

Angels Among Us

Rightly Dividing The Word: Shelf 5 — Volume 42

OBJECTIVE: One of the most intriguing studies of the Bible is in reference to the existence and ministry of angels. This subject has stimulated the curiosity of Bible students for centuries. In today's religious world, however, there are enough speculations about angels to write books. And many have. I will add to that library. Nevertheless, it is not my intention in this brief book to give any lengthy study of angels, and especially to discuss speculations that are beyond what is revealed on the subject in the Bible. Because there is little revealed on this subject in the Bible, this should not discourage one's beliefs that angels are there, or here, in reference to our lives in this world. We would simply seek to remain with what the Bible actually says on the subject in His word, and from there, walk by faith. We are sure that this is a walk with which our Father is pleased.

We must confess that we have little trust in the speculations of those who have claimed today that they have personally conversed with angels. This is not to say that we do not believe that angels exist. Neither do we mean to say that angels are idle in reference to their work today among the saints of God. And we might add that we cannot deny someone's supposedly personal encounter with one they perceived to be an angel. Such is a personal matter, and a perception that is based on faith. But in view of the fact that the totality of the gospel has already been revealed, and that God is no respecter of persons, we would

question any personal conversations that one might claim to have had with an angel today.

We must understand, however, that the Bible teaches that God is not working in a manner today that appeals to our empirical perceptions. If He did so, then He would hinder our walk by faith. He seeks to build our faith. And truly, we seek to grow in our faith. We believe that God desires that we walk by faith in order to develop our characters for eternal dwelling. For this reason we believe that God keeps His angels at a distance from us, lest our faith depend on angels and not the Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, those who seek to walk by sight, must guard themselves from conjuring up all sorts of fantasies concerning any close encounters with extraterrestrial beings. It is not our purpose here to survey the personal experiences of those who claim to have supposedly encountered an angel. Our task here is simply to understand what the Bible teaches concerning this subject, and thus, understand what the Holy Spirit desires that we know about angels.

We must assume that the inspired Scriptures were written in order to give us a definition of what God feels is essential for our faith. Whatever our beliefs may be concerning the presence and work of angels, or the experiences we may have had, we must allow our understanding of this subject to be directed and defined by the word of God.

One of the first surprises that the Bible student learns about the study of angels is that God used angels to carry out many missions for Him throughout history. This is a surprise simply because there is usually little study of this subject among Bible students. Angels were God's messengers throughout history, and simply because we do not see angels today, does

not mean that they are not there. According to what the Bible says, they are there. Angels are present among us, though it is not necessary to personally encounter or hear them (See Hb 13:2). They simply carry on with their God-commissioned ministry at the command of the One who created them.

Angels are doing their intended work as the messengers of God regardless of our full understanding of what they do, or where they are at any time in history. As with studies of the Holy Spirit, we need not understand everything concerning the being and work of angels in order to know that they are doing what God wants them to do. The limitations of our awareness of their presence or their work does not limit what they are doing. Nevertheless, since there is so much in the Bible about their ministry among those on earth, the logical assumption is that they are still here. They are still working for their Creator on behalf of the saints. However, our questions concerning their work at any one time in history must be defined by what we read about their work in the Bible.

- 1. T or F:** Believing that angels now work in this world does not taken our minds of Jesus as our Savior.
- 2. T or F:** Christians must never focus on angels to the point that they marginalize their focus on the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ.
- 3. T or F:** God allows angels to personally appear before us in order to increase our faith.
- 4. T or F:** Angels have the authority to work beyond the authority of the Lord Jesus.
- 5. T or F:** Because we cannot perceive angels through our senses means that they do not exist.

Chapter 1

= Hebrew And Greek Words =

Malakh is the common Hebrew word that is used in the Old Testament for angels. In the New Testament, the Holy Spirit used the word *aggelos*. Both words refer to angels as supernatural beings

who were sent forth as messengers on behalf of God. And since they were/are sent forth, we must assume that they are doing what God intends that they do. The common definition of the word *aggelos* is “messenger.” Angels were thus messengers of God who worked in order to carry out the will of God (See Jg 6:11-23; 13:3-5).

A. Work Of Angels In Old Testament

Both the Hebrew and Greek words that are translated “angel” are also used in reference to designated people who carried God’s message (See 1 Kg 19:2; Lk 7:24). As God sent forth different individuals to accomplish His work, so He also sent forth angels as His messengers.

When the plural form of *malakh* was used in the Old Testament, **reference was to human messengers**. However, when the singular form of the word was used, reference was almost always to the divine messengers of God. The plural form of the word was used to refer to the prophet Haggai (See Hg 1:13) and to the priests of Israel (See MI 2:7). The word was even used to refer to the one who was to come as “the messenger” (John, the Baptist) in order to prepare the way for the Messiah (See MI 3:1).

In the Old Testament there are other Hebrew words that refer to angels. These words are translated in English versions with various English words. Depending on the particular version of the Scriptures that one is using, there will be variations in translation. For example, angels are referred to as “holy ones” (“saints”) (See Jb 5:1; Ps 89:5,7; Dn 8:13) and “watchers” (See Dn 4:13,17,23). Collectively, angels are referred to as a “council” (See Ps 89:7), a congregation (See Ps 82:1; 89:5), or “hosts.” Because there are so many different translations of the Hebrew word that refers to angels in the Old Testament, the context must be the final authority in reference to who is the “messenger” or “angel” about whom the text speaks.

The phrase “hosts of heaven” is applied to angels

because there are many angels (See Dn 7:10). This host of angels is pictured to be standing at the right and left hand of God (See 1 Kg 22:19). Angels are there to praise continually the name of the Lord (See Ps 103:21; 148:1ff). At least we can conclude from their presence before the Lord that they are heavenly beings. Their proper habitation, therefore, is in a heavenly realm. When they were revealed on earth, they were outside their proper realm of existence.

6. T or F: The primary meaning of the Greek word *aggelos* is “good news.”

7. T or F: The word *aggelos* was never used in reference to a human messenger of God.

B. Work Of Angels In New Testament

When the word *aggelos* is used in the New Testament in reference to angels, it is often used with a qualifying phrase that identifies their proper habitation. For example, there are “the angels of heaven” (See Mt 24:36), or the “heavenly hosts” (See Lk 2:13).

References to angels in the New Testament also infer that there is an order or rank among angels. Jude referred to “Michael the archangel” (See Jd 9). He also referred to the “voice of the archangel” (See 1 Th 4:16). It may also be that Paul included angels when he referred to “principalities,” “powers,” “thrones,” and “dominions” in the context of Ephesians 1.

At least Peter had angels in mind when he spoke of the kingship and lordship of Jesus over all things. He wrote that Jesus *“has gone into heaven and is at the right hand of God, angels and authorities and powers having been made subject to Him”* (1 Pt 3:22). Though we may not understand all that is involved in the order or rank of angels, we do know that Jesus is presently ruling as head over all angels. Therefore, what work angels have done since the coronation of Jesus, they do on behalf of Jesus who has authority over all things (See Mt 28:18; Ep 1:20-23).

Angels do not have the right to function autonomously

in reference to their work. They are now under the total control of King Jesus. Wherever they have showed up in history after the gospel coronation of Jesus to the right hand of the Father in heaven, therefore, they have functioned under the mandate of the King of kings and Lord of lords. There never were, nor will be, any angels who have the freedom to roam about at their own will.

