

THE MINISTERING SPIRITS

Parts 7&8 - Guardians

Things to talk about?

- 1) Do you think you can know or talk to your guardian angel?
- 2) How many prayers speak of angels as being on guard duty?
- 3) If we have these angelic guardians, why do bad things still happen?

Musical interlude: Angels, by Amy Grant (an oldie but a goodie)

VII). The guardian angels

A) Searching the Scriptures

1) Psalm 91:11-13

Does this passage speak of guardian angels in the way we usually think of them?

- What is the “danger” they are guarding us from?
- How do we balance this passage with not putting God to the test?

2) Matthew 18:10

- Why would the angels be especially protective of children?
- If their (the angels) always behold the face of the Father, how are they watching over their charges and looking out for danger?
- Why would infants and children be especially vulnerable in the ancient world?

3) Matthew 2:13, 19

- Would this dream messaging count as “guarding”? Why / why not?
- Are any angels directly involved in helping Jesus (and family) escape to Egypt?
- Wouldn't news of herod's death had spread to Egypt anyway?

4) Daniel 6:16-24

- Is this a visible or invisible angel?
- Is there anything hinting that this was a personal angel assigned to Daniel?
- Why were the lions suddenly hungry in verse 24? Did the angel depart?

5) Acts 12:6-11

- Do you think Peter knew his rescuer?
- What does it mean that “the angel left him” in verse 10?
- Again, is there anything to suggest this was Peter's lifelong “guardian angel”?

6) Genesis 24:40

- What's the difference between guiding and guarding?

- What was the role of the accompanying angel?
- How would this have been a comfort to Eliezar?

7) **Exodus 14:19-20**

- Can a guardian angel be a guardian for a whole group (tribe, nation, etc)?
- Was the angel the pillar of cloud or a separate entity?
- Does this guardian angel “fix” the problem?

B) The history of guardian angels and their status today

- 1) Spirits attached to people were common in the ancient Near East and elsewhere
 - * Not deities (even lesser deities), but supernatural protectors of individuals
 - * Egyptians, Sumerians, Hittites, Assyrians, and Babylonians had spiritual protectors
 - * The Greeks (and Romans) had daemons - not to be confused with demons – as guides and guardians from birth to the crossing of the Styx
- 2) Zoroastrian (Persian) belief has *Fravashi*; a personal guardian spirit assigned to a person at birth who accompanies them throughout all of life.
- 3) First mentioned in the Christian tradition in a 2nd Century AD extra-biblical text called *The Shepherd of Hermas*, where we see each human being is assigned an angel by God and a devil by Satan. They sit on your shoulders and whisper into your ears.
- 4) Origen in the 3rd Century said that every human being has an angel throughout life to guide and guard against spiritual perils. A millennium later Aquinas would formulate it into the doctrine (Canon) still in place today in the Roman Catholic Church
- 5) Luther’s only comment on this was that we should trust in God for deliverance from danger, not in an unseen, unnamed angel; but he did hold to Origen’s premise.
- 6) The official feast day to celebrate your guardian angel’s work is October 2.
- 7) Songs, movies, TV, (and a vigilante group in the 80’s) make more of this than Scripture does. Scripture tells us to focus on God, not His creations.

C) Angels as escorts when we die (kind of the ultimate “guard duty”)

- 1) This is based on a single passage - Luke 16:22-23
 - Who took the soul of Lazarus to Abraham’s bosom?
 - Who took the soul of the rich man to Hell?
 - Should this, as it is a parable/story, be taken literally in all its aspects?
- 2) **2 Kings 2:9-12**
 - What does Elisha cry out when Elijah is taken up?
 - Is there any mention of angels (we suppose the charioteers)?
 - Where does the concept of angels taking Elijah “home” come from?
- 3) Yet there are many anecdotal suggestions and, of course, media portrayals.
 - Ever been with someone at the hour of their death and they say they see an angel?
 - Would this be the “final duty” of our guardian angel - to get us to heaven safely?
 - “Meet Joe Black” was a movie from 1998 is all about the escorting angels (Death)
 - “Touched by an Angel” had Andrew in many episodes to “take you home”
 - What “dangers” exist after we die? Why would we need escort?

