

Hebrews 1:14 Angels Watching Over Me

Last week we ended the first chapter taking a quick look at the way in which God's angels are set apart to minister to those who will inherit eternal life.

But it seems that angels are misunderstood among both the world and believers in Jesus Christ. The world has a tendency to cast them as heavenly "go-fers." In other words, if someone is inclined to seek the spiritual world and they want answers or direction for their lives these creatures, who supposedly have the answers, are at their disposal depending on the attitude of the person seeking them.

Of course the best way to stay in the good favor of angels is to make sure you are wearing your angel pin where ever you go or placing paintings of angels on the walls of your home. They like that sort of adulation. And a small statue of an angel placed strategically on your night stand will always go a long way with these winged creatures who only want to serve you.

Unfortunately, when the world is seeking the spiritual beings they think are heavenly angels they may be entertaining the type of angels who masquerade as light but are really of the darkness.

But, it's not only the world that has problems when it comes to the subject of angels. Many Christians find themselves not understanding angels and the way in which they are used of God for the sake of men.

We are told in verse 14 of Hebrews 1 that angels are ministering spirits and that they are sent out to render service to those who will inherit eternal life. It's interesting that the Greek word for service in verse 14 is *diakonia*. You might recognize the word. A very close word in the Greek found elsewhere in the New Testament is diakonos, and it's where we get our English word deacon.

We recognize deacons as those within the body of Christ whose ministry is service to the body. And so, in a very real way angels are deacons appointed by God to serve those who will inherit eternal life. These deacons however are not chosen by the church, they are chosen by the One who is the foundation of the Church, Jesus Christ Himself.

Angels are often depicted by those within and without the church as winged beings. The truth of the matter is that angels are never seen in Scripture as having wings. The closest reference that could even be remotely connected to angels having wings is a passage in Revelation.

Revelation 14:6-7 ⁶ And I saw another angel flying in midheaven, having an eternal gospel to preach to those who live on the earth, and to every nation and tribe and tongue and people; ⁷ and he said with a loud voice, "Fear God, and give Him glory, because the hour of His judgment has come; worship Him who made the heaven and the earth and sea and springs of waters."

This doesn't have as much to do with teaching that angels have wings as it does with John's reference as to what he sees. An angel is flying or moving about above the earth. Jesus Himself

when He ascended to the Father in front of His disciples was literally taken up from them as He moved from the earth up into the sky. With that reference one could say Jesus was flying back to the Father, but no one would attribute to Him as having wings to accomplish this.

So, where does this concept of angels with wings come from? More than likely from a group of heavenly beings described as Cherubim or Seraphim.

Well, surely they must be a class of angels, like archangels. The word of God is very clear on what the Seraphim and Cherubim are. In fact, the first mention of Cherubim is found in the beginning of Genesis immediately after both Adam and Eve are banished from Paradise, the Garden of Eden.

Genesis 3:24 So He drove the man out; and at the east of the garden of Eden He stationed the cherubim and the flaming sword which turned every direction to guard the way to the tree of life.

The Cherubim are also described in some detail in the book of Ezekiel with some very strange imagery. Keep in mind that the imagery given to Ezekiel is part of a vision from God.

Ezekiel 1:1 ^{NAU} Now it came about in the thirtieth year, on the fifth *day* of the fourth month, while I was by the river Chebar among the exiles, the heavens were opened and I saw visions of God.

Part of the visions that Ezekiel sees are living beings that we know to be Cherubim. Now some would argue that since Ezekiel is having a vision none of what he sees is actually real but only an illusion as though he's watching a big screen TV. But this is not what visions are. Some might also say this of dreams from God, but even these dreams often convey things that are very real. Consider Joseph who was confronted by an angel of the Lord.

Matthew 1:20-25 But when he had considered this, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, "Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife; for the Child who has been conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit. "She will bear a Son; and you shall call His name Jesus, for He will save His people from their sins." Now all this took place to fulfill what was spoken by the Lord through the prophet: "BEHOLD, THE VIRGIN SHALL BE WITH CHILD AND SHALL BEAR A SON, AND THEY SHALL CALL HIS NAME IMMANUEL," which translated means, "GOD WITH US." And Joseph awoke from his sleep and did as the angel of the Lord commanded him, and took *Mary* as his wife, but kept her a virgin until she gave birth to a Son; and he called His name Jesus.