8. T or F: All angels are presently under the kingdom reign of the Lord Jesus Christ.

9. T or F: Angels have the authority to make their own decisions and act autonomously on their own accord.

Chapter 2

= Angels In The Old Testament =

There is more in the Old Testament concerning angels than is usually considered. In our efforts to study and understand the work of God through the patriarchs to preserve the seedline of woman for the coming Seed, we often overlook the fact that God worked through His messengers on many occasions in order to bring about the fulfillment of His eternal gospel plan to bring the Seed into the world.

Though the Old Testament does not focus on angels as a primary subject to be studied, angels played a significant part in many unique situations where God was working in order to accomplish His eternal plan to bring the Son of God into the world. In His work, the presence of angels is mentioned as an ordinary manner by which God worked among men. It may simply be because of the length of time, but the predominate work of God through angels took place before the revelation of the gospel. There were centuries of God working through angels in order to bring the Seed of woman into the world. However, because of the expanse of time from creation to incarnation, angels appeared on the scene of history in only a few unique episodes of God's work to accomplish His eternal plan.

Eventually, there occurred the good news of the

incarnation of the Son of God on the face of the earth. God used angels to initiate the beginning of the gospel birth of Jesus (See Lk 1:8-11,26-28; 2:10,11). Jesus then *“increased in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and man”* (Lk 2:52). And then when He was about thirty, *“Jesus went about all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues and preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing all kinds of sickness and all kinds of diseases among the people”* (Mt 4:23).

God initially worked through the miraculous work of Jesus and the early disciples in order to confirm the message and messengers of the gospel (See Mk 16:20; Hb 2:4). Since all revelation concerning the gospel has now been revealed through the inspired word of God (See 2 Tm 3:16,17), God does not need to work openly through angels. He does not need to do so because everyone now has the opportunity to hear and respond to the gospel of His Son that is revealed in the word of God.

10. T or F: The work of angels in the Old Testament was to preserve the seedline of the Savior until the incarnation of the Seed.

11. T or F: Angels did not have any part in the birth of Jesus.

A. Angels Present At Creation

In order to understand the work of angels to carry out the redemptive plan of God in this world, we must journey back before this world existed. Our information concerning the earthly mission of angels, therefore, begins before the creation of the world. When the earth was brought into existence, there were angels already in existence, and ready for the commissioning of God. In order to bring about this eventual incarnation into this material world, God, the Son, first created angels, and then all things. Paul wrote,

For by Him all things were created that are in heaven and that are on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers. All things were created through Him and for Him (Cl 1:16).

Angels would fall under the category of things **invisible**. Therefore, in the work of creation, **God the Son created angels**. The origin of Satan would also fall under the category of those “invisible” beings that were created. However, Satan was not created as the evil one we come across in the Garden of Eden. He was a created angel who eventually rebelled against the authority of God some time before the Garden of Eden temptation. He is truly a “fallen angel.” Nevertheless, his origin was included in the creation of all things by God the Son.

Though John revealed the visions of Revelation with astonishing cryptic symbols, we could assume that through the Spirit he gave some explanation concerning the fall of Satan in the following statement:

Now there was war in heaven. Michael and his angels fought against the dragon. And the dragon and his angels fought, but did not prevail, nor was a place found for them any longer in heaven. Then the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent called the devil and Satan, who deceives the whole world. He was cast out to the earth, and his angels were cast out with him (Rv 12:7-9).

Since Satan and his angels gave up their proper habitation in heavenly places (See 2 Pt 2:4; Jd 6), and Satan himself was present at the time of the temptation in the Garden of Eden, then we must conclude that **angels were in existence before the serpent showed up in the Garden of Eden**. Their creation took place before the temptation event in the Garden.

Sometime after their creation, Satan and his heavenly hosts evidently rebelled, and subsequently, they were all cast down from their original heavenly environment. Therefore, we would conclude that all angelic beings were in existence before the Garden of Eden. However, Satan and his demons were cast out of the heavenly environment sometime after their creation, but before the temptation of the Garden.

The Psalmist referred to the angels of God being

present at the time of creation (See Ps 148:2,5). Because they were in existence at the time of creation, angels subsequently rejoiced over the creation of all things (See Jb 38:7). However, after the creation and before the Garden of Edan event, they were cast down.

Some have assumed that reference was made to angels in Genesis 6:1,2 when the following statement was made concerning the “sons of God”:

*Now it came to pass, when men began to multiply on the face of the earth, and daughters were born to them, that **the sons of God saw the daughters of men, that they were beautiful; and they took wives for themselves of all whom they chose** (Gn 6:1,2).*

It is believed by some that in the preceding Genesis 6:1,2 statement, Moses referred to women of this world marrying the “sons of God” who were angels. However, it is unlikely that this is the correct interpretation of this historical statement. Since angels have no gender, and thus no sex of either male or female, then the statement would not refer to women of this world marrying angelic beings who have no sex. This agrees with Jesus’ statement concerning angels: *“For when they rise from the dead, they neither marry nor are given in marriage. **But they are as the angels who are in heaven**”* (Mk 12:25).

Angels never married, nor were given in marriage, simply because they have no sexual orientation. The purpose of the sexual orientation of man and woman from the beginning was for the purpose of multiplying and populating the world. But this was never the purpose of angels. They were never given the right to multiply and populate the world with angels.

The correct interpretation of the Genesis 6:1,2 statement would be that those who were in a covenant relationship with God (“sons of God”) were marrying unrighteous people (“daughters of men”). It was simply the case of believers marrying unbelievers, and thus, the virus of wickedness increased on the

face of the earth as the unrighteousness of the wicked overcame the good of the righteous. The context of Genesis 6:1,2 is explained in Genesis 6:5: *“God saw that the wickedness of man was great on the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.”*

12. T or F: Angels were created by the Son of God as a part of creation.

13. T or F: Satan was originally a creation of the Son of God before the Garden of Eden fall.

14. T or F: At one time in human history fallen angels married human women, and then began to populate the world with evil people.

B. The Nature Of Angels

We know little of the nature, or even the character, of angels. Little is revealed in the Old Testament about these mysterious beings who were sent into this world on missions from God. Nevertheless, there are enough statements in the Bible that give us some hints concerning their nature and character that stimulate our imagination.

When angels were allowed to appear to humanity, they came in the form of men (See Gn 18:2,16; Ez 9:2). There is a possible reference to an angel who appeared as such to the women in Zechariah 5.

Since angels were created with the right to make free-moral choices, Job 15:15 states that God does not put His trust in His holy ones (angels). In other words, our trust is in God, not in His angelic messengers, for His messengers must function in total subjection to the purpose for which they were created. Whether correct or not, since Eliphaz’s argument in reference to angels is correct, *“Behold, He puts no trust in His saints [angels],”* then certainly God will not put His trust in man (See Jb 4:18).

God would not put His trust in angels simply because angels receive their commission from God, the One in whom we must put our trust. The point is that angels work in obedience to the will of God. Since they have no autonomous authority as free-moral beings, we must assume, because of the

rebellion of Satan, that angels were given some free-moral choices. Though Satan and his angels could choose, neither he nor his angels have any indigenous power over the created world. **They have only the power that God allows them to exercise.** This fact was brought out in the case where Satan sought to tempt Job. Before his temptations of Job, he had to ask permission from God (See Jb 1:6-12).

There are no references in the Bible to angels having halos or wings. The concept of winged angels possibly came from the “flying” angel of Revelation 14:6 and Zechariah 5 (See Dn 9:21). Therefore, we must not allow our concept of angels to be determined by the fine artwork of those who have portrayed on canvas their understanding of these heavenly beings.

