

# ANGELS

## INTRODUCTION:

1. The study of "ANGELS" is a fascinating study. For the angels are primarily the ministers of God's providence. The scriptures have much to say about angels. Yet, today there is a very general disregard for the subject.
2. Actually, members of the church of the Lord, generally speaking, give little or no thought for the subject. Many brethren have never heard a sermon, or studied a lesson regarding the subject of "angels."
3. With many, the subject of angels is a question of myth or reality. Some questions that naturally arise relative to angels include the following:
  - a. What is the origin of angels?
  - b. What is the state or form of angels?
  - c. What are the attributes of angels? Their mission? Their destiny?

## I. THE ORIGIN OF ANGELS

1. Relative to the origin of angels, God asked Job: "Where was thou when I laid the foundations of the earth? Declare, if thou hast understanding. Who hath determined the measures thereof, if thou knowest? Or who stretched the line upon it? Where upon were the foundations thereof fastened? Or who laid the corner-stone thereof, When the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy" (Job 38:4-7).

The "sons of God" shouted for joy when God laid the foundations of the earth, but Adam was not created until the sixth day of creation. Who, then, were those sons of God? Without doubt, they were angels.

2. Angels, however, were not in the beginning and thus from eternity. For instance, Nehemiah 9:6 reads "Thou art Jehovah, even thou alone; thou hast made heaven, the heaven of heavens, with all their host, the earth and all things thereon..." (Neh. 9:6).

In short, Jehovah made or created the "host" of angels. Psalms 148 indicates that God created all-- that is, the host-- and then called upon the whole creation to praise him. The reading is as follows: "Praise ye Jehovah. Praise ye Jehovah from the heavens: Praise him in the heights. Praise ye him all his angels: Praise ye him, all his host. Praise ye him, sun and moon: Praise him, all ye stars of light. Praise him, ye heavens of heavens, And ye waters that are above the heavens. Let them praise the name of Jehovah; For he commanded, and they were created" (Psalm 148:1-5).

Emphasis should be placed on the fact that there were no angels until Jehovah commanded, and then they were created.

3. The apostle Paul wrote: "For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father, from whom every family in heaven and on earth is named,..." (Eph. 3:14,15). This scripture affirms that God has a family. It also affirms that part of the family is in heaven, and part is on earth. The family in heaven also consist of angels-- of created beings.
4. Further, the author of Hebrews wrote: "...but ye are come unto mount Zion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to innumerable hosts of angels, to the general assembly and church of the firstborn who are enrolled in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect, and to Jesus the mediator of a new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling that speaketh better than that of Abel" (Heb. 12:22-24).

Thus heaven is composed of innumerable hosts of angels. The very thought of this reading from Hebrews staggers one's imagination.

5. Paul wrote the Colossians of thrones, dominions, principalities, and powers, and by these he must have spoken of the organizations among the good angels. He said, "...who is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation; for in him were all things created, in the heavens and upon the earth, things visible and things invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities, or powers; all things have been created through him, and unto him; and he is before all things, and in him all things consist" (Col. 1:15-17).

In this quote, Paul adds that the invisible things of heaven-- which certainly includes angels-- were created through him and unto him. That angels are created beings is an inescapable conclusion. Angels were not-- are not-- therefore, glorified human beings. Jesus said that glorified human beings would be *as* angels, but he did not say they would be angels.

Angels were created as a company, as individuals, and not as a race. Angels had no sex distinctions. Jesus said, "...Ye do err, not knowing the scriptures, nor power of God. For in the resurrection they never marry, nor are given in marriage, but are as angels in heaven." (Matt. 22:29-30).

## II. ANGELS ARE FREE MORAL AGENTS

1. Angels, like man, were created in the image of God and were therefore, free moral agents. The will of an angel was, and is autonomous. Had angels been created otherwise, they would have been mere robots and thus unable to serve as the ministers of God's providence. Angels were placed under law; otherwise they would not have had the freedom of will.

To illustrate how that angels were under law, David wrote: "Bless Jehovah, ye his angels. That are mighty in strength, that fulfill his word, Harkening unto the voice of his word. Bless Jehovah, all ye his hosts, Ye ministers of his, that do his pleasure"

(Psalms 103:20-21).

Jude wrote: "And angels that kept not their own principality, but left their proper habitation, he hath kept in everlasting bonds under darkness unto the judgment of the great day" (Jude 6).

Peter wrote: "...God spared not angels when they sinned, but cast them down to hell, and committed them to pits of darkness, to be reserved unto judgment" (2 Pet. 2:4).

There can be no question--angels were under law, and disobedient angels were cast out of heaven and down to the abyss.

2. Angels are of a higher order than man, but they are of a lower order than that of God, Christ, and the Holy Spirit. When Jesus came in the flesh, he was thereby made, "a little lower than the angels," and this fact indicates that man was of a lower order than that of angels (Heb. 2:7). Angels are "... ministering spirits, sent forth to do service for the sake of them that shall inherit salvation" (Heb. 1:14).

