

# life groups

## questions - angels & demons



*"Believers, look up - take courage. The angels are nearer than you think."*  
— Billy Graham

In writing this lesson I find the topic a little difficult. Why? Because I prepare these with an eye strongly toward life application. Whatever the sermon topic might be, I want to probe the question: "Now what? How do we then live?" The topic of angels & demons does not lend itself as readily to that sort of discussion. Scripture does reference these beings quite a lot, but usually to serve some greater function of the particular narrative, not really to show how their existence might directly impact our lives today.

I find that even our own church history and sub-culture can affect the way we view angels and their roles in our lives. I have a dear friend that has prayed for me in times of need on multiple occasions and asked God to "send your ministering angels to come alongside my brother" – a request that I have to admit was something that was not put forth for folks in the churches I grew up in. However, because I have an understanding of what Scripture teaches about some of the roles of angels, I know that praying this is not anti-biblical (after all, at the end of His time of temptation in the desert, angels were dispatched to minister to the Lord Jesus) – it's just something that wasn't done in my church background.

Q :: What misconceptions are there in the unchurched world about angels? About demons?

Q :: Some churches go a step further and may even direct prayers to a particular angel – something not supported by Scripture. How has your own church history taught you to think about angels?

Q :: Why is a strong biblical understanding of the true nature of angels and demons so important to believers?

Obviously with some potential answers to that last question pointing to Satan and his desire to deceive, we must use caution with any study of angels. I found this passage in one of the source materials I consulted for this lesson:

*Go to any search [engine] and you will find many "angel" sites listed on the internet. Please be very careful when visiting these places. Remember your adversary. He is lying in wait to deceive you. Once you are deceived he has an open door into your life. His goal is to steal, kill, destroy. You may think the study of angels is a harmless pursuit. It can be extremely dangerous, so please be very careful. Pray to God, the Father, in Jesus' name. Ask His direction. Ask His protection. And if you want His angels to surround you, talk to Him about it. Remember this: when you start to talk to angels, you may very well be talking to demons in disguise.*

I strongly concur with that warning. In 2 Corinthians 11:13-15, Paul is speaking about false apostles and warns us that we should not be surprised that Satan's servants would masquerade as servants of righteousness because, after all, Satan masquerades as an angel of light.

Q :: Having grown up in the church, the fact that Satan masquerades as an angel of light is one of the primary things I was taught about the devil. However, it was always taught as a fact, but removed from any context of just how that might look. How do you think this biblical truth about Satan might manifest itself in our world today?

In a lengthy bible.org article on angels, the author concludes with a section titled: Some Warnings (Things to Do and Not to Do). His third point in particular comes to mind in light of the cynicism that can grow out of the very fact that we know Satan can (and most certainly wants to) deceive us in our understanding of the spiritual realm. His third warning is this: **Do not become critical of the reports of angels.** Some of his rationale...

*When we hear of reports of angels, it is only natural for us to be skeptical...and there is the need for a certain amount of skepticism... "healthy skepticism." The reasons a healthy skepticism is needed are the deceptions of Satan referred above and the spiritually bankrupt condition of our culture and its willingness to accept anything but the truth.*

*So belief in Satan, demons and angels is more and more common place, not because people are believing the Bible, but because of the rise of their spiritual emptiness. Angels have become an easy substitute, a handy compromise to the reality of the Living God as He is revealed in Scripture. When asked "Do you believe in angels?" Jamal Mashburn, [former NBA forward] of the Dallas Mavericks, responded, "Yes. For me it is like an inner voice that tells me what to do and what not to do, where to go and where not to go. It's somebody like God that protects and cares for me" (Dallas Morning News, 18 December 1994).*

*Why not? God seems so distant and austere. Angels seem so friendly. On the other hand, angels are the ministering spirits of God and He can send them to anyone whom he pleases. I have never seen an angel or had an experience where I was sure an angel was involved, but I do believe many reports are true.*

Q :: Consider the author's juxtaposition of the reasons for a more common belief in angels being NOT more belief in the Bible, but instead, spiritual emptiness. Is it not interesting that people who are spiritually empty are not seeking to fill that void with something else – but with something spiritual in nature? What can we learn from that?

Q :: Please share any experience you have had where you believe that an angel was directly involved?

Q :: What are the dangers of an overly critical spirit – whether in dealing with someone who has had a legitimate spiritual encounter of some sort, or with someone who may be under deception about something in the spiritual realm?

While scripture does not **explicitly** teach that everyone has a Guardian Angel, as is a popular notion, there are passages that, especially when viewed collectively, can certainly lead one to believe exactly that. Read the following passages and make particular note of who the passage says the angel is given charge to protect.

- Acts 12:5-15 (The disciples thought that Peter had his own angel)
- Daniel 12:1; 10:13; 10:20-21 (Individual angels are assigned to individual nations)
- Revelation 2:1 – 3:14 (Individual churches have an angel assigned to them)
- Matthew 18:10 (Children appear to have a guardian angel over each of them)
- Psalm 34:7 and 91:9-12 (Angels over those who believe)

So while, on the one hand Scripture never specifically states that everyone has a guardian angel, what the whole of scripture seems to teach is, as Norman Manzon, of The Bible Study Project puts it:

*The close disciples of the apostles believed that the one who stood at the door was Peter's own angel, Jesus stated that children have their own angels, individual nations have their own angels, and each of the seven churches of Asia had its own angel. I must therefore conclude that all children, church saints, churches and nations have their own individual angels.*

All that being said, the truth is that we live in two worlds. One which we can see, and the other which is invisible. In the unseen world in which we find ourselves, the Bible teaches that we are in the midst of a great war – a war being fought, to some degree, over us. The fact that we struggle to grasp this world, let alone operate in it, is borne out by the fact that one of the top 5 questions our congregation wanted an answer to was this one. Which really brings me to the last question – the same one that I stated at the very beginning:

Q :: In light of this invisible world – and war – that we find ourselves in . . . Now what? How do we then live?