Simply because Joseph was spoken to by God through an angel in a dream did not make this the equivalent of the type of dream you and I might have where we see ourselves in a high school math class only in our underwear. None of that is real, even though it may feel real as we dream it. But in the case of Joseph it was not his wild imagination that led him to marry Mary, but real information conveyed from heaven that heralded the coming of a real Messiah.

The same can be seen with the Magi and Joseph after Herod gets word that he was tricked.

Matthew 2:11-14 After coming into the house they saw the Child with Mary His mother; and they fell to the ground and worshiped Him. Then, opening their treasures, they presented to Him gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh. And having been warned *by God* in a dream not to return to Herod, the magi left for their own country by another way. Now when they had gone, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream and said, "Get up! Take the Child and His mother and flee to Egypt, and remain there until I tell you; for Herod is going to search for the Child to destroy Him." So Joseph got up and took the Child and His mother while it was still night, and left for Egypt.

But we should not be surprised by this as God uses these types of means of communication, not to cover or mystify or confuse the issue but to impart real and clear information with real consequences as they take the information seriously enough to obey what God has said.

In these particular cases there is no reason to spiritualize the message as meaning something other than what it actually says. And so there is no need for some type of interpretation.

Now, when you and I have a dream we may read all sorts of things into it if we can even remember all of the components of it in any reasonable fashion. But when the God of heaven and earth conveys information to a person in a dream you can bet it means what He is saying.

And this raises the issue of visions spoken of in the word of God. What are they? What kind of information are they conveying? Is the information meant to be taken at face value or is it to be interpreted in some spiritual way that has nothing to do with reality as we know it?

And again, the best way to approach a vision from Scripture is to take whatever is being conveyed in the vision given by God to the prophet or person of His choice and let the vision be the guide. But first, let's take a quick look at what visions are in God's economy and how they are meant to be used to convey information from the throne of the living God.

Visions by definition are simply things that are seen. In the N.T. we have a couple of Greek words that are used for visions. The most common word in the N.T. is the Greek word *horama* which simply means, sight; that which is seen.

The other Greek word used on a couple of occasions is *optasia* which means "an appearing" from the Greek word *optazomai*, which means, to be seen.

When we see the word vision or visions in the O.T it carries with it the same idea of, that which is seen. And keep in mind that in both Old and New testaments when someone is given a vision of God it is something that is actually seen with their physical eyes outside of sleep, as opposed to a dream which is seen in your mind through your mind's eye, if you will, even though your mind is not fabricating the message, but rather God is placing a message before His chosen instrument as we saw in the case of Joseph's dream.

But visions in the N.T. are also designed by God for people to actually see a spiritual reality. For instance when Stephen was being stoned to death the Lord gave him a vision in the midst of his death.

Acts 7:54-56 ⁵⁴ Now when they heard this, they were cut to the quick, and they *began* gnashing their teeth at him. ⁵⁵ But being full of the Holy Spirit, he gazed intently into heaven and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God; ⁵⁶ and he said, "Behold, I see the heavens opened up and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God."

Stephen is very much awake, though close to death. In this instance he is literally shown the bodily resurrected ascended Jesus standing at the right hand of God. And notice what verse 56 says. "I see the heavens opened up."

The phrase "opened up" is one Greek word which means completely opened up which infers totally revealed. In other words, what was not seen before is now totally revealed. This does raise some interesting questions that we don't have time to deal with now, but let me raise at least the one question.

If Stephen had this vision of heaven opened up to him was the Son of God always in the same proximity to Stephen who was just not able to see Him until the Lord opened up his eyes to what was in front of him? And is that the case for us today? Is Christ and heaven close enough for us to see, only hidden from our sight?

But visions are described many times in the O.T. and Ezekiel is experiencing such a vision when he begins to describe what he sees with his physical eyes even if he doesn't fully understand what he sees.

Ezekiel 1:13-16 ¹³ In the midst of the living beings there was something that looked like burning coals of fire, like torches darting back and forth among the living beings. The fire was bright, and lightning was flashing from the fire. ¹⁴ And the living beings ran to and fro like bolts of lightning. ¹⁵ Now as I looked at the living beings, behold, there was one wheel on the earth beside the living beings, for *each of* the four of them. ¹⁶ The appearance of the wheels and their workmanship *was* like sparkling beryl, and all four of them had the same form, their appearance and workmanship *being* as if one wheel were within another.

Whether Ezekiel comprehends what he sees here he is obliged by God to describe and ultimately pen exactly what he sees for our consumption as the written word of God.

So, what are these beings?

