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## WHY TALK ABOUT ANGELS?

When I was a less-than-cherubic child of four or five, I entertained a variety of unorthodox notions about the universe and my place in it. Knowing nothing of the Bible at that time, my child's mind tried to make sense out of some of the deeper questions of life. Chief among these was the question of where I had come from.

My parents did their best to teach me my prayers, take me to church, and explain that God deserved the credit for making me. Still, I wondered if God hadn't created me somewhere in the clouds (where I thought heaven was) and only later sent me down to join my family on earth. No doubt I had been influenced by paintings I had seen of chubby little angels bouncing from cloud to cloud, their wings firmly glued to shoulders about the size of mine. More than anything, I wanted to believe that I too had once had wings and would someday have them again. Though I did not understand my desires then, I believe now that I longed for the freedom that the angels possessed and for the ability to move at will between heaven and earth. Somehow, I felt too heavy for my years, unfairly chained by gravity to the natural world when what I wanted was to soar into the skies where I imagined God to be. So strong was my desire to be airborne that, like many children who grew up watching Clark Kent transform himself into Superman, I once attempted a disastrous flight down the living room stairs.

Such experiences were to alter my views drastically. But they did not change my desire for a deeper connection with God and with the unseen world he had created. Years later I have come

to understand his mercy and his plan of salvation, accomplished through the life and death of Jesus of Nazareth. I have also come to cherish and to believe the Bible, which tells the unfolding story of God's love for us and his plan for the human race.

Page after page of the Scriptures describe the long struggle between God and the men and women he created to know him. It is a story of mercy, miracles, rebellion, treachery, wrath, repentance, nick-of-time rescues, and ultimate salvation. The cast of characters includes not only the Creator himself and the countless men and women he has made but also angels, both good and bad.

Too often, though, we ignore the role that angels play. Many Christians are afraid that talk of angels will distract from the power and majesty of God. And many others have a hard time taking angels all that seriously. But as John Calvin has said, "The angels are the dispensers and administrators of the Divine beneficence toward us; they regard our safety, undertake our defense, direct our ways and exercise a constant solicitude that no evil befall us."

Like it or not, angels are important players in the drama of salvation. Perhaps it's time we paid a little more attention to these powerful and loving allies that God has given us. True, there are dangers. We must not forget that worship belongs only to God, no matter how beautiful or powerful some of his creatures may be (see Revelation 19:10). We must also remember that angels are but one way that God works in the universe. Pascal said, "We create angels, but trouble comes if we create too many." They aren't the whole story, nor even the most important part of the story. They are simply supporting actors, servants of the living God, as we are. Even so, such fears fail to justify our ignorance of the angels. Knowing more about their nature and purpose will help us to perceive more of God's majesty and his loving plan for our lives.

I have delved into the pages of the Bible and listened to the stories of people of faith in the hopes of satisfying my own curiosity about angels and offering comfort and encouragement to anyone who longs for a deeper connection with God. The skepticism and rationalism of our age have not smothered our desire for the spiritual dimension of life. If anything, such attitudes have merely created a pent-up thirst that only God can quench.

I hope that these reflections will increase your thirst and your desire to know God as you become aware of the heavenly allies he has given you. If we let them, angels can be a window to God, offering a glimpse of his power, his goodness, and his loving intentions toward us. It's time to put aside a materialistic view of the universe in favor of a thoroughly biblical one. With this book, I hope to do in writing what a painter by the name of Sir Edward Coley Burne-Jones accomplished in his art: "The more materialistic science becomes, the more angels shall I paint: their wings are my protest in favor of the immortality of the soul."