

THE MINISTRY OF ANGELS

"The angel of the Lord encampeth round about them that fear Him, and delivereth them." – Psalm 34:7.

THERE is more or less difficulty associated with all attempts to think about the great Jehovah, His character and His power. The Scriptures seem to indicate that God has used various ways of manifesting His power to His people – to the Jews during the Jewish Age and to the Christian Church during the Gospel Age. We think it would not be an improper thought that the word angel may stand for any agency or power, whether animate or inanimate, that God would be pleased to use in connection with service. God could make the wind or the flaming fire His messenger. He could make the great Archangel or an inferior angel His messenger. He could use as His messenger whatever or whomsoever He might choose to invest with the requisite power; just as a representative of these United States, going to another country, would be recognized, regardless of his own personal ability or standing.

The details of how the Almighty has knowledge of our prayers, our thoughts, our words, our needs, are not furnished us in the Scriptures; and evidently it is not necessary, therefore, that we should understand these in every particular. We do not think that any finite mind could comprehend God. He is too great for our comprehension, far too mighty for us to understand fully all His powers, His ability. Nevertheless we can apprehend some things respecting God, and are therefore invited in the Scriptures to study Him along the lines of His Revelation. To assume that God is in every place, in every niche of space throughout the Universe, seems to us an absurdity, not taught in the Bible; and to assume that God knows about every little tadpole, pollywog, microbe, or that He even [R5634 : page 55] takes knowledge of every act of

each one of the human family, when there are millions upon millions of these, is beyond our understanding.

If we should limit God's attention to the Church, still there are thousands of these; and the capacity to understand and deal with ten or twenty thousand people in an instant seems to us to be an impossibility. Nor would such an arrangement be what we would expect God to have. Any human being who would attempt to deal with even a hundred people and to know everything going on would be thought to be very unwise. Rather he would have various agencies through which his will would be done by those hundred people by which he would know what was being done, and by which they would know his purpose respecting the work. His general knowledge of matters would not imply that he would be in every room in the house at one instant nor take notice of every person at the same instant.

In our present text, however, we are inclined to think that the word "angel" used by the Psalmist refers to spirit beings. Our reason for thinking so is that the revelations [R5634 : page 56] of the Lord in olden times previous to Pentecost were nearly all by spirit beings. These materialized and then dematerialized, vanishing from sight. In general the Scriptures seem to indicate that God's dealing with His people in those earlier times was through angels. As respects this Gospel Age, just closing, we have confidence that God has shown as great care in His dealings with Spiritual Israel as He did with Natural Israel; for Spiritual Israel comes nearer to Him as His House of Sons than did Natural Israel as a House of Servants. But God expects the House of Sons to walk by faith and not by sight, a much higher walk. Hence His manifestations to these are not such as appeal to the natural senses. They are, nevertheless, just as real.

THE EYES OF THE LORD

We read that "The eyes of the Lord run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to show Himself strong in the behalf of them whose heart is perfect toward Him"; also, "The eyes of the Lord are in every place, beholding the evil and the good." But this does not give us the thought that God personally beholds every individual act of every person on earth, but that He takes cognizance of matters throughout the world by means of His power, His agencies. These "eyes" referred to are the Lord's influence, His power of *knowing*, whatever the means. Whether His power is exercised and His will executed through angels or through other forces and agencies, it makes no difference – no more than it would with us in carrying out our wishes. If we wished to know about certain matters in Philadelphia, there would be various methods by which we could learn. One effective method would be to telephone and get into direct communication with the individual, provided he is supplied with a telephone. Or through the telegraph we could send a message; or we could send a messenger directly to the party, by foot or by train or some other conveyance.

Now if mankind have these various ways of accomplishing their designs, we can appreciate our Heavenly Father more by thinking of Him as having full ability to come into communication with His children, and as having various agents of communication. God has means, no doubt, far superior to any of ours. He has not revealed the matter clearly to us except to tell us that He is informed respecting all that concerns us, as well as respecting all the affairs of the world. He does tell us that angels are His ministers, and that these have a charge over His people. "Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation?" They do not minister in the sense of directly providing bread for us, nor in the sense of cooking our food, nor of building our houses – in none of these ways do they minister. How,

then, do they serve us? We have no way of knowing positively how they serve except from the words of our Lord Jesus, that the angels of God's "little ones" always behold the face of the Father, always have access to Him.

The fact that these angels represent the Lord's "little ones" would imply that they would have immediate access to God and have immediate attention. What would be the use of the Father's receiving the angels into His presence unless there was something to be communicated? Our understanding is that God's knowledge of our affairs and interests is gained by methods with which we are not acquainted. We may assume, however, that the mediums used are largely the angelic messengers. The head of every business house and banking institution has certain laws, certain regulations, governing all the operations of the business. Just so God has certain laws governing nature. It is not necessary that we pray to God that the earth may turn around upon its axis and that tomorrow may come. We may be sure that the Almighty, the One who represents exact Justice and infinite Wisdom, has laws that govern His entire Universe; that the angels have insight into these laws; and that they are Jehovah's deputies, just as an earthly court might deputize some one to sit in chancery and to take information.

