

A STUDY IN ANGELS

Roger Ellsworth say that the Bible mentions angels about 273 times.

Time magazine had an article on them which describes them as kind and non-judgmental, which is lovely and convenient.

Around 2011-2013 Simone Callahan (formerly Shane Warne’s wife) accepted \$80,000 from *New Idea* to pose in a bikini and say how upset she was about Shane Warne and Liz Hurley, then added: ‘I’m in a very happy place.’ She had met another man, Toby Roberts, and so she said: ‘I think I accept there is a degree of karma. I am sure everything happens for a reason and my angels are looking after me at the moment.’

Angels seem to be making some kind of comeback, but so far they are more the Hollywood version, not the biblical one.

The Nature of Angels

1. How many angels are there? (Ps.68:17; Rev.5:11) _____

2. What is said about angels in Revelation 19:9-10; 22:8-9? What is this telling us about our attitude to the angels? What is forbidden? Who alone is to be worshipped, and why? _____

3. What do the angels do in Psalm 148:1-2? What is said in Hebrews 1:6? What does this mean for Christ? _____

4. When did some of the angels rebel against God? (Gen.3:1) How many of them rebelled? (Rev.12:4) _____

Before Adam disobeyed God, one of God’s angels, usually known as Lucifer, had already led a rebellion against the authority of heaven. Dante put this rebellion within twenty seconds of their creation, while John Milton put it just before the fall of Adam and Eve. Milton’s view seems more likely.

5. Has God has done anything to redeem these angels? (2 Peter 2:4) _____

Augustine made the suggestion that God predestined the same number of people to make up the number of the angels in the new heaven and new earth.

6. There are two Old Testament passages which are often interpreted as referring to the fall of Lucifer and his angels. They are Isaiah 14:12-17 (referring to the king of Babylon) and Ezekiel 28:11-19 (referring to the king of Tyre). The extravagant language may point to the condemnation of Satan. How would you

interpret the two passages? _____

7. What was the first sin of the one who became Satan (the adversary), and also of his angels (demons)? (1 Tim.3:6) How are we to walk before God? (Micah 6:8)

Augustine: 'By aspiring to be self-sufficing man fell away from Him who truly suffices.'

Spurgeon and Whitefield struggled to suppress pride when they were so successful in their preaching. William Wilberforce's favourite verse, one that he kept repeating to himself, was 'God be merciful to me, a sinner.'

Milton's *Paradise Lost* has Satan say: 'Better to reign in Hell than serve in Heaven.'

8. Does Satan actually reign in hell? (Rev.20:10) _____

Angels as Ministering Spirits

1. Did Christ believe in angels? (Matt.22:30; 26:51-53) _____

2. Does that mean that we should believe every story about angels? (Gal.1:8) _____

Joseph Smith, who founded the Mormon cult, claimed that he was visited by the angel Moroni. Muhammad claimed that he received the Qur'an from the angel Gabriel.

Someone once told Andrew Bonar that he had been visited by angels one night, and Bonar replied: 'Have you a cat in the house? Don't you think it may have been the cat?'

3. What is one of the essential functions of angels? (Heb.1:14) _____

Billy Graham calls them 'God's secret agents'.

4. Who did the angels do in Elisha's day? (2 Kings 6:11-17) What do we learn from this? _____

5. What about the angel and Peter in Acts 12:6-10? _____

6. What does Psalm 91:11-12 promise, and how can this be misused? (Matt.4:5-7)

J. G. Paton served in the New Hebrides in the nineteenth century, first on Tanna, then on Aniwa. He had a very difficult and dangerous time on Tanna. Once, an attack by heathen Tannese on his house was called off because of the 'armed men' with Paton. When Paton heard this, he was amazed: 'What armed men?' There were no armed men, of course, and Paton believed that he had been protected by angels.

7. How does an angel comfort Elijah? (1 Kings 19:5-7) What about Paul and the threat of shipwreck? (Acts 27:23-25) _____

When Corrie ten Boom was imprisoned by the Nazis at Ravensbruck, she managed to keep her Bible and her woollen underwear. She always believed that angels had looked after her in this, because she was no expert at hiding things from the Nazis.

