

## INTRODUCTION

When we were in the former Soviet Union this summer, we bought some watches. On the watch band was a figure of a man's face. We tried to ask who he was but we did not have a translator at that time and so the people kept pointing to the sky. We sort of wrinkled our brow and asked, "Is that Jesus? Is that God?" We finally found out it was neither. It was the first Soviet cosmonaut Yuri Gagarin, who was a great hero to the Soviet people. In 1960 he was the first man blasted into space and when he came back and made his famous statement: "I've been to the heavens, and I did not see God!" Ten years later Yuri Gagarin died in a plane crash and by the way—that's when he saw God. But it's interesting that years later, what a different report some of the Soviet cosmonauts gave about heaven or space. This is an article from USA Today and it is dated in 1990. It says, "Six Soviet cosmonauts said that they witnessed the most awe-inspiring spectacle ever encountered in space—a band of glowing angels as big as jumbo jets!" It lists the names of the cosmonauts and they are all in Russian so I won't try to pronounce all of them for you. "What we saw were seven giant figures in forms of humans with mist-like halos as in the classic depiction of angels. Their faces were round with cherubic smiles. Twelve days later the figures returned and were seen by three other Soviet scientists, including female cosmonaut, Svetlana Savitskaya said, "They were smiling as though they shared in a glorious secret." Folks, there is no secret. God's word and modern testimonies bear out the truth of the fact that there are angels, God's ministering spirits.

Last Sunday I shared some of the truths about angels for you to at least come to the understanding that there are angels, even though you might not be able to see them. Today I would like to share with you how God uses his angels for ministry purposes, because you can believe in something, but if you don't know the purpose of it, you are no better off.

Not long ago I read in *Newsweek* about Whammo Toy Company, who has the patent Frisbee patent, through a charitable trust sent 500 Frisbees to an African orphanage with no explanation. The President of Whammo Toy Company received an interesting letter back from Sister Dominic who runs the orphanage. She said, "Dear Sir: Thank you for the plastic dishes. We eat off of them every meal, but an amazing thing has happened some of the boys have started tossing them and they fly really well. This may be an idea for your toy company! I'm afraid some of us really don't know the real purpose of angels and that's the intent of this message today to inform you of the ministry of angels.

Psalm 34:7 says, "The angel of the Lord encamps around those who fear him, and he delivers them." And we read this wonderful promise in Psalm 91:9-12. "If you make the Most High your dwelling—even the Lord, who is my refuge—then no harm will befall you, no disaster will come near your tent. For he will command his angels concerning you to guard you in all your ways; they will lift you up in their hands, so that you will not strike your foot against a stone."

I would like to share five points of ministry of God's angels with you. Last week we learned from Hebrews 1:14 that God's angels are ministering spirits sent forth to minister to those who are heirs of salvation. Let me share with you what they do.

### 1. ANGELS PRONOUNCE GOD'S MESSAGE TO US

Number one, according to the scriptures, angels pronounce God's message to us. That is the most basic ministry of angels. The word angel, itself, *angelos* means "messenger." *Angelos* is even sometimes used in scripture of a human messenger. I happen to believe in the book of Revelation where it talks about the angel of the church at Laodicea, or Sardis, or Ephesus that it is speaking there of the human messenger of that church. The Hebrew word for angel is the word *malachi* just like the prophet, Malachi, which means "messenger." The basic ministry of angels is to deliver God's message to us. There are many, many examples in the Bible of this. In Acts 8:26, God sent an angel to deliver a message to Philip. "Now an angel of the Lord said to Philip 'Go south to the road—the desert road—that goes down from Jerusalem to Gaza.'" God sent an angel to Philip telling him to go preach to an Ethiopian eunuch who needed to know how to be saved.

I have received many letters from people who believe they received messages from God through. But there is a very important point to note: Nowhere in the Bible do angels ever deliver an evangelistic message to lost people. Some of us wish God had organized it so we would not have to share our faith, that we could just become Christians, get our ticket to heaven and not have to worry about talking to anybody else about Jesus. We would prefer that God would send his angels on Tuesday night or Wednesday night visitation, but nowhere in the Bible does he do that. He sends messages to his own children, but he gives us both the privilege and the responsibility of going and taking that message to those who are lost. I believe the reason angels never deliver a message about salvation is because they don't know what salvation is: They have never been lost. They have never been saved. In 1 Peter 1:12, the Bible says, referring to salvation, "Even angels long to look into these things." They don't understand grace. They don't understand what we have experienced. Once we were lost; now we are saved. They don't understand that. So, they don't have the job of communicating that message. We have that message.

## **2. ANGELS PROVIDE FOR OUR NEEDS**

Not only do they pronounce God's message, but secondly they provide for our needs. The question often asked is, "If angels are ministering spirits and then we have God's blessed Holy Spirit what's the difference between the two? Why doesn't he just do everything through his Holy Spirit?" I'm not about to tell you I know all the mysteries of the scriptures. There is a certain mystery about the person of God and the reality of angels we can never figure out but as best I can determine, it seems like God's Holy Spirit comes to live inside of us as Christians. Angels never live inside of a person and the Holy Spirit ministers to us spiritually, whereas God's ministering spirits have been given the ability to minister to us even physically.

