

Yaqīn in the Angels (الملائكة): The Faithful Servants of Allah and the Bearers of His Revelation

ءَامَنَ الرَّسُولُ بِمَا أُنزِلَ إِلَيْهِ مِنْ رَبِّهِ ۚ وَالْمُؤْمِنُونَ ۚ كُلٌّ ءَامَنَ بِاللّٰهِ وَمَلَائِكَتِهِ ۚ وَكُتُبِهِ ۚ وَرُسُلِهِ ۚ

"...The Messenger has believed in what has been revealed to him from his Lord and so have the believers. All of them have believed in Allah, His angels, His Books and His Messengers..."

(Qur'an 2:285)

In the previous article, we reflected upon one of the most profound declarations in the Qur'an:

اللّٰهُ نُورُ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ

"Allah is the Light of the heavens and the earth."

(Qur'an 24:35)

From that magnificent verse emerged a fundamental truth: Allah alone is the source of all guidance, certainty, and ultimate reality. Every created light is dependent upon Him, while He alone possesses Eternal Light.

Yet this realization naturally gives rise to another question.

If Allah is the source of all Divine guidance, how does His guidance reach humanity?

The Qur'an answers this question by directing our attention to one of the greatest realities of the unseen (*al-ghayb*): the angels.

Belief in the angels is therefore not an isolated doctrine within Islamic theology. It is one of the six pillars of *Imān*, inseparably connected to belief in Allah, for through His angels Allah communicates revelation, executes His commands, records human deeds, and administers His creation with perfect wisdom. To believe in the angels is to affirm that the universe is governed not by chance, but by the perfect command of Allah.

The Day Jibrīl Came to Teach the Ummah

Among all the gatherings that took place in the blessed life of our beloved Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ, few possess the theological significance of the gathering in which Jibrīl (عليه السلام) appeared before the Companions.

‘Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb (رضي الله عنه) narrates:

"While we were sitting with the Messenger of Allah ﷺ one day, a man appeared before us whose clothes were exceedingly white and whose hair was intensely black. No signs of travel could be seen upon him, yet none of us knew him."

The Companions were immediately struck by the mystery of this visitor.

Madinah was not a great metropolis through which strangers passed unnoticed. Travellers arriving after long journeys bore the unmistakable marks of the desert upon their clothing and faces. Yet this man appeared immaculate, as though untouched by travel, while remaining completely unknown to everyone present.

Who was he?

The Companions watched silently as he walked through the gathering and came directly before the Messenger of Allah ﷺ.

Then something even more remarkable occurred.

The stranger sat so close to the Prophet ﷺ that **their knees touched**, and he placed his hands upon his own thighs. There was no hesitation in his manner, no sign of uncertainty. Rather, he addressed the Prophet ﷺ with calm dignity and asked:

"O Muḥammad, inform me about Islām."

The Messenger of Allah ﷺ replied by describing the five pillars upon which outward submission to Allah is established: the testimony of faith, prayer, zakāh, fasting in Ramaḍān, and pilgrimage to the Sacred House for those able to undertake it.

The stranger replied:

"You have spoken the truth."

The Companions were astonished.

‘Umar (رضي الله عنه) later remarked that they found it extraordinary that the man should ask a question and then immediately affirm the correctness of the answer.

The conversation continued.

The stranger then asked:

"Inform me about Īmān."

The Messenger of Allah ﷺ replied:

"It is to believe in Allah, His angels, His Books, His Messengers, the Last Day, and to believe in Divine Decree, its good and what appears difficult."

(Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim)

The discussion did not end there.

The visitor next asked about **Iḥsān**, and the Prophet ﷺ elevated the conversation from belief to spiritual excellence:

"It is that you worship Allah as though you see Him; and though you do not see Him, indeed He sees you."

Thereafter he asked about the Last Hour and some of its signs.

Then, just as mysteriously as he had appeared, the stranger departed.

The Companions remained seated, still wondering about the identity of the remarkable visitor.

After some time, the Messenger of Allah ﷺ asked:

"O 'Umar, do you know who the questioner was?"

'Umar replied:

"Allah and His Messenger know best."

The Prophet ﷺ then revealed the answer that transformed this extraordinary encounter into one of the greatest lessons in Islamic theology:

"That was Jibrīl. He came to teach you your religion."

(Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim)

How remarkable this encounter truly was.

The greatest of the angels did not descend merely to deliver revelation.

He came as a teacher.

He did not deliver a sermon.

He asked questions.

He guided the Companions—and every generation after them—to discover the foundations of their religion through a dialogue with the Messenger of Allah ﷺ.

Within that dialogue, the Prophet ﷺ defined the three great dimensions of Islam:

- Islām — outward submission.
- Īmān — inward belief.
- Iḥsān — spiritual excellence.

It is no coincidence that belief in the angels appears immediately after belief in Allah.

For if Allah is the source of revelation, then the angels are among the honoured servants through whom His revelation reaches His Messengers by His command.

The Qur'anic Identity of the Angels

The Qur'an introduces the angels in a manner unlike any other creation.