8. How did God speak to Daniel in his old age in exile? (Dan.9:20-23) _____

Angels in History

1. Read Daniel 10:10-14, 20-21. What does this tell us about the role of angels in human history? _____

Apparently a fallen angel (a demon) was ruling over Persia, and battling with the angels of Israel, including the archangel Michael.

Stuart Olyott calls verse 13 'certainly one of the most mysterious verses in the Old Testament'.

The problem with C. Peter Wagner's views about territorial demons is not that they do not exist, but that Wagner wants to know more about them than God has revealed.

2. What does 1 Corinthians 10:20 teach us? _____

3. What do we know about what is taking place in the spirit realm? (Rev.12:7-10) _____

4. How was this at work in the death of Ahab? (1 Kings 22:20-23) _____

Missionaries in hostile places are often more aware of this spiritual warfare than the average Christian is. We were most aware of this in the Pashupatinath temple next to the holy Bagmati river in Kathmandu. You could feel the devil.

5. William Perkins thinks that 1 Corinthians 11:10 refers to ministers, Bruce Winter says it refers to messengers from the Roman authorities, but it is probably best understood as referring to angels. If so, what does it mean? _____

6. What does Jesus tell us about angels in Matthew 18:6, 10? How should this affect us? _____

7. What does an angel do in evangelism in Acts 8:26? Compare this to the Spirit's work in Acts 8:39. _____

Sometimes you may have the experience of being led to do something that leads to the evangelising of someone. You know that the prompting comes from God, perhaps by one of His angels.

8. What do fallen angels do in:

(a) Genesis 3:1 _____

(b) Genesis 3:4-5 _____

(c) Ephesians 2:1-2 _____

(d) Luke 8:12 _____

Richard Dawkins rants and raves, and thinks that he is doing that all by himself. He would laugh at the notion that the devil is working on him, but the devil does not mind that at all.

9. What will angels do in the judgment? (Matt.13:49-51; 25:31; 2 Thess.1:7-8) Why do you think this is so? What does 1 Timothy 5:21 add to the picture? _____

10. What do the unfallen elect angels do in the salvation of God's people? (Luke 16:22) _____

Joni Eareckson is certain that she saw the beaming light of an angel on the night when her five-year-old niece, Kelly, died.

11. What is picture given to us in Hebrews 12:22-24? _____

D. L. Moody: 'Some day you will read in the papers that D. L. Moody is dead. Don't you believe a word of it. At that moment I shall be more alive than I am now.'

Christ and the Angels (Hebrews 2:9)

To the Jehovah's Witnesses, and to many of the cults, Christ is the highest of the angels, and that is all. To the Christian, Christ is the God-man.

1. Show from Hebrews 1 the difference between Christ and the angels. _____

2. From the Old Testament, what is said about the Angel of the Lord? (e.g. Gen.32:22-32; Ex.3:2-4; Joshua 5:13-6:2; Judges 6:11, 14, 21-22; note John 1:1) _____

Calvin points out that angels lead us to Christ, not away from Him. They do not

detract in any way from His being the one mediator.

3. What happened in the incarnation, when God became man? (Heb.2:9) What does this mean for Christ's manhood? Why did the one who is above the angels become for a time below the angels? (Heb.2:14-18) _____

Gregory of Nazianzus: 'what has not been assumed cannot be redeemed.'

4. Can angels minister to God? (Acts 17:25) Yet what do we find with regards to Christ? (Matt.4:11; Luke 22:42-44) _____

This is so startling that some manuscripts leave out verses 43-44. That is why you will not find them in the RSV, translated in 1952.

C. S. Lewis portrays this in *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*, where Lucy and Susan are with Aslan before he is sacrificed on the Stone Table. Ultimately Aslan suffers and dies alone, but he says to the two girls: 'I should be glad of company to-night.'