Look at Elijah's example in 1 Kings 19:5. "He lay down under the tree and fell asleep. All at once an angel touched him and said, 'Get up and eat!'" Elijah was physically exhausted, emotionally drained, spiritually depleted and just sitting under a tree wanting to die. God sent an angel and Elijah went to sleep. The angel came and poked Elijah in the ribs. By the way, we're going to see that one of the main jobs of angels is to wake people up. It never says the Holy Spirit can actually touch somebody physically, but angels do. Wives you are never more like an angel than when you punch your husband in the ribs and say, "Wake up!" in church. So this angel touched Elijah in the ribs and said, "Get up and eat!" and there was food there. Of course

the Bible says it was a cake. What kind of cake was it? Obviously, it was angel food cake, there provided by that angel. Actually, it wasn't angel food, because the Bible tells us what angel food is. In Psalm 78:24-25 the Bible says, “He rained down manna for the people to eat, he gave them the grain of heaven. Men ate the bread of angels.” So, there is something about the ministry of angels how they are able to minister even in terms of food and waking somebody up and helping them like that. So, angels provide for our needs at times.

Not long ago a very well-respected widow, who was not at all unstable emotionally or spiritually, shared with me that after the death of her husband, she had a hard time getting over her grief, as most widows do. She said it just seemed like she couldn't stop crying. One night she said she got in her bed and had never realized just how big and cold and empty a bed could be until her husband died. She said she was lying on her left side and she was praying and crying and praying and crying saying, “God, when will it end? When will the pain end?” She said at that moment she actually felt arms come out and embrace her from behind. She said she was afraid to look, but she said those arms were as real as any arms she had ever felt. She said she went to sleep and slept peacefully that night. She said that was the beginning of her peace and victory over that time of grief. She says she believes it was an angel of God sent to provide for her even physically at that time. So, they pronounce God's messages. They can even provide for our needs.

### **3. ANGELS PROTECT US FROM HARM**

Number three: Angels, according to the scriptures, protect us from harm. That's the passage we read from in Psalms 34 and 91 and there are many examples in the Bible. In Exodus 23:20, God said to Moses, “See, I am sending an angel ahead of you to guard you along the way and to bring you to the place I have prepared.” A lot of people ask if there is such a thing as a “guardian angel.” I have been told by a friend of mine who is a former Catholic—now a member of this church—that the Catholic Church teaches that every person has a guardian angel that is with you from the time you are born to the time you die. They never leave. This person was even taught to pray to their guardian angel. But what do the scriptures say about that? Nowhere in the Bible does it teach that there is one guardian angel assigned to every person. You won't find it. You won't find the phrase “guardian angel” in the Bible. The closest thing you might find to it may be Matthew 18:10. Jesus, speaking about little children, says, “See that you do not look down on one of these little ones. For I tell you that their angels in heaven always see the face of my father in heaven.” That's interesting. He doesn't talk about their angels being with them on earth. Let's keep our theology straight. Only God is omnipresent right? Angels aren't. Satan—who is a fallen angel—is not. Only God is omnipresent. Angels in the Bible can't be in heaven and on earth at the same time. That's why Jacob saw angels ascending and descending up the ladder. That's why Jesus said to Nathaniel in John 1:51, “You shall heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending on the Son of Man.” Angels have to shuttle back and forth. So, my friend, the idea of one guardian angel with you all of your life is not taught in scriptures. What I am saying is I have better news for you. I don't know that I believe in a guardian angel, but I do believe in guardian angels, because the Bible says God sends his angels to guard you to keep you from hurting yourself at times and so they protect us!

By the way, I have received so many angel testimonies I can't even read them all. I hope you

will keep writing them down and sending them in to me. I'm going to try to put these in some kind of a book that will include many of these personal testimonies. It's amazing how most of them deal with this one area how God supernaturally protected me! Most of them have to do with some times when people were driving. I guess that's when they were in the most danger. Let me read to you some of these personal testimonies. This is from a man who fought in the Vietnam War and he asked that his name not be shared but he says,

"I served five tours of duty in Vietnam and on my third tour I was on a search and destroy mission in the Mekong Delta. On this particular day I was carrying 15 pounds of C4 plastic explosives, about 30 blasting caps, 25 hand grenades, 28 magazines with 20 rounds of ammo in each and a Claymore mine. I was walking on a rice paddy dike and all of a sudden my foot froze in mid air about a foot off the ground. I got goose bumps all over my body and a voice said to me, 'Move back!' I looked around and there was no one close enough to speak to me. I stepped back and studied the ground. There appeared to be fresh dirt over a coconut tree limb. I climbed into the water and examined it and there was an anti-personnel mine. If I had stepped on that mine, I would have taken part of my team with me!"

