

Straight Talk #14 On Angels

by William J. Schnobelen

Angels appear to be everywhere these days. No longer confined to Christmas-time and Catholic gift-stores, they are now appearing in coffee-table books, New Age videos, knick-knacks and even movies and hit TV shows.

God actually made the cover of TV GUIDE in the spring of 1997. Over the last decade, angels have become "hot." Countless books are out there talking about "guardian angels" and other angel experiences. There are even books by New Age teachers about how to communicate with your angel or pray to him (or her?).

Movies in recent years have been bringing back the angel motif, like *"Angels in the Outfield"*, *"Wings of Desire"*, *"The Prophecy"* or *"The Preacher's Wife."* More recently, there was "Legion." Let us not forget the old TV mega-hits, *"Highway to Heaven"* and *"Touched By an Angel."* Various Christian media are even proclaiming that the producers of these shows are Christians and that they had a Christian message. Well ... *maybe.*

All this attention might be a welcome sign of revival, except that most of these "angelic incarnations" bear **very little resemblance** to the angels that appear in the Bible. In fact, in the vast majority of these cases, the angels involved would not appear to be doing the work of God at all, but rather the work of the devil.

Thus, we need to see what God's Word, the Holy Bible, has to say about the issue of angels; and how much of what we see around us in the popular culture can be trusted.

The problem with these shows is that they present pretty lousy theology mixed in with enough sentimentality and inspirational talk to help get it down. To be certain, these shows are vast improvement over the usual godless diet of mayhem, lust, and occultism which Hollywood churns out. They are not really violent. They contain no sex or bad language to speak of. However, in many ways they are more dangerous—because the error they present is *subtle.*

We know that shows like *"Vampire Diaries"* or *"The Shield"* are violent, vile and smutty. They are the media equivalent of the Church of Satan. They are totally up-front about what they are selling. However, *"Touched by an Angel"* (TBA) is the TV equivalent of the Mormon Church: sweet, righteous, pristine and caring, yet actually cursed at the core. Like the Mormons, TBA pretends to present an uplifting spiritual message which could, if one is not careful, uplift you all the way to hell.

Spiritual Pulp Fiction?

The problem is related to the fact that these are the end-times and that there is a lot of deception abroad in the land. Anyone who watches *Touched by an Angel* (TBA for short) comes away with these concepts:

- 1) God is real and He loves you (so far, so good)
- 2) He has a plan for your life (beginning to sound a bit like the Mormon TV commercials!)
- 3) Angels are all too human. They have to learn things "the hard way" just like us.
- 4) Hell and judgment are "out!"
- 5) The gospel of Yah'shua Christ is never heard.

All of this is nice, "warm and fuzzy" religiosity which could hardly offend or alienate anyone. That is the problem with the media. Whenever it approaches spirituality, it tends to run it through a blender so you end up with bland brainless "baby-food" pulp instead of the milk or meat of the gospel.

Virtually NONE of these concepts (except #1 and maybe 2) are Bible truth. Now that shouldn't surprise anyone who knows Hollywood. Satan would rather sit on a very large tack than allow the gospel to be presented clearly on network TV! The danger is that many fine people are being deceived into THINKING these shows carry the message our Creator wants them to hear—just as many fine people are deceived by the nice Mormon message.

TBA gives us a Pabulum gospel which presents God's love without his justice—or if the justice element is present, it is a justice whose demands can be met by simple human acts of kindness and caring. Those on TBA are usually presented as fearful, unloving, or physically, relationally or mentally "challenged" in some fashion. They are "touched" by the angel(s) and learn some important lesson about themselves and how important loving, sharing and caring are. Occasionally, little miracles happen; but by and large it is a very "tame" spirituality.

The difficulty is that our God is not "tame!" He is not a kitty who will just curl up in your lap, purr and make you feel good. He is the "Lion of Judah" and **He roars!** He is the God of the earthquake and the storm, and when His real angel speaks, people often mistake his voice for a thunderclap (**John 12:29**) God is not just "Mr. Nice-Guy," even though lost people would like to think that is all He is.

Avoiding the Issue

Angels in the media deceive the viewer into thinking that if you are nice to people and love your kids then God will love you and take you to heaven. All is presented without an authentic Biblical context. Never do you hear the truth that no one is righteous before God (**Rom. 3:10**) or that all that "sharing and caring" will get you is a fast ticket to hell unless you have Yah'shua (Hebrew for Jesus) the Messiah as your Lord and Savior (**John 14:6**).

