

I BELIEVE IN ANGELS...DO YOU?



Q: What have ABBA in 1979 and Robbie Williams in 1997 got in common?

A: *hit singles about angels!*

So sang ABBA in 1979 on the hit single, "I have a dream", "*I believe in angels.....*"

Robbie Williams' biggest singles hit was "Angels" in 1997.

As I write this it is *Michael and All Angels Day* in the church calendar and so in morning prayer we turned our attention to angels.

Do you believe in angels?

And what sort of angels do you believe in if you do?

Firstly, the wing question. In Christian art stemming back to medieval times, angels are often (if not always) portrayed as having wings and glowing! Any nativity would be bereft without a few feathers and a halo.

But the Bible doesn't describe heavenly encounters with men with wings. Just with heavenly beings in human form.

Heavenly beings in heaven do have wings (Seraphim in Isaiah having six and Cherubim in Ezekiel having four).

But angels sent to earth have no mention of wings.

So, if you meet an angel, you won't be able to depend on the feathers to know.

What do angels do?

Well, the Greek word from which we get the English word Angel is *angelos*. It means "messenger" and we can think of many ways in which angels come

bringing messages to biblical characters such as Mary, Zechariah, Joshua and Abraham.

They are also warriors of terrible strength and deadliness. The most crucial story being the tenth plague of Egypt where angels swept through Egypt coming for the firstborn, yet passing over the Israelites who had marked their door frames with lambs blood from the feast.

Angels might fight against wickedness but that means that they are also agents of protection over the righteous.

I had the privilege once a few years ago to review the parish profile of a parish in vacancy in Birmingham. It was a very interesting profile in many ways. But it didn't mention something of its history.

Wallace and Mary Brown arrived in Quinton, an urban estate church, where there was barbed wire around the church grounds and much anti-social behaviour and constant damage and threat. The Brown family were, after six months or so, at their wits end. They were in truth on the verge of packing up and leaving, so disrupted and fearful had become their lives of ministry.

After much prayer they took steps to take away the barriers surrounding the church and their home. They prayed fervent prayers, crying out to God. And things started slowly to change. They found that the young people who had previously terrorised the area, were still around but started to engage. They got drawn into activities and became well known even in the occasional service. It was a turning point and Wallace and Mary stayed for many years seeing great fruit for the kingdom.

But here is the thing. Not only did they find their situation changing as a result of those desperate prayers. They also saw something else.

Angels.

Posted on the walls around the church. They saw them and felt their protection. Hence the name of their book : *"Angels on the walls"*. Get hold of a copy, It's a great read.

And Quinton church is a thriving church today, one that is home to a dear friend of mine.

The readings for All Angels Day included:

Psalm 34: *"The angel of the Lord encamps around those who fear him and delivers them"* (v7)

Tobit 12 (from the books not in the main canon): where Raphael (an archangel) gives advice to the protagonists including *"Bless God and acknowledge him in the presence of all the living for the good things he has done for you. Bless and sing praise to his name. With fitting honour declare to all people the deeds of God. Do not be slow to acknowledge him"* Raphael then goes on to explain how he had intervened to rectify their situation. They end up praising God *"when an angel of God had appeared to them"*.

Daniel 12: *"At that time, Michael, the great prince, the protector of the people, shall arise. ...but at that time your people shall be delivered... Many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt"* The archangel is part of the great final victory that leads to the time of judgement – which is coming!

Acts 12: Peter has been arrested and is in jail between two soldiers. *"Suddenly an angel of the Lord appeared, and a light shone in the cell. He tapped Peter on the side and woke him, saying "Get up quickly". And the chains fell off his wrists. The angel said to him, "Fasten your belt and put on your sandals." He did so. Then he said to him, "Wrap your cloak around you and follow me"... and Peter escaped.*

Biblical angels - protecting, rescuing, guiding, fighting mighty battles.

Do you believe in angels?

Well, you may have met one without realising. I have heard credible stories from a handful of people over the years where an intervention from a "person" may well have been an angel. One was shared yesterday in Morning Prayer. A random intervention from an erstwhile taxi driver who appeared from nowhere, said "come with me!", drove a couple to a destination of his choosing, and disappeared just as brusquely. And that family have lived in this area ever since. Not planned by them. But certainly ordained.

Do you believe in angels?

I encourage you to do so. Because you never know when you might need one!

One of the key prayers we can pray every day is “Lord we pray for our protection”.

The Lord answers with angels.

Here is the collect for that day (the special prayer for All Angels Day). A great place to finish and a prayer to bring into your regular prayers.

*Everlasting God,
you have ordained and constituted
the ministries of angels and mortals in a wonderful order:
grant that as your holy angels always serve you in heaven,
so, at your command,
they may help and defend us on earth;
through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord,
who is alive and reigns with you,
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and for ever.*

Amen!

Your brother in Christ,
Doug

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