

Angels—Ministering Spirits

Hebrews chapter one describes for our encouragement how that we are not alone in our walk to the Kingdom. Speaking of the Angels, we read:

“Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation?”

We learn then, that the Angelic presence is with us in the various circumstances of life, being “sent forth” by Yahweh, “to minister” to us in our times of need. The sweet Psalmist of Israel also spoke of this Divine ministration:

“The angel of Yahweh encampeth round about them that fear him, and delivereth them. O taste and see that Yahweh is good: Blessed is the man that trusteth in him” (Psa. 34:7-8).

Notice this association between the Angelic presence and Trusting in Yahweh: we must trust in the wisdom of our Maker, and in the ministering spirit He has provided to deliver us out of evil. That is not to say that the Angel will prevent evil from occurring in our lives: it is a Divine Principle that the Lord will chastise his children to develop their character in ways that are pleasing to him. So we read the exhortation in Hebrews chapter 12:

“My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, Nor faint when thou art rebuked of him: For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth ... no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous: nevertheless it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby” (Heb. 12:7-11).

We can expect therefore, to experience difficulties and challenges in our journey to the Kingdom—all part of our training for better days ahead. The promise is not that the Angel will stop evil from coming, but rather we will be delivered out of it when it does come. We suffer as do all men and women in the world at large—but the difference is that in our case it is a Divinely Regulated evil, designed to chasten and develop aspects of our character that need modification. The allusion in Psalm 34 appears to be the example of Jacob, a man who certainly knew what it meant to receive affliction. At the end of his mortal pilgrimage, he demonstrated his trust of the Angel in his life, asking the same care to be granted to Joseph’s sons:

“the God before whom my fathers Abraham and Isaac did walk, the God which fed me all my life long unto this day, the Angel **which redeemed me from all evil**, bless the lads, and let my name be named on them ...” (Gen. 48:15-16).

Notice, Jacob did not suggest that the Angel had prevented evil from coming: rather, he referred to how the Angel redeemed him out of it. This was in response to his earlier vow as he fled from his brother Esau:

“And Jacob vowed a vow, saying, if God will be with me, and will keep me in this way that I go, and will give me **bread to eat, and raiment to put on**, so that I come again to my father’s house in peace, then shall Yahweh be my God” (Gen. 28:20-21).

Yahweh had indeed blessed Jacob accordingly: throughout his trials he had food to eat and raiment to put on. In our affluent age, men and women tend to want more. Not being satisfied with a simple diet, they want the best, nicest food (contrast Daniel who refused to partake of royal food). They are not happy with basic attire, rather they desire the best designer clothes. Supposing that gain is godliness, a person’s success in life is determined by his possessions and position in society. But the Apostle echoed the example of Jacob: “having **food and raiment** let us be therewith content” (1 Tim.

6:8). Let us be content with those things that are needful to sustain a mortal life. Let us seek first the things of the Kingdom to Come, and our Maker will provide everything else that we need (Mat. 6:33) - which is not necessarily the same as everything we want.

Another case in point is the experiences of Daniel's three friends in the Truth, and their refusal to bow the knee to the Babylonian Idols. They were thrown into a fire so hot that it devoured the mightiest men of Babylon, yet they were protected from harm to the extent that even the smell of the fire did not linger in their clothes. So, Nebuchadnezzar recognised the means of divine protection: "Blessed be the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego, **who hath sent his angel** and delivered his servants that trusted in him..." (Dan. 3:28, see also Dan. 6:22). Again, the fiery trial came – it was not averted – but in the midst of it all, the Angel delivered them out of all evil.

SEEING AND BELIEVING

When we experience challenges and adverse circumstances in our lives therefore, we must accept the wisdom of our Father in bringing them upon us. Indeed, as we saw above, they are tokens of His love towards us, for as a loving Father, he chastises his children. But it is sometimes difficult to see where the Divine hand is leading us. Sometimes we cannot discern the ministration of the Angels in our lives. But even then, we must trust that it is so. 2 Kings chapter 6 recounts how a young man was greatly perplexed by the apparent strength of the adversary:

"When the servant of the man of God was risen early, and gone forth, behold and host compassed the city both with horses and chariots. And his servant said unto him, Alas, my master! How shall we do?" (2 Kings 6:15).

But the wiser prophet recognised the unseen Hand of Angelic Deliverance:

"and he answered, Fear not: for **they that be with us are more than they that be with them**. And Elisha prayed, and said, Yahweh, I pray thee, open his eyes that he may see. And Yahweh opened the eyes of the young man; **and he saw**: and behold, the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire round about Elisha" (2 Kings 6:17).

The Angelic hand is often unseen – especially by men of the flesh. But in the words of Psalm 34, they encamped "round about" Elisha and his servant, and delivered them, as their antagonists were smitten with blindness, and were unable to find their way. Even so, we ought to have confidence that Yahweh is with us in our warfare against sin. Elisha's prayer to Yahweh is alluded to later in the New Testament: "Ye are of God, little children, and have overcome them: because **greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world**" (1 Jno. 4:4). Like Elisha's servant, we must have our spiritual eyes opened, recognising the great power that is for us, and which shall ultimately effect our final deliverance from the power of sin.

There is evidence in Scripture that the "heirs of salvation" have specific angels appointed to "minister" to them. This is hinted at in Psalm 34, cited above: it is one angel that encamps around them. Again, Jacob spoke of one angel which delivered him from evil. And then we also have the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, speaking of his disciples:

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

Notice the description used here: "their Angels", which implies that they each have angels watching over them. The point here being, that as their individual angels appear in the presence of their Father, we must beware of our attitude and actions towards them—for we would not want their angels to bring a bad report of us to the Father.

