

Supplement to the video program

# Encounters with Angels

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*For what is man that Thou art mindful of him?  
And the son of man that you visit him?  
For you have made him a little lower than the angels.  
Psalm 8: 4-5*

The subject of angels has been somewhat of a fad in recent years. We hope this program can make a useful contribution in that it presents the first person testimonies of people who are convinced that they have had an encounter with angels and they are confident of the authenticity of their experiences.

We present them as an opportunity for reflection and discussion, especially in the perspective of Scriptural references. We do not present this program to affirm or deny any of the particular experiences.

In speaking of angels we are aware that we are approaching a realm of mystery which the Bible does not explain in detail, so it is important to employ a healthy caution, recognizing that the film is not intended to promote curiosity or the seeking of spiritual "states" or experiences.

This supplement has three sections. First some background material on what the Bible and church leaders have said about angels. Secondly, a brief summary of the specific incidents reported in the video, and thirdly some afterthoughts.

## 1. ABOUT ANGELS FROM THE BIBLE AND THEOLOGIANS

**Angels in the Bible.** According to one Bible concordance, there are 158 references to angels in the Old Testament and 178 in the New Testament. There are also other listings that overlap these.

**Why Angels?** According to Gregory Nazianzen (329-389): ". . . since this movement of self-contemplation (the life of God in Himself) alone could not satisfy (his) Goodness, (which) must be poured out and go forth beyond Itself . . . He first conceived the Heavenly and angelic powers . . . Then when his first creation was in good order, He conceived a second world, material and visible."(Orationes 38:9)

**Angels were created before people.** God first created as His Royal Court the pure, bodiless spirits we call angels before He set about creating the material world and man. In Job 38:7 God says to Job: "When the stars were made all my angels praised me with a loud voice." The Fathers of the Church understand the word "heaven" in Gen. 1:1 as being not the physical heaven, which was formed later, but the invisible heaven, or the dwelling place of the angels. Saints Ambrose, Jerome and Gregory the Great all wrote that at the creation of the visible world the angels already stood before the Face of the Creator and served Him.

We first read of Satan, the fallen angel, as the serpent in Genesis 3:1-5. The Fathers teach that he was originally Lucifer, the Light-Bearer. He was the most beautiful of the Angels, until, consumed with pride, he defied God and was cast from heaven. In Isaiah, 14:12 we read, "How you are fallen from heaven, O Day Star, Son of the Dawn." Jesus says, in Luke 10:18. "I saw Satan fall like lightening from heaven." In Revelation 12:7 we read of Michael and his angels fighting against the dragon, "that ancient serpent who is called the Devil and Satan." These angels who took Satan's side against God were cast from Heaven with their master, and became the demons. (Jude 1:6. ) They have no power against man except what God permits them to have (Job 1:12 ; 2:6.)

**Angels are spiritual beings.** (Matthew 22:30.) By their nature angels are active spirits which have intelligence, will and knowledge. They can move faster than thought and pass through matter. We also know that they can assume human form when it is necessary for humans to see them, as did the angel who strove with Jacob in Genesis 32:24. He maketh his angels spirits, and his ministers a flame of fire. (Psalm 104:4.)

St. John of Damascus (c.657-c.749) writes: "all that we can understand is that (angels) are incorporeal and immaterial. For all that is compared with God Who alone is incomparable, we find to be dense and material."

**Angels are numerous.** In Genesis 32:2 Jacob was met by so many angels he exclaimed, "This is God's army (or 'camp')!"

Jesus was surrounded by angels at His birth, after His temptation in the wilderness and after His agony in the garden. Twelve legions were ready to defend Him at the time of His arrest (Matthew 26:53), and angels were the first witnesses of His resurrection (Matthew 28:2-3). Countless angels will be with Him at His Second Coming (Matthew 24:30-31).

**Angels are associated with visions of God.** An angel appeared to Moses when God spoke to him from the burning bush in Exodus 3:2.

The three angels Abraham entertained in his tent in Genesis 18 are said by some Biblical scholars to represent the Holy Trinity. Abraham addressed the three of them together as "My Lord." It is thought that through such contacts the Old Testament patriarchs came to know something of the mystery of the Trinity.

