

There's another argument we can make that guardian angels do not exist. If we come to rely on a spiritual being for our safety and benefit, it reduces our desire to do what God wants us to do without spiritual assistance. We must do the will of God, even when it appears difficult, because we want to do that, not because we can make it easier by calling on our friendly angel to make it all better.

We also should note that angels did not appear in the common form we think of – no wings, no halo, no robes. In cases where their physical aspect is mentioned, they are referred to as men (see the case of the angels visiting Abraham before going to Sodom to rescue Lot, or the description as men – albeit in shining apparel – appearing before the women at Jesus' tomb).

For the most part, angels are identified with God and thus

are considered righteous. Certainly, God would use only those loyal to him to deliver his messages. But there are two passages which show some angels ran afoul of God. In **Jude 6** and **II Peter 2**, angels which sinned and/or kept not their first estate were chained and kept imprisoned until judgment, Jude specifying judgment of the great day. ~

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NAVARRE MESSENGER

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What does an angel look like? What does an angel do? Are there guardian angels?

What are angels?

We all have mental images of what angels look like. Even though we may not believe in some of the concepts the world ascribes to these heavenly beings, our mind's eye sees them as dressed in flowing white robes, with long golden hair and white feathered wings on their backs. We see them as either male or female. If you're a movie fan,

you may see them as depicted in Angels in the Outfield, where archangel Christopher Lloyd directs a number of them in assisting the hapless Los Angeles Angels (after all, what other team would they help?).

Apart from Hollywood depictions, artists and sculptors have created enough works of art based on the Bible that we see many images of angels hovering over the baby Jesus in the manger, or walking up and down a ladder in Jacob's dream, or poised at the entrance to Jesus' tomb the day

he rose from the grave.

We can't help but form that impression of an angel because that's what the world wants us to see. And the Bible gives us little, if any, detailed picture of how they appeared to men.

If we are to understand who angels are and what they do, we must turn to scripture. They are described as being an "angel of the Lord" or "angel of God" no fewer than 77 times in the King James Version. So they have a connec-

tion with God. Let's start with the definitions of the word "angel."

The Greek word for "angel" is *aggelos*. Despite the double g, it is pronounced "ANG-el-os," with the emphasis on the first syllable. From that we get our English word "angel."

The Hebrew word for angel is *mal'ak*. It is pronounced "mal-AWK," with the emphasis on the second syllable.

Mal'ak is defined by Strong's Hebrew Dictionary as "a messenger; specifically, of God, i.e. an angel (also a prophet, priest or teacher): — ambassador, angel, king, messenger."

Strong's Greek Dictionary defines *aggelos* as "a messenger; especially an 'angel'; by implication, a pastor: — angel, messenger."

We see that the primary meaning of each word is "messenger," which means one sent to deliver infor-

mation. If you look closely at the remaining definitions, all the secondary meanings also relate to the idea of giving information.

So we can conclude that when we read the phrase "angel of the Lord," we can just as well say "messenger of the Lord." If we connect the idea of messenger to the word angel, and envision an angel more as a messenger than as a winged creature with flowing robes, we are well on our way to understanding the role angels played in the relation between God and man.

The first time an angel is mentioned in scripture is Genesis 16, when God's messenger spoke to Hagar, Sarah's maid servant. After that, some 25 very clear accounts of angels speaking directly to humans are mentioned in the Bible.

Let's list these accounts, with book, chapter and a brief word identifying the people receiving the message from God:

OLD TESTAMENT: **Genesis 16:** Hagar; **Genesis 19:** Lot; **Genesis 21:** Hagar; **Genesis 22:** Abraham; **Genesis 31:** Jacob; **Exodus 3:** Moses; **Numbers 22:** Balaam; **Judges 2:** Israel; **Judges 5:** Maroz; **Judges 6:** Gideon; **Judges 13:** Maroz' wife; **I Kings 19:** Elijah; **II Kings 1:** Elijah; **I Chronicles 21:** Gad; **Zechariah 1:** Zechariah;

NEW TESTAMENT: **Matthew 1:** Joseph; **Matthew 28:** women at tomb; **Luke 1:** Zacharias; **Luke 1:** Mary; **Luke 2:** shepherds; **Luke 22:** Jesus; **Acts 8:** Philip; **Acts 10:** Cornelius; **Acts 12:** Peter; **Acts 19:** apostles; **Acts 27:** Paul.

Remember, the accounts above show an angel speaking to one or a few people, delivering a direct and specific message from God.

There are some 14 other accounts (and we could make a case for a greater number than that) which show angels being dispatched on a mission. While these are not verbal messages, we can understand that, as messengers of God,

the actions these angels took certainly deliver a strong point, either positively or negatively, to the recipients. So we are within our rights to understand that the concept of messenger still applies in these cases:

OLD TESTAMENT: **Genesis 28:** Jacob's ladder; **Exodus, 14, 23, 32, 33:** angels guided Israelites; **II Samuel 24:** pestilence delivered; **I Kings 19:** Elijah urged to eat; **II Kings 1:** Elijah warned about Ahaziah; **II Kings 19:** Assyrians smitten; **I Chronicles 21:** angel prepared to destroy Jerusalem; **II Chronicles 32:** angel killed Assyrians; **Daniel 3:** angel saved Shadrach, Meshach, Abednego; **Daniel 6:** angel shut lions' mouths.

NEW TESTAMENT: **Matthew 13-16, Mark 13:** angels seen as reapers/gatherers at the end of the world; **John 5:** angel stirred Siloam; **Acts 5:** angel opened prison; **Acts 12:** angel killed Herod.

At your leisure, note these passages and see how the angels interacted with people. At

some point you may encounter those who believe angels have a different mission, and you will be able to show them what angels actually did.

Angels generally are not named in scripture. One, Gabriel, was identified as speaking with Zacharias and Mary in **Luke 1**. In **Daniel 8** and **9**, Daniel speaks of a connection with Gabriel following a vision; this Gabriel may well have been the angel mentioned in **Luke**. The only other angel called by name is Michael, mentioned in **Jude 9** and **Revelation 12**, both instances revolving around likely spiritual combats.

But we haven't answered all the questions listed at the beginning of this article. Notably, are there guardian angels?

The word "guardian" does not appear in the King James Version, although many cases exist where we may assume that God watched over (guarded) people: we can cite the baby Moses being placed in an ark to be rescued by Pharaoh's daughter, or the Israelites

wending their way through the desert led by a cloud and fire; or these same Israelites being provided food during their wanderings and their clothes not wasting away. Surely, that is God guarding them.

But as there is no word "guardian" per se, there likewise is no "guardian angel" mentioned.

In man's mind, a guardian angel is provided to specifically take care of a single individual. Not unlike the cinematic angels in *Angels in the Outfield*, they are supposed to be nearby to protect and assist their charges. Thus, when someone steps off a curb into traffic and somehow is not hit by a car, he may describe himself as being protected by his guardian angel.

Jesus recognized that angels could be called on to protect him (Satan believed the same thing; see **Matthew 4**). But he did not take advantage of that, even when he prayed before his crucifixion that he not suffer that cruel death.