Feb. 5th at 7pm. To just explore your experiences and questions in this area of the paranormal.)

Let me summarize the Bible's view of angels in story format. This is the story of angels:

The Bible says, God made angels in vast ages past – before he made human beings. Why did he make the angels? For the same reason a person makes a mirror. That is, angels were made to reflect back to God his own likeness and being. Now you may think it's sort of egocentric to make something that will reflect your own likeness, but isn't that why you had children? Was that an egocentric thing or was it a gift?

See, it was a gift for the angels to share in who God was, it was a generous thing to create as God did. So he made them with moral purity and magnificent abilities. They are pure spirits, made on a higher plane than the physical – though they may at times appear in physical form. They live in the light of God's presence, majesty, wisdom, beauty, purity, and light.

But something terrible happened...

In long ages past, we are told there was a rebellion. God had made one angel, a lead angel and he made him so magnificent, so like God in glory and beauty and power that this angel began to wonder why he should be servant and not master. In his heart he desired God's spot.

In Ezek 28:14-17 (refers to a human king but also traditionally to God's highest creation):
You were anointed as a mighty angelic guardian, for so I ordained you. You were on the holy mount of God... You were blameless in your ways from the day you were created till wickedness was found in you... Your heart became proud on account of

your beauty, and you corrupted your wisdom because of your splendor... So I drove you in disgrace from the mount of God, and I expelled you, O guardian cherub, from among the stones of fire.

This angel, this magnificent, beautiful creature became what we know as the devil or Satan. Originally created good, he had designs on God's throne and so pride the Bible says, was his downfall. And there was a coup – a war – in heaven. As many as a third of all the angels joined the one they called the Morning Star in his war with God. How many is that? We don't know. The Bible says there are an innumerable host, numbering them 10,000 times 10,000. So we can speculate that they are in the hundreds of millions – a vast host called demons – a name that means "WASTE".

So you can see, that angels and demons are really the same thing: spirits God created to reflect his glory. But some now are twisted and their wills bent to that of their dark Lord. All this takes place before humanity appears on earth.

Now, God has a war on his hands. How's He going to fix this problem? Rather than judge those spirits right away, God decides to do something else. In his un-searchable wisdom he decides to begin another creation project by sculpting and creating animal forms of flesh and bone, and into the highest of these creatures, people, he pours his image.

It's similar to how he poured his glory into the angels, but different. It's on a lower scale. This time, instead of making pure spirits, he made "half breeds". CS Lewis says, God made us amphibious: We're at home here in a physical world, in space and time, but we're also made for heaven. Which is why regardless of our upbringing or culture, you notice us half-breeds are incurably spiritual, be it paganism, Buddhism, or communism.

But why would God make half breeds this time? Let me answer with this: When the first Boeing 707 took a test flight over Lake Washington in 1954, everyone knew this plane was pretty cool and was going to revolutionize air travel. But then, test pilot Tex Johnson did something no one expected. The huge, commercial jet did a barrel roll over Lake Washington!

That risky maneuver wasn't part of the script but what the pilot accomplished was to sell the plane, to show off it's amazing attributes, to increase the glory of the plane, by putting it into a risky, challenging situation.

In a sense when God made people, that wasn't expected either, and it seemed hugely risky to create spirit beings encased in flesh.

- Surely these half breeds will rebel just like the higher spirit creatures!

But you see, his intent was to put himself in a risky situation and so highlight his amazing attributes to all powers in the universe. **To increase his own glory.** That through the lower creature, God could demonstrate to the higher creatures, what he is like.

Therefore, WE humans are the means by which God is teaching a lesson to the universe, especially to fallen spirits who rebelled against him in ages past. We're part of something cosmic that is happening far beyond us. Our very existence is part of a much larger plan.

So the angels, both good and bad are looking in on what God is doing on earth. The fallen angels spy an opportunity. Satan looks at earth and these half spirit, half animal creatures and says to himself, here are more recruits for my war against God. This is how I get to God... no direct confrontation but by marring his image in the lesser creature I stab at him.

So there in Eden, the Bible says, at the dawn of mankind, we find not just humans, we find also the devil signified in the Serpent. And what does he do with Eve? He tempts her to eat the forbidden fruit. How?

- **He first made her question God.** He put doubt about God in her mind. Did God really put limits on this tree? Is anything really out of bounds? I'm just exploring the terrain here, asking questions... He tried to cloud her mind, muddy her thinking about right and wrong.
- **Second he accused God of lying.** When Eve mentioned that God told them they would die if they ate the fruit, he said, no way! You won't die! God lied, God didn't tell you the whole the story.
- **Third he accused God of withholding good things** from his creatures. He said, "God knows that when you disobey him and eat the fruit you'll become just like him, knowing everything, both good and evil."

SO this is his strategy even today. To strike at the only "weakness" of God: namely, God LOVES. How is that a weakness? Well, because of His great love, God will not coerce His creatures to love Him in return. Satan jumps on this as an open door. That means he's may draw them away if he can.

Now it may be that you have thought of this as a sort of big charade, like a drama with a prearranged script that the Devil and God worked out in advance. Like a WWF match! Friend, I want you to consider for a moment that the Devil is earnest! **He thinks he's going to win.** If he can draw all people to himself, at least he can go down saying, God, me and all these millions of dark angels and humans stand in defiance of you and your rule. We stand as rebels to the end, we reject your leadership, no matter how benevolent you say it is, we stand as free agents, even if it means death or hell, because to live as your slaves would be a hell for us.

And so Satan and his minions have been involved in an aggressive recruiting campaign ever since. This war is playing out in the heavenly realms and we are a part of it – whether we want to be or not. We are caught up in this cosmic story of warfare, like the common Iraqi people are caught up in a war not of their choosing.