Thus, TBA is theological fantasy, just as much as "*Star Wars*" is science fiction fantasy. The difference is that most people understand that science fiction is fantasy, but they may well pin their hopes on the cuddly angels of TBA or the latest Hollywood film.

In a broader sense, the craze over angels is a way of avoiding God. God represents righteousness, truth and judgment. That is too "politically incorrect!" The producer of the show, Martha Williamson, has gone out of her way to avoid having the God of TBA be *just* the God of the Bible—very ecumenical! She praised a moment on the show when the senior angel on the TBA show, "Tess" told someone you cannot hide behind the Bible. (See endnote 1) If you cannot hide behind God's Word, what can you hide behind?

Most of the angel material out there has more in common with the New Age than the Bible. Media angels do not judge you, nor do call you to repentance. They do not point you to Calvary. They exist to help you across streets or through difficult times in your life. They give you a false sense of spiritual security and righteousness. This is NOT the Biblical experience of angels.

Reality Check!

Most angels in the Bible terrified anyone who saw one. Some people fell to the ground in a dead faint upon seeing an angel. Others felt for certain that they would die (**Judges 6:22-23**). Yes, there are rare instances of angels bringing comfort (to the shepherds of Bethlehem, to Yah'shua in the garden), but these are always to the people of Elohim. Don't forget, one angel slew 185,000 people in one night (**Is. 37:36**)! Imagine what an angel would do to Hollywood!

We, as Believers, can pray and ask God to send angels to help us and protect us (**Hebr. 1:14**). That is our blessing. Praise God! **Ps. 34:7** says: "*The angel of the LORD encampeth round about them that fear him, and delivereth them.*" In the Bible, *not just anyone* gets a full-service angel!

However, TBA, etc. makes it appear that angels are ecumenical, celestial social workers

in the employ of a God who loves everyone and will help anyone (irrespective of their relationship with Yah'shua) and is just too nice a Guy to EVER send anyone to hell.

Then there is the other danger. People are encouraged by many of these angel books to communicate with their angels or pray to them. The Bible forbids this because it is dangerous. Paul warns us in **Col. 2:18** *"Let no man beguile you of your reward in a voluntary humility and worshipping of angels, intruding into those things which he hath not seen, vainly puffed up by his fleshly mind,"*

True angels are very unassuming and try to stay in the background. They do not draw attention to themselves. They will not receive worship (**Judges 13:14, Rev. 22:9**). That is why we really only know the names of two angels in the entire Bible, Michael and Gabriel (**Judges 13:18**).

False Angel, False Gospel

If you are "communicating" with an angel or praying to one, it is NOT one of God's angels, rest assured. Fallen angels are out there, and they are more than willing to deceive those who do not know better. Many times the messages these angels convey are little different from the messages from "trance channellers" or other demonized people who have familiar spirits. It is a false message of syrupy love.

Angels *can* preach a different gospel (**Gal. 1:6**). People often ignore that. Remember that both Islam and Mormonism started with an angelic message. Mohammed claimed that the angel Gabriel appeared to him and dictated the Quran to him. Today that religion is taking more than a billion people to hell, as well as fomenting violent terrorism around the world.

Mormon founder Joseph Smith claimed that the angel "Moroni" (actually the spirit of a dead American prophet) revealed to him the location and purpose of the gold plates upon which the Book of Mormon was written. That was the beginning of Mormonism, a religion today deceiving millions.

Unfortunately, just as with the Mormons or the Muslims, the gospel preached by the angels in the media and books is—at the very best—an incomplete gospel. With Yah'shua, "almost" doesn't count. Either you have the real gospel, or you are "accursed."

We have even ministered to people who believed that they were privileged to have sex with their guardian angel! *Chapter and verse on that one, please?* Some men have even believed that they had sex with gorgeous girl angels! Ever notice the diaphanous gowns that "Monica" (the young, Irish angel) sometimes wears on TBA? How about "Angel as sex object?"

Date with an Angel?

This is all part of Satan's plan. Remember the "days of Noah," when fallen angels came down and had sex with women (**Gen. 6**). Yah'shua warned us that this entire age before his Second Advent would be just like the days of Noah. Notice the movies about angels falling in love with mortals—perhaps even being willing to give up their angelic nature for a taste of love ("*Wings of Desire*" or—more subtly—"The Preacher's Wife"). This is exactly what Satan wants to promote. And what person would not be flattered if they were "propositioned" by a real, live angel??

