

WHO ARE THE ANGELS?

Their work and ministry explained.

Not many years ago in the newspaper there was a report of a freak accident with a photograph accompanying the accident in which a car had been coming down the mountain side and veered off the road and gone through the protecting rails around the road, and was balancing precariously on the edge of a cliff. There was a thousand foot or so drop on the other side. The occupants of the car were all saved because the car didn't tip over. It just got jammed on the edge of the cliff.

Another newspaper report talked about how the premonition of a young girl saved her mother and her sister. The newspaper report went on to say how that this girl was out visiting with friends and while she was out visiting with her friends, she had a premonition that she ought to go home. She went home, and when she got home she found that her mother and her sister were being overcome with gas. She was able to rescue them and resuscitate them and save them.

Thousands of near-accidents and split second escapes from injury and near deaths occur every day. The question that I want to ask is, does all this happen by mere chance? Or, is there some great power that is working on man's behalf? Remember this, that we are surrounded today in the world by mysteries, unseen mysteries, baffling enigmas. Forces are at work that man cannot explain. There is an unseen world. In fact, there are more things in the universe today that we don't see than that which we do see.

There are billions of atoms. No one has ever seen an atom, but there are billions of them in the world. No one has ever seen the air itself, but we know it's there. When it comes to the area of astronomy and the study of the stars, we know there are thousands of galaxies that we have never seen. They're beyond the power of the telescope, but we know they're there because of their influence on stars and on galaxies that we can see. But we've never seen them. Really, when it comes to life there are many, many things that we have never seen, but still exist.

But there is a book, a very wonderful book the Bible, which explains what separates the visible world from the invisible world. It's now my plan to have a look at what this Book says about the invisible world because we do have an invisible world. The Bible tells us that the angels form a part of that invisible world.

Psalm 34:7. "The angel of the LORD encampeth round about them that fear him, and delivereth them."

The reason this wonderful world of the angels is so little appreciated, is no doubt due to the fact that we hear so few sermons on the subject of the angels. The majority of people when it comes to the subject of angels just think of them as good thoughts or poetic imagination or something like that. Most people do not realize the reality of the angels. Some people think that the angels are the spirits of little girls that die.

Genesis 3:22-24. "And the LORD God said, Behold, the man is become as one of us, to know good and evil: and now, lest he put forth his hand, and take also of the tree of life, and eat, and live for ever: 23 Therefore the LORD God sent him forth from the garden of Eden, to till the ground from whence he was taken. 24 So he drove out the man; and he placed at the east of the garden of Eden Cherubims, and a flaming sword which turned every way, to keep the way of the tree of life."

Now you see, the angels or cherubim were in existence long before any man died. So angels are not the spirits of our beloved dead. Angels never become men, and men never become angels because they are

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a separate class of beings created before man was created. The angels were in existence before man was created.

Hebrews 2:6-7. "But one in a certain place testified, saying, What is man, that thou art mindful of him? Or the son of man that thou visits him? 7. "Thou made him a little lower than the angels; Thou crowned him with glory and honor, and didst set him over the works of Thy hands."

So the Bible makes it very clear of the separation between man and the angels. Man is a completely different order of creation to the angels, made a little lower, the Bible says, than the angels. Would you like to know how many angels there are?

Revelation 5:11. "And I beheld, and I heard the voice of many angels around about the throne and the beasts and the elders: and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands."

So the Bible makes it very clear that there's an awful lot of angels, an innumerable company of angels, Hebrews 12:22 says. It's impossible to number the angels. So actually the number of the angels is greater than the number of men, women, and children that are living on the earth if you multiply that out.

Now what is the work of the angels? What is the work that God has designed for them to do?

Hebrews 1:14. "Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation."

That's their purpose, to help us to become heirs of salvation. You see, the whole plan of heaven changed when sin came in. God stopped His work of creating and He centered His work in redeeming man, in saving mankind. When Jesus offered His life to redeem man from sin, the angels laid aside their former duties and plans to take up the great task of helping you and me to become heirs of salvation, to help humanity out of the pit of sin. No doubt their songs of praise changed to a song of songs and tears when man sinned. God the Father was deeply grieved, so was Jesus, the Man of sorrows.

You know, mankind has never taken his redemption very seriously, but God does.

The Bible indicates that when we go to heaven we are going to be closest to the throne, that is, redeemed man is going to be closest to the throne which indicates that since Jesus has taken upon Himself humanity, that humanity has become expressly precious in the sight of God because of the fact that Jesus became one of us and died for us. I think that is the reason why, in heaven above we will be occupying a position even higher than the angels.

A man has to accept God's salvation. God's provision is for all, but it's only for those who really accept. The provision is for everyone. It's there for everyone. But only those who accept it will be saved.