How are we involved in this war? * Fallen angels – as spirits – can speak to our spirits. They can whisper thoughts into our minds to:

- put God in doubt
- say that God's lying
- claim he's withholding all the good stuff, the fun.

Ever had that happen? You say,

Rick, I'm not evil and even if there was a devil I wouldn't be drawn to him. I'm not enslaved to the devil.

But friends, you misunderstand the nature of the battle. No human made in the image of God is drawn to **evil** first. FIRST, as with Satan, we are drawn to the false prize of personal autonomy – THAT leads to all kinds of evil: lust, selfishness, cunning, control, abuse, lies, exploitation, blame shifting. But first, it's just this:

I'm want to total autonomy!

Now as this creation experiment moves forward, it must have looked at times to the angels like it was a miserable failure. What a mistake!

- They all seem to be falling away!
- They're so weak, so frail, so corrupted from being ruled by glands and chemicals that all of them seem to be joining the enemy whether they want to or not.

BUT THEN, God did something awesome. God decided to encase **himself** in flesh. Jesus Christ was blood, sinew, tissue, atoms. And all the fullness of God dwelt in him. And this perfect God man died on the cross, and in so doing, mysteriously, a divine transference was accomplished.

- he died in his uncorrupted flesh, a death that somehow heals our corrupted flesh at war with God.
- AND he rose again to seal the eventual defeat of all spiritual powers of evil.
 - o So that now, a transference can happen if we half-breeds will fully identify with the God-man, Jesus.
 - o Every one who is willing to crucify, to kill our old fleshly person, by repenting of a past lived apart from God... will have our spirit's reborn, forgiven, redeemed, and made fit for heaven.

You see, not only are we different from the angels in that we are encased in flesh, we are different in that we are **redeemable**. We can be fixed. Humans can be restored. In fact, the Bible says, we the lesser creatures whose spirits are redeemed will be exalted over the higher creatures, the angels, and we will judge the fallen ones in eternity some day.

The Bible says, the angels observe the incarnation of Christ and the good news of spiritual rebirth and it says they "LONG TO LOOK INTO THESE THINGS."

So even some get obsessed with angels, the truth is, it's they who are looking at US with amazement!

They must wonder:

- how can we be spirits while still being animals?
- how can these spirits, trapped as we are in flesh, commune with God who is pure spirit?
- And how can God who is pure spirit, encase himself in flesh?
- And how can these half-breeds corrupted utterly by their flesh, be reborn in their spirits?
- How can a dead spirit, be made alive again so that God fills the very house of flesh that was corrupted?

This blows them away... great as they are, they can never understand Redemption. It's truly stunning to them that we can be fixed, because apparently, they cannot. Those who NEVER rebelled never needed fixing. Those that do rebel, it's irreversible, and final. Why? Why can't demons or Satan turn back to God? We're not told why.

- Maybe it has to do with the fact that they require no faith to apprehend God, they saw God's Glory clearly and chose to reject him,
- Maybe it's because they never had to look at him through a corrupted body that's drawn toward spiritual entropy.
- Maybe it's because they had no tempter, whereas, we had someone pulling us to the dark side.

Nevertheless the Bible says, angels long to look into these things. It seems the angels are blown away by God's amazing mercy, the fact that he made a Way! In mercy on Adam's helpless race.

We might be just as awed if we discovered that God had made a way for ants or mosquitoes to live forever. Wouldn't that blow you away? We would have a fresh view of how deep his mercy runs, how great he is, how low he stoops to save. So no wonder the angels are found

- at Jesus birth, and
- at the tomb after his resurrection, and
- helping the church.

They've gladly taken a new role... to help us reject Satan and be restored. Heb 1:14:
Are not all angels ministering spirits sent to serve those who will inherit salvation?

They are singing, Jesus said, every time another person rejects the lies of the father of lies and responds to the Creator's redemption offer. Jesus said they throw a party! They'll never experience salvation, but they are seeing the full depth of God's power and mercy unfold over long ages of human history and they stand in awe.

Angels good or bad are awesome creatures and the Bible knows nothing of fat cupids with wings and harps or red imps with pitchforks. In Scripture, the visitation of an angel is terrifying; it has to begin by saying "Fear not." The angels in our art and movies look as if it were going to say,
"Sup, dude?"

If we were to look at an angel in full glory – after we peed our pants – we'd probably want to bow down and worship it... but that would be a huge mistake. When John did that in the Bible an angel rebuked him, saying,
don't do it, worship God.

They would never want you to pray to them, but to pray to God. They would find it strange that people who have the chance to invite God himself to dwell in their remade hearts would ever find it necessary to go to someone other than God.

This doesn't mean we could never ask God for the protection of his angels. The Bible says, angels act ON ASSIGNMENT to guard and protect us. Psalm 91:9:

If you make the Most High your dwelling - even the Lord who is my refuge - he will command his angels concerning you to guard you in all your ways.

If you're seeking God, wouldn't you like to make a promise like that your own?

True story... In a Chinese city in the 1950's bandits had surrounded a mission where American Missionary Amy Monsen had been serving the needs of sick and frightened refugees. As they heard armed men gathered outside, Miss Monsen gathered them together and they prayed. All night long, they heard gun fire, and screaming but the mission compound was untouched.

In the morning, people from three different neighborhoods asked Miss Monsen:
who were those four guards, three sitting and one standing, quietly watching from the top of your house all night long?

She said,
there was no one on the housetop.

They said,
we saw it with our own eyes!

There is a war going on in the unseen realms, friends. Most of us, it's not so much a matter of believing that, but of not wanting to be on the wrong side. The Bible says, simply resist the devil, and he will flee, draw near to God and he will draw near to you.