

# God's Unseen Messengers

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company of angels.”*

—*Hebrews 12:22*

ing and faith-strengthening.

Not all references to angels in the Scriptures are to spirit beings. The Hebrew and Greek words which have been translated as “angel” simply mean “messenger.” Although it most often refers to spirit beings that God used to communicate a message or perform a function, it may also apply to another human being that was used to deliver a message from God.—Josh. 6:25; Hag. 1:13; Luke 7:24,27; 9:52

Our attention here, however, is upon the holy angels of God—his invisible spirit beings, or unseen messengers—which the Bible tells us are the primary agencies by which our Heavenly Father fulfills his will in respect to overruling the affairs of mankind.

**THE WORD ANGEL, IN ITS** various forms, appears in the Bible more than three hundred times, and yet we sometimes feel that we know very little about them. However, a careful study of this subject can be very reward-

They have also been given a special charge over his chosen people—the heirs of salvation. “Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation?”—Heb. 1:14

## **CHARACTERISTICS OF ANGELS**

There are many things we do not know about angels, but there are some important things that we do know. We know that angels were created with free will, as mortal beings, and in the image of God. They had the freedom to choose between serving God or rebelling against him. Some of them chose a course of evil and became messengers of Satan instead of God. The Bible foretells their ultimate destruction, along with Satan. How many these will be, we do not know.—Matt. 25:41; II Pet. 2:4; Jude 1:6

Job 38:7 speaks of a time in the distant past when there was no rebellion in the angelic realm: “When the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy.” These holy angels are more than just messengers, or servants of God; they are his “sons” and have access to God’s presence at all times.

We believe that God’s only begotten Son, Jesus, was the Father’s only direct creation, the “beginning and the end.” (Rev. 22:13) All other life, including Lucifer and all of the angels, was created by the Son during the time of his pre-human existence, using the power vested in him by the Father. The Apostle Paul tells us that Jesus was the “firstborn of every creature: By him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him.”—Col. 1:15,16

## ACTIVITIES OF THE HOLY ANGELS

We learn a lot about the angels when we notice in the Bible the many accounts of their activities as they carry out the purposes of God in the earth as his messengers. It is our understanding that in nearly every instance the holy angels represented God in his dealings with ancient Israel and all of the prophets in the Old Testament. For instance, when God spoke to Moses out of the burning bush, it might first appear to be a conversation directly between God and Moses, but Exodus 3:2 declares that it was an angel of the Lord that spoke to Moses on God's behalf. Later, when Moses received the tables of the Law in the holy mount and all the instructions concerning that Law and the Tabernacle arrangement, the Old Testament account states that it was God who talked to Moses. However, in Galatians 3:19, the apostle declares that the Law was "ordained [Greek: arranged thoroughly] by angels in the hand of a mediator [Moses]." The apostle also refers to this in Hebrews 2:2, "The word spoken by angels was steadfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompence of reward."

Genesis chapter 32 tells of Jacob wrestling with a man—a materialized angel—all night long, and Jacob would not let him go until he had received a blessing. (vss. 24-26) Then in verse 30, the account says, "I have seen God face to face, and my life is preserved." We believe that these angels were in the position of representing God so completely that they could speak and act as God himself. If this is true, it is very important that these holy angels be perfect and thus able to reflect in their own characters the exact image of God in every way.

We see God's mighty power demonstrated through the angels. It took only one angel to smite all of the firstborn of Egypt, and this same angel led the children of Israel out of Egypt. (Exod. 14:19) On another occasion, seventy thousand rebellious Israelites were slain by a single angel.—II Sam. 24:15,16

## **THE ANGELS' MINISTRY TO JESUS**

Angels ministered to Jesus during his earthly walk. (Matt. 4:11) Near the close of his life, in the Garden of Gethsemane, as Peter was trying to protect him with the sword that he had, Jesus told Peter to put the sword away, saying, "Thinkest thou that I cannot now pray to my Father, and he shall presently give me more than twelve legions of angels?" (Matt. 26:53) If it had been God's will for the angels to save our Lord at that time, one angel would have been enough. Jesus, though, continued by saying if the angels were to save him, "How then shall the scriptures be fulfilled, that thus it must be?"—vs. 54

What a great temptation it perhaps was for God's holy angels to reach down, as it were, and protect Jesus on that occasion. They knew, however, that it was the Father's will for him to be tried, persecuted, and finally crucified on the cross. Thus these holy messengers faithfully carried out the Father's will and did not intervene.