OUR LORD JESUS THE CHIEF MESSENGER

If in connection with our text we also have in mind our Lord's words before His ascension, "Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the Age," we shall understand that the Lord Jesus is the Chief Messenger, or Angel, of Jehovah. He has surely been the Chief Messenger to the Gospel Church. Our thought, then, is that through the angels and other agencies God is governing the world, and especially caring for His people, through our Lord Jesus Christ, who is the Head of all the Divine spiritual powers and has charge of all Jehovah's affairs. We have been brought into the School of Christ. He is our Teacher. When we go to the Father in

prayer, we do not ignore this Teacher, but we go in His name; and we are not to suppose that the Father would ignore Him. He would be the Father's Representative in dealing with us. But we are not to suppose that the Lord Jesus has every detail of the affairs of the world under His personal supervision; but rather that those angels report to Him whatever is necessary, and that thus there are certain principles operating. This seems to us to be the reasonable and logical arrangement of Divine operations. We are not insisting upon this for other minds, but merely saying that this appeals to our own mind.

In view of the fact that the Church has been put under the special guidance of the Lord Jesus, it would not be a far-fetched thought that Jehovah encampeth round about His people through Jesus, and that the angels are under His direction. If Satan is the chief of his band of angels, so our Lord would have angels under His control, and He would be their Prince. We read of what Alexander the Great accomplished, and of what Napoleon Bonaparte did, regardless of the fact that they had many thousands under them to carry out their will. So we think of all the spirit beings as under the direction and guidance of Jesus Christ. Into His hands God has committed all power in Heaven and on earth. All the angels of God were made subject to Him; and through these, under the control of our Lord, all the interests of God's people are supervised. This is our thought, and we like to think so.

DELIVERANCE IN VARIOUS WAYS

Our text proceeds to say that the angel that encamps around the people of the Lord "delivereth them." In olden times the Lord's children were sometimes delivered miraculously. Some were delivered from prison; others were not. Some were delivered from the sword; others were not. We should accept the will of God, whatever it may be. But in order to be able to do this, for our spiritual good, our ultimate good, we must realize that the terms

and conditions under which we accepted of Him were that we would give ourselves unreservedly into His hands. A proper fear, or reverence, for the Lord, would surely lead us to place ourselves fully in His keeping and under His guidance and control. Our experiences in life have shown us how unable we are to direct ourselves aright. The Lord will deliver each of us in the way that will bring us the largest measure of blessing.

In the days of the Apostles, St. Peter was delivered from prison by an angel of the Lord, who appeared to him as a man. This was in the interest, not only of the [R5634 : page 57] Apostle, but of the entire Church, showing them that the Lord was able to fully care for His people, giving them valuable lessons. And although these outward manifestations are not given to us of the present time, we have other blessings that more than compensate for these outward tokens that are not at present for the good of the Church. We are able to say with the Apostle that all things are working together for good to those who love God, to the called ones according to His purpose. We should be full of confidence in Him – that we are subjects of His choicest care at all times.

EACH SAINT HAS HIS MINISTERING ANGEL

While we may not be too positive in our interpretation on this subject, we understand that each one of the Lord's people, in proportion as he is one of God's true children, has a ministering spirit, a person, an angel, who has charge of his affairs. This angel makes his report to the Lord, whether monthly, weekly or hourly we do not know. If God sees this to be the wise, proper course, we have every confidence in His Wisdom. Whatever God has arranged is fully satisfactory to us in this matter, and we are sure that it is quite right and fully in harmony with the Divine character.

We think that this principle is illustrated in the Book of the Prophet Daniel. Daniel had been praying and after some little time his prayer was answered. The angel Gabriel, who was the Lord's

messenger to Daniel, explained [R5635 : page 57] to him certain things. At the beginning of his supplications the Lord had purposed to send him an answer. Gabriel had been sent especially to inform him, but had been detained by certain other duties. The fact of his detention should not give us the thought that Daniel or any of the Lord's people would ever be neglected; but that while minor affairs of Daniel were under the guidance of some lower angel, there were important matters that were entrusted to Gabriel as the plenipotentiary, as it were, in regard to Daniel's interest and other matters. There was a delay, and Gabriel mentioned what the delay was; the prince of Persia had withstood him for twenty-one days.

We have heretofore pointed out that this Gospel Age has been different from the Jewish Age and preceding ages; that after the Gospel Dispensation was ushered in, outward demonstrations, such as the gifts of the Holy Spirit – the gift of healing, the gift of tongues, the interpretation of tongues, and discerning of spirits – and angelic visitations passed away; and that during the Gospel Age it has been God's will that the Spiritual House of Israel should walk by faith and not by sight, and that therefore it would be inappropriate after the Church was fully established to expect angels to appear, to manifest themselves outwardly.

But the angels of the Lord, nevertheless, have a charge more particularly over us of the Gospel Church than over any other of the Lord's people at any previous time in the world's history. The Lord is especially interested in Spiritual Israel. These angels, then, care for us, supervise our affairs, and are God's agencies or channels of communication to us as to His will; that is, communication in the sense of providences for us, causing *this* providence or the *other* providence.

HOLY ANGELS NOT MANIFEST TO OUR SENSES

We would not give the thought of the angels whispering into our ears. We think that the angels which now whisper in the ear are

the same ones that give table-tippings, planchette communications, communications through the hand by writing, and various other communications to the ear and the eye of spirit-mediums; namely, evil spirits, fallen angels. Our understanding is that the holy angels do nothing of the kind. The Lord's people of the present Age are to find their instruction in His Word. There is no need of a book on Mormonism or Spiritism or New Thought or of clairvoyant or clairaudient power for the Lord's children. These are all snares of the Adversary and his demons.

The followers of Christ have the Bible and the invisible ministries of the holy angels to provide for their interests and to providentially guard and guide their affairs. This, to us, is very real and of great comfort. If we had the thought that God was doing all this personally, we would think that He had certainly forgotten *us*. But having the assurance of His Word that not a hair of our heads can fall to the ground without our Father's attention, our mind can rest in the fact that He accomplishes His purposes in Christ for His children through the ministrations of the holy angels.

