

Angels – Part 3 – Interactions

What can we learn from the interactions of people in Scripture when encountering angels? Since we are told that these things were written for our instruction and as an example for us, what do we see in these examples.

1 Corinthians 10:6, 11 ESV

*Now these things took place **as examples for us**, that we might not desire evil as they did.*

*Now these things happened to them **as an example**, but they were **written down for our instruction**, on whom the end of the ages has come.*

Adam and Eve

The first potential encounter of an angel with man that I see in Scripture is when Adam and Eve were cast out of the garden.

Genesis 3:24 ESV

*He drove out the man, and at the east of the garden of Eden He placed **the cherubim and a flaming sword** that turned every way **to guard the way to the tree of life.***

A couple of assumptions would need to be made for this to be an encounter between Adam and the cherubim.

1. Adam and/or Eve saw the Cherubim that was stationed at the east of the garden.
2. The reaction, or feelings, after seeing the Cherubim and the flaming sword.

We are not told either of these things in Scripture that I have found. Had they seen the angel standing guard with the flaming sword, my guess is that it would have been a fearful sight. I believe they would have been scared off from ever challenging the angel.

1. This incident shows the power of the angels when operating in the authority of Almighty God.
2. We would do well to remember this at all times, heeding the warning to stay away, if there is one.

Lot in Sodom

We have looked at the verse in Hebrews each time so far, and here it is again.

Hebrews 13:2 ESV

*“Do not neglect to **show hospitality to strangers**, for thereby some have **entertained angels unawares.**”*

We see Lot put this into action.

Genesis 19:1-3 ESV

*The two angels came to Sodom in the evening, and Lot was sitting in the gate of Sodom. When lot saw them, he rose to meet them and bowed himself with his face to the earth and said, **“My lords, please turn aside to your servant’s house and spend the night and wash your feet. Then you may rise up early and go on your way.”** They said, “No; we will spend the night in the town square.” But **he pressed them strongly**; so they turned aside to him and entered his house. And he made them a feast and baked unleavened bread, and they ate.*

Lot opened his home to the two angels for food and lodging. There is nothing here telling us whether Lot knew that the two were angels or men. We are told they were angels in the narrative of the story, but I believe the actions of lot in these verses and through verse ten reveal Lot believed they were men. The encounter with the other men of Sodom in verses four through ten reveal Lot trying to protect the men/angels, even at personal cost to himself. The angels saw enough, and it was time for them to take action. And notice that they are referred to as men in verse ten.

Genesis 19:10-11 ESV

*But the men reached out their hands and brought Lot into the house with them and shut the door. **And they struck with blindness the men who were at the entrance of the house**, both small and great, so that they wore themselves out groping for the door.*

I believe that this is the time that the men revealed themselves to be angels. There was not necessarily a physical change, but the act of striking the men of the city with blindness was a sign for Lot, as well as a means of protection for him from the violence of the men of Sodom. I imagine Lot had to take a step back and evaluate what he just saw take place.

Lot then heeded the warning of the angels of the coming destruction of Sodom as they revealed to him the assignment they were undertaking as directed by God to do. He tried to get the message through to his future sons-in-law, but they thought Lot was joking.

What are our observations from this story? These things we ought to do also.

1. Lot showed hospitality to strangers.
2. Lot recognized the power of the angels and paid attention.
3. Lot heeded the warning shared by the angels.

But then Lot had a moment of crisis as he hesitated when the time came for committed action.

Genesis 19:15-16 ESV

*As morning dawned, **the angels urged Lot**, saying, “Up! Take your wife and your two daughters who are here, lest you be swept away in the punishment of the city.” **But he lingered**. So the men seized him and his wife and his two daughters by the hand, **the LORD being merciful to him**, and they brought him out and set him outside the city.*

The angels fulfilled their assignment which appears to have included getting Lot and his family to safety. From there it was up to Lot and his family to be obedient to what they were told by the angels. Lot put himself in danger by lingering rather than acting immediately in obedience. God, however, was merciful to Lot and made a way of escape for him. We ought not presume upon God to always overcome our hesitation. Lot's wife failed to heed the warnings and paid the price later. We need to learn to act immediately when it is called for, stepping out in faith.

Angels in Dreams

Jacob Leaves Laban

An angel, referred to as the angel of God, appeared to Jacob in a dream with instructions to leave Laban. The angel of God appears to be the same as the Angel of the LORD.

