

Angels and Demons.

(The Ministration of Angels Continued, Guardian Angels and the Why the Ministry of Angels)

Question 1—*What are some of the other purposes for the ministry of angels?*

Answer—We have considered various purposes of the ministry of angels with respect to God, themselves, the creation and providence; yet, within the last of these, we must contemplate their ministry with respect to men, both the wicked and the elect, both corporately and individually:

First, with respect to the wicked individually, angels are instrumental inflicting the judgments of God; such as the case of Nebuchadnezzar, when he is to be cast down in his pride, Dan. 4:13, 14, 23, 31; or, in the case of Herod, when God sent an angel to smite him in His wrath, Acts 12:23. Thus, they shall be the angels of divine wrath casting the reprobate into eternal punishment at the last day, Matt. 13:41, 42.

Second, with respect to the wicked corporately, angels have been instrumental inflicting the divine judgments on nations and their armies; such as in the case of the Sodomites, whose city was overrun with the most unnatural wickedness, Gen. 19:11-13; or, in the case of the Egyptians, when Pharaoh refused to obey the voice of the LORD, Ex. 12:29. Therefore, it was an erroneous opinion among the Jews that all the evil inflicted on mankind was brought by evil angels because when the LORD would send punishment upon men for their sins, He sent holy angels to execute these purposes, *cf.* 2 Kings 19:35; Isa. 37:36.

Third, with respect to the elect, they exercise the divine chastening, *cf.* 2 Sam. 24:16, 17; as well as dispensing the blessings of God to promote their salvation, *cf.* Heb. 1:14. With regard to their dispensing of divine blessings, there are several ways in which they did so:

1.) By putting them in mind of their duties, teaching them, so they might persevere in their course, despite outward appearances, *cf.* Acts 27:23, 24. Likewise, they are instrumental in directing Philip, the evangelist, to the Ethiopian eunuch, Acts 8:26; for they often discover to the apostles their duties, teaching them how the Gospel was to be taken to the Gentiles, *cf.* Acts 10:3, 7. In other ways teaching them of future things, which was common throughout the Old Testament, *cf.* Gen. 16:7-12; 18:2, 16, 17; 19:1, 12, 13; 28:12-15; Dan. 10:14, 21; Zech. 1:9, 10. In the New Testament, they have often performed the office of evangelists, announcing the birth of Christ, Luke 1:11; 2:10; declaring His resurrection, Matt. 28:2-7; and His ascension, Acts 1:10, 11.

2.) By consoling them, against both present and impending dangers; so, did the angel who spake with Hagar, Gen. 16:7-12; and those angels who appeared for the keeping of Jacob and his family, Gen. 32:1. Likewise, Daniel was comforted by the angel sent to him, Dan. 10:10-21; as was the case of Elijah, when he had been affrighted by the idolatrous queen of Israel and he prayed he might be permitted to die, 1 Kings 19:5-7. Similarly, in the New Testament, the angels have ministered comfort to the saints; as is evident when Mary is told she shall conceive and bear Christ, Luke 1:26-38; and the women who went to tell the disciples of Jesus' resurrection, Matt. 28:5-8.

3.) By guarding them, for we know that they encamp around them that fear the LORD, Ps. 34:7; so, they were with Jacob, in his journey, *cf.* Gen. 32:1, 2. They do so protecting them, *cf.* Ps. 91:11; as well as fighting for them, *cf.* Dan. 10:13. Thus, they are ever present delivering believers from the hands of their enemies, whether from death or imminent peril, actively, *cf.* Gen. 19:15-17; or merely through their normally unseen presence, *cf.* 2 Kings 6:17. Sometimes preserving them from the harm of enemy armies, *cf.* 2 Kings 19:35; and sometimes from the cruel designs to extinguish their lives, *cf.* Dan. 3:25, 28; 6:22. Other times by bringing them deliverance from prison, *cf.* Acts 5:19; 12:7. This angelic guardianship extends from the earliest years, even infancy, *cf.* Matt. 18:10; and extends to a ministry to believers even in death, *cf.* Luke 16:22.

Fourth, with respect to the elect corporately, especially considered as the church, this angelic ministry often appears insinuated in the Name of God found particularly in the Prophets, the LORD of hosts, *cf.* 1 Sam. 1:3. This term refers to Christ Who is the Jehovah over the angelic armies, as appears, *cf.* 1 Sam.

4:4; Ps. 99:1. He it is Who is directing these angelic armies in their various ministries, *cf.* John 1:51. He is the King of glory, *cf.* Ps. 24:10; Whose kingdom is to be extended over the whole earth, *cf.* Zech. 14:9 *with* Isa. 37:16. This Name was revealed as the failure of the church of Israel might have called into question the efficacy of the working of the LORD indicating that He would work, even should Israel fail, *cf.* Isa. 1:8, 9. It is under this Name that God promises to crush the enemies of His people, *cf.* Isa. 10:24; by His ministry of angels, He will protect and defend His church, even establishing His kingdom by them, *cf.* Isa. 31:4, 5. Thus, it is His armies of angels which give strength to the armies of His people, *cf.* 1 Sam. 17:45. It is through their ministry that the LORD encourages the small remnant to build again the holy temple, in Jerusalem, *cf.* Hag. 2:4-9. It is through their ministry, working by the church, that the LORD will eventually put down all rebellion, in heaven and earth, *cf.* Isa. 24:21-23.