It does not begin by describing the number of their wings, the extent of their power, or the splendour of their appearance.

Instead, Allah first reveals their relationship with Him.

بَلْ عِبَادٌ مُّكْرَمُونَ

لَا يَسْبِقُونَهُ بِالْقَوْلِ وَهُمْ بِأَمْرِهِ يَعْمَلُونَ

"Rather, they are honoured servants. They do not precede Him in speech but act only by His command."

(Qur'an 21:26–27)

This verse establishes the first defining characteristic of the angels:

They are **honoured servants** (*'ibādun mukramūn*).

Their honour does not arise from independent authority or extraordinary ability. Their nobility lies entirely in their servitude to Allah.

The Qur'an continues this portrait:

يَخَافُونَ رَبَّهُمْ مِّنْ فَوْقِهِمْ وَيَفْعَلُونَ مَا يُؤْمَرُونَ ٥٠

"They fear their Lord above them and they do whatever they are commanded."

(Qur'an 16:50)

Here Allah reveals another defining quality of the angels: **khashyah**—a profound reverence and awe of their Lord. Their obedience is not mechanical. It is accompanied by complete consciousness of Allah's Majesty.

The Qur'anic description reaches its culmination in another verse:

لَّا يَعْصُونَ اللَّهَ مَا أَمَرَهُمْ وَيَفْعَلُونَ مَا يُؤْمَرُونَ

"They do not disobey Allah in what He commands them, but they do what they are commanded."

(Qur'an 66:6)

Taken together, these verses beautifully construct the Qur'anic identity of the angels.

They are:

- honoured servants,
- completely obedient,
- filled with reverence for Allah,
- and utterly submissive to His command.

Unlike mankind and jinn, the Qur'an never attributes rebellion, arrogance, forgetfulness, or hesitation to the angels.

Their existence is one of uninterrupted worship and perfect obedience.

The Prophet ﷺ further informed us regarding their origin:

"The angels were created from light, the jinn were created from smokeless fire, and Adam was created from what has been described to you."

(Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim)

Among the countless angels whom Allah created from light, the Qur'an repeatedly draws our attention to one by name. Not because he shares in Allah's authority, but because Allah entrusted him with the greatest responsibility ever bestowed upon an angel: the faithful conveyance of Divine Revelation. It is to this noble servant—Jibrīl (عليه السلام)—that we now turn.

Jibrīl (عليه السلام): The Trustworthy Spirit

Among the countless angels whom Allah has created the Qur'an singles out one by name more than any other: **Jibrīl (عليه السلام)**. This distinction is not bestowed because he possesses authority independent of Allah, nor because he occupies a position that diminishes the Majesty of his Creator. Rather, his honour lies in the trust that Allah entrusted to him—the conveyance of Divine Revelation to His chosen Messengers.

The Qur'an says:

قُلْ مَنْ كَانَ عَدُوًّا لِجِبْرِيلَ فَإِنَّهُ نَزَّلَهُ عَلَى قَلْبِكَ بِإِذْنِ اللَّهِ مُصَدِّقًا لِمَا بَيْنَ يَدَيْهِ وَهُدًى وَبُشْرَىٰ لِلْمُؤْمِنِينَ

"Say, whoever is an enemy to Jibrīl—it is he who has brought it down upon your heart by Allah's permission, confirming what came before it, and as guidance and glad tidings for the believers."

(Qur'an 2:97)

This verse is remarkable in both its precision and its theology.

Allah attributes every stage of revelation to Himself. The Qur'an originates from Allah alone. Jibrīl neither authors revelation nor alters it. He neither adds to it nor subtracts from it. His honour lies in absolute fidelity to the trust placed upon him. Every word he conveyed was transmitted **by Allah's permission**, exactly as it was revealed.

The Qur'an reinforces this truth in another passage:

وَإِنَّهُ لَنَنْزِيلُ رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ

نَزَلَ بِهِ الرُّوحُ الْأَمِينُ

عَلَى قَلْبِكَ لِتَكُونَ مِنَ الْمُنْذِرِينَ

بِلِسَانٍ عَرَبِيٍّ مُبِينٍ

"Indeed, this Qur'an is a revelation from the Lord of all the worlds. The Trustworthy Spirit has brought it down upon your heart, that you may be among the warners, in a clear Arabic tongue."

(Qur'an 26:192–195)

Thus, revelation is never separated from its Divine source. Jibrīl (عليه السلام) is honoured because he faithfully fulfils his trust without the slightest deviation. This absolute trustworthiness is further emphasized when Allah describes him in Sūrah al-Takwīr:

إِنَّهُ لَقَوْلُ رَسُولٍ كَرِيمٍ

ذِي قُوَّةٍ عِنْدَ ذِي الْعَرْشِ مَكِينٍ

مُطَاعٍ ثَمَّ أَمِينٍ

"Indeed, this is the word conveyed by a noble messenger, possessing strength, honoured before the Lord of the Throne, obeyed there and trustworthy."

(Qur'an 81:19–21)

Elsewhere Allah says:

عَلَّمَهُ شَدِيدُ الْقُوَى

"He has been taught by one mighty in power."