Ezekiel 1:1-6 ^{NAU} Now it came about in the thirtieth year, on the fifth *day* of the fourth month, while I was by the river Chebar among the exiles, the heavens were opened and I saw visions of God. (On the fifth of the month in the fifth year of King Jehoiachin's exile, the word of the LORD came expressly to Ezekiel the priest, son of Buzi, in the land of the Chaldeans by the river Chebar; and there the hand of the LORD came upon him.) As I looked, behold, a storm wind was coming from the north, a great cloud with fire flashing forth continually and a bright light around it, and in its midst something like glowing metal in the midst of the fire. Within it there were figures resembling four living beings. And this was their appearance: they had human form. ⁶ Each of them had four faces and four wings.

The first thing we notice here is that Ezekiel was hanging out around the river Chebar, apparently minding his own business when the heavens were opened up and he saw visions of God. Again, he was wide awake as God revealed something very special to him.

But back to my point as to what the Cherubim are and what they are not. The first thing you'll notice here is that nowhere in this passage does Ezekiel say he sees Cherubim. Instead, we see that he describes what the NAU calls living beings, while other translations including the NIV, ESV and KJV call them living creatures.

Later in the book of Ezekiel the prophet further explains what these living beings actually are as we see in the 10th chapter.

Ezekiel 10:17-22 ¹⁷ When the cherubim stood still, the wheels would stand still; and when they rose up, the wheels would rise with them, for the spirit of the living beings *was* in them. ¹⁸ Then the glory of the LORD departed from the threshold of the temple and stood over the cherubim. ¹⁹ When the cherubim departed, they lifted their wings and rose up from the earth in my sight with the wheels beside them; and they stood still at the entrance of the east gate of the LORD'S house, and the glory of the God of Israel hovered over them. ²⁰ These are the living beings that I saw beneath the God of Israel by the river Chebar; so I knew that they *were* cherubim. ²¹ Each one had four faces and each one four wings, and beneath their wings *was* the form of human hands. ²² As for the likeness of their faces, they were the same faces whose appearance I had seen by the river Chebar. Each one went straight ahead.

And so, Ezekiel confirms that the living beings he saw at the river Chebar in the opening of the vision of Ezekiel in the first chapter are the same living beings he now describes as Cherubim.

So, what are Cherubim? The text is clear unlike the English translations we have seen. While it sounds benign and somewhat ambiguous to use the terms living beings or living creatures, it betrays the Hebrew word for such living beings which is chayyah. All throughout the O.T. chayyah is used almost exclusively for animals, wild beasts. In fact, it is the very word God uses of all animals that walk on the earth that are created on the sixth day of creation.

Genesis 1:29-30 ²⁹ Then God said, "Behold, I have given you every plant yielding seed that is on the surface of all the earth, and every tree which has fruit yielding seed; it shall be food for you; ³⁰ and to every beast (CHAYYAH) of the earth and to every bird of the sky and to every thing that moves on the earth which has life, *I have given* every green plant for food"; and it was so.

So, it is clear that Cherubim are not angels. However, it is also just as clear that they are animals, albeit heavenly animals. I believe that part of the reason that almost every English translation utilizes some form of the term "living creature" for these Cherubim is because of a bias. And part of that bias has to do with a preconception that animals do not live in the present heaven let alone are they used to magnify God as they surround the throne of God.

Having said that, other questions should certainly arise as to the physicality of these animals around the throne of God. These heavenly animals have wings that can be heard like the voice of God Almighty when He speaks.

Ezekiel 10:5 Moreover, the sound of the wings of the cherubim was heard as far as the outer court, like the voice of God Almighty when He speaks.

For sound to be heard at all an atmosphere is necessary, and we might also ask why would wings be necessary if not to fly, again necessitating an atmosphere, all of which is physical in nature. Of course the physicality of the present heaven is for another study, but Ezekiel made it clear that he saw with his physical eyes physical animals of a strange sort to be sure, but heavenly creatures that he clearly identifies as chayyah, or animals.

But are Cherubim the same as Seraphim? The first time Seraphim are described is in the book of Isaiah, interestingly enough also in a vision. Remember, a vision is simply that which is seen, and seen with physical eyes. Here's the way Isaiah describes it.

Isaiah 6:1 ^{NAU} In the year of King Uzziah's death I saw the Lord sitting on a throne, lofty and exalted, with the train of His robe filling the temple.