**Angels have different classifications.** A book, called *The Celestial Hierarchy*, important in both the Eastern and early Western Churches, describes the angels' different degrees of honor and closeness to the throne of God as well as their different responsibilities. Highest of all are the Seraphim — "six-winged and many-eyed" — who circle the throne of God, crying Holy, Holy, Holy (Isaiah 6:2.) After them are the Cherubim (Isaiah 37:6.) Then come Thrones, Dominations and Powers as in Colossians 1:16; after these, Princedoms and Virtues, Archangels and Angels. We know three Archangels by name— Michael in Daniel 10:13, Jude 1:9, Gabriel from Luke 1:26, and Raphael from Tobit 3: 16-17. The angels under them follow God's orders regarding humanity and creation. These comprise the nine ranks or Choirs of Angels.

**Angels Praise God and Serve Man.** Angels eternally praise God, but they also have the task of ministering to people: "Are they not all ministering spirits set forth to serve, for the sake of those who are to obtain salvation?" Hebrews 1:14

Remembering Abraham, St. Paul advises us: "Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for thereby some have entertained angels without knowing it." Hebrews 13:2.

Each person has a guardian angel and these always enjoy the vision of God in heaven. Jesus said: "See that you do not despise one of these little ones; for I tell you that in heaven their angels always behold the face of my Father who is in heaven." Matthew 18:10.

John Calvin wrote: "The angels are the dispensers and administrators of the Divine beneficence toward us; they regard our safety, undertake our defense, direct our ways, and exercise a constant solicitude that no evil befall us."

## 2. THE VIDEO

In this video we meet people who claim to have had encounters with angels. Certainly the experiences, whatever they were, profoundly affected each person. A number of experiences are recorded.

**A Sharing of Love.** In the first incident, a woman tells us that she was discussing love with a friend when she experienced a tingling sensation and they both became aware of a very bright light. They felt as if it were in support of what they were saying.

**Unseen Choirs.** A number of people were involved in the second experience. This took place in a church where the singer and accompanists were rehearsing. They heard what they believed to be angels singing with them. After the singer left the musicians could still hear the singing. The experience was an encouragement to the parish, bringing a conviction that God was pleased with their worship and that the angels wanted to join them.

A musical group visiting in the United States heard a recording made by a small group in Canada. When they cleaned the tape, which was not of professional quality, and played it back the sound of a great "angelic choir" was heard.

**Comforting Touch.** A reassuring hand on her shoulder comforted a widow in the process of doing housework. Shortly after her husband's death one of her three children, who was only five years old, insisted that he saw his father while visiting a theme park. He said his father held him, but he couldn't feel him.

**A Healing Visit.** Another woman was praying at her ill mother's bedside when she became aware of an angel in "Biblical dress," with two enormous wings. The room was filled with light. She said she knew that some celestial being was with them. At that moment her mother opened her eyes and said she believed she was going to get better.

**Angelic Visitors.** Two tall angels in "traditional" dress appeared high up in the middle of a church during the singing of the Hallelujah from *Handel's Messiah*. Not everyone saw the vision.

**Reassuring Figure.** A woman who had undergone a sterilization procedure was feeling depressed and spiritually low. Left alone after her husband brought her home from the hospital, she became aware of a figure. It was a comforting experience.

**A Photograph.** Still another convinced angel-viewer was in an airplane, concerned about the safety of the flight during a severe storm. The person prayed, but also took a picture from the window of the plane. When the film was developed the picture seemed to show an angel.

**Artist's Touch.** While watching the light rippling on the water, an artist felt a woman's hand covering her own. It was cooler than hers. The feeling of "presence" left her almost immediately, but she was filled with "wonderful feelings" of reassurance.

**Satan Stalks.** A new Christian who had been brought up in a cult that denied the divinity of Jesus and the Holy Trinity, had a vision of Satan standing at the foot of her bed. She said he was dressed like an angel and had a sword in his belt, but she knew it was Satan because she smelled smoke. He stalked around her. She was sure she was somehow at fault. The next morning she called the elder's wife who came and prayed for her asking that she receive the gift of tongues.