The appearance of angels was beheld by people, but we must question whether there was any real incarnation of angels into the flesh of man. At least, the incarnation of Jesus was based on the fact that God in spirit (See Jn 4:24) came in the flesh of man (See Jn 1:14; Ph 2:5-8). We could argue that if angels were actually the incarnation of heavenly beings into the flesh of man, this would certainly marginalize the true incarnation of the Son of God.

One of the major teachings of the apostate gnostics of the second century A.D. was that Jesus was only the last in a series of digressive emanations from God. This gnostic teaching started off on the basis that there is no darkness in God (See 1 Jn 1:5). But the gnostics came to a wrong conclusion. They assumed that God, who is all good, could not connect with the material world that was supposedly all evil. The gnostics assumed, therefore, that there had to be a digression of angelic beings from God, which beings would eventually come into the evil material world. The last of this series of emanations was supposedly Jesus. He could come into the world because He was the final digression from God.

The emanation of “Jesus” supposedly digressed so far away from God that He could be “the son of

God” in the darkness of this world. Because this emanation digressed so far from God who is good, that he became spiritually dysfunctional, and thus could identify with the evil of the world. This gnostic fantasy destroys the gospel of the incarnation of the Son of God. Therefore, if we assume that angels were an incarnation, then we are moving closer into a theology that rubs shoulders with the theology of the gnostics.

It would be better to understand that angels were visionary beings who appeared in the form of men. They could interact with humans, but their “human form,” whatever it was, was not permanent. Even if we assume that they appeared in the flesh of man, we must not assume that they were an incarnation as the Son of God.

The difference between an angel in the appearance of a man, and the Son of God as the incarnation of God, is that one was formerly eternal in the spirit (See Jn 4:24), **but the other was the creation of the eternal Spirit** (See Cl 1:16). Incarnation, therefore, would apply only to the gospel of the eternal Son of God, not angels. The incarnation of the Son of God was something that He personally chose to do, not something He was commissioned to do as angels are commissioned. Paul revealed this in the following statement: ***“He made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant and being made in the likeness of men”*** (Ph 2:7).

15. T or F: Because angels appeared in the form of people, we can assume that they were an incarnation of spirit beings.

16. T or F: Because angels receive their commission of God, then we assume that they do not have the authority to indigenously act on their own.

17. T or F: The gnostics taught that Jesus was the final emanation of fallen angels from the presence of God.

18. T or F: Because angels appeared in human form, we would conclude that some angels permanently retained their human form.

C. Angels Worked The Will Of God

On several occasions, angels are pictured to be

carrying out missions of destruction in the affairs of humanity. In this sense, they were angels of destruction (See 1 Sm 16:14; Ps 78:49). The warlike work of angels is portrayed in the word “hosts” (See Gn 32:1ff; Ja 5:13-15; 1 Kg 22:19; 2 Kg 6:17). They are the “hosts” of God who stand ready to carry out the work of God against His enemies. They even stand ready to carry out God’s work in reference to the unfortunate decisions of His people. For example, when David numbered Israel in violation of the will of God, an angel destroyed many in Israel with a pestilence.

And when the angel stretched out His hand over Jerusalem to destroy it, the Lord relented from the destruction, and said to the angel who was destroying the people, “It is enough; now restrain your hand (2 Sm 24:16).

An angel was also sent to destroy Sodom and Gomorrah (See Gn 19:13). When the Assyrian army surrounded Jerusalem, an angel of the Lord came in the night and killed 185,000 Assyrian soldiers.

And it came to pass on a certain night that the angel of the Lord went out, and killed in the camp of the Assyrians one hundred and eighty-five thousand; and when people arose early in the morning, there were the corpses—all dead (2 Kg 19:35).

The reason for this destruction was in the fact that the Assyrians were on the verge of wiping out the nation of Israel, through whom God had planned to bring the Savior into the world (See Gn 12:1-4). Since their intentions were totally against the work of God in history through Israel, the army of the Assyrians had to be terminated.

Another case of the destructive ministry of angels is identified in the prophetic visions of Ezekiel. Ezekiel heard the command that six angels were commissioned to destroy the wicked of the city of Jerusalem (See Ez 9:1-7).

From the few cases of history that are recorded

in the Old Testament concerning the destructive missions of angels, it is clearly evident that angels carried out destructive missions in order to accomplish the goals that God wanted to carry out through national Israel and certain individuals. We would thus conclude from this mission of angels that **they were created and sent forth in order to implement and preserve the eternal plan of God to bring the Savior into the world.** And since the Savior came into the world for us, then we must conclude that the destructive work of angels that are recorded in the Old Testament was for the purpose of our eternal salvation.

Angels also functioned in the Old Testament era in order to carry out many constructive works, most of which had positive results. While on Mount Sinai, the Sinai law was evidently given through the ministry of angels. Stephen spoke of this ministry: *“You [Jews] who have received the [Sinai law] by the direction of angels”* (At 7:53; see Gl 3:19; Hb 2:2). Other examples include the angel who appeared to Jacob in a dream (See Gn 28:12; 31:11). In order to divert Balaam, an angel once appeared to the donkey on which Balaam rode (See Nm 22:22-41). In this particular case, it seems that the donkey saw the angel, but Balaam did not, arguing the point that the appearance of angels was not the incarnation of angelic beings in the flesh of man.

There was also the angel who interpreted a vision that was given to the prophet Daniel (See Dn 10:5). Another angel also interpreted a vision that was given to King Belshazzar (See Dn 7:16). On other occasions, Gabriel interpreted visions and dreams for Daniel (See Dn 8:15ff; 9:21). In these cases, angels were functioning on behalf of God to enlighten people on earth concerning His work among men.

In the book of Daniel reference is also made to Michael who is described as *“one of the chief princes,” “the great prince who stands for the children of your people,”* and *“your prince”* (See Dn 10:13,21;12:1). Reference is also made to the *“prince [commander] of*

the host” of God in Joshua 5:14. This is undoubtedly a reference to Michael, the archangel. In some way, therefore, Michael functions as the “prince” of angels in his relationship with all other angelic beings. We have no doubt that this is true, and thus, there is a rank of authority among angels that was designated by the One who created all angels (See CI 1:16).

It is significant to note under this point that at one time in the spirit world there was an argument between Michael the archangel and Satan (See Jd 9). The argument was over what should be done with the body of Moses. Satan surely wanted it to be preserved and presented in some mausoleum where it would eventually be worshiped by the Jews. Such has been done throughout history when iconic leaders died. So in order to prevent this, the Holy Spirit informed us that Michael contended with Satan over the body of Moses.

The end of this story revealed the submissive spirit of Michael. He chose not to contend with Satan, but submitted to the authority of the Lord. He subsequently turned the matter over to the Lord, who in turn, buried the body of Moses in an unknown location (See Dt 34:5,6). The incident not only revealed the submissive spirit of Michael, but it also revealed the rebellious spirit of the Chief of demons and his demonic angels.

19. T or F: Angels were always sent from God on peaceful missions.

20. T or F: The New Testament covenant was delivered to Israel to Moses on Mount Sinai.

21. T or F: Angels never appeared to unrighteous people.

D. The “Angel Of God”

On several occasions throughout the history of Israel, there appeared a messenger from God who was referred to as the “Angel of the Lord,” or “Angel of God.” **Some biblical interpreters have assumed that this Angel was the Son of God before His incarnation.** In fact, some translations capitalize the word “Angel” when it is used in various

Old Testament contexts in reference to the ministry of this Angel.