Even though, by TV standards, TBA is innocent; remember that the root of the word "innocent" is the same as ignorant. *Of course* it does not promote sex with angels or even praying to angels. We certainly give it that much. It is "family entertainment." Perhaps it is expecting too much for TV to ever communicate spiritual truth. However, the tragedy is that it comes so close to the truth at times and yet falls back. That is what can make it dangerous.

You can watch TBA until your eyeballs fall out and you will never hear that you are a sinner and that only Yah'shua can save you by what He did for you on Calvary. That would be too "narrow-minded" a message! Remember, the root of the Greek word for sin is translated "falling short of the mark." That is just what TBA, etc. do, they fall short of the mark.

Because of this, anyone who watches them thinking they are getting a "message from God" is dangerously and damnably deceived. Perhaps what is so sad is that these sorts of shows are often as close to Yah'shua as most people these days ever get—and yet they are still half-a-universe away from Him.

What does the Bible actually tell us about real angels?

Well, the word angel first appears in the Old Testament in **Gen. 16:7** where the heavenly being appears and ministers to Hagar. He is an object of awe and fear, and he brings a message from God (one point for the TV show). The very word for angel in Hebrew is "**MALAK**" meaning messenger or deputy. This seems to be their frequent duty, but not by any means their only duty. An angel in the Bible can also be an "Appearance" of the Lord. Many times angels came without a message—either to protect God's people or to destroy the enemies of God.

The first angelic appearances in the New Testament (**Matt. 1:20, 2:13, Luke 1:13**, etc.) all involve angels bringing messages about the coming Messiah.

It is clear from the Bible that angels are spirit beings. **Psalm 104:4** tells us "*Who maketh his angels spirits.*" (see also **Hebr. 1:14**) Because they are spirits, it is self-evident that the laws of physics do not apply to them. They can ascend in a fountain of flame (**Judges 13:19-20**), walk through the walls of locked prisons (**Acts 12:7**) and evidently

can travel very fast, probably faster than the speed of light. One angel slew 70,000 Israelites in a short time (**2Sam. 24**).

It is also clear that angels are quite powerful. One angel wiped out an entire army (185,000 men) in one night (**2Kings 19:35**). An angel defeated a Roman cohort (the toughest soldiers, the "Special Forces" of their day) and rolled away a huge stone single-handedly from Yah'shua' tomb. Remember the Psalm that tells us "*Bless the Lord, ye his angels, that excel in strength.*" (**Ps. 103:20**)

Apparently, they are also very wise (**2Sam. 14:20**). A lady speaking to David compares his wisdom with that of an angel: "*My lord is wise, according to the wisdom of an angel of God, to know all things that are in the earth.*" Thomas Aquinas, the famed Catholic philosopher and theologian speculated that angels have "infused knowledge." This means that from the moment of their creation, God pours into them anything they will ever need to know—instantly. Now that is philosophy and not the Bible. The scriptures do not say precisely that, but they DO seem to indicate that angels are extremely intelligent.

What Angels Aren't

1) It may surprise you to know that angels are not mentioned to have haloes in the Bible, as the term is commonly understood. Nor, for that matter do saints. That is a bit of Catholic superstition drawn straight from Babylon. The halo or "nimbus" behind the head of angels and saints in Catholic iconography is actually an emblem of the sun-god, Baal. It has nothing to do with holiness or sanctity.

2) Another cherished idea which is not at all supported by the Bible is that angels have wings. Nowhere in either Testament do we find an angel with wings. Cherubs have wings (**Ezek. 1:6, Rev. 4:8**) and Seraphim (plural of Seraph) have wings (**Isa. 6:2**); but these beings are not exactly angels. They are an entirely different variety of heavenly being. Every angel in the Bible is readily mistaken for a human man; in fact, they are often called men. NO ONE would mistake the beings in Ezekiel 1 or Isaiah 6 for normal men.