So this mighty creative power of God possessed by God that was made in the beginning to create mankind, now is turned to save mankind. That's why Romans 1:16 says that the gospel is the power of God unto salvation. The same power that God used to create the world back in the beginning, now has been channeled into saving man. That's why the gospel is the power of God. The same power that God used to create this world is the same power that God is using to recreate us in His own image. That's why none of us need to despair about the saving power of God.

We can have tremendous confidence in God's salvation because the provision has been made and the power is available to all of us if we'll but accept.

To illustrate: Say I was coming along down the street and suddenly I look up and I saw a fire in one of the large hotels that was burning. Suddenly I hear the siren of the fire brigade ringing and screaming down

the street. By the time I get down to the hotel, there is quite a crowd that's gathered there to watch the fire like there always is.

I saw the fireman as he got his ladder, and stretched up and reached up the third floor. When the fireman climbed up the ladder at this hotel that's on fire, he noticed a man was sitting in his easy chair reading a book. As soon as the fireman saw him, he used his tomahawk and smashed the window and said to the man, "Hurry, the hotel's on fire. Get out. Come down my ladder."

Well, the man casually yawns and lays aside his book, and he says. "Mr. Fireman, what do you mean by disturbing me in my private room this afternoon? I'm enjoying this book." The fireman says, "Look, friend! The hotel's on fire. Get out quick or else you're going to be burned alive."

"Huh," the man says, "Look: This building is fireproof. The beat authorities in town have told me that this place is impossible for it to burn down."

"Well," the fireman says, "I don't care what they say. The thing is alight. Get out quickly."

"Well," he said, "You know, if I burn there's going to be a lot of people whose going to burn with me, and besides," as he looks at the fireman with great satisfaction in his voice, "I don't think a decision like this ought to be entered into too quickly. I must do some thinking about this. I'd like time to consider, and furthermore," as he comes over toward the window, "I don't even like the look of your ladder anyway, Mr. Fireman. But at any rate, Mr. Fireman, thank you very much for coming up and warning me about this. Some day I'll think more about it. But as this afternoon, I'm enjoying my book. Then maybe I'll take your ladder and I'll come down. But thank you very much for your concern in saving my life."

Tell me! What would any normal person think of a person who would talk like that? Yet, when it comes to salvation, they're the very excuses that people come up with against accepting God. They say, the world will never end. Just like that man who said that this hotel will never burn down. Others say, "Well, if I'm lost, there will be plenty of others who will be lost with me. And I don't want to start to become a Christian because I might become a backslider." And they refuse to follow Christ because they feel that when they begin to walk the Christian life that they might slip away. Well, I don't know whether God doesn't have the same feelings toward us when we talk like that as we have toward that person up there in the hotel reading his book when the fireman came up to save him.

Notice how concerned the angels are regarding our salvation.

Luke 15:10. "Likewise, I say unto you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repents."

Shouldn't that give us encouragement that there's more joy in heaven over one sinner that repents. That ought to be enough to inspire you if you haven't as yet given your heart to Jesus. That ought to be enough to inspire you to give your heart completely to Him.

Do you know that even the angels study the Bible?

1 Peter 1:12. "Unto whom it was revealed, that not unto themselves, but unto us they did minister the things, which are now reported unto you by them that have preached the gospel unto you with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven; which things the angels desire to look into."

They study the Scriptures more earnestly than we do, so that they can help us find eternal life. They know how artful the devil is, and the Bible says, they desire to look into these things. What an example that is to us, that we should look into the things of God and to study it: They know that the only hope in winning the battle against the world, the flesh, and the devil is to study God's Book. That's why it says

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here that they look into these things. And the angels, with silence, witnesses to the agony in the Garden of Gethsemane when Jesus was there.

You know, when Jesus was dying on the cross, if Jesus had simply raised one finger, He could have called ten thousand angels. In fact, every angel in heaven would have come down onto this earth to save Jesus if He had just merely raised His finger. They were waiting there. In fact, the angels gasped as they saw how the wicked sinful humanity treated their Savior. God had to hold them back because they wanted to come down and rescue Jesus.

In fact, when Peter cut the ear off the soldier, what did Jesus say? Lay down your sword, Peter. If you can see as I can see, the very angels are all about us. He said, "I could have called ten thousand angels to rescue us."

Every one of us, the Bible says, has an angel as our special companion.

Acts 12:15. "And they said unto her, Thou art mad. But she constantly affirmed that it was even so. Then said they, It is his angel."

