

# **Angels and the Devil**

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The Quran refers to angels as the direct servants of God. One of their primary purposes is to relay the message of God unto mankind. Their every action is completed to fulfill the will of God, and they do not possess the capability to deviate from this responsibility. They are, in fact, completely infallible, and must remain so in order to be pure beings which are capable of relaying the righteous message. Thus, if angels had the ability to become fallen, and were therefore able to commit sin, or deviate from their duty to God, the message they relay would also be imperfect.

According to Muslims, the role of angels differs very little from the concept of the holy beings held by most Christian sects. Perhaps the primary distinction between the Islamic and Christian understanding of angels is the scale on which they operate within our daily lives. Muslims believe that every human has, among others, two angels that accompany him from the point of his conception; to the point in which his soul exits his body (death). These two angels are responsible for recording the good and bad deeds that their respective host commits. However, it is not just a simple legislation these angels record, they are responsible for registering how the sins or good deeds a man commits affects his

persona, his soul, and to an extent even his physical appearance. It is of course, ultimately the decision of God as to what the outcome of ones actions are to be, however God employs His host of infallible angels to carry out His laws. It is accepted in Islam and Christianity that the Archangel Gabriel is responsible for the delivery of God's messages to His messengers. There are numerous examples of this occurrence in the holy Quran. The dictation of the Quran itself was received by the prophet Muhammad, directly from the angel Gabriel, who was conveying the message directly from God.

The responsibilities of angels exceed relaying divine messages to God's chosen messengers, and recording the actions and nature of mankind. Angels are in fact responsible for maintaining the perfect equilibrium of nature and all of God's divine laws. They are behind every drop of rain that falls from the clouds, every storm that brews above us, and even the micro ecological miracles of bacteria and germs. It must be noted that the angels are not working autonomously, in fact their every action is willed by God, and they do not even posses the capability to act on free will.

Many believe that the Holy Spirit is an angel. There are two prevailing views in Islam about the Holy Spirit. The first and most common is that it is the Archangel Gabriel. Although this view is the traditional one, there are many who believe that it is a unique creation by Allah that is different and perhaps a higher being than Angels.

Angels have many other roles according to the teachings of Islam. There are guardian angels that protect us from daily mishaps; there are angels who protect us from the whispers of the devils, and there are angels who are charged with causing us to die. However, Muslims believe that angels do not perform evil acts, when they bring us death or calamities since they are only performing tasks that are ordained by God.

The existence of a being that is bent on misguiding the righteous is a theme common to many faiths. Islam holds a somewhat unique perspective on the origin, role, and nature of the devil. Unlike Christians, Muslims do not believe that Satan was a fallen angel; instead he is a creature that God created from fire among a species of creatures referred to in the Quran as Jinn (Quran 7:13). Members of this species possess the capability to commit sin just as their human counterparts. This is an important distinction, as Islam rejects the idea that angels have the capability to sway from their designated path from God. Furthermore, the Quran states that angels are created solely from light, as opposed to clay like humans, or fire like Jinn (Qur'an 7:12-18).

The Islamic perspective on the fall of Satan centers on the creation of Adam. The Quran states that when God created Adam, He commanded all of his angels to submit to His new creation. Present with the angels, and commanded by Allah to prostrate himself to Adam, was *Iblis*. *Iblis* is the name of a Jinni that God

allowed to reside among the angels. The story is recounted in Chapter seven of the Quran:

7: 12. And WE indeed created you and then WE gave you shape; and then WE said to the angels, 'Submit to Adam; and they all submitted. But *Iblis* did not; he will not be of those who submit. 7: 13. God said, 'What prevented thee from submitting when I commanded thee?' He said, 'I am better than he. Thou hast created me of fire while him hast thou created of clay.' 7: 14. God said, 'Then go down hence; it is not for thee to be arrogant here. Get out; thou art certainly of those who are abased.' 7: 15. He said, 'Respite me till the day when they will be raised up.' 7: 16. God said, 'Thou art of those who are respited.' 7: 17. He said, 'Now, since Thou hast adjudge me to be erring, I will assuredly lie in wait for them on Thy straight path; 7: 18. 'Then will I surely come upon them from before them and from behind them and from their right and from their left, and Thou wilt not find most of them to be grateful. 7: 19. God said, 'Get out hence, despised and banished. Whosoever of them shall follow thee; I will surely fill Hell with you all. (Quran 7:12-19).

The Quran makes a clear distinction between *Iblis* (the actual name for Lucifer in Arabic) and angels, as *Iblis* boasts of his composition of fire and the Quran states on numerous occasions that angels are created of pure light. This incident when *Iblis* refused to prostrate himself to Adam because Adam was created of clay and *Iblis* of fire is seen by Islam as the root of all feelings of supremacy and hence the cause of all evil.

Out of spite and quest for revenge, *Iblis* swore to misguide mankind and lead them to hell. *Iblis* uses his many followers from among the Jinn and people who may or may not be aware that they serve his cause, to misguide people. The Quran makes it clear that *Iblis* is humanity's number one enemy and that we must guard ourselves against him and his soldiers (Qur'an 6:142). Muslims believe that every human being is well equipped to protect himself against *Iblis* and his army

of Jinn and people, and that God gave us the willpower, wisdom, and knowledge we need to do so.

Muslims and Christian agree that angels are pure friendly beings that intend well for humankind. They also agree that the devil is humankind's number one enemy. Lucifer is a despised character in both traditions. There is also consensus that without careful attention to our actions, people can be utilized by the forces of evil to do harm to our species and the Earth for which God made us responsible because He gave us dominion over all that's in it. The question remains however, can we find common ground by virtue of our reverence for angels and our shared belief that they are always with us to be human brethren? Can we, based on these shared beliefs, treat each other as either brothers in faith or equals in humanity?