Question 2—*Whether there be guardian angels assigned to each believer from birth?*

Answer—The majority view of the Reformed theologians is against this view for the following reasons: 1.) Scripture nowhere expressly mentions a guardian angel, though it speaks of angels sent directly from God to minister to those who shall be heirs of salvation, *cf.* Heb. 1:14. 2.) One angel is often sent to guard many believers and is even said to be encamped around them, *cf.* Isa. 37:36; Ps. 34:7. Conversely, many angels often seem to be assigned to one believer, *cf.* Ps. 91:11; 2 Kings 6:17; Gen. 32:1, 2. 3.) Additionally, it is this belief is thought to have a pagan origin; though it is admitted it was an opinion amongst Jews from whom Christians may have derived this. Yet, it is suspected of helping the papal superstition of angel worship, condemned by the apostle, *cf.* Col. 2:18.

Nevertheless, some Reformed theologians have thought it a reasonable opinion that angels were assigned, if not to all men, at least to believers, based upon two passages in Scriptures specifically: 1.) There are said to be angels assigned to the little ones, *cf.* Matt. 18:10. To this, the majority reply that this shows merely that angels guard little children as well as adults, but there is no mention of any particular or peculiar angel assigned. 2.) There is mention made of Peter's angel, Acts 12:15. Here, the majority reply that this is merely the voice of Jewish converts not well instructed; or, if speaking accurately, it may simply mean any angel; or, possibly that it refers to a messenger. There is one other passage which is sometimes taken generally, where Paul speaks of women and the assembly, *cf.* 1 Cor. 11:10. Here, the majority understand that the only thing in view is that angels are present in sacred assemblies and witness the piety or impiety of the participants.

Question 3—*For what purpose does God use a ministry of angels?*

Answer—The ministry of angels is neither from necessity or inability on the part of God, for He is Almighty, *cf.* Jer. 32:27. After all, God created by His Word alone, *cf.* Heb. 11:3; and by it He might have governed all things alone, *cf.* Matt. 19:26. Thus, He does so from His indulgence and love: 1.) For the good of the angels themselves whom God has thought worthy of this honor, wishing them to be as it were co-workers, working together with Him in the government of the world, *cf.* Heb. 1:7. 2.) For the consolation of believers who thence know how much of a care they are to God, since He wills to use for the promotion of their salvation the ministry of creatures (not only corporeal, but also spiritual) far excelling themselves as to nature, *cf.* Ps. 8:5. 3.) For the promotion of greater friendship among angels and men; for it is evident that friendships are entered into and increased by the bestowal of mutual kindnesses and offices, *cf.* Heb. 12:22, 23. 4.) For the good order of the universe that thus all creatures (superior and inferior, visible and invisible) answering in turn to each other and woven together by certain sure bonds of offices might establish more firmly the harmony of the world, *cf.* Col. 1:16. 5.) Especially for the glory of God himself who is the ultimate and principal end of all his works; a glory which shines forth most illustriously from the ministry of such noble creatures, *cf.* Dan. 7:10.

Question 4—*Ought we to seek the intercession of angels or render them worship?*

Answer—First, we ought to understand that the office of intercessor is joined to that of the priest who had fulfilled the act of sacrificing, *cf.* Ex. 30:34-38. This is fulfilled for us in Christ alone, Who satisfied for us and therefore He alone can intercede for us, *cf.* Rom. 8:34, 35; 1 John 2:1, 2.

Second, to present the prayers of others to God is a part of the Mediatorial and priestly office, which is claimed for the One Who is the only Mediator between God and man, *cf.* 1 Tim. 2:5. He is the uncreated Angel interceding for the church, *cf.* Zech. 1:11, 12; which character is confirmed in the Revelation, Rev. 8:3. For Jesus Himself confesses that He is the One to Whom it belongs to send fire upon the earth, *cf.* Rev. 8:5 *with* Luke 12:49.

Third, he alone can carry up prayers to God who can wash off the corruption and expiate the impurity and imperfection of those whom he represents, which was typified by the high priest under the Mosaic law, *cf.* Ex. 28:38; whereas, Christ alone is our great High Priest, *cf.* Heb. 9:24.

Fourth, the angels can neither offer up all of our prayers, because they are not searchers of the heart able to discern the sincerity as well as the words of these prayers, *cf.* Jer. 17:10. Nor can they carry these prayers in their original dress, being spirit which have no bodies, but Christ is touched with our infirmities, yet without sin, *cf.* Heb. 4:14, 15.

That angels are not to be worshipped is taught: 1.) From the condemnation of the worship of angels by the apostle, Col. 2:18. 2.) From the condemnation of the prostrating of John by the angel which spoke to him, *cf.* Rev. 19:10; 22:9. 3.) Because Scripture clearly teaches that God alone is to be worshipped, *cf.* Matt. 4:10.