(Qur'an 53:5)

The early scholars explained that this refers to Jibrīl (عليه السلام), whose immense strength was matched only by his complete submission to Allah.

Ibn Kathīr notes that Allah praised Jibrīl with these qualities to affirm the authenticity of revelation and to remove every doubt concerning its transmission. The Qur'an reached the Messenger of Allah ﷺ exactly as Allah intended, free from alteration or corruption.

Al-Ṭabarī similarly explains that these verses establish Jibrīl's trustworthiness as the faithful intermediary between the Creator and His Messengers. His excellence lies not in independent authority but in perfect obedience.

Reflecting upon these verses, one begins to appreciate an important lesson.

The Qur'an never glorifies Jibrīl in isolation.

Every honour bestowed upon him points back to Allah.

His strength glorifies Allah.

His obedience glorifies Allah.

His trustworthiness glorifies Allah.

Even his nearness to the Lord of the Throne magnifies the Majesty of the One who honoured him.

Thus, belief in Jibrīl is not admiration of an extraordinary angel for his own sake. It is recognition of Allah's perfect wisdom in choosing the most trustworthy of His servants to convey His final revelation.

The Angels and the Unseen Order of Allah

Although Jibrīl occupies a unique position in the transmission of revelation, the Qur'an presents the angels collectively as an unseen kingdom whose every action reflects the command of Allah.

Some continually glorify their Lord without weariness.

يُسَبِّحُونَ اللَّيْلَ وَالنَّهَارَ لَا يَفْترُونَ

"They glorify Him night and day, never growing weary."

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Others seek forgiveness for the believers.

الَّذِينَ يَحْمِلُونَ الْعَرْشَ وَمَنْ حَوْلَهُ يُسَبِّحُونَ بِحَمْدِ رَبِّهِمْ وَيُؤْمِنُونَ بِهِ وَيَسْتَغْفِرُونَ لِلَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا

"Those who carry the Throne and those around it glorify the praise of their Lord, believe in Him and seek forgiveness for those who believe..."

(Qur'an 40:7)

Still others faithfully record every word and deed.

مَا يَلْفُظُ مِنْ قَوْلٍ إِلَّا لَدَيْهِ رَقِيبٌ عَتِيدٌ

"Not a word does a person utter except that with him are observers prepared (to record)."

(Qur'an 50:18)

Others guard mankind by Allah's command.

لَهُ مُعَقَّبَاتٌ مِنْ بَيْنِ يَدَيْهِ وَمِنْ خَلْفِهِ يَحْفَظُونَهُ مِنْ أَمْرِ اللَّهِ ۚ يَقُومُ سُوِّءًا فَلَا مَرَدَّ لَهُ

"For each person are successive angels before him and behind him, guarding him by the command of Allah."

(Qur'an 13:11)

The Qur'an presents these responsibilities not to satisfy human curiosity about the unseen, but to awaken the believing heart.

Every spoken word is known.

Every righteous deed is witnessed.

Every sincere supplication is heard by the Lord who commands His angels with perfect justice and mercy.

Yet despite the diversity of their responsibilities, the Qur'an continually returns us to the same truth.

No angel acts independently.

No angel possesses authority apart from Allah.

No angel shares in His Lordship.

Every command originates with Allah.

Every action returns to Allah.

Every honour belongs ultimately to Allah.

How Belief in the Angels Transforms the Believer

Belief in the angels is therefore not merely an article to be memorised. It transforms the believer's daily life. The knowledge that every word is recorded cultivates careful speech. The knowledge that the angels seek forgiveness for the believers' nurtures hope. The knowledge that they glorify Allah without ceasing inspires perseverance in worship.

The Messenger of Allah ﷺ also informed us that the angels attend gatherings in which Allah is remembered.

He said:

"Allah has angels who travel through the roads seeking the gatherings of remembrance. When they find a gathering in which Allah is remembered, they call to one another, 'Come to what you are seeking.'"

(Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī; Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim)

In another narration, the Prophet ﷺ said:

"Indeed, the angels lower their wings for the seeker of knowledge, being pleased with what he seeks."

(Jāmi' al-Tirmidhī; Sunan Abī Dāwūd)

Such narrations remind the believer that the unseen world is not distant from the life of faith. By Allah's command, His angels accompany the journey of the sincere believer with honour, supplication, and faithful service.

The Qur'an presents the angels not as objects of fascination, but as models of perfect servitude.

They neither compete with Allah's authority nor share in His Divinity.

Their greatness lies entirely in their obedience.

Among them, Jibrīl (عليه السلام) stands as the faithful bearer of revelation, entrusted by Allah to convey His words exactly as they were revealed to His Messengers.

Thus, belief in the angels strengthens the believer's certainty that the guidance reaching humanity has been preserved with absolute fidelity from its Divine source.

Having reflected upon those entrusted to carry revelation, we now naturally turn to the revelation itself.

The next article of Imān to be explored is: **Belief in the Revealed Books**, through which Allah's guidance continues to illuminate the hearts of those who seek Him.