### III. STATE OR FORM OF ANGELS

1. Relative to the state or form of angels, for one thing, angels are invisible to the unaided human vision. They are incorporeal, that is they are not made of material substance. Balaam's ass was permitted to see the angel of Jehovah that stood in the way, and she lay down under Balaam. "Then Jehovah opened the eyes of Balaam, and he saw the angel of Jehovah standing in the way, with his sword drawn in his hand" (Num. 22:23).

In the days of Elisha, the king of Syria sent a host with horses and chariots to take him. Elisha's servant said: "Alas, my master! How shall we do?" Elisha said, "Fear not; for they that are with us are more than they that are with them" (2 Kings 6:15-16).

"And Elisha prayed, and said, Jehovah, I pray thee, open his eyes, that he may see. And Jehovah opened the eyes of the young man; and he saw: and, behold, the mountain was full of horses and chariots round about Elisha." (2 Kings 6:17).

There can be no doubt; those horses and chariots were angelic beings. Neither the angel that stopped Balaam's ass, nor the horses and chariots were seen by the unaided human eye.

2. For another thing, angels were and are capable of assuming any form in which God is pleased to employ them. As has been observed, angels appears as horses and chariots. An angel appeared to Moses as a flame of fire in the midst of a bush which burned and was not consumed. This angels was probably none other then the second person of the Godhead. The passage of scripture reads: "And the angel of Jehovah appeared unto him in a flame of fire out of the midst of a bush; and he looked, and behold, the bush burned with fire, and the bush was not consumed" (Ex. 3:2).

The Hebrew writer wrote: "And of the angels he saith, Who maketh his angels winds, And his ministers a flame of fire:" (Heb. 1:7). The point is that just as one cannot see the wind he cannot see an angel; but an angel once appeared as a flame of fire and in other forms as well.

3. Angels very frequently appear as men. Angels appeared as men to Abraham, and Jehovah was one of them (Gen. 18:1,2). Angels appeared as men to Lot (Gen. 19:1,2). At that time "Jehovah [the word or second person of the Godhead] rained upon Sodom and upon Gomorrah brimstone and from from Jehovah [the first person of the Godhead] out of heaven" (Gen. 19:24).

An angel appeared as a man to Manoah (Judges 13:9). Jacob wrestled until the breaking of the day with an angel who appeared in the form of a man (Gen. 32:22-28). The angel that made known to the women at the sepulchre the resurrection of Jesus was a young man (Mark 16:5). The two angels who proclaimed the return of Jesus as the ascension from the summit of Mount Olivet, appeared as men clothed in white apparel (Acts 1:10,11). [A question might be raised as to the "tongues parting asunder like as of fire" which came upon the apostles on Pentecost. Might those "tongues like as of fire" have been angels? cf. 1Cor. 13:1.]

#### **IV. THE ATTRIBUTES OF ANGELS**

##### **A. Not Omniscient.**

1. Relative to the attributes of angels, a first consideration should be given to the fact that angels are superhuman in knowledge, but they are not omniscient, as all knowing, as God is.

To illustrate how that angels are superhuman in knowledge, let's consider the following in order: Three angels, in the form of men, announced to Abraham that his wife Sarah-- then ninety years of age-- would have a son when the season cometh round (Gen. 18:10). One of the three was none other than Jehovah.

The Angel, Gabriel, who stands in the presence of God, announced to Zacharias that his wife Elizabeth, then advanced in years, would bear a son, that his name should be called John (Luke 1:11-19).

An angel announced to the virgin, Mary, that she would bear a son begotten of God by the Holy Spirit (Luke 1:26-37). The first announcement of a Savior born was made by an angel to the shepherds who watched their flocks in the plain of Bethlehem by night (Luke 2:13,14). An angel warned Joseph to flee to Egypt lest Herod slay the Christ child (Matt. 2:13-15). Two angels in the form of men in white apparel announced that this Jesus who was received up from you into heaven shall so come in like manner as ye beheld him going into heaven (Acts 1:10,11).

2. That angels, while superhuman in knowledge, were not omniscient is illustrated by

the following: Peter declared-- regarding the preaching of the prophets beforehand of the sufferings of Christ, and the glories that should be revealed-- declared "which things angels desire to look into" (I Pet. 1:10-12). In short, the angels did not know the meaning of all that was taking place with respect to the plan of redemption for man.

Angels did not know when the judgment would come upon Jerusalem. Jesus said, "But of the day and hour knoweth no one, not even the angels of heaven, neither the son, but the Father only" (Matt. 24:36). Angels are not, therefore, omniscient, or all knowing though they are superhuman in knowledge.