Actually, a cherub is essentially a winged bull (compare **Ezek. 1:10** with **Ezek. 10:14**), which obviously looks nothing at all like a man. It is not clear from Isaiah 6 what seraphim look like, except that the word is associated with flame. Read **Hebr. 1:7**: "*And of the angels he saith, Who maketh his angels spirits, and his ministers a flame of fire.*" Note the distinction between angels and the "ministers" who are a flame of fire—perhaps the Seraphim who "minister" before the throne of God day and night crying "*Holy, Holy,, Holy is the LORD of hosts: the whole earth is full of his glory.*" (**Is. 6:3**)

NOWHERE in the Bible are cherubs represented to be chubby naked babies with wings! That is a totally pagan association without any basis in reality. It seems to have emerged from the practices of St. Valentine's Day and the pagan concept of the god of

love, Eros (or Cupid). I am certain any cherub would be highly insulted to be compared to such idolatrous, inaccurate nonsense, if cherubs were capable of such emotions.

3) Contrary to popular belief and the entertainment media, people do not become angels when they die (even nice people). Remember *"Highway to Heaven,"* or *"The Preacher's Wife"* which imply that their angel heroes had a human existence first here on earth. Who could forget all those cute cartoons that show someone dying, sprouting wings and a halo and gliding heavenward. WRONG on all counts.

Angels are an entirely different order of being from us. They were **CREATED** by Yah'shua (**Col. 1:16**) and we human beings were created lower than they (**Ps. 8:5**). It is just a variation on the heathen doctrine of evolution to think that somehow we "evolve" into angels and earn our wings (remember *"It's a Wonderful Life!"*). It is also back to the old lie of salvation by **works** rather than faith in Yah'shua' work on the cross alone (**Eph. 2:8-9**).

The only place in the Bible which would remotely teach that we turn into angels when we go to heaven would be: *"For when they [people] shall rise from the dead, they neither marry, nor are given in marriage; but are as the angels which are in heaven."*—**Mark 12:25**. There is a distinct difference between saying that something becomes an angel and saying that they are "as the angels." "As" means similar to, not identical with; in the context, primarily in the fact that the saints in heaven do not get married, just as angels do not marry. (We will talk more about this issue in a moment.)

4) A final, common canard about angels which the Bible does not support is that they are (a) sexless; or (b) female. That is one place where TBA strikes out. You can search the Bible from Genesis to Revelation and never find an angel of the female gender (or Irish angels or Black angels, for that matter!). *Every* angel we see in the Bible is a young male.

This is further borne out by the fact that our Messiah (Who is obviously male) is called the angel of God (**Gal. 4:14, Acts 27:23**). Many Bible scholars also feel that the "angel of the Lord" mentioned 52 times in the *Tenakh* (Old Testament) (**Gen. 22:11, Num. 22:24, Judges 2:4, Judges 6:11, Isa. 37:36**, etc.) is actually the pre-incarnate apparition of Yah'shua Christ.

Angels are not sexless either. While we cannot say with dogmatic certainty that there are no female angels, it would be strange that the Bible should be silent about them if they did exist. Angels in the Old Testament are called *"the sons of God"* several times (**Gen. 6:2-4, Job 1:6, Job 38:7**, etc.). They are never called "daughters of God." That too is significant.

It is evident from several scriptures that angels can have sexual feelings for human women (see the following section). Thus, it would stand to reason (except in San Francisco) that the angels are male.

Fallen Angels

Genesis 6:2-5 gives us the first indication in the Word of God that angels could sin against God, though it is a theme which is carried through virtually the entire Bible. While we cannot say for certain the reason why every angel fell, we can tell from this passage and others that at least some of the time, the reason had to do with angels lusting after human women. The passage says:

Gen. 6:2 That the sons of God saw the daughters of men that they were fair; and they took them wives of all which they chose.

Gen. 6:4-5 There were giants in the earth in those days; and also after that, when the sons of God came in unto the daughters of men, and they bare children to them, the same became mighty men which were of old, men of renown And God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.

Though some Bible commentators will try and tell you that the "*sons of God*" were not angels, but just the "godly line of Seth," sound exegesis does not support that concept. Nowhere in the Old Testament are human beings called "sons of God," for whatever reason. Also, there really was never any "godly line" from anyone. It appears clear that Seth's grandchildren were pretty much as wicked as everyone else's, with the exception of Noah (**Gen. 6:9**) and of course, Enoch—the fifth generation from Seth (**Gen. 5:18-24**) That this passage applies to angels is borne out by two other verses.

Jude 6-7, which talks about angels who "*kept not their first estate*" because they, like the Sodomites, went after "*strange flesh.*" Of course, for an angel to have intercourse with a human would certainly be going after strange flesh. We are an entirely different "species" than angels! **2Pet. 2:4-11** seems to be speaking about the same event, though in less direct fashion.