Alexander Whyte suggested that the angel might have reminded Christ of the prophecies that the Messiah had to suffer. Who knows what was said? Perhaps the heavenly presence of the angel was enough for Son of God in agony.

In fact, He even desired human company at this time (Matt.26:37-38).

5. Back in heaven, what is the status of Christ with regard to the angels? (1 Pet.3:22; Rev.5:11-12) _____

All hail, the power of Jesus' Name!

Let angels prostrate fall;

Bring forth the royal diadem

To crown Him Lord of all.

Charles Wesley:

The praises of Jesus the angels proclaim,

Fall down on their faces, and worship the Lamb.

Then let us adore, and give Him His right,

All glory and power, all wisdom and might,

All honour and blessing, with angels above,

And thanks never-ceasing, and infinite love.

6. What does being in Christ mean for the Christian in comparison to the angels? (1 Cor.6:3; Eph.1:20-23; Rev.3:21) _____

7. What does 1 Peter 1:12 tell us about God's plan of salvation? _____

Cherubim and Seraphim (Genesis 3:24; Isaiah 6:1-8)

Reginald Heber: 'Cherubim and seraphim falling down before Thee,/ Who wert, and art, and evermore shalt be.' We can only assume that cherubim and seraphim are angelic beings.

1. What do the cherubim do after the Fall? (Gen.3:24) What does this reveal about them? _____

Thomas Binney:

*The spirits that surround Thy throne
May bear the burning bliss;
But that is surely theirs alone,
Since they have never, never known
A fallen world like this.*

2. What is the function of the two golden cherubim sculptured for the ark of the covenant, and placed over the mercy seat? (Ex.37:1, 6-9) _____

3. What is the role of the seraphim in Isaiah 6:1-4? Who is the Lord? (John 12:40-41) _____

Calvin: 'If angels are overwhelmed by the majesty of God, how great will be the rashness of men if they venture to intrude so far!'

Seraphim means 'burning ones', and the picture here is surely the burning holiness of the triune God.

4. Yet what do the seraphim reveal in Isaiah 6:5-7? _____

John Flavel: 'When the corn is nearly ripe, it bows the head and stoops lower than it was when green.'

These angels should not be confused with the Holy Spirit:

(a) The Spirit indwells Christians (John 14:17; 1 Cor.6:19); the angels come to

God's people;

(b) The Spirit convicts of sin (John 16:8); the angels simply communicate God's message to His people;

(c) The Spirit is everywhere at the same time (Ps.139:7); the angels are only at one place at a time.

(d) The Spirit knows all things (1 Cor.2:11); the angels do not (1 Pet.1:10-12).

5. Who leads the worship in heaven? (Rev. 4:6-11) _____

Entertaining angels (Hebrews 13:1-2)

1. What is the lesson in Hebrews 13:1-2, drawing from Genesis 18? (note Gen.18:22; 19:1) _____

2. Read Matthew 25:35, 40; Romans 12:13; 1 Peter 4:9; for the elder, see 1 Timothy 3:2. Then Genesis 18:2-8. What does this tell us about hospitality? _____

3. In the biblical world, showing hospitality could easily be a form of social climbing. What does Jesus teach about this? (Luke 14:12-14) _____

4. How can God bless a simple act of kindness in far-reaching ways? (Heb.13:2; see Gen.18:8) _____

For New Testament examples of hospitality, not necessarily of angel visitation, see 3 John 5-8; Acts 16:15; 17:7; 21:8, 16; Rom.16:23.

Roy and Dale Rogers had a little girl with severe intellectual and physical disabilities, who died when she was two years' old. In 1953 Dale Evans Rogers wrote a book about her, called *Angel Unaware*. Dale Rogers was saying that this was a blessing sent from God in a most unexpected way.

I have met people with angel stories but I am not one of them. But in your Christian life you will often find unexpected and far-reaching blessing through simple acts of kindness or hospitality. The visitor may impress one of your children, he or she may have just the right word at just the right time, he or she may open up a new world in some way. God visits His people through an angel or a messenger. It happens over and over again - Matthew 10:42.