

Angels

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Angels have been depicted in art for centuries. They are mentioned frequently in the Old and New Testaments and in many other writings, sacred and profane. Angels have delivered vital comfort and messages of great importance to men and women on earth. Yet their existence today is frequently denied, or their roles discounted. The prophet Moroni proclaimed that “It is by faith that angels appear and minister unto men” (Moroni 7:37). Faith is the prerequisite for the appearance of angelic beings.

There are Different Types of Angels

Christian doctrine provides extensive detail on angels, defining different types of angels and their origin. Angels are broadly defined as “messengers sent from God” (Gospel Principles Glossary). The prophet Joseph F. Smith concerning angels revealed: “When messengers are sent to minister to the inhabitants of this earth, they are not strangers, but from the ranks of our kindred, friends, and fellow-beings and fellow-servants” (Gospel Doctrine, Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1970, 435–36).

The prophet Joseph Smith taught that angels are connected to the earth. He said they are beings “...who belong to it [the earth] or have belonged to it” (Dean arman, “Questions and Answers,” Tambuli, Apr. 1984, 22). The apostle Bruce R. McConkie describes five specific types of angels (See Mormon Doctrine (1979 Bookcraft, Salt Lake City, Utah, 35-37):

Pre-existent Spirits: These are the spirits of those who have not yet come to the earth.

Spirits of Just Men Made Perfect: These are the spirits of those who have lived righteously on earth, have died, and are awaiting their Resurrection. These individuals are referred to as “just men made perfect” (Heb 12:22-24). The visit of Gabriel to Zacharias and to Mary illustrates this kind of being.

Translated Beings: These are translated beings that function as angels, as was the case with the appearance of Moses and Elijah on the Mount of Transfiguration (Matt. 17:1–3). The Apostle John was translated and became a ministering angel (John 21:22-23)

Resurrected Personages: These are resurrected beings that serve as angels (Matt. 27:52-53). The appearances of Moroni and John the Baptist to Joseph Smith illustrate this type of angel.

Righteous Mortal Men: These are holy men living on earth that are occasionally referred to as angels as they act as ministers for God such as those that appeared to Lot to warn him of the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah (Gen. 19).

Suspiciously absent from this list of angelic types is the “guardian angel.” The prophet Joseph F. Smith taught that help may be rendered by ministering angels during times of need, but that the true guardian angel for the children of men on earth is “...the power and direction available through the Light of Christ and the Holy Ghost” (Joseph Fielding Smith, Doctrines of Salvation, comp. Bruce R. McConkie, 3 vols., Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1954, 1:54).

Distinguishing Angels from Emissaries of Satan

We are encouraged to “try the spirits” in order to know if they are from God or the adversary. John wrote: “Hereby know ye the Spirit of God: Every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God: And every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God: and this is that spirit of antichrist, whereof ye have heard that it should come; and even now already is it in the world” (1 John 4:2-3). Furthermore the

Lord adds “Wherefore, it shall come to pass, that if you behold a spirit manifested that you cannot understand, and you receive not that spirit, ye shall ask of the Father in the name of Jesus; and if he give not unto you that spirit, then you may know that it is not of God” (D&C 50:31).

The Purposes of Angels

The purposes of angels are many. Consider the following list of angelic actions compiled by Larry E. Dahl, Associate Professor Of Church History And Doctrine, Brigham Young University (“I Have a Question”, the Ensign, March 1988):

- To announce and testify of events pertaining to God’s work and glory (Matt. 1:20–21, Matt. 28:1–6; Luke 1:11–20, Luke 2:8–14; Rev. 14)
- To preach the gospel and minister “unto the children of men, to make manifest concerning the coming of Christ” (Moro. 7:22; Moses 5:58)
- To declare “the word of Christ unto chosen vessels of the Lord, that they may bear testimony of him” (Moro. 7:31; Mosiah 3:1–27)
- To bring to earth “their rights, their keys, their honors, their majesty and glory, and the power of their priesthood” (D&C 128:21; D&C 27:12; D&C 110:11–16; JS—H 1:68–70)
- To protect and guide the servants of God in times of trouble so that they may accomplish his purposes (Acts 5:18–20; Dan. 3:28; 1 Ne. 3:29; Hel. 5)
- To bring comfort, instruction, and warnings to faithful individuals in times of need (Gen. 16:7; Ex. 23:20–23; Matt. 2:13, 19–20; 1 Ne. 11:14–15:30; Alma 8:14–18).

Conclusion

The Christian doctrine on Angels provides valuable detail on the character of angels and their interactions with humans on earth. This doctrine brings to life many passages in the Bible that mention angels and helps us understand our relationships with them. This doctrine

opens up spiritual possibilities, not only from a scriptural standpoint, but from the reality of countless experiences of many who have been aided by divine intervention from spiritual beings. How many times have you heard of someone claiming to have been helped by an ancestor or a person they didn’t know? This doctrine helps tie together various instances where individuals were given divine help from heaven-sent beings in various forms.

Unfortunately we see very little public acknowledgement of Angels by most Christian leaders of today. The reason for this is that likely they are afraid to be seen as “crazy” or some kind of religious nut. It is important that Christian Church leaders publicly acknowledge the nearly constant activity of angels in the present day, and to do so without being criticized by other Christian entities.

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