Peter had been put in prison. The angel had come down that night and rescue Peter from the prison and let him out and came out and walked the streets. First of all he thought that he would go down to the house of Mary, the mother of John, where the church was assembled for prayer for the release of Peter. Peter walked down and went down there. When Peter knocked on the door, this little girl came and answered the door. She was so shocked to see Peter that she didn't even invite him in, and left Peter standing there at the door. While the church had been asking God to release Peter from prison, they didn't expect it so soon. So when she went down and said, "Peter's at the door," what did they say? "Thou art mad. But she constantly affirmed that it was even so. Then said they, It is his angel." You see, they had been praying all night that God would release Peter from jail. When Peter was released they said, "No, it couldn't possibly be."

That's very much like the way we pray. We pray for a thing. Then we don't believe that God will do it. That was the way it was in the early Christian church. Peter was there, and they said, "It must be his angel." They recognized that every one of us has an angel. The Bible says, we have a guardian angel. Let me read it to you.

Matthew 18:10. "Take heed that ye despise not one of these little ones; for I say unto you, That in heaven their angels do always behold the face of My Father which is in heaven."

Now the little ones not only refer to children, but this also refers to little ones in the faith. The Bible says, every one of us has an angel, a guardian angel. I believe that God is very patient with us just like a mother whose training her child. She takes a lot of time and patience to train that little one to walk. And that's the way Christian pathway. Day by day that little one begins to walk and takes those few wobbly steps and falls down. That's the way it is when we begin to walk the Christian life.

The Bible says, we are to take courage. Remember that just as that mother is not discouraged by the fact that the baby falls down when it starts to walk, neither is God discouraged when we make mistakes when we first begin to walk the Christian life. For we will make mistakes. There's nothing more certain than that. We'll make mistakes and we'll fall plenty. But the Bible says, if we'll only get up and try again and make our decision to go ahead with what we know to be right, God will give us the power and the strength, and gradually our spiritual muscles will increase just like the muscles of that little baby as it becomes stronger and stronger day by day.

Do you think our heavenly Father, whose got a greater heart of love than any mother, will be discouraged with us, as long as we're endeavoring to do the right thing? Not at all. That's why the Bible

says, our angels are beholding the face of God which is in heaven. There can be many stories which can be told of how the angels encamp round about us to deliver us.

I remember a story that happened some years ago over there in South America, Ecuador, in the Lake Colts, region. There rose a rebellion among the Indians there. Ten thousands of them rebelled against the government. Any white man that was in that area was coming in for a pretty hard time. So, Aullie Ford, who was the missionary and his wife, in that particular area were occupying the mission station. The Indians were going to make an attack, first of all on the mission station.

In telling the story, he said, those Indians came down and were going to attack the mission station from the front aide. As they got within e mile of the mission station, they suddenly stopped, and they backed off and they came round and came from exactly the opposite direction. Once again, within about a mile of the mission station, they stopped. By about this time the government troops had come down and they sought of quelled the rebellion. Some days later some of those leaders of the Indians came to Aullie Ford after the rebellion had been put down, and they said, "Tell us: Who were those soldiers you had round the mission were when we came and were planning to take the mission station?" Ford explained that they had no soldiers. They wouldn't believe it. They said that there were soldiers and they had fixed bayonets. They were all lined up along side.

"When we saw it we decided we were going around to attack from the back. But when we got round there we found a studded line of soldiers with fixed bayonets." Aullie Ford explained that there were no soldiers and the never had been any soldiers here. They weren't convinced. They said, "Let me take you in." He showed them all over the mission station down in the attic everywhere. There were no soldiers hidden anywhere, Aullie Ford and I believed he was correct. We believe that when those Indians came down to do them harm, God had put the angels there under the seeming app of soldiers with fixed bayonets to hold back those rebellion. Indians from attacking God's church.

I believe that there's a world, an unseen world. And it won't be until we get home to the glory land that many a time we think that we have gone through a close shave. People say, "That was a lucky escape." "I went through an experience and I nearly had an accident." One day in the glory land we're going to learn the real truth and that the angel of the Lord encamps round about them that fear Him and delivers them. God's angels are there to protect us and to care for us. I think that it's a good thing in our praying to thank God for the angels and to thank God that His protection is over us, around about us. In fact, let me read it to you.

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

The Assyrians were trying to destroy Israel, and Elisha said to his friend, his servant there, "Don't be worried," because Eliisha knew that surrounding them were the angels of God here under the figure of chariots and horses.

Verses 11-12. "Therefore the heart of the king of Syria was more troubled for this thing; and he called his servants, and said unto them, Will ye not show me which of us is for the king of Israel?"

12. "And one of his servants said, None, my lord, O king: but Elisha, the prophet that is in Israel, tells the king of Israel the words that thou speaks in thy bedchamber."

You see, he felt that someone was betraying him. And then you read on, and it says, "Elisha." Elisha prayed that the man's eyes would be opened. If we could only see today that in this place where you and I are in, the angels of God are here. It is a good thing to remember that when we come especially to

study the Word of God that when we begin to read that the angels draw near to help us. They're there to help us to become heirs of salvation. It's a good thing to thank God for the work of the angels.