Genesis 31:11-13 ESV

*Then **the angel of God** said to me in the dream, “Jacob,” and I said, “Here I am!” And he said, “Lift*

*up your eyes and see, all the goats that mate with the flock are striped, spotted and mottled, for I have seen all that Laban is doing to you. **I am the God of Bethel**, where you anointed a pillar and made a vow to me. Now arise, go out from this land and return to the land of your kindred.”*

Verse 10 begins, “the angel of God,” while verse 13 begins, “I am the God of Bethel.” What is going on here? Previously there was a distinction between the two. Jacob slept and saw the ladder with the angels of God going up and down between heaven to earth. Then the LORD appeared above the ladder. This took place at Bethel, as referred back to in Genesis 31:13.

Note: Many commentators believe “ladder” was more likely “steps”.

Genesis 28:12-13 ESV

*And he dreamed, and behold, there was a ladder set up on the earth, and the top of it reached to heaven. And behold, the **angels of God** were ascending and descending on it! And behold, **the LORD** stood above it and said, “**I am the LORD**, the God of Abraham your father and the God of Isaac. The land on which you lie I will give to you and to your offspring.”*

Here it is clear that a number of angels were going up and down, and that God stood above them and spoke. So how does it work in verse 31? Did the “angel of God” get Jacob’s attention and then God spoke? Was the angel speaking on behalf of God? Was the “angel of God” actually God all along?

The study bibles I have do not answer the question. Neither does the Nelson's commentary I have, nor the Matthew Henry commentary online. Gill's Exposition of the Entire Bible states, "This was not a created angel, but the eternal one, the Son of God, and who is afterwards called God, and to whom Jacob had made a vow, which he would never have done to an angel; but to God only."

Joseph Contemplates Divorce

In the Gospel According to Matthew, we read of Joseph considering the quiet divorce of Mary, unwilling to put her to shame. Then came Joseph's dream.

Matthew 1:20-21 ESV

*But as he considered these things, behold, an **angel of the Lord** appeared to him in a dream, saying, "Joseph, son of David, do not fear to take Mary as your wife, for that which is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. She will bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins."*

It appears, from all accounts I have read, that in this case the angel is a messenger sent by God to inform Joseph of some needed details.

Having now followed this bit of a rabbit trail, we see that God has communicated through angels in dreams. There are a couple of questions to be dealt with.

1. Does the one who has the dream believe it is given by God?
2. Does the dreamer respond to the message as if it were a word from God?

In these two examples the answers are yes, and yes. There appears to be no other interactions, or reactions required of the one who dreamed. There is no inappropriate behavior as this is passive for the dreamer. Of course, the dreamer must choose to believe the message and follow the instructions.

What is seen in most angelic encounters in Scripture, written or implied, is respect for the angel when it is known to be an angel of God. Generally speaking, the angels come from the presence of God and carry a sort of aura of that presence with them that perhaps gets the attention of the one to whom the message is being brought. There tends to be a certain amount of awe and respect shown toward the angel being encountered. We do, however, have an example where this is taken too far.

Revelation 22:8-9 ESV

*I, John, am the one who heard and saw these things. And when I heard and saw them, **I fell down to worship at the feet of the angel** who showed them to me, but he said to me, **“You must not do that! I am a fellow servant with you and your brothers the prophets, and with those who keep the words of this book. Worship God!”***

The key here was the intent to worship the angel, not the bowing down of John. As we see in the instance of Balaam, he bowed, but there was no intent to worship the angel. It was more likely fear and awe.

Numbers 22:31 ESV

*Then the LORD opened the eyes of Balaam, and he saw **the angel of the LORD** standing in the way, with his drawn sword in his hand. And **he bowed down and fell on his face.***

Balaam then entered into a conversation with the angel, but he was not rebuked for bowing down.

So, how are we to interact with angels? Here is what I have come to believe:

- We may not know it is an angel until after the fact. Give thanks to the Lord and seek guidance of Holy Spirit on how to respond to the message received.
- Realize that angels are primarily messengers on behalf of God, and treat them with due respect.
- Other than instruction in a message, angels are not teachers giving us some new doctrine to teach others.
- Anything received in messages from angels ought not contradict Scripture. If there is contradiction, the encounter was with a familiar spirit or some demonic entity.
- Angels are on assignment from God, not from man. Man has no place or authority in ordering angels to do anything.
- We may, at times, seek God's assistance through His release of angels to accomplish a certain result. If the request is aligned with His will, He may do so.
- I see no account of any person commanding angels to go here or there, or to do any task. Even Jesus implied it is the Father's doing to send angels.

Matthew 26:53 ESV

*Do you think that I cannot **appeal to my Father**, and
He will at once send me **more than twelve legions of
angels?***

For more examples to study, here is one online page to use as a starting point.

20 Angelic Visitations and Encounters

<https://discover.hubpages.com/religion-philosophy/20-Angelic-Visitations-and-Encounters-in-the-Bible>