Then there is the intriguing passage in **1Cor. 11:10** "*For this cause ought the woman to have power on her head because of the angels.*" Discussed in the context of headship, this verse is almost bewildering unless it is read in the context of Gen. 6. It is saying that women who go about without proper spiritual covering over them (the headship of a husband or pastor) - or even perhaps a physical head-covering - are beguiling to angels who are being tempted by Satan to fall through sexual sin.

This "fall" of angels certainly happened before the flood, and evidently happened afterwards (note the phrase "*and also after that*" in **Gen. 6:4**). This union of women and angels seems to have produced "giants" and "mighty men." (See endnote 2) There were giants after the flood (obviously Goliath and others, like the Anakims and Emims—see **Num. 13:33, Deut. 2:11; 3:11**, etc.). Additionally, we have the warning of Paul to the Corinthian church just mentioned. So apparently this issue of angels falling with "the daughters of men" is not just an historical footnote. It MAY still be going on today.

Of course, there are other reasons that angels have fallen (or will fall). The most notable passage that speaks of this is in **Rev. 12:7-9**. It discusses the dragon and his angels fighting against Michael and his angels and the dragon and his angels being cast out. Commentators differ on whether this is an event that has already happened or if it is still to come. The important point is that it seems to point to some kind of large defection (ONE-THIRD of the angelic host—**Rev. 12:4**).

Deceiving the Gullible

The bottom line is that there are today fallen angels out there, frequently masquerading as elect (good) angels. This is why there is such a huge amount of weird angel material out there in the New Age and Spirituality section of any bookstore. In most cases, these books send a message akin to that the TV and movies already discussed, or even worse. Sometimes they are aligned with the near-death experience or clinical death experience (which is an issue beyond the scope of this booklet).

Such angels are always portrayed as protectors or else bear fluffy, sentimental messages about God or the afterlife. They are usually *quite a bit different* from the Biblical angels, who invariably inspire dread and fear. These angels and the books about them invariably avoid discussing judgment, sin, hell or the redeeming power of the blood of Yah'shua the Messiah. This means the people reading them get a warm glow, which invariably becomes significantly hotter when they end up in hell!

The counsel about all such "angelic" literature is the same as it was in the days of Paul. We should not get over-involved with angels, in terms of trying to communicate with them or pray to them. Remember Paul's warning mentioned earlier in Col. 2:18!

True, elect angels of God always wish to stay in the background and do not wish to draw attention to themselves. NOR do they wish to be worshipped nor prayed to. In terms of the message they bring, whether by book, video, or TV show, remember Paul's advice:

Gal. 1:8 But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed.

A similar warning is clear from the Old Testament:

*Isa. 8:20 To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is **no light in them**.*

Thus, we do not need angels to preach to us or teach us, because we have a "*more sure word of prophecy*" (**2Pet. 1:19**)—the Holy Bible (see also **Hebr. 2:2**). Angels will not be teaching any doctrine—at least not until **Rev. 14:6**.

That isn't to say that on occasion, a child of God might not receive a warning or instruction from an angel, rather like Joseph did (**Matt. 2:13**), but it probably will not be doctrinal in nature. If it is, be sure and measure it carefully according to the Word of God. No angel will ever contradict the Book of the God Who sent them.

Trying the Spirits

I also believe that if confronted by an angel with a message, it is perfectly acceptable to challenge them in the name of Yah'shua. By that, I mean politely but firmly (see **Jude 9** and **2Pet. 2:11**) demand that they identify the "God" in whose name they come. If they will not confess that Yah'shua Christ is Almighty God Himself come in the flesh, then command them to depart in Yah'shua' name. If they do confess Yah'shua as God come in the flesh, then you can probably assume that they are elect angels.

However, I do believe that angelic encounters are comparatively uncommon. I also believe that many times we have been helped by angels (often in humble human form) without even knowing it. (**Hebr. 13:2**) God and His providence for us are more wonderful than we can ever imagine. Praise His name.

Just remember, before believing anything from an angel (or a book supposedly about angels) measure it entirely against the plain Word of God, the Authorized Version!

Endnotes:

1. "Angels and Insights" by Daniel Howard Cerone, TV GUIDE, p.45, March 29-April 4, 1997.
2. For more on this issue, see our book SPACE INVADERS, 1996, With One Accord Publishers, available from our ministry.

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