Isaiah says, he saw the Lord sitting on a throne. He's not dreaming this. He is not hallucinating. He simply makes the statement that he saw something with his physical eyes. This is the definition of a vision in the context of God revealing something to His prophet.

But notice what Isaiah sees around the throne of God.

Isaiah 6:2-3 Seraphim stood above Him, each having six wings: with two he covered his face, and with two he covered his feet, and with two he flew. And one called out to another and said, "Holy, Holy, Holy, is the LORD of hosts, The whole earth is full of His glory."

Seraphim are described here as having six wings, presumably three sets of two as each set serves a purpose that Isaiah sees and simply reports. With two he covered his face, and with two he covered his feet, and with two he flew.

He's not giving commentary here he is simply stating what he sees. This winged Seraphim has two sets of wings that appear to act as covering for his body. The third set allows him to fly. Again, like the Cherubim flight necessitates an atmosphere for this to take place. Unlike the Cherubim with only two sets of wings, that is four, the Seraphim have 6 wings.

But notice that the Seraphim, unlike the Cherubim, actually speak. This doesn't mean the Cherubim don't speak or can't speak, only that it's not recorded that they do so. And the Seraphim actually speak the praises of God as they call out to each other, Holy, Holy, Holy is the Lord of Hosts, the whole earth is full of His glory.

Seraphim speak. Certainly seraphim must be an angelic class with the ability to praise God around His throne, right? Well, let's allow the word of God to give us the answer.

Revelation 4:1-8 ^{NAU} After these things I looked, and behold, a door *standing* open in heaven, and the first voice which I had heard, like *the sound* of a trumpet speaking with me, said, "Come up here, and I will show you what must take place after these things." Immediately I was in the Spirit; and behold, a throne was standing in heaven, and One sitting on the throne. And He who was sitting *was* like a jasper stone and a sardius in appearance; and *there was* a rainbow around the throne, like an emerald in appearance. Around the throne *were* twenty-four thrones; and upon the thrones *I saw* twenty-four elders sitting, clothed in white garments, and golden crowns on their heads. Out from the throne come flashes of lightning and sounds and peals of thunder. And *there were* seven lamps of fire burning before the throne, which are the seven Spirits of God; and before the throne *there was something* like a sea of glass, like crystal; and in the center and around the throne, four living creatures full of eyes in front and behind. The first creature *was* like a lion, and the second creature like a calf, and the third creature had a face like that of a man, and the fourth creature *was* like a flying eagle. And the four living creatures, each one of them having six wings, are full of eyes around and within; and day and night they do not cease to say, "HOLY, HOLY, HOLY *is* THE LORD GOD, THE ALMIGHTY, WHO WAS AND WHO IS AND WHO IS TO COME."

In both Revelation and Isaiah we have these living creatures as John describes them in verse 6 of Revelation 4, who in both books are praising God in very similar ways with very similar words, "HOLY, HOLY, HOLY *is* THE LORD GOD, THE ALMIGHTY."

But what is interesting about what John sees and what Isaiah saw is that both of them are speaking of the same thing. Winged creatures having six wings. It's clear that Isaiah and John are speaking of the same creatures. In fact, John uses a word that Ezekiel would have used to describe the Cherubim. Remember that Ezekiel uses the word *chayyah*, which is the Hebrew word for animal or a beast that crawls on the ground.

In the book of Revelation John describes the six winged living creatures. Most English translations describe these six winged Seraphim as living creatures. The KJV, however uses the term *beast*. Why would the KJV do this? Because someone on that translation committee felt this was the best translation for the Greek word *zo-on* used of these six winged creatures. A quick look at the word *zo-on* will reveal that this is where we get our English word *zoo*. And what do we find in zoos, aside from people teasing the animals? Animals are found in a *zoo*.

In every instance in the book of Revelation when John describes the Seraphim he uses the word *zo-on*. In other words, the Seraphim, like the Cherubim are heavenly animals that surround the throne of God to declare His greatness day and night. And by the way the phrase *day and night* is used to describe what is happening around the throne, not just what John is experiencing as though the vision were going on from dawn to dusk in his world while he watches the vision of these creatures in heaven.

So, the original question was do angels have wings and where would we find an instance of this in the bible? The answer is angels don't have wings and nowhere is Scripture does it teach this. Rather heavenly animals have wings. These beings actually surround the throne of God this very day declaring His glory as they lift their wings in praise and flight.

So, if angels don't have wings then what are they and why do they seem to always appear to men as men themselves?