In the context of this Angel, we must understand that the history that is recorded in the Old Testament was for our learning (See Rm 15:4; 1 Co 11:10). And that which we are to learn from Old Testament history is that history was recorded to unveil the gospel of the coming incarnation of the Son of God. Therefore, the Angel who is identified specifically as the “Angel of God” worked on behalf of God in order to accomplish the eternal purpose of God on earth in the history of man.

The Angel of the Lord appeared on special occasions in order to carry out specific tasks in reference to the eternal gospel plan of God. Because the Bible defines the work of the Angel of the Lord to be the direct work of the Lord, this Angel is pictured in the position of the Lord Himself. It is because of this that many assume that the Angel of the Lord is a reference to God the Son.

We could certainly make a valid argument here in reference to the work of the Son of God before the incarnation. We see God the Father working in the affairs of this world before the incarnation of God the Son. The Holy Spirit also worked throughout Old Testament history, specifically in inspiration of the prophets. It would only be logical, therefore, to assume that God the Son was also working. This would especially be true in the Son’s preparation for His own incarnation.

It simply would not be reasonable to conclude that God the Son sat in idleness throughout history before the incarnation. As in the creation of man, the Father, Son and Holy Spirit worked as one in order to accomplish the purpose for which the world was created (See Gn 1:26; Cl 1:16). They also worked as one throughout history in order to bring the Savior into the world. We would assume, therefore, that there would be some reference to God the Son in the Old Testament. We would conclude that this reference was to the Angel of the Lord who carried

out the purpose of God for the creation of the world.

Several contexts in the Old Testament mention the special work of the Angel of the Lord. The Angel of the Lord appeared to Hagar in the desert (See Gn 16:7), to Abraham when Abraham interceded on behalf of Sodom and Gomorrah (See Gn 18), and to prevent the sacrifice by Abraham of his son Isaac (See Gn 22). Abraham promised that Eliezer would go forth under the protection of this Angel (See Gn 24). Later, the Angel appeared to Jacob (See Gn 31), and subsequently, Jacob wrestled with the Angel of God (See Gn 32:24ff). Jacob even spoke of this Angel and God as the same (See Gn 48:15ff). The Angel of the Lord also appeared to Moses in the burning bush on Mount Sinai (See Ex 3; At 7:30). He appeared to Joshua (See Ja 5:13 - 6:2). He also appeared to Gideon (See Jg 6:11ff).

Israel was commanded to obey the Angel that God sent before them to lead them out of Egyptian captivity, and through their wilderness wanderings (See Ex 23:20ff). On the occasion of Israel's deliverance from Egyptian captivity, the Angel spoke with authority. If Israel disobeyed the Angel, then they would be disobeying God. In this sense, therefore, the Angel stood for God because God revealed His authority through this Angel in order to lead Israel. Since there are definite inferences in the Old Testament that the Angel of the Lord was the Son of God in spirit, it is difficult not to come to the conclusion that He truly was.

In Exodus 32:34 – 33:17, Moses interceded on behalf of the nation of Israel when they sinned against God. Subsequently, God informed Moses that His Angel would go before him to lead Israel (See Ex 32:34). God promised at the foot of Mount Sinai, *"I will send an angel before you"* (Ex 33:2). God promised that this Angel would go up with Israel into the land of promise in order to drive out the Canaanites.

It is interesting to note that in Exodus 32:34 God would send the Angel to go before Israel into

the land. In Exodus 33:2 reference is made to “an angel.” We could possibly assume that “the Angel” of Exodus 32:34 was the same angel of Exodus 33:2. But what is significant to notice was the purpose for sending the Angel to lead Israel in her feat of casting out the Canaanites from the land. God sent the Angel instead of Himself because of what He said in Exodus 33:3: *“I will not go up in the midst of you because you are a stiffnecked people, and I might consume you in the way.”*

It seems that the intercessory work of Jesus the Son of God started long before the atoning sacrifice of the cross. If God went with Israel into the land, the people would of necessity be terminated because of their persistent rebellion that would eventually take place in the land of promise. But if the Angel led the way, the wrath of God would be appeased through the intercession of the Angel. Of this intercessory work, Paul wrote of King Jesus in His present ministry: Jesus *“is even at the right hand of God, who also makes intercession for us”* (Rm 8:34). *“There is one God and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus”* (1 Tm 2:5). The Angel who went with Israel into the land of promise eventually came in the flesh in order to continue His work of intercession between God and man as Moses interceded on behalf of Israel.

Moses had at one time interceded on behalf of Israel. But when he died, the Angel of the Lord in the flesh took on this responsibility. Eventually in the history of Israel there would be the voice of one crying in the wilderness that Israel’s intercessor in the Spirit was incarnate in the flesh as their Savior (See Lk 2:10,11).

It is thus challenging to determine who the special “Angel of the Lord” was in the Old Testament. Our best conclusion would simply be that God could use this special Messenger to carry out His work, and in so designating this Angel in a special way, we would view Him to be different from all other angels. Since this Angel of the Lord worked so obediently on behalf

of God the Father in special situations, we could only conclude that the Angel of the Lord was truly special and chosen to carry out specific works that would accomplish the purpose for which the world was created. Since the world was created by God the Son in order to bring us into the eternal presence of God, we would assume that God the Son was at work in the affairs of man long before He showed up on the scene when an angel made the following gospel announcement to some shepherds:

But do not fear, for behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy that will be to all the people. For to you a Savior is born this day in the city of David, who is Christ the Lord (Lk 2:10,11).

Once the seed of Abraham was chosen to give birth to a nation that would preserve the seedline of woman unto the time of the “crushing” (See Gn 3:15), we would assume that the Seed would work through the chosen nation of Israel until the time of the revelation of the incarnation. The Son of God was the “Angel of the Lord” who worked to bring Israel to the cross. But after the ascension and coronation, and as King of kings over all things, the resurrected Seed worked to bring His spiritual seed into eternal glory. Since the world came into existence in order to populate heaven, and national Israel was established to preserve the seedline, then we would correctly assume that God the Son began His ministry of reconciliation from the very time when the command was issued, *“Let Us make man ...”* (Gn 1:26).

- 22. T or F:** It is not reasonable to conclude that the pre-incarnate Son of God was idle before His incarnation.
- 23. T or F:** Moses interceded on behalf of Israel in order that they not be destroyed.
- 24. T or F:** The “good tidings” that was preached to some shepherds by an angel was the good news of the incarnation.

Chapter 3

= Angels In The New Testament =

Angels in the New Testament are associated with beginnings. We see their appearance when the Son of God was born into the world. We see their appearance when Jesus, the Son of God, began His earthly ministry. And finally, we see the special work of angels in the beginning of the church. And at least on one occasion, we see the beginning of a child of God on his way to eternity. We would conclude, therefore, that God's sending of angels was unique in the first century in His work to begin the gospel dispensation of His work on earth until Jesus comes again.

And when Jesus comes again, angels will be coming with Him in order to consummate world history and begin the heavenly dwelling of millions of God's children. Since in the first century the focus of their work was to begin this gospel dispensation of God's work, then we would conclude that the manner or reasons for which they ministered in the first century would continue until the purpose for which the world was created is finalized.

A. Angels Worked At The Incarnation

Angels worked at the beginning of the mission of the Son of God in the incarnation. The work of one prominent angel was significant at the time of the incarnation of Jesus. An angel, **Gabriel**, appeared three times to Joseph in circumstances surrounding the birth and early life of the baby Jesus (See Mt 1:19,20; 2:13,19). In reference to the birth and ministry of John the Baptist, the angel Gabriel appeared to Zacharias (See Lk 1:8-20). An angel of the Lord also appeared to Mary, the mother of Jesus. This angel informed Mary, *"And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bring forth a Son. And you will call His name JESUS"* (Lk 1:30,31).