The holy angels also have emotional qualities such as we of humankind have—they sing beautifully together and praise God when there is some great event to celebrate, such as occurred at the birth of Jesus. (Luke 2:13,14) They also experience great joy when they observe a sinner repent and turn to the Lord.—Luke 15:7

## **INVISIBLE MESSENGERS TO THE CHURCH**

These same angels who have been fully dedicated to the service of God as his invisible messengers down through the ages have a very special and peculiar mission during this present Gospel Age. Every one of the Lord's little ones, all those who are in covenant relationship with God, have become the special charge of the holy angels. "He shall give his angels charge over thee, to keep thee in all thy ways. They shall bear thee up in their hands, lest thou dash thy foot against a stone." (Ps. 91:11,12) All of the Lord's people should rejoice at this text of Scripture! These holy angels are the eyes of God, observing everything that is going on in the lives of the consecrated.

These angels are also spoken of as the eyes of the Lord in the earth. We read in II Chronicles 16:9, "The LORD's eyes keep on roaming throughout the earth, looking for those whose hearts completely belong to him, so that he may strongly support them." (*International Standard Version*) This text should not give us the thought that it is necessary for God to personally behold every individual act of his people. The eyes referred to are God's influence, his power of knowing, whatever the means. Whether his power is exercised and his will executed through angels, other forces or agencies, or by himself personally, it makes no difference, because it all is at his direction and overruling.

## **MINISTERING SPIRITS**

We understand that each of the Lord's people, in proportion as he or she is one of God's true children, has one or more ministering spirits, or angels, who have special charge of their affairs. These angels

care for us, supervise our affairs, and are God's agencies or channels of his divine power over us as to his will and providential care. There are two key thoughts that we should have in mind as we consider this ministry of the holy angels. First, they abide with us continually, and we are their special charge. This is shown in Psalm 34:7, which reads, "The angel of the LORD encampeth round about them that fear [reverence] him, and delivereth them." The word "encampeth" in this verse means literally, "to pitch a tent."

Secondly, these ministering spirits have instant access to the Father at all times in connection with his supervision of our affairs. This is indicated by the words in Matthew 18:10 spoken by Jesus: "Take heed that ye despise not one of these little ones; for I say unto you, That ... their angels do always behold the face of my Father which is in heaven." We should remember that these holy angels share our Heavenly Father's concern for our spiritual well-being, and as directed of God, and his will, they do not err in their overruling of the affairs of his people.

Another point to be kept in mind in respect to the ministry of the holy angels is that, notwithstanding their ministry to us, we still "walk by faith, not by sight." (II Cor. 5:7) Therefore, it is God's will that the angels' ministry in the lives of his people be accomplished in what appears to us as natural processes, rather than direct miracles. Additionally, the overruling of the angels in our lives is always accomplished in a way that will not interfere with our own free will. If we are determined to follow our own will in a given matter, and do not seek God's guidance and overruling, then the angels will

probably not interfere, and perhaps we will learn a difficult lesson from the experience as a result. However, if God's will is our chief concern in every aspect of our lives, then his holy messengers are ready to help us in every way, so that as New Creatures we may prosper and be spiritually blessed.

## **GUARDIAN ANGELS**

Our "guardian angels," the term often used to describe God's ministering spirits, do many things on our behalf. Sometimes they are used to give us strength to endure our experiences. It may not be God's will for us to be immediately delivered from a trial, but he will always give us strength to go through it. Deliverance will come in the proper time and way in our trials, and sometimes angels are used to accomplish this.

We remember how Paul was delivered from death on various occasions in order that the Gospel might be preached in other places. (Acts 14:19,20; 16:16-40) Earlier, as recorded in Acts 5:17-20, is an account of the priests and leaders of the people taking all of the apostles and putting them in a common prison. The account says, "The angel of the Lord by night opened the prison doors, and brought them forth, and said, Go, stand and speak in the temple to the people all the words of this life." That was how they got in prison in the first place, and yet God, through the angel, told them to go out and do the same things again! This is an important lesson for us. The angel of the Lord will, at times, deliver us also from our trials, but not so we can take it easy and be more comfortable in this life. Rather, deliverance will be in order that we might continue the work of sacrificing

the flesh and its interests, laying down our lives for our brethren, and preaching the Gospel to others.

Our guardian angels also protect us from unnecessary evil; they lift us up, lest we dash our “foot against a stone.” (Ps. 91:12) We can think of this as the little unseen things that the holy angels do for us daily. We cannot know how many times the angel of the Lord has protected us and kept us from harm. The burden of our prayers should be that of thanksgiving to God for his daily tender mercies and care over us through his angels. Prayer is important in these little things. It is encouraging when we hear the followers of the Lord recount the many seemingly insignificant leadings of God in their daily experiences that have been the result of prayer and supplication. Our guardian angels respond to these prayers so long as they are inspired by proper motives and in harmony with God’s will.

