

Angelic Helpers

There is another one! We look closer just to be sure. Yes, pinned to a blouse or jacket is a little golden angel. Angels seem to be showing up everywhere these days. Even the first Lady of the United States reputedly wears one on days when she needs extra help. Greeting cards, gift boutiques, printed media, television, motion pictures-all are brimming over with "angel-ware" to feed the public's latest infatuation. A recent telephone poll revealed that two-thirds of Americans believe that angels truly do exist. Half believe that they have their own personal guardian angel. Surprisingly one in three Americans believe that they have felt an angelic presence or experienced angelic help in their lives. (TIME December 27, '93)

But the public's current interest doesn't seem so much fueled by a desire to know and serve God as by the need to be comforted in these desperate times. Angels are perceived as invincible mighty spirits-far above earth's din of war, economic grasping and social unrest. They are free from all the frailties of human sin, weaknesses of the flesh and limitations of time and space. The thought that each person has so mighty an angel as a personal protector, guide, and friend is very appealing indeed. It is a great comfort in a chaotic world.

For those who balk at the concept of an omniscient and supremely powerful God who rules the universe with very exacting laws, the popular concept of angels offers a convenient compromise. Angels are commonly viewed as intermediaries between the lofty God of the universe and puny man. This brand of New Age angel is "warm and fuzzy," nonjudgmental and benevolent to all regardless of their adherence to God's rules.

Who Are Angels Helping?

According to the publisher of Angel Watch, a bimonthly newsletter, "Each of us has a guardian angel. They're non-threatening, wise and loving beings. They offer help whether we ask for it or not. But mostly we ignore them." However well intentioned such New Age theology may be, it cannot be held as authoritative for Christian people. For the truth as to who are helped by angels we must go to the source of Christian faith-the Scriptures. "The angel of the LORD encampeth round about them that fear him, and delivereth them." Psalm 34:7 The angels of the Lord help those who have a reverential fear, respect, for God-not a lackadaisical attitude toward Him or His principles of righteousness.

God's promise is, "Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, and will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty. Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God." 2 Corinthians 6:17-7:1

The most finely tuned delineation of who are helped by angels is given by the Apostle Paul in the Epistle to the Hebrews, "Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation?" Hebrews 1:14

The Lord's angels are sent forth (not acting of their own volition) by the command of God. They are sent forth to minister unto the heirs of salvation. Not all mankind will be heirs of salvation in the special sense referred to in Hebrews 1:14. (see 1 Timothy 4:10) The heirs of the kingdom will be those who are called, and chosen, and faithful. Revelation 17:4 Those who are faithful to God and, yes, His rules will be the heirs of the kingdom.

"Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God. And such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God." 1 Corinthians 6:9-11

The Heirs of Salvation

Simply put, angels are not acting as guardians for everyone. They are acting on behalf of those who will be heirs of salvation. Of this class the Scriptures say:

"There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. Ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his. For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God. For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father. And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together." Romans 8:1-17

The heirs of salvation are those who submit themselves fully to a life of walking after the spirit. They will be heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ if they suffer with him. The angels of God minister to those who are fighting the good fight of faith to become heirs of the kingdom.

The Fallen Angels

The Scriptures use distinguishing phrases to divide angels into two basic categories. "The angel of the LORD," "the angels of heaven" or "the angels of God" are phrases that distinguish the holy angels from the fallen angels-otherwise known as demons. "God spared not the angels that sinned, but cast them down to hell [Greek tartaroo - a prison to confine these disobedient spirits], and delivered them into chains of darkness, to be reserved unto judgment." 2 Peter 2:4 Their sin was that they left their dominion, took human form and illicitly commingled with the Adamic race. Jude says, "The angels

which kept not their first estate, but left their own habitation, he hath reserved in everlasting chains under darkness unto the judgment of the great day." Jude 6
The fallen angels left their first estate, the spirit realm, and were subsequently placed in chains of darkness. They could no longer materialize and so were constrained to work through the powers of darkness-demonic possession, mediums and sowing evil influences in men's minds. Jude reveals that these chains of darkness are to last unto the judgment of the Great Day of Christ. That day is upon us-even as we see the signs of Matthew 24 being fulfilled.

The ramification is that we may now expect that these fallen angels will again materialize and seek to deceive the world. They may bring about great delusions, which will try the faith of many. 2 Thessalonians 2:8-12

What About Those Who Have Experienced Angelic Help?

Many claims have been made of angels manifesting themselves to various people. These angels brought about healing, powerful senses of peace, visions of glory in war and other revelations. We do not dispute the claims of those who have been helped-we believe that they have seen what they say they have seen. But, in the light of God's word, we do question what may have been behind what they have seen.

Perhaps the chief danger with "angel-ism" is that it may lead people to a new gospel. A gospel which features open-armed acceptance of sinners by angels-but has no Christ. There is "one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus; who gave himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time." 1 Timothy 2:5-6

God's Holy Angels Not Manifest to Our Senses

Our Gospel Age differs from the Jewish and other ages in God's divine plan. Leading up to and through the establishment of the Christian church, angels of God did manifest themselves to mankind in order to do God's work and will. Miraculous demonstrations of divine favor, gifts of tongues, healings, discerning of spirits-and angelic visitations had their intended effect and then passed away. The church of Christ, strongly rooted in the Scriptures, has since walked by faith and not by sight. 2 Corinthians 5:7 It would now be inappropriate after the Church's establishment to expect that angels will appear to us, outwardly manifesting themselves.

But the angels of the Lord, nevertheless, have a more particular charge over us of the Gospel church than over any others of God's people in previous times. The Lord is especially interested in spiritual Israel. So it is that these angels care for us, supervise our affairs and communicate to us the will of God in ways which our human sight cannot perceive. They communicate in the sense of arranging providences for us.

God's angels would not be whispering into our ears. We believe the Scriptures identify those spirits, which whisper into the ears of men as being fallen angels. We hear so often

of criminals committing heinous acts because "voices in their head" ordered these acts. These whisperers are the same ones who aid and abet mediums in their seances, channel voices to the New Age shaman and even appear as angels of light-all with the purpose of creating darkness. On the other hand, God's holy angels will keep their first estate.

The Lord's people of the present age are to find their instructions in his Word. They will not believe any other Gospel even though an angel would speak to them or appear before them. As Paul warned, "Though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed." Galatians 1:8 These other angels are fallen ones; we call them demons.

We must be aware of their devices because "For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places." Ephesians 6:12

The followers of Christ have the Bible and the invisible ministries of the holy angels to provide for their interests-to providentially guard and guide their affairs. This, to us, is very real and of great comfort. God has given us the scriptural assurance that not a hair of our heads can fall to the ground without his knowing it. We, as heirs of salvation, have our angels always beholding our Father's face in heaven-communicating with him regarding our every experience. Matthew 18:10

Our minds can rest, in these desperate times, knowing that our heavenly Father has appointed the accomplishment of his purposes for us in Christ through the diligent and capable ministrations of his holy angels.