It is significant to notice the announcement that an angel made immediately after the birth of Jesus. **This angel made the first announcement of the gospel.** Luke recorded the angel's announcement:

*Do not fear, for behold, I bring you **good tidings of great joy** what will be to all the people. **For to you a Savior is born** this day in the city of David, who is Christ the Lord (Lk 2:10,11).*

When the angel made the preceding announcement of the birth of Jesus to the shepherds, *“then suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God”* (Lk 2:13).

The “good tidings” (gospel) that were announced was for the purpose of alerting the Jews that the prophecies of the Messiah, the Christ, were being fulfilled. This was good news. However, it was good news beyond what they were expecting, because the news was about the salvation of the atoning death of the incarnate Son of God. It was not an announcement about the restoration of national Israel. It was an announcement at the very beginning that would eventually conclude with Jesus’ gospel atonement, resurrection and ascension to the right hand of the Father in order to begin His gospel reign as King of kings. Once the people realized that the baby that was born in a barn in Bethlehem was truly the incarnate Son of God, who would be God’s sacrificial offering for the sins of the world, their announcement to the world would indeed be *“good tidings of great joy to all the people.”*

25. T or F: It was Michael the archangel who appeared to Zacharias concerning the birth of John the Baptist.

26. T or F: With the birth of the Son of God into this world, the seedline promise was to be fulfilled.

B. Angels Begin Jesus’ Ministry

Angels worked to begin the ministry of Jesus. They also worked at the conclusion of His ministry. Immediately before His crucifixion, angels came to Him in the Garden of Gethsemane in order to strengthen His soul. In the Garden *“an angel appeared to Him from heaven, strengthening Him”* (Lk 22:43). Since this angel came “from heaven,” we assume that this was the time when the Father

reached forth Himself from heaven in tender loving care over an only begotten Son who was on His way to the suffering of the cross.

(During His ministry, there was a traditional belief in Jerusalem concerning the pool of Bethesda. It was believed that an angel stirred the waters of the pool in order to bring healing. It was supposed that an angel stirred the waters of the pool of Bethesda, and subsequently, offered healing to the one who first entered the water when it was stirred. This statement is recorded in John 5:4 in older texts of the New Testament. However, because of the lack of manuscript evidence, this reading has been left out of more recent texts. It is assumed that the reading was not a part of the original autograph, but was probably inserted into the text of John as a marginal statement of explanation. The historical comment was made by some later scribe who simply wanted to explain to the readers what the belief in Jerusalem was concerning the stirring of the pool of Bethesda. It was, therefore, a historical commentary that was eventually added by later scribes. The later scribes thought that the scribe of the original manuscript from which they made their copies, had mistakenly left out this case of a supposed work of angels.)

There were angels present at the time of Jesus' resurrection. At the end of Jesus' ministry on earth, and after the crucifixion and three days in the tomb, an angel came and rolled away the stone from the tomb of Jesus (See Mt 28:2). When certain women came to the tomb on the glorious Sunday morning of His resurrection, there were angels who reported the resurrection to the women (See Lk 24:23). Since the disciples had a difficult time in connecting the dots between the crucifixion of Jesus, and the intended atonement of that event, they did not initially believe that Jesus had been raised from the dead. Jesus later rebuked them for not at first believing what the women reported (See See Mk 16:14).

It appears, therefore, that the presence of the angels at the tomb of the resurrection scene was for a greater purpose than to comfort the women. **They were there to substantiate the fact of the resurrection.** The declaration of the resurrection was not simply made by some women whom the disciples thought were in an emotional state of hysteria when they failed to find the body of Jesus. **The resurrection was verified and declared by angels.** It was as the angel said to the women: *“He is not here [in the tomb], for He is risen as He said. Come, see the place where He lay”* (Mt 28:5). The announcement of the gospel of the resurrection, therefore, was first made by angels.

We must keep in mind that throughout the ministry of Jesus, angels did not assume the ministry of Jesus. They did not in any way serve as messengers to the unbelieving public in order to preach the gospel. Gabriel announced to Mary the good news of her pregnancy. However, the focus of the announcement was on her pregnancy, not the preaching of the gospel. This same indirect ministry of angels occurred in reference to the unbelieving world. At the time of the birth of Jesus, the angel only announced to the shepherds that the Son of God had been born in bodily form in Bethlehem.

Specifics concerning the gospel were not explained by angels. The witnessing work of angels at the time of the beginning of the life and ministry of Jesus was secondary in reference to the proclamation of the gospel. Angels announced the events of the gospel, as the incarnational birth of Jesus. But they were not allowed to reveal the gospel of the atonement that took place at the cross. The revelation of this mystery was reserved to be revealed only through the apostles and prophets.

27. T or F: One of the works of angels as the messengers of God was to preach the gospel to the unbelieving world.

28. T or F: Angels had no function in the resurrection of Jesus.

C. Angels At Beginning Of Church

Angels worked at the beginning of the church with special people who worked for God. When the church was first established, unique events transpired as a result of the work of angels. When the apostles were imprisoned, an angel opened the doors of the prison for the apostles and instructed them to go and preach in the temple (See At 5:19). Because God wanted the Ethiopian eunuch as a special evangelist to Africa, an angel was sent to Philip in order to inform Philip that the eunuch was on his way back to Africa (See At 8:26). It was Philip who had the responsibility to preach the gospel to the eunuch, not the angel.

When God sought to inform the church that He wanted the gospel preached specifically to the Gentile nations, He sent an angel to Cornelius, the one who would be the example of Gentile obedience (See At 10:3). Cornelius was then commanded by the angel to send for Peter who would teach him the word of the gospel by which he would be saved (See At 10:22). An angel also appeared to Peter while he was in Herod's prison, awaiting execution (See At 12:7). An angel also smote Herod for his arrogant behavior, and thus, he was eaten with worms (See At 12:23). An angel also appeared to Paul in a dream in order to comfort him on his journey as a prisoner to Rome (See At 27:23).

What may be significant in reference to the work of angels in the first century when the church was initially beginning, is that there is little biblical information concerning a conclusion to the work of angels in reference to the disciples. The initial work of the Holy Spirit involved His ministry through the miraculous gifts that were given to the early disciples by the laying on of the apostles' hands (See At 8:18). But when the last Christ-sent apostle died, this ministry was eventually concluded when the last person died on whom the apostles had laid their hands.

In the beginning of the church, it was also the work of the Holy Spirit to reveal all truth to the apostles in reference to the gospel, and then inspire the recording of that truth as the New Testament documents. The Holy Spirit thus concluded His particular work in order that the disciples rely on the power of the word of God. He would continue His ministry in an indirect manner throughout this gospel dispensation. But we have no deductive conclusion for the cessation of the ministry of angels. We simply conclude that they would carry on in some way throughout this gospel dispensation.

No reason is given in the New Testament for any cessation of the work of angels. Their ministries were specific, and often particular in reference to individuals. Though we have Holy Spirit inspired accounts of the appearance and work of angels in the first century, we do not have such inspired accounts today. We would only assume that the work of angels will not be finished until the last saint is secured in the arms of God. It is then that the angels will join with Jesus in His coming in order to collect the remaining saints who are alive at the time of the end of all things.

29. T or F: Once Jesus ascended to the right hand of God, and the Holy Spirit came on the apostles, angels continued to play a part in the early establishment of the church.

