

WHO ARE THE ANGELS?

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Many people think that their loved ones at death become angels. This naturally raises the question, "What kind of beings are the angels?"

If our children are to become the seraphs of heaven, we are all interested in knowing something of their nature. In Hebrews 2:6,7 we read: "What is man that Thou art mindful of him? or the son of man, that Thou visits him? Thou made him? Thou made him a little lower than the angels."

Therefore, man is of a different order of beings from the angels, he was made a little lower than the angels. No one has ever become an angel at death. The angels are not the spirits of the dead. In fact, we read of angels before any man ever did, even before this world was created the angels existed. From Job 38:4-7 I quote these words: "Where were you when I laid the foundations of the earth? declare, if thou has understanding. Who hath laid the measures thereof, if thou knows? or who hath stretched the line upon it? Whereupon are 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?"

Thus we see that at the creation of this world there were many of God's creatures who rejoiced over its creation. The sons of God mentioned in these verses might have been either the angels or the inhabitants of other worlds. It was certainly a happy day for all God's creatures when this world was created. The earth came forth from the hand of its Maker in marvelous beauty. It shone as a diadem in our constellation of stars. The creation of this world and its solar system brought added beauty to the universe, and a song of rejoicing and a song of praise came forth from every creature. How different might have been their reception of this world into the family of stars if they had know that upon it, sin would make its appearance, and that here the Son of God, the Creator, would have to come and live under the most humiliating circumstances and surroundings and finally die a miserable, ignominious death upon a cross in order to redeem this earth from the clutches of sin.

We find that there are different orders of intelligent beings. "Thou made him a little lower than the angels." Hebrews 2:7. Man does not progress to the higher order of angels, but was created upon a different plane, and never will become an angel. In the Bible we find that there are many angels. "I beheld, and I heard the voice of many angels roundabout the throne-and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand and thousands of thousands." Revelation 5:11.

From this description of the number of the angels, we see that there are so many that it was impossible for the prophet to count them. In another place the Bible speaks of "an innumerable company of angels." Since the fall of man the angels have been given the important task of ministering to those who are to be saved. "To which of the angels said

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He at any time, Sit on My right hand, until I make your enemies thy footstool? Are not they all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation?" Hebrews 1:13,14. "The angel of the Lord encamps round about them that fear Him and delivers them." Psalm 34:7.

The whole plan of heaven changed as soon as sin came. God stopped His work of creating and centered His attention upon the work of redeeming and saving man kind. The Son of God offered His life to redeem man from the power of sin: angels laid aside their former duties and plans to take up the great task of helping humanity out of the pit of sin into which it had fallen. When sin came into this world, the songs of praise and joy fade away from the lips of those in the heavenly chorus and ended in a sob. Our heavenly Father was deeply grieved, and His Son, Jesus, became the Man of sorrows. Man has never taken his redemption very seriously, yet every creature in heaven is giving his entire attention to the work of saving the lost.

This mighty creative power that's possessed by God was all turned into the channel of saving men from sin and death. "I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believes." Romans 1:16. As translated by Dr. Weymouth, it is "God's power working for salvation." I want you to contemplate the mighty provision that God has made for your salvation. Even though you may feel that you are the weakest person of all, morally, and that you do not have strength enough to live a Christian life, yet you can have absolute confidence in God that He can save you, for He can create within you a clean heart and renew a right spirit within you. God will use all of His mighty creative power to regenerate and transform you into a true Christian. There is no need for anyone to despair and to feel that He cannot be saved. The part that is disappointing to God is that man Himself seems to be so little concerned about the whole plan.