This is an interesting phenomenon as we look at both Old and New Testament accounts of angels appearing before men. The first recorded appearance of an angel addressing a human being is in the case of Hagar, Sarai's hand maid, when she was banished along with her son, Ishmael, from the presence of Abram and his family.

Genesis 16:6-9 But Abram said to Sarai, "Behold, your maid is in your power; do to her what is good in your sight." So Sarai treated her harshly, and she fled from her presence. Now the angel of the LORD found her by a spring of water in the wilderness, by the spring on the way to Shur. He said, "Hagar, Sarai's maid, where have you come from and where are you going?" And she said, "I am fleeing from the presence of my mistress Sarai." ⁹ Then the angel of the LORD said to her, "Return to your mistress, and submit yourself to her authority."

This particular angel is designated, the angel of the Lord. The angel of the Lord is often found to be, not of the angelic order, but God Himself, as the context would suggest. So, why would God be designated an angel? The word angel in the Hebrew is malak and can mean messenger or ambassador.

As God Himself can approach men with a message or as the One representing the will of the Father, He can certainly be viewed as that messenger or ambassador.

The immediate context of Genesis 16 implies that this particular angel makes a claim that only God could make.

Genesis 16:10 Moreover, the angel of the LORD said to her, "I will greatly multiply your descendants so that they will be too many to count."

Here this angel speaks in the first person who alone has the ability to multiply the descendants of Hagar. Now it is certainly possible in this instance that the angel, who is the ambassador of God, is speaking in the first person because the ambassador is representing God and is speaking as though God were speaking. And so, some might suggest that this angel of the Lord is in fact a real angel and not a theophany, or a pre-incarnate appearance of God or the Son of God.

But there are other instances where the context is clear that the angel of the Lord is in fact God Himself.

Exodus 3:1-4 ^{NAU} Now Moses was pasturing the flock of Jethro his father-in-law, the priest of Midian; and he led the flock to the west side of the wilderness and came to Horeb, the mountain of God. The angel of the LORD appeared to him in a blazing fire from the midst of a bush; and he looked, and behold, the bush was burning with fire, yet the bush was not consumed. So Moses said, "I must turn aside now and see this marvelous sight, why the bush is not burned up." When the LORD saw that he turned aside to look, God called to him from the midst of the bush and said, "Moses, Moses!" And he said, "Here I am."

Here the angel of the Lord appears in a blazing fire in the midst of the bush in verse 2. In verse 4 the angel of the Lord is not referred to as angel but rather, LORD.

Exodus 3:4 When the LORD saw that he turned aside to look, God called to him from the midst of the bush and said, "Moses, Moses!" And he said, "Here I am."

Two Hebrew words are used here to further identify this angel of the Lord in verse 4. The English word, Lord, is the Hebrew word Yahweh, or Jehovah. And so, it is clear that the angel of the Lord in this context is Jehovah. The second word in this verse in the English is God. In Hebrew it is Elohim. And so, the context in this case clearly identifies this angel of the Lord as being God Himself revealed in the midst of the burning bush, another example of a theophany.

But in the case of Hagar, if in fact we are speaking of a real angel appearing to her, we are not told in the context how the angel is manifested to her, only that he found her near a spring of water in the wilderness. We might assume that it was a manifestation that Hagar identified as a man since a normal conversation is going on between them.

But there are a number of passages in the O.T. where it is clear that an angel is manifested as a man.

Genesis 18:1-3 ^{NAU} Now the LORD appeared to him by the oaks of Mamre, while he was sitting at the tent door in the heat of the day. When he lifted up his eyes and looked, behold, three men were standing opposite him; and when he saw *them*, he ran from the tent door to meet them and bowed himself to the earth, and said, "My lord, if now I have found favor in your sight, please do not pass your servant by.

In this case the context makes clear that Jehovah appeared to Abraham by the oaks of Mamre. In verse 2 we have three men appearing to Abraham as he recognizes this was a special appearance.

Since my point here is to get some insight about angels and the way they appear to men I will only briefly comment on one of the men who appears to Abraham, that one being, Jehovah. All throughout Scripture we are shown how God reveals Himself to men, be it in the Garden of Eden as He walks among Adam and Eve, or as He is shown here in Genesis 18 as one of three men.

Jesus Christ makes it clear that He is the One who reveals the Father.

^{NAU} **John 12:45** "He who sees Me sees the One who sent Me.