30. T or F: One of the works of angels when the church was established was to continue to reveal the word of God to the apostles.

D. Angels At The Consummation

Angels will work at the beginning of the consummation of all things. There is at least one final event of world history in which angels will be involved. Paul wrote, *“For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God”* (1 Th 4:16). We know that the angels will be involved in this final coming of Jesus. Paul gave us a very specific revelation of this matter when he wrote the following:

For it is a just thing with God to repay tribulation to those who trouble you, and to give you who are afflicted rest with us when the Lord Jesus will be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels in flaming fire, taking vengeance on those who do not know God and who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ (1 Th 1:6-8).

Assuming that the parables of Jesus in Matthew 25 are pictures of the final judgment, Matthew 25:31 would be a parallel statement to the preceding revelation: *“When the Son of Man will come in His glory, and all the angels with Him, then He will sit on the throne of His glory.”* This revelation of the future consummation of all things is reminiscent of the consummation of the world through the flood of Noah’s day. It was then that *“Enoch also, the seventh from Adam, prophesied of these, saying, “Behold, the Lord came with ten thousands of His saints [angels] to execute judgment on all (Jd 14,15).*

In all the above cases of the appearance of angels, angels worked in unique situations in order to bring about the will of God for the destiny of this world. They were not sent to be preachers of the gospel to the unbelievers. They were not sent as teachers for the saved, or even judges of the saved. They were sent as special envoys of God in times of crisis for ministry to carrying out the work of God among those of this world. In the events of the end of all things, they will continue to assist in carrying out the work of God to consummate all things of this present world.

31. T or F: There will be no angels involved in Jesus’ final coming.

32. T or F: We would conclude that when Jesus comes again, the angels will in some way function in the gathering of the saints and the destruction of the world.

Chapter 4

= Angels With The Early Saints =

Sprinkled throughout the New Testament are several references to angels. It is not that the New Testament teaches specific things about angels

in reference to their character and nature. Our information concerning angels is derived indirectly from the work that they performed in the first century, which work was recorded by the Holy Spirit. From their work, therefore, we learn much about who they are and their existence. One important point we learn about angels in the New Testament is the fact that belief in angels played a significant role in the theology of the early disciples, specifically the Jewish disciples.

A. Angels During Jesus' Ministry

Appearance of angels during the ministry of Jesus. During His ministry, Jesus spoke of the angels of heaven (See Mt 22:30), as well as the devil and his angels (See Mt 25:41). At the time of Jesus' ministry, there were the two groups of angels in the spirit world. **(1)** There were angels who worked on behalf of God for the sake of the disciples. **(2)** And then there were those angels who were associated with Satan, and thus worked to discourage the work of God. As previously stated, we assume that those angels, or demons, who were with Satan had fallen with him after their creation, and subsequent rebellion in heavenly places.

1. The angels of heaven:

Jesus declared that the angels of heaven were holy, that is, they were set apart for specific tasks (See Mk 8:38). Though they are intellectual beings, they are not omniscient (all-knowing); they did not, during the ministry of Jesus, know the coming of the Lord in judgment on Jerusalem (See Mt 24:36). They are beings without sex, and thus without sexual desires (See Mt 22:30). Any appearance of an angel, therefore, would not be in the appearance of men with wings and halos, or women with flowing blond hair. It is difficult to extract all the imaginary portrayals of angels from our minds. But in order to be objective, we must.

Jesus was the very creator of angels, and thus it

is interesting to note what He said in reference to angels during His earthly ministry. In the parable of the rich man and Lazarus, Jesus taught that angels were present at the time of the death of Lazarus, **for the spirit of Lazarus was carried away to Abraham's bosom by angels** (See Lk 16:22). From this incident we would assume that at the point of death of any child of God, there are angels present, though we cannot perceive their presence through the senses. They are there to carry away our spirits to Abraham's bosom, or in the case of Christians, to carry our spirit away to the care of Jesus. In this sense, therefore, we are in the presence of angels whose work is to carry away our spirit to the faithful care of Jesus (See Ph 1:23).

Jesus used the metaphor of Abraham's bosom in the parable of the rich man and Lazarus because He was, during His ministry, speaking primarily to the Jews (See Lk 16:22). But now in reference to Christians, we would assume that we will be carried away by angels to Jesus upon our death. We assume this because when Jesus comes again, He will ***bring with Him those who have fallen asleep in Jesus*** (1 Th 4:14). If we die before the final coming of Jesus, we will be one of those whom Jesus will bring with Him in order to collect the living saints.

We cannot verify the presence of an angel, or angels, through empirical senses at the time of the death of a saint. We can only assume that when a saint is near death, there are angels present who stand ready to carry away the spirit of the departing saint. We say this because we would not believe that at the point of death the spirit of the saint evaporates into the collective of oblivion, as is taught by Buddhists. On the contrary, Hebrews 1:14 states concerning the ministry of angels, ***Are they not all ministering spirits sent forth to minister to those who will inherit salvation?*** We would assume, therefore, that one of the last tasks of the "ministering spirits" on our behalf is to carry our spirit, at the time of our death, safely into the arms of Jesus.

One of the missions of angels is to deliver God's people. Of His own deliverance, Jesus said that twelve legions of angels could have been sent to deliver Him from the hands of His enemies (See Mt 26:53). If angels could have delivered the Son of God from the cross, then certainly they will be able to deliver us from the destruction of the world that is yet to come.

In reference to the spiritual deliverance of a soul from sin, angels rejoice when just one sinner repents (See Lk 15:10; compare 1 Co 4:9; Ep 3:10; 1 Pt 1:12). In Luke 12:8 Jesus said, *“Also I say to you, whoever will confess Me before men, him will the Son of Man also confess before the angels of God.”* In this statement, Jesus wanted us to understand that the angels are sincerely interested in our repentance. They yearn that we repent and join them in eternity. No angel will have endured the suffering of living in the flesh of man on earth, and thus, we would assume that all angels honor every saint who has endured the suffering of death that is in this world. They thus rejoice when one obeys the gospel, which means that that gospel-obedient person will be delivered from the second death when they come with Jesus.

There is little information in the Bible concerning “guardian angels.” In a single statement that is recorded in the Bible, there is an indication that there is before God “guardian angels” who minister specifically on behalf of each saint. Jesus said, *“Take heed that you do not despise one of these little ones, for I say to you that in heaven their angels continually see the face of My Father who is in heaven”* (Mt 18:10). Since this is the only statement in Scripture where the concept of guardian angels is mentioned, it would be a weak argument to assume that this is a central ministry of angels. However, if the concept is true, then we must keep in mind that the angels about whom Jesus spoke, are “in heaven.” Whether collective as a group of angels, or as a designated angel for each “little one,” we do not know.

Has God assigned an angel to the “little ones”? Are the little ones represented before God with the presence of a special angel? There is certainly no harm in this belief. It is an area in which we all would walk by faith. Whether the Holy Spirit or angels, we would conclude from a summary of New Testament statements that God is present and working in the lives of His saints through the medium of the Holy Spirit and angels.

The Father has not left us abandoned to this world. In this context of teaching concerning angels, we must remember that angels are *“ministering spirits sent forth to minister to those who will inherit salvation”* (Hb 1:14). When the Hebrew writer made this statement, he assumed that we would understand the statement for what it says.

Another statement that enlightens us concerning the behavior of angels is the statement of Jesus in Matthew 6:10: *“Your kingdom come. Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.”* Obedience to the will of God is carried out in heaven by those who dwell in those heavenly places. Angels dwell in heavenly places, and thus, angels are obedient to the will of God in heaven. Those angels who are in the presence of God in heavenly places are behaving in obedience to the will of God.