I'll just now read you of the power of the angels.

2 Kings 19:3. "And it came to pass that night, that the angel of the Lord went out, and smote in the camp of the Assyrians a hundred fourscore and five thousand: and when they arose early in the morning behold, they were all dead corpses."

You imagine that! A hundred and eighty five thousand of the world's toughest soldiers lay dead with one angel. You can just imagine the power of the angels at the resurrection of Christ. There were one hundred tough Roman soldiers around the tomb. One angel came down from glory, and what happened to those one hundred soldiers, the Bible says? They fell down as dead men. That was just one angel.

Can you just appreciate now the glory that is going to be associated with the second coming of Jesus when the Bible says that Jesus is going to return with all the holy angels, ten thousand times ten thousand and thousands of thousands? Why, the very sun itself will pale into insignificance along side the glory that's going to be associated with the coming of Jesus. Let me read you something else that the angels do.

Revelation 20:12. "And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life; and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works."

The Bible says that we're going to be judged out of those things which are written, every thought, every word, every act is placed indelibly in the book of life. Every duty shown. I think a lot of us would be a lot more careful of what we did day by day if we realized that everything that we do is faithfully recorded in the book of life. Daniel 7:9,10 says that we're going to 'b judged out of the books and the books faithfully records everything that a man does without any bias at all.

Revelation 3:5. "He that overcomes, the some shall be clothed in white raiment; and I will not blot out his name out of the book of life, but I will confess his name before My Father, and before His angels."

You think of what a thrill will come to your heart when Christ reads your name before the angels of heaven! What a privilege to have your name on the honor roll of heaven! I notice that young people today will strive hard to have their names on the honor rolls of this world. Men will work and will play tennis or play cricket or whether they're athletes, they will strive hard to have their names recorded on the honor rolls of this world. Women will sacrifice anything and work hard to become members of some prominent society or club.

Well, it takes effort, too, to have your name on the Lamb Is book of life, and the effort is that we must make our decision to serve Christ, and that name, the Bible says, will be written in the Lamb's book of life. One day very soon Jesus is going to return and we're going to be judged, the Bible says, out of those things which are written in the Lamb's book of life.

You know, I think one of the greatest privileges that is going to be ours is when we go to heaven to be able to meet our guardian angel. Don't you think so? And to be able to talk to our guardian angel and for him to explain to us how he has looked after us and cared for us, anti bring back to our memories to be able to give us the inside story of how he protected, how he cared, how he watched over us. I think it's going to be a wonderful privilege to be able to talk to my guardian angel. It will be a wonderful privilege for you to be able to talk to him and to have him tell you all about you life and how he cared for you,

But the best part of the story is not only just that, but the best part of the story is the fact that God wants us to be saved. God is doing His utmost. He's given us the holy Book. He's given us salvation. He's

given us the angels who are there to help us to become heirs of salvation. The angels' primary work today is to help us to be saved.

Jude 1:24. "Now unto Him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy."

It's not your ability to live a good life that will save you. It doesn't depend upon your spiritual strength. Salvation depends upon God's power. That's what salvation depends. The Bible says that God will keep me from falling. I don't keep myself from falling. The Bible says, God will keep me from falling and He will present me faultless before His throne with exceeding joy. God has never lost a single case. Let us remember that.

When I was over in Scotland, I there heard an experience that happened some years ago when some scientists were out collecting some eggs of a rare bird. They had been hunting for many, many weeks for that bird and for its eggs. One day they came across on a cliff edge and they could see the bird sitting down there at the edge of the cliff, just over the cliff out of reach. They knew, of course, the eggs were underneath the bird, and they wanted to get a sample of those eggs. Try as they would, they couldn't get down to get the egg. It was a very precarious cliff with a long fall if their feet would slip. They noticed a boy who was minding the sheep in the field half a mile or so away. So they called to the boy and said, "Look? If you will we will pay you a very good sum if you would go over the edge of the cliff. We will tie a rope around you so that you can't slip, and we will lower you over the edge of the cliff. If you get one of those eggs for us we will pay you a sum." Well, the boy was very interested in getting the sum, but to getting over the edge of that cliff, he wasn't quite sure whether that would hold the rope. He said, "Alright: On one condition. I'll go over the edge of the cliff if I can go home and get my father, and my father holds the rope, I'll go over the edge."

I thought to myself, that's the way it is. You see, the boy had confidence not in the scientist, but he had confidence in his Dad. So it is with us. You and I can have confidence in our God because He's never lost a case. He won't lose your case and He won't lose mine. When we think about giving our hearts to Him again right now, let's remember that Jesus, the same yesterday, to ay and forever, will save to the uttermost to them that come unto God by Him.