John 14:9-10 ⁹ Jesus said to him, "Have I been so long with you, and *yet* you have not come to know Me, Philip? He who has seen Me has seen the Father; how *can* you say, 'Show us the Father'? ¹⁰ "Do you not believe that I am in the Father, and the Father is in Me? The words that I say to you I do not speak on My own initiative, but the Father abiding in Me does His works.

John 17:25-26 ²⁵ "O righteous Father, although the world has not known You, yet I have known You; and these have known that You sent Me; ²⁶ and I have made Your name known to

them, and will make it known, so that the love with which You loved Me may be in them, and I in them."

^{NAU} **Colossians 1:15** He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation.

In fact, He is designated the Word, the logos, the One who explains and reveals. If this is the role of the Son of God then it stands to reason that each time God Himself comes to man, in an O.T. setting, in a visible form, that it would be the Son of God revealing the living God. We call these O.T. appearances Theophanies or more correctly Christophanies.

But back to our text in Genesis 18 describing the three men appearing to Abram at the Oaks of Mamre. Of the three, two of the men would eventually go down to rescue Lot from the wrath of God soon to be poured out on Sodom.

As we know the two men who went down to Sodom were in fact angels sent from the Lord. But it is curious that in the meeting with Abram they are called men, the Hebrew term ish.

Why are they called men if they are angels? Well, the logical answer would be that they looked like men. They talked like men. They dressed like men. In fact they even ate like men. Interestingly, whenever angels appear before men, the men being addressed by the angels would not know they were angels unless the angel somehow identified himself as such. This is precisely why the writer of Hebrews makes the comment he does.

Hebrews 13:2 ² Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for by this some have entertained angels without knowing it.

Why would you not know it? Because an angel would look no different than any other man on the planet and is for this reason identified as men as we go back to the events leading up to the destruction of Sodom as the two angels, referred to as men, save Lot and his family.

GEN 19:15-16 "With the coming of dawn, the angels urged Lot, saying, "Hurry! Take your wife and your two daughters who are here, or you will be swept away when the city is punished." When he hesitated, the men grasped his hand and the hands of his wife and of his two daughters and led them safely out of the city, for the LORD was merciful to them."

In a similar way we see an angel appear to the prophet Zechariah as a man, but in this instance it is a vision that is revealed to the prophet.

Zechariah 2:1-3 ^{NAU} Then I lifted up my eyes and looked, and behold, *there was* a man with a measuring line in his hand. ² So I said, "Where are you going?" And he said to me, "To measure Jerusalem, to see how wide it is and how long it is." ³ And behold, the angel who was speaking with me was going out, and another angel was coming out to meet him,

Clearly the angel is described as a man who was measuring the city of Jerusalem.

In the N.T. we have many accounts of angels appearing as men before other people.

Matthew 28:1-6 ^{NAU} Now after the Sabbath, as it began to dawn toward the first *day* of the week, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary came to look at the grave. ² And behold, a severe earthquake had occurred, for an angel of the Lord descended from heaven and came and rolled away the stone and sat upon it. ³ And his appearance was like lightning, and his clothing as white as snow. ⁴ The guards shook for fear of him and became like dead men. ⁵ The angel said to the women, "Do not be afraid; for I know that you are looking for Jesus who has been crucified. ⁶ "He is not here, for He has risen, just as He said. Come, see the place where He was lying.

Luke 1:11-13 ¹¹ And an angel of the Lord appeared to him, standing to the right of the altar of incense. ¹² Zacharias was troubled when he saw *the angel*, and fear gripped him. ¹³ But the angel said to him, "Do not be afraid, Zacharias, for your petition has been heard, and your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you will give him the name John.

Mark 16:2-7 ² Very early on the first day of the week, they came to the tomb when the sun had risen. ³ They were saying to one another, "Who will roll away the stone for us from the entrance of the tomb?" ⁴ Looking up, they saw that the stone had been rolled away, although it was extremely large. ⁵ Entering the tomb, they saw a young man sitting at the right, wearing a white robe; and they were amazed. ⁶ And he said to them, "Do not be amazed; you are looking for Jesus the Nazarene, who has been crucified. He has risen; He is not here; behold, *here is* the place where they laid Him. ⁷ "But go, tell His disciples and Peter, 'He is going ahead of you to Galilee; there you will see Him, just as He told you.'"