This indicates that in some way angels have free-moral choice in reference to obedience of the will of God. They are not robots. Free-moral choice indicates that they have the choice of obeying the will of God or disobeying. Those angels who are “in heaven,” therefore, are an example of obedience to the will of God. We should pray that this obedient spirit should take place on earth throughout the world.

33. T or F: The demons of Satan were active during the ministry of Jesus.

34. T or F: Jesus cast out demons to reveal His authority over them.

35. T or F: Angels are omniscient in reference to all things.

36. T or F: From what happened during the death of Lazarus, we could correctly conclude that angels are present when a child of God dies.

2. The devil's angels:

Throughout the Bible there is also revelation concerning the fall of angelic beings (See Jb 4:18; Ez 28:12-19; Mt 25:41; 2 Pt 2:4; Rv 12:9). These fallen angelic beings dwelling in a spirit realm of existence. These are those angels who have been cast down. Peter wrote of these fallen angels: *“God did not spare the angels who sinned, but cast them down to pits of darkness and reserved them for judgment”* (2 Pt 2:4; Jd 6). These are those angels whom Jesus will eventually doom to eternal hell at the final judgment.

In fact, what Jesus stated in Matthew 25:41 seems to indicate that hell is specifically prepared for the devil and these fallen angels: *“Depart from Me you cursed into everlasting fire that is prepared for the devil and his angels.”*

The fact that some angels in the past rebelled against the will of God, assumes the fact that angels are free-moral beings who have the opportunity to choose in reference to the will of God. Sometime in the past, some angels chose to rebel against the will of God, and thus, they are reserved in darkness until they are eventually cast into eternal destruction.

Since all things have been created by God the Son (See Cl 1:16), then we must conclude that the Son created all angels, and subsequently, the Son has authority to take out those angels who rebelled. However, and as previously stated, we must not conclude that Satan was initially created to be evil. John wrote of God, *“God is light and in Him is no darkness at all”* (1 Jn 1:5). The One in whom there is no darkness cannot create that which is darkened with sin. On the contrary, all that God created was good. Nevertheless, since angels, including Satan, were created with the freedom to make choices, Satan and some angels gave up their proper dwelling. They rebelled against God. They were subsequently cast down from their dwelling in the presence of God. What Jesus seems to indicate in the Matthew 25:41 statement is the fact that destruction is waiting

for these rebellious angels, including their leader, Satan. Jesus will eventually say to all the wicked, ***“Depart from Me you cursed into everlasting fire that is prepared for the devil and his angels.”***

But before the coming condemnation of Satan and his angels, we must not assume that Satan’s demons are freely roaming about among humans cursing and indwelling whomever they so choose. Those who believe this fail to understand the authority that Jesus presently has over all things, including the demonic world (See Mt 28:18; Ep 1:20-22).

Even during His earthly ministry in His lowered state in the flesh, demons were terrified of the authority of Jesus. On one occasion during His ministry, demons begged Jesus, ***“that He not command them to go out into the abyss”*** (Lk 8:31). When Jesus’ disciples returned to Him after a mission trip, they said of their experience with demons, ***“Lord, even the demons are subject to us in Your name”*** (Lk 10:17). And then Jesus said, ***“I saw Satan fall from heaven as lightning”*** (Lk 10:18).

We must not forget that when Jesus ascended to His heavenly throne in order to reign over all things with all authority, demons were greatly restricted. This is the assurance that Paul gave to the Ephesians who lived in a culture of all sorts of supposed roaming spirits of the demonic world: ***“He says, ‘When He ascended on high, He led captivity captive and gave gifts to men’”*** (Ep 4:8). So in view of His gospel coronation at the right hand of God the Father, Jesus reminded the world, ***“Now will the ruler of this world be cast out”*** (Jn 12:31). If Jesus now exercises this authority over demons, then certainly He is in control of all angels. It is now that ***“angels and authorities and powers”*** have been made subject to Him (1 Pt 3:22).

37. T or F: Angels are not inherently eternal beings since Jesus will destroy all the fall angels.

38. T or F: We could correctly assume that angels can make choices simply because some angels chose to rebel against their Creator.

B. Angels In The Epistles

Throughout the letters of the New Testament, several statements are made concerning angels. However, many of the statements are made with little explanation of who angels are. Angels just show up on the scene in the early history of the church. Why the Holy Spirit left us with little explanation is not difficult to understand. **Our primary focus as Christians is on Jesus, not the Holy Spirit or angels.** The Holy Spirit guided John to record the words of Jesus that when the Holy Spirit came after the ascension of Jesus, *“He [the Holy Spirit],”* Jesus declared, *“will glorify Me, for He will take of Mine and will declare it to you”* (Jn 16:14).

The New Testament writers were inspired to mention angels in different contexts. However, the inspired writers did not dwell on the subject of defining the character and nature of angels, nor their ministry on behalf of the saints. The Holy Spirit minimized this information in order that our focus, as Christians, not be diverted from the central theme of the gospel of the Lord Jesus. The brevity of such information assumes that the Holy Spirit left us with our own imagination concerning the presence and ministry of angels in the lives of the New Testament characters. We would also conclude that the Spirit left us with the task of wondering how the angels would work past the close of the early beginning of the church.

Another thought for why the Holy Spirit left us with little explanation on this subject is in the fact that He wanted us to assume that God’s normal work with the saints throughout history needs no further explanation. As we study the work of angels throughout the history of humanity in the Bible, God assumes that we will draw the conclusion that He has not parked His angels in reserve until the final day when Jesus comes.

Angels have not gone into retirement. They continue to work on behalf of the saints, though our

perception of them and their work is not through our senses. Though they are not perceived, we must not conclude that they are inactive, or are not there. What the Holy Spirit wants us to imagine is that God continues to work through angels on special occasions. They are there, though just beyond our senses. Therefore, we would not be dogmatic about them being there.

In the Colossian epistle Paul attacked the Colossian disciples' tendency to worship angels. ***“Let no man disqualify you of your reward by delighting in false humility and the worship of angels”*** (Cl 2:18). When John fell down before an angel of God at the end of the visions of the book of Revelation, the angel said to him, ***“Do not do that, for I am your fellow servant, and of your brethren the prophets, and of those who keep the sayings of this book. Worship God”*** (Rv 22:8,9). Since no angel or man on earth has the right to receive the worship that is to be extended to God only, the angel before whom John fell quickly corrected the actions of John. The angel, under no circumstances, would accept worship from John.

From Paul's admonition in Colossians 2:18, and the event of John falling down before an angel who rebuked him for doing such, we would conclude that angels should never be worshiped. Angels themselves understand that worship is to be directed only toward God. If they accepted worship, then they would be in danger of being cast down to darkness to await the destruction of the final day (See 2 Pt 2:4).

Jesus now has authority over all angelic beings. He ***“has gone into heaven and is at the right hand of God, angels and authorities and powers having been made subject to Him”*** (1 Pt 3:22). Since Jesus is the King of kings and Lord of lords (See 1 Tm 6:15), then all those who are of His kingdom reign should be in submission to Him alone. And since we reign with our King, then in the end, angels also will be subject to us. This seems to be what Paul indicated in 1 Corinthians 6:3 when he mentioned

that the saints will judge angels. It is for this reason also that angels watch in reference to the obedience of the saints.