B. Not Omnipotent.

1. A second consideration should be given to the fact that angels are superhuman in strength and power, but they are not omnipotent, or all powerful, as God is. The following instances will serve to illustrate the strength and power of angels.

The two that went from Mamre to Sodom smote with blindness the men, both small and great, that had gathered at Lot's house (Gen. 19:11).

In the time of David, an angel destroyed by pestilence from Dan to Beersheba, seventy thousand men (2 Sam. 14:15-17). An angel of the Lord smote in the camp of the Assyrians 185,000 of the mighty men of valor, leaders, and captians (2 Kings 19:35,36; 2 Chron. 32:21).

When Daniel was thrown into the den of lions, an angel shut the mouths of the lions so that they did not hurt Daniel (Dan. 6:22). An angel of the Lord descended from heaven and came and rolled away the great stone-- which weighted about 4,000 pounds-- from the door of the sepulchre (Matt. 28:2-4). An angel of the Lord by night opened the prison doors and brought the apostles out, and said, "Go ye, and stand and speak in the temple to the people all the words of this life" (Acts 5:19).

An angel of the Lord smote King Herod when he allowed the people to honor him as a god, and Herod was eaten of worms and gave up the ghost (Acts 12:23). When Peter was bound with two chains and made to sleep between two soldiers, and watchmen were placed before the doors of Herod's prison, which doors were secured by iron gates, bolts, bars, and locks; an angel entered the prison and led Peter out as though nothing had been in the way. The iron gate opened to them of its own accord, and they went out (Acts 12:10). Peter, when writing of the spirit of ungodly men and how they were self-willed and ready to rail at dignities, said: "Whereas angels, though greater in might and power bring not a railing judgment against them before the Lord" (2 Pet. 2:11). Thus Peter, incidental to his main theme, stated that angels are "greater in might and power," than is man.

David wrote: "Bless Jehovah, ye his angels, that are mighty in strength, that fulfill his word, harkening unto the voice of his word" (Psalms 103:20).

2. That angels, while superhuman in power, were not omnipotent is illustrated by the fact that when, in the days of David, the angel that had just destroyed 70,000 stretched

out his hand upon Jerusalem to destroy it, the Lord repented him of the evil and said to the angel that destroyed the people: "It is enough; stay now thine hand" (2 Sam.24:15,16). The angel had no power except as the Lord exerted his power through him. Angels are not, therefore, omnipotent, or all powerful, though they are superhuman in power.

## V. GUARDIAN ANGELS

### A. The Question.

1. The study of angels is very fascinating. We read in the Bible of good angels and bad angels, their number, and something of their work. Sometimes people speak of "guardian angels" who supposedly are assigned to accompany and help individuals. Is this a Biblical doctrine?
2. If we each do have a "guardian angel" what does he do? What kind of protection, as the name implies, does he give? Does he, as one religious group claims "assist them in their attainment of salvation"? Does he suggest thoughts, or act as an intermediary?

### B. The Discussion.

1. The term "guardian angel" as such is not found in the standard English Bible, but one of the basic texts upon which such a belief rests is Psalms 91:11 "he will give his angels charge of you to guard you in all your ways."
2. There are other passages in both the Old and New Testaments which suggest that persons have what we might prefer to call "attendant or ministering angels" (Matthew 18:10; Heb. 1:14; Psalms 34:7; Acts 12:15; Acts 27:23).

We find in the book of Daniel the inference that nations too have "guardian angels". Michael seems to have been the patron angel of the Jewish people (Daniel 10:13,20; 12:1). It seems that other nations also enjoyed such angelic guardianship (Daniel 10).

3. We have many instances of angels appearing in the Old Testament as messengers, but there were those that provided Elijah with food, directed the nation of Israel in the wilderness, appeared with the Hebrew children in the fiery furnace, and protected Daniel in the lion's den by shutting the lion's mouth.
4. It is in the apocryphal literature that belief in guardian angels emerges clearly. In the Book of Tobias, the father asks God to bless his son's journey and send his angel as a companion for the trip. He then comforts his weeping wife with the words "a good angels shall accompany him." In this period of literature the guardian angel is also viewed as an intermediary in prayers.

### C. The doctrine

1. The doctrine of "guardian angels" is certainly not played up as anything important in

either of Testaments. The daily presence and work of angels is not clearly defined in the Bible.

One scholar on angels suggests the reason angels had little significance in the Israelite life of faith was because their consciousness was of God and His place with them. Perhaps little is told us of angels so we will not fall into worshipping them (Rev. 2:8,9) and giving them more recognition than God (Col. 2:18).

Conclusion. While accepting the idea of "ministering angels" (Heb. 1:14, at least for the saints), we reject the idea that they suggest thought to us or act independently of the gospel of Christ to accomplish salvation. Most of the information about angels and just how they are helping us remain a mystery. Perhaps it is better to be careful and ascribe them neither more nor less work and glory than the Bible tells of them.