Luke 24:1-8 ^{NAU} **1** But on the first day of the week, at early dawn, they came to the tomb bringing the spices which they had prepared. ² And they found the stone rolled away from the tomb, ³ but when they entered, they did not find the body of the Lord Jesus. ⁴ While they were perplexed about this, behold, two men suddenly stood near them in dazzling clothing; ⁵ and as *the women* were terrified and bowed their faces to the ground, *the men* said to them, "Why do you seek the living One among the dead? ⁶ "He is not here, but He has risen. Remember how He spoke to you while He was still in Galilee, ⁷ saying that the Son of Man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men, and be crucified, and the third day rise again." ⁸ And they remembered His words,

John 20:11-16 ¹¹ But Mary was standing outside the tomb weeping; and so, as she wept, she stooped and looked into the tomb; ¹² and she saw two angels in white sitting, one at the head and one at the feet, where the body of Jesus had been lying. ¹³ And they said to her, "Woman, why are you weeping?" She said to them, "Because they have taken away my Lord, and I do not know where they have laid Him." ¹⁴ When she had said this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing *there*, and did not know that it was Jesus. ¹⁵ Jesus said to her, "Woman, why are you weeping? Whom are you seeking?" Supposing Him to be the gardener, she said to Him, "Sir, if you have carried Him away, tell me where you have laid Him, and I will take Him away." ¹⁶ Jesus said to her, "Mary!" She turned and said to Him in Hebrew, "Rabboni!" (which means, Teacher).

What is interesting in all of these accounts is that the angels always appear as men, and in the account of Mark 16:5 the angel is recorded as a young man. Why are angels always depicted as those whom appear to be human beings?

There are many questions that need to be raised if we are going to have a meaningful discussion on these holy agents of God for the blessing of mankind. Let me pose just a few.

If angels appear as men in this world is this in fact the form in which God has created angels? Do angels, when they appear on earth to people in the form of men, retain that form when they cannot be seen by people, and do they retain that form when they return to heaven as seems to be inferred from Zechariah's vision of heaven?

In two instances in the book of Revelation it is clear that the angels that John is confronted with appear in a form that allows him to bow down at the feet of these angels.

Revelation 19:9-10 ⁹ Then he said to me, "Write, 'Blessed are those who are invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb.'" And he said to me, "These are true words of God." ¹⁰ Then I fell at his feet to worship him. But he said to me, "Do not do that; I am a fellow servant of yours and your brethren who hold the testimony of Jesus; worship God. For the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy."

Revelation 22:8-9 ⁸ I, John, am the one who heard and saw these things. And when I heard and saw, I fell down to worship at the feet of the angel who showed me these things. ⁹ But he said to me, "Do not do that. I am a fellow servant of yours and of your brethren the prophets and of those who heed the words of this book. Worship God."

Therefore, if the form of angels in heaven is human in appearance and the form of angels when they serve God's people on earth is human in appearance, can we surmise that their forms are human looking whether in heaven or on earth, and thus they were created with this form?

But this does raise another question as to the substance of this form. As the writer of Hebrews addresses angels as spirits, and in light of the way they seem to be depicted, whether in heaven or on earth as human looking, could angels have spiritual bodies, not unlike the spiritual bodies that we will one day possess in eternity?

1 Corinthians 15:42-44 ⁴² So also is the resurrection of the dead. It is sown a perishable *body*, it is raised an imperishable *body*; ⁴³ it is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory; it is sown in weakness, it is raised in power; ⁴⁴ it is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body. If there is a natural body, there is also a spiritual *body*.

In the case of resurrected human beings what is a spiritual body? Some suggest that it is not physical but has somehow been transformed into something other than physical. But the text and the rest of Scripture simply refute this notion.

Paul clearly says in 1 Corinthians that the body, (*soma* in Greek), is buried and the same *soma* or body is raised in power. The direct object of the sentence in each case is a physical body that is buried and then raised, which must be the same body according to the context.

To then identify this soma or body as spiritual is not changing the nature of the physical aspect of the body but rather adding an element that was not there before, namely the spiritual life that has been granted to that previously corruptible body now making it incorruptible.

And so, for a human being in Christ to go from corruptible to that which is incorruptible through the resurrection is what Paul means by a body that is spiritual in the sense that the curse no longer dwells or resides in that body having been delivered from the sin and its effects on that body as Christ has raised us to life eternal.

So, is it possible that when the writer of Hebrews makes the comment that angels are ministering spirits sent to serve those who will inherit life, does he necessarily exclude the idea that they could be physical in some form, but that their bodies are not touched by any aspect of the curse that was placed on the physical universe?