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Part 8/9 - Q &A

Let's talk about it:

- 1) Do you think you might have “entertained angels unawares”?
- 2) Has anyone ever said something that was exactly what you needed to hear at that time?
- 3) Has a sermon (even on YouTube) ever changed your understanding/way of living?

VIII) A couple passages about angels in our midst

A) Hebrews 13:2

- 1) What does it mean to “show hospitality”?
- 2) Why was this a big deal in the 1st century AD (and up until recent times)?
- 3) How is this a “throwback” to Genesis 18 & 19?
- 4) How does this passage fit within the broader context of Hebrews 13:1-10?
- 5) What is the author *really* trying to encourage?
- 6) How does hospitality show the condition of one's heart?
- 7) What are some of the ways we “show hospitality” in today's world?

B) Revelation 2:1, 8, 12, 18; 3:1, 7, 14

- 1) Who are the “angels” of the 7 churches of Asia?
- 2) In what way(s) are pastors angels?
- 3) In what way(s) are pastors NOT angels?
- 4) What is the bare-bones, basic definition of “angel”?
- 5) Who, then, can be an angel?
- 6) Is the phrase, “Oh, you're an angel” hyperbole?
- 7) Minority viewpoint - “angel” refers to celestial guardian of the particular city

IX) Questions (and best attempt at answers)

A) Are angels aliens?

- 1) Depends on how one defines the term “aliens”
- 2) Connotation is “little green men from Mars” in spaceships - so wouldn't work
- 3) Denotation seems to support angels as aliens
 - they are *extraterrestrial*, not of this earth, but live in the heavenly realm
 - they have “powers” beyond that of human beings (strength, speed, knowledge)
 - they do not conform to the laws of physics as we understand them

- 4) Are they “alien life forms”? - no, they don’t meet the definition of life
 - angels do not reproduce
 - angels *can* eat (but do they digest/excrete), but *must* they eat? What is their food?
 - do angels “respire”?
 - angels do not grow (as far as we know, no birth/pupa leading to mature form)

B) If God is all-knowing and knew Satan would rebel, why create him?

- 1) Angels had free will at the time of Creation (can’t love under compulsion)
- 2) This necessitates the ability to NOT love (rebel)
- 3) After Lucifer’s rebellion, the angels were confirmed in their status (elect / holy)
- 4) Foreknowledge should not be confused with causation
- 5) God knew Satan would rebel, but that also set up Christ’s redemption
 - if Satan didn’t fall, Eve could not be tempted and lead Adam astray
 - if there was no fall there would be no Gen. 3:15 promise
 - if there was no heavenly rebellion, we would not have Christianity

C) What did the Sadducees do with angels?

- 1) Sadducees denied angels, bodily resurrection, and miracles
- 2) They were the first of what we, today, would call “materialists”
 - Everything has a natural/worldly explanation with very few exceptions
 - even the 10 plagues of Egypt were “explained” in terms of natural phenomena
- 3) Only the Torah is authoritative for faith (first 5 books of OT)
 - the writings (histories) do not count as God’s Word
 - the prophets are not a reliable source for establishing belief
 - the Psalms and poetic books are imaginative, fictional, or allegorical
- 4) Angelic appearances in the Torah are instances of *theophany*
 - God appears in the form of the Angel of the Lord (as we looked at in week 4)
 - God needs no messengers, but speaks to humans (like Moses) directly

D) If Satan was cast out of heaven, how can he appear before God in Job 1:6 & 2:1

- 1) Here the angels are called “the sons of God” - so it’s a family gathering
 - Is the “black sheep” of the family still invited to Thanksgiving dinner?
- 2) This is the heavenly court (in the medieval sense)
 - ALL subjects of the king, baron, etc. had to present themselves and swear fealty
 - even captured enemy “nobles” were brought in to swear non-aggression
 - this practice gave rise to David’s image in Psalm 23:5
- 3) Satan cannot “live” in heaven, but he can still be summoned by God and must obey
- 4) As for Satan’s appearance - wasn’t he a snake in Gen. 3?
 - Satan is good at masquerade; taking many outward forms
 - He will simply choose the form that gives him the best chance of deception
 - He often appears as an angel of light (II Cor. 11:14)
 - Shapeshifters and evil have been aligned across cultures and millennia

E) Open Q&A - no guarantee of answers, let alone correct ones, but ask anyway.

Zoom study is off for August and will re-zoom in September