Suppose there was a fire in a large hotel. The fire brigade answers the alarm and makes every effort to rescue the men and women who are trapped in some of the rooms. Up against the side of the building, to the ledge of a third floor window, the firemen place a ladder and one hastens up through the smoke and flames to rescue a man in that room. When the fireman looks in the window he sees a man sitting in an easy chair, calmly reading a book. Immediately the fireman smashes the window, and shouts to the man inside to come out quickly and go down the ladder before the flames cut off that avenue of escape. Upon hearing the shout of the fireman, the reader casually yawns. He lays aside the book, stretches and says, "Mr. Fireman, what do you mean by disturbing me here in my own private room?" The fireman replies, "Mister, don't you know this building is on fire, and you will certainly burn to death if you remain in this room?" "Oh," retorts the hotel guest, "this building will never burn up. It is fireproof. Some of the greatest construction men of the world have pronounced this building absolutely safe. They say it never can be destroyed by fire." "I do not care how many have pronounced this building absolutely safe and fireproof," answers the fireman. "This building is burning, and if you don't get out of the hotel, you will burn with it."

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"Well, if I burn up in this building, there will be a lot of people who will burn up with me," replies the quest, with a note of satisfaction in his voice. He goes on to say, "Besides I don't know that a decision like this should be made too hastily. I should take plenty of time to consider what difficulties I might encounter in going down that ladder. But, I thank you, Mr. Fireman, for letting me know that the hotel is on fire. I'll think it over and maybe someday I'll agree with you. Then I'll go down your ladder to safety; but at this present time, I am too busy with my work here in the room to bother with your plan of saving other people's lives."

What would you think of a man like that, dear reader? Why, you would say that a man like that was demented and had completely lost his reason. This world is going to be destroyed by fire, and I wonder what God thinks of the people who are neglecting to accept His plan of salvation through Him. When I talk to people about believing in Christ and accepting salvation, they make the same excuses as the hotel quest. They say that this world will never come to an end: but that if they are lost many others will go with them. They will not become Christians, because they say they may backslide. They refuse to follow the warning to accept life through Jesus, given by God's servants, because they think they should wait and not follow some emotional feeling about salvation. They dismiss the whole question by saying that they are too busy to think about religion now, and with a courteous "Thank you," for being so interested in their welfare, they promise that someday they will think it over and possibly make a decision about being saved. I wonder whether God does not regard people as mentally unbalanced when they treat so lightly His great provisions for their salvation.

When the angels entered into the task of helping man to be saved they studied the plan of salvation. Of 1 Peter 1:10-12, I quote in part: "Of which salvation the prophets have inquired and searched diligently... which the angels desire to look into. Surely, we too should be most diligent in the study of the Bible that we may better understand the plan of salvation. Each Christian has a guardian angel to help him.

"Take heed," says Jesus, "that you 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." Matthew 18:10. Those who have recently accepted Christ are also considered as little children they are children in Jesus. If God considers the Christians as children when they are first converted, then I am sure He is very patient with them through the years as they grow more like Jesus.

How does a mother train her little baby when it is learning to walk? Does she say, "Son, you should not be creeping around the floor any more. You ought to get up and walk. But if you do not think you can walk without falling, then do not try to walk." Is that what a mother says to her little baby? No, indeed, a mother lifts her little boy to his feet, holds his hand, and helps him across the floor. Soon he learns to balance himself a little. After much encouragement the baby tries to walk alone, falling many times of course. Does the mother scold the child when he falls down when he tries to walk? Does she whip him? No, she does not. When the child falls, she picks him up. If he falls a hundred times, she

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will pick him up each time and encourage him to try again. She never finds fault or criticizes him as long as her little one is trying.

Do you not think our Heavenly Father, who has a greater heart of love than we have, and who loves His children more than we love our children, will be more considerate of those who are learning to walk the Christian pathway? Will He demand that you walk perfectly in the Christian life before you make your first attempt? Will He condemn you if you fall and fail to do what you should do? No, my friend, He will not. You will always find the extended hand of God ready to lift you whenever you fail. When you come back to Christ after you have fallen into sin, and look up to Him, you will see a smile upon His face, and you will hear Him say words of encouragement. He will ask you to try again, and assure you that He will forgive you each mistake that you make.