In this sense their normal appearance would be that of men though they are clearly not of the class of men since they were not birthed as men but created as a separate class of beings to dwell in the presence of a Holy Spiritual God in the present heaven as well as on the earth in both its un-cursed and cursed states?

Simply because they are spiritual and invisible in most cases to human beings would not automatically disqualify them as physical in any sense. After all Jesus Christ is very much physical and yet invisible until which time He chooses to open our eyes to His physical presence as He did with disciples prior to His ascension and then Paul and Stephen after His ascension to the Father.

So is Christ's physical resurrected body spiritual? Absolutely. And so we cannot exclude the possibility that the spiritual bodies of angels, like the future physical spiritual bodies of human beings, are not physical in some sense.

In fact, the idea that John on the isle of Patmos, or the disciples at the tomb of Jesus on the day of His resurrection, are actually seeing angels with their eyes begs the question, how can they see anything that is not real or mere spirit?

Does a phantom have substance? Does a spirit have substance? Does an angel, who is identified as a spirit, simply cause the mind of a human being to think they are seeing a man? Or are people seeing what they see as in the case of Jesus after His resurrection where He makes this statement.

Luke 24:39-43 ³⁹ "See My hands and My feet, that it is I Myself; touch Me and see, for a spirit does not have flesh and bones as you see that I have." ⁴⁰ And when He had said this, He showed them His hands and His feet. ⁴¹ While they still could not believe *it* because of their joy and amazement, He said to them, "Have you anything here to eat?" ⁴² They gave Him a piece of a broiled fish; ⁴³ and He took it and ate *it* before them.

Notice verse 39. It clearly says that a spirit does not have flesh and bones. There you have it. A spirit, and thus an angel that is identified as a spirit in Hebrews, does not have flesh and bones.

Okay, but what do you do with the rest of Luke 24:40-43 when Jesus then proves His humanity by inviting His disciples to touch Him and then He asks for something to eat?

Well, of course Jesus can do this, He's a resurrected human being. But then the question must be asked, how does a spirit do any of those same things since the point Jesus is making is that only those who are physical can partake of such things?

This leads us right back to the occasions where angels also can be touched and can eat and can move around in this world as they fellowship with humans who would not know they are angels unless the angel identifies himself as such.

Now, obviously it would be tenuous to assert conclusively that angels share the same physical properties that humans do. But on the same note it would be just as wrong to say that angels are only spirit beings with no physical properties at all based on what we've seen regarding them in the word of God.

So, what are we to conclude?

Angels were created by God to serve those who will inherit eternal life as they serve God around His throne to His glory. Angels were not created with wings. The Seraphim and Cherubim, heavenly animals, were created with wings. Angels were created with a form that does not change whether in heaven or on earth, as that of men.

Angels can be invisible to people on earth and yet still be in their very presence. Angels can be present on earth and be visible while not being identified as an angel precisely because they have the same form as human beings.

There is no indication in Scripture that angels can procreate with their own kind let alone with human beings who are not of their kind according to the creation account of Genesis.

So then, are angels physical in nature? From every indication in Scripture they apparently are as they are not restricted in any physical sense of participating in many of the same physical activities that human beings do, (ie., clothing themselves, eating, drinking, walking, talking, singing, fellowshiping), as they appear as men whether in heaven or on earth.

How then should we view angels?

As fellow servants as was made clear to John when he was tempted to bow down to an angel.

Revelation 19:10 ¹⁰ Then I fell at his feet to worship him. But he said to me, "Do not do that; I am a fellow servant of yours and your brethren who hold the testimony of Jesus; worship God.

And so, the holy angels of God and holy, or set apart elect human beings are co-workers with a similar goal; advancing the Kingdom of God as He empowers us through His Holy Spirit to advance the gospel of Jesus Christ on planet earth where both types of servants work.

We should thank God for His servants to us and appreciate the work they do, but no more than we would thank God and appreciate fellow human beings who are also co-laborers of the Lord's.

Though we may not see them or their work we can be assured that angels are ever present and working for our good at God's discretion.

One day we will meet and continue to co-labor with these amazing servants in the new heavens and new earth where both groups will fulfill their specific roles in the Kingdom of God and we'll finally get to thank them face to face in our glorified physical bodies.

Until that day just know that God is with us and will continue to lead and guide us through the Holy Spirit and His word, and will continue to give the task of protection and comfort through those we know as angels when we least expect it as we have entertained them periodically without even knowing it.

To God be the glory!