All of the truly consecrated should be able to testify to the goodness of the Lord in these small matters from day to day that sometimes almost seem miraculous. Let us be sure our motives are right, and then seek God’s help and blessing in these little experiences of our daily lives. These holy, guardian angels are carefully watching every aspect of our lives; we are never alone. They represent the Father’s presence with us daily and hourly.

## **THE PSALMIST’S TESTIMONY**

The Psalmist David describes this close, daily, and hourly watch-care of our Heavenly Father. We quote in full the 139th Psalm:

“O LORD, thou hast searched me, and known me. Thou knowest my downsitting and mine uprising,



thou understandest my thought afar off. Thou compassed my path and my lying down, and art acquainted with all my ways. For there is not a word in my tongue, but, lo, O LORD, thou knowest it altogether. Thou hast beset me behind and before, and laid thine hand upon me. Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; it is high, I cannot attain unto it. Whither shall I go from thy spirit? or whither shall I flee from thy presence? If I ascend up into heaven, thou art there: if I make my bed in hell [Hebrew: the grave], behold, thou art there. If I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea; Even there shall thy hand lead me, and thy right hand shall hold me. If I say, Surely the darkness shall cover me; even the night shall be light about me. Yea, the darkness hideth not from thee; but the night shineth as the day: the darkness and the light are both alike to thee. For thou hast possessed my reins: thou hast covered me in my mother's womb. I will praise thee; for I am fearfully and wonderfully made: marvellous are thy works; and that my soul knoweth right well. My substance was not hid from thee, when I was made in secret, and curiously wrought in the lowest parts of the earth. Thine eyes did see my substance, yet being unperfect; and in thy book all my members were written, which in continuance were fashioned, when as yet there was none of them. How precious also are thy thoughts unto me, O God! how great is the sum of them! If I should count them, they are more in number than the sand: when I awake, I am still with thee. Surely thou wilt slay the wicked, O God: depart from me therefore, ye bloody men. For they

Speak against thee wickedly, and thine enemies take thy name in vain. Do not I hate them, O LORD, that hate thee? and am not I grieved with those that rise up against thee? I hate them with perfect hatred: I count them mine enemies. Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: And see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.”

## **HEAVENLY MANNA PROVIDED**

A very important ministration of the angels is that of assisting in supplying our needs, both temporal and spiritual. God has promised to supply all our needs, and we should thank him daily for his temporal provisions. (Phil. 4:19) More important, though, are our spiritual needs. He daily supplies us with manna—bread—from heaven. In the 6th chapter of John, Jesus said he was that bread from heaven, and the words he speaks are “spirit and life.” (vss. 32-35,63) We remember that the manna provided for Israel in the wilderness which they gathered daily was prepared by the angels. (Exodus chapter 16) This is recalled to us in Psalm 78:23-25, which states that the Israelites did eat “angels’ food.” Our guardian angels are very interested in our spiritual well-being. They have arranged the affairs of God’s people so that many have opportunities to study, to fellowship, to learn from one another, to attend meetings and conventions, to partake of this spiritual food. Some of the Lord’s people are isolated and may not have all of these privileges. However, if it is through no fault of their own, we believe that God especially protects them, cares for them, and makes up to them

in other ways that their spiritual life may prosper. This too, perhaps, is another means by which God's holy angels minister to his people.

## **THE PROSPECT BEFORE US**

The wonderful fellowship we enjoy when gathered together with others of the household of faith is but a foretaste of that grand gathering that awaits us if we are faithful to our covenant with God. Such is the sentiment of our theme text, "Ye are come unto mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels." What joy awaits us when, if faithful, we come unto the city of the living God and see our Heavenly Father and our dear Lord Jesus face to face, and then meet this innumerable company of angels that were so directly involved in our lives during our earthly walk! Perhaps we will have an opportunity to meet those angels who have specially ministered unto us now, and to share fellowship and shed the tears of joy together as we talk about some of our experiences in the Christian way. What a joy it will be to join together with these holy messengers in the greatness and the goodness of our loving God.

We should now be making plans to attend that "general assembly" in the heavenlies. (Heb. 12:23) We do this by our determination to do God's will daily to the best of our ability, and giving all diligence to make our "calling and election sure." (II Pet. 1:10) We have the mighty power of God working on our behalf, and his great love and compassion, all being ministered to us through his holy angels. Let us, therefore, press onward each day and not "neglect so great salvation."—Heb. 2:3 ■