Some sisters among the Corinthian disciples were uncovering their heads as a show of disrespect for authority in the culture. Since angels are aware of the behavior of the saints, Paul exhorted that the sisters continue wearing the symbol of submission in the culture. They should do this for the sake of the angels. Paul wrote in reference to the head covering, *“For this reason the woman ought to have a symbol of authority on her head because of the angels”* (1 Co 11:10).

Before the creation there were some angels who did not submit to the authority of their Creator. As a consequence, they were cast down from heavenly places and are now awaiting their just punishment in the fire and brimstone of hell (See Mt 25:41). Paul wrote to some Corinthian sisters not to encourage any other angels to do what the rebellious angels did before the creation of the world.

Paul did not want those in Corinth, who had aligned themselves with Jesus as their King and Lord, to arrogantly rebel against the authority of God. In this sense, therefore, Paul could have been exhorting the women of Corinth to manifest continually a spirit of submission for the sake of the angels. Though the head covering in most cultures of the world today does not manifest a position of submission, such did in the culture of Corinth. The women of the time could thus reveal their submission by covering their heads. Nevertheless, in all situations today, the saints must give an example of submission as an example for angels. This thought was surely in the mind of Paul when he wrote, *“... submitting to one another in the fear of God”* (Ep 5:21).

Angels were often mentioned in the manifestation of the visions that came to John the apostle. Throughout the book of Revelation we are constantly reminded that angels played a key role in the Holy Spirit’s work to reveal the visions to John. It is

probably a personification that the word “angel” is used in reference to there being an angel for each of the seven churches of Asia (See Rv 1:20). Therefore, it is not necessary to conclude that God assigns an angel to the collective group of disciples in every city throughout the world.

In the book of Revelation, John mentions the “*angel of the waters*” (See Rv 16:5), the angel that “*has power over fire*” (See Rv 14:18; compare 7:1; 19:17), and the “*angel of the abyss*” (See Rv 9:11). Mention is also made that there was war in the spiritual realm between Michael and his angels against the dragon and his angelic beings (See Rv 12). As previously mentioned, the result of this war was that Satan was cast down. Whether this was a picture of what actually happened before creation, we are not told. Nevertheless, we could assume that John was given a vision of what actually happened before the creation in order to use what happened then to illustrate what happened in the spiritual realm at the cross of Jesus when the head of Satan was crushed (See Gn 3:15).

Before the coming of Jesus as the Messiah, a unique theology developed among the Jews concerning the existence and work of angels. Since there was a lack of an intercessory being who would function as Jesus eventually would, the Jews sought for mediators between God and man. This desire for mediators or intercessors led to a concerted effort on the part of Jewish theologians to exalt the place and work of angels between God and man. This exaltation of angels is revealed in the first arguments of the Hebrew writer in order to avert an apostasy of some Jewish saints back to Judaism.

In the first two chapters of Hebrews, the writer made a contrast between the place and being of Jesus and that of angels. Throughout the first two chapters, the writer affirmed the proposition that was set forth in a question: “*But to which of the angels did He ever say, ‘Sit at My right hand until I make Your enemies Your footstool’?*” (Hb 1:13). The fact was,

at the time Hebrews was written, God never exalted any angel, especially to a position of authority.

Though our focus as Christians is to be solely on Jesus, this does not set aside our beliefs, and often speculations, concerning the presence and work of angels in the world today. Angels are still rejoicing over the repentance of sinners. Angels are still working as ministering spirits on behalf of those who will inherit eternal salvation. They are still before the throne of God, giving glory to God.

We are limited to a very small empirical world wherein we can only perceive that which exists through our senses. However, there is a world beyond our senses that is filled with the mystery of God. In this spiritual realm are angels who go about in order to service the needs of the saints. We can speculate concerning the ministry of these angels. We can imagine their presence and being. However, the limitations of our senses frustrates us from visually encountering these heavenly beings. We even say this with caution, since the Hebrew writer indicated that some have entertained angels without their knowledge thereof: *“Do not forget to entertain strangers, for by so doing some have unwittingly entertained angels”* (Hb 13:2).

39. T or F: The early church was not taught to follow the leadership of angels, but to follow the word of God.

40. T or F: In the first century there were some who worshiped angels.

41. T or F: Angels played an active part in leading the early church.



CLASSROOM DISCUSSION

1. Why is it misleading to focus on angels as a part of our faith?
2. What was the work of angels, both in the Old and New Testaments?
3. What are some of the general uses of the word *aggelos* in the Bible?
4. What were some cases where angels in the history of Israel worked to preserve the seedline promise?
5. What were the many functions that angels played in the incarnation of the Son of God into this world?

6. Why would we conclude that Satan was a “fallen angel”?
7. Why would we conclude that the appearance of any angel was not an incarnation of a spirit being into the flesh of man?
8. Why would we conclude that there was no permanency of the appearing of angels in human form?
9. What are some of the occasions when God sent forth angels on destructive missions?
10. Why did Michael the archangel not argue with Satan?
11. What are some reasons why we could believe that the “Angel of God” in the Old Testament could be the Son of God before the incarnation?
12. What were some of the things that the “Angel of God” did in the Old Testament?
13. What did Gabriel, on behalf of the Son of God, do at the time of the Son’s introduction into this world?
14. How did angels assist Jesus at the time Satan tempted Him in the wilderness?
15. What are some examples where God did not allow angels to preach the gospel to unbelievers?
16. What can we assume from the fact that there are some angels who are fallen, and will eventually be destroyed?
17. Why did angels not have to play an active part in the establishment and continuation of the early church?

ABREVIATIONS

OLD TESTAMENT

Genesis - **Gn**, Exodus - **Ex**, Leviticus - **Lv**, Numbers - **Nm**, Deuteronomy - **Dt**, Joshua - **Ja**, Judges - **Jg**, Ruth - **Rt**, 1 Samuel - **1 Sm**, 2 Samuel - **2 Sm**, 1 Kings - **1 Kg**, 2 Kings - **2 Kg**, 1 Chronicles - **1 Ch**, 2 Chronicles - **2 Ch**, Ezra - **Er**, Nehemiah - **Ne**, Esther - **Et**, Job - **Jb**, Psalms - **Ps**, Proverbs - **Pv**, Ecclesiastes - **Ec**, Song of Solomon - **Ss**, Isaiah - **Is**, Jeremiah - **Jr**, Lamentations - **Lm**, Ezekiel - **Ez**, Daniel - **Dn**, Hosea - **Hs**, Joel - **Jl**, Amos - **Am**, Obadiah - **Ob**, Jonah - **Jh**, Micah - **Mc**, Nahum - **Nh**, Habakkuk - **Hk**, Zephaniah - **Zp**, Haggai - **Hg**, Zechariah - **Zc**, Malachi - **Ml**

NEW TESTAMENT

Matthew - **Mt**, Mark - **Mk**, Luke - **Lk**, John - **Jn**, Acts - **At**, Romans - **Rm**, 1 Corinthians - **1 Co**, 2 Corinthians - **2 Co**, Galatians - **Gl**, Ephesians - **Ep**, Philippians - **Ph**, Colossians - **Cl**, 1 Thessalonians - **1 Th**, 2 Thessalonians - **2 Th**, 1 Timothy - **1 Tm**, 2 Timothy - **2 Tm**, Titus - **Ti**, Philemon - **Pi**, Hebrews - **Hb**, James - **Js**, 1 Peter - **1 Pt**, 2 Peter - **2 Pt**, 1 John - **1 Jn**, 2 John - **2 Jn**, 3 John - **3 Jn**, Jude - **Jd**, Revelation - **Rv**

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