Again, it would appear that the Lord Jesus himself has a specific personal angel. In the introduction of the Apocalypse, it is written:

“The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave unto him, to shew unto his servants things which must shortly come to pass; and he sent and signified it by **his angel** unto his servant John ...” (Rev. 1:1).

Again, notice the description: not “one of his Angels”, but a specific one: “his angel”. Jesus sent the message by a particular angel unto his servant John.

In certain regards, the role of the angels foreshadow the work of the Master. Exodus chapter 23 describes how that a specific angel was to be with Israel, and bring them into the land promised to their Fathers:

“Behold, I send an Angel before thee, to keep thee **in the way**, and **to bring thee into the place which I have prepared**. Beware of him, and obey his voice. Provoke him not, for he will not pardon your transgressions, for my Name is in him. But if thou shalt indeed obey his voice, and **do all that I speak**; then I will be an enemy unto thine enemies, and an adversary to thine adversaries. For my Angel shall go before thee, and bring thee in unto the Amorites &c.” (Exo. 23:20-23).

One of the important points here, is that this name-bearing Angel would speak the words of Yahweh: “obey **his** voice, and do all that **I** speak”. And this Angel would bring them into a prepared place. These themes are echoed in John chapter 14 by the Master himself:

“let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father’s house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to **prepare a place** for you, and if I go and **prepare a place** for you, I will come again, and I will receive you unto myself ...” (Jno. 14:1-3).

“... I am **the Way**, the Truth and the Life: no man cometh unto the Father but by me ...” (Jno. 14:6).

“... in that day ye shall know that I am in my Father, and ye in me, and I in you. He that hath my commandments, **and keepeth them**, he it is that loveth me ...” (Jno. 14:20-21).

Just as the Angel was to go before the people in their warfare against the nations, even so our Redeemer, who spoke the words of Yahweh has gone before us, to prepare the way.

As a side issue, Jesus here speaks of “my Father’s house” containing many “mansions”, or rooms/dwelling places as the original word means. There is no real difficulty here: in the Old Testament, the House of Yahweh was the Temple (see Jno. 2:16), and in the kingdom to come, the Temple will be rebuilt and established as a House of Prayer for the peoples (Isa. 56:7). The hope of the believers is they serve him day and night in His House. So John saw in his vision of the glorified saints

“... these are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. Therefore are they before the throne of God, **and serve him day and night in his Temple** and he that sitteth upon the throne shall dwell among them” (Rev. 7:14-15).

And the Psalmist spoke of his desire to be in that house:

“Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life: and I **will dwell in the house of Yahweh for ever**” (Psa. 23:6, see also Psa. 84:10).

Although church theology teaches that this is a promise of dwelling in heaven, there is no verse in the Holy Writ that states heaven to be the location of the Fathers House.

In Messiah’s mortal days, the Angels had an important role in ministering to his needs. He, above all men was an “heir of Salvation”, and the Divine messengers were sent to watch over him. So, after his trial in the wilderness, we read that “behold, angels came and ministered unto him” (Mat. 4:11). Again, at the time of his affliction in the garden of Gethsemane, “there appeared an angel unto him from heaven, strengthening him” (Lu. 22:43). At the time of his being lifted up upon the cross, he had at his disposal “twelve legions of angels” who could effect his release. Indeed, if the Son of the Almighty needed the strength and ministrations of the angels, how much more do we?!

There is also a future role for the Angels to perform. Although it is stated that “unto the angels hath he not put in subjection the world to come” (Heb. 2:5), they will be instrumental in raising and gathering the responsible to judgment:

“For the Son of Man shall come in the glory of his Father **with his angels**; and then he shall reward every man according to his works” (Mat. 16:27).

“and he shall **send his angels** with a great shout of a trumpet, and they **shall gather together his elect** from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other” (Mat. 24:31).

Just like the angels led Lot and his family out of Sodom immediately prior to its destruction, even so the saints shall be taken and delivered from the wrath to come (1 Thess. 1:10). The angels will take us away from the troubles facing the world, to appear before the judgment seat of Messiah, the future world ruler. And in that day, the verdict will be pronounced in the presence of those angels who have watched over us during the days of our mortal preparation:

“I say unto you, Whosoever shall confess me before men, him shall the Son of **man also confess before the angels of God**: but he that denieth me before men shall be **denied before the Angels of God**” (Lu. 12:9).

What a joy it will be for those angels who have ministered to us during our mortal days, to see us enter into the kingdom! How appropriate for them to be there at the time when the judgment is passed!

So then, we find that being “heirs of Salvation”, we are given an Angelic minister to keep us from falling, and “deliver us from all evil”. What a comforting thought that is! Our Father will never leave us, nor forsake us, not for a moment, as our unseen ministers operate silently for our benefit. But let us beware! If we really believed the Angel was there, watching us, would we do some of the things we do? The Angel will keep us from falling if we trust in God for all things—but he does not remove our free-will. If we choose to stray from the path, the Angel will not stop us, and we will suffer the consequences of our own folly.

Only in the Kingdom will we fully appreciate the ministrations of our Angel. But until that time comes, let us be thankful to our Father that we are not left alone in this spiritually benighted age, and apply ourselves to the word of Truth, that we might learn to do His Will, and work with the Angel who watches over us, that we might ultimately enter into the promised Day of Rest.

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