**Gardener's Experience.** A man heard an unseen choir singing "Because He Lives I Can Face Tomorrow," and also saw a bright, amazing light and a garden more beautiful than anything he had ever seen.

**Angelic Plumber.** A plumber arrived when needed on a Sunday morning. He was believed to have been an angel.

**Runaway Tractor.** A large crowd of campers had gathered when a tractor was seen going out of control at rapid speed. It headed toward a large crowd at the beach. People praised the driver, who, at the risk of his own life maneuvered it away from them. The tractor crashed into and demolished a car. Those who had seen a driver worried because they could not find his body. Most of the crowd insisted there was no driver. The belief is that it was an angel who took the wheel and saved lives.

**Angelic Reminders.** Depressed because her mother had been fighting pneumonia for three months, a woman awoke to find her room filled with light. At first she thought it was the headlights of a car, but when she looked there was none. Nevertheless the room was filled with light. Remarkably she went back to sleep. In the morning she found herself singing a song about the guardian angel that she had not sung since childhood. Two days later she received two cards with pictures of angels and two little gold angel pins from her mother's relatives in Australia.

**Decision Confirmed.** The committee of a church was gathered to interview a new minister. Afterwards they were not sure that they had made the right choice. All were praying. Suddenly "beautiful angels' wings" covered the whole room and they were convinced the choice was God's will.

**Driver's Protection.** The same woman who had a vision of Satan dressed as an angel related an incident of angelic care. She and her husband were driving along when her husband suggested that she take the wheel to gain more experience. She was concerned, and prayed that they would be safe. Suddenly an angel with a sword, wearing a long garment appeared at the side of the car. As she was driving about 40 to 45 miles per hour, the angel remained at the side of the car, but was standing still.

**Guardians of the Gate.** The curate of a church had to take a trip, leaving his pregnant young wife and their little daughter alone in the rectory. The garden gates had come down as a result of serious storms, making the garden accessible to the public foot path. The young wife was frightened and after putting her daughter to bed she prayed for their safety. Looking out the window she saw two angels between seven and ten feet tall, brilliant in gold and light standing on the gateposts.

**Jesus in the Doorway.** The last relates to near-death experience. When the clergyman came to give communion to his parishioner, the man told him he saw Jesus standing in the doorway, Neither he nor the man's wife saw anything, but the sick man was joyful.

### 3. AFTERTHOUGHTS

**So What Do We Make Of All This?** Out-of-the-ordinary experiences have always been a part of church history. Innumerable saints of both East and West, as well as uncanonized “mystics,” have reported or been reported as having extraordinary visions or to have entered mystical states. One can cite such diverse individuals as Joan of Arc and Hildegard of Bingen, St. John of the Cross and Padre Pio. For most men and women who live quiet lives of faith in Christ, such experiences may be strange and probably not to be envied. They are definitely not to be sought.

Luther tended to regard mysticism with suspicion, and so did most of the reformers who followed him. The Eastern church is particularly cautious regarding visions and mystical/ecstatic states. The Russian word “prelest” (loosely, delusion) is used frequently in ascetical and spiritual works to remind the monastic, and the devout lay person, of the possibility of deception. Theologians warn that this is a very real danger for the inexperienced person, when such a state is self-induced. Extreme caution is always advised as Saint Paul reminds us “for even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light.” II Corinthians 11:14.

We cannot help but notice that some of the experiences reported in the video seem similar in some respects with those of channelers and Spiritists, and remind us of some aspects of the New Age milieu. Typical manifestations are a tingling sensation, a bright light and the sensations of a “presence” and of reassurance and comfort. Tangible “proofs,” such as the photo and tape of “angelic” singing make us wonder how this fits in with the immaterial life of the angels. This is not to pass any judgement on any of the particular stories in the video but just to suggest that many questions remain. We hope this video and supplement have been of assistance to you in your own examination of the subject area.

The Bible mentions how angels are amazed at the Incarnation and astounded by the sacrifice Jesus made for us. They must be bemused and perhaps amused by the impact they are making on our lives.

#### VIDEO CREDITS

*Encounters With Angels*

**Research:** Hope Price, Glenyce Eckersley

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**A Mark-It Television Production**