He goes on and shares another incident of protection in Vietnam also, but he says he believes this was from an angel.

Betty Turman in our church writes about an afternoon many of you can remember a couple of years ago.

"I had the most amazing experience with angels on December 24, 1990. That Christmas season Tyler had a lot of ice. South Broadway was partially clear, but there was still a lot of thin ice in slick patches. People had just turned on their headlights and it was already dark at 5 PM. As I turned right on Broadway coming out of Brookshire's parking lot, I started into a skid. In that split second before, I had reminded myself to be very careful. I had looked ahead through my windshield and seen so many lights of oncoming traffic and in my rear view mirror there was much more traffic bearing down on me. My car spun at least two full turns and finally stopped in the middle of the highway facing the opposite direction from which I had started. There was no way on earth I could have survived without the intervention of angels. I felt like in those three to five seconds angels had halted the cars or done something to prevent a massive pileup. It seemed to me that at that time everything had stopped moving except me and my out-of-control car. There was no human way that any of those cars could have stopped fast enough without skidding or going into a spin like me. I went home and told David that the arms of the Lord had been around me. I really did feel them and the angels had protected me!"

That's just one story of many that have been shared with me. People have told me stories of things that happened 30 and 40 years ago but they haven't been able to forget it, because they believe God's angels were sent to protect them.

Here's a letter from one of our television viewers, who is now 68 years old. She relates this experience when she was 6 years old.

“My mother sat me beside her on the top step of our back porch and was talking with my aunt as she was brushing my hair dry. I stood up and I stumbled over her foot and fell fourteen feet onto a small rocky area. I remember my mother and my aunt screaming as I was falling. I fell flat on my back and I was looking up at the sky.” Then she writes, “*I did not*” [underlined did not four or five times] “I did not hit the ground. I was caught and eased softly to the ground. I never cried nor was I afraid. I got up and ran back up to my frantic mother.” She writes, “An angel did protect me from harm. I have always all my life known this.”

All throughout God’s word, friends, you find many, many examples of how angels have protected God’s people from harm. It was in the Bible according to Daniel, chapter 6. An angel was the one who kept those lions’ mouths shut when Daniel was in the lions’ den.

#### **4. ANGELS PRESIDE AT OUR DEATH**

Not only do they protect us from harm but number four angels preside at our death. According to what the Lord Jesus said in Luke 16:22, angels are present at the time we die and they are the ones who carry our souls and our spirit into heaven. “The time came when the beggar [Lazarus] died and the angels carried him to Abraham’s side.” A blessed truth, friend, is that angels are present when a Christian dies and angels are the ones who escort us into heaven itself our souls our spirits. This is a good point for me to say there are a lot of people who when you talk about angels don’t think there is anything supernatural about them. There have been books written that try to say angels are only human beings who do nice things to people. In fact, some of the letters I have gotten have been stories of how somebody they knew did wonderful things for them. Whereas, it may be possible for human beings to act angelic at times, there are supernatural beings called angels that God has given us for specific tasks. Look at what we have talked about so far. A human being might deliver a message from God through the word and that’s an angelic ministry. A human being might protect somebody from harm. A human being might even help somebody to understand God’s word and minister to them physically but a person *cannot* carry someone’s soul and spirit into heaven. Only a supernatural being from God can do that.

Some of you may be asking, “Brother David, when you talked about angels protecting people, I kind of got hung up there because I had a loved one who was a good Christian and God didn’t protect them. Why weren’t they protected? Where were the angels when my loved one suffered and died?” It’s the sovereignty of God and I don’t understand it completely, but all I know is that sometimes angels are there to protect and sometimes they aren’t. If you are really struggling about that, I would just tell you to write down this scripture reference Hebrews 11:35, because Hebrews 11:35 talks about all those great saints of God, the roll call of faith, how many of them were supernaturally delivered. Then in the last part of 11 it talks about all those that weren’t. Those who suffered from the sword and were cut in half and were stoned and died! Then it says that they might receive a better resurrection. If I understand the Christian life, it’s wonderful to be protected supernaturally and to be delivered, but for a Christian it’s even better sometimes when we can go on to be with Jesus. So, sometimes the angels are there but God’s will is not for them to protect. God’s will is for them to carry that person’s soul and spirit into heaven. So angels do preside at our deaths.

I got a call this week that one of our deacons, had gone to sleep one night and he died, like I suppose any of us would wish we could die. He put on his pajamas, pulled up his covers and went to sleep and woke up with Jesus. But, as his wife and I spoke that morning we talked about how sometime during the night the angels had come and visited him and carried his soul and spirit into heaven.

I have a very beautiful letter here from a lady who writes about her mother who was in the hospital dying of cancer, coming in and out of a coma in a great deal of pain, but whenever she would wake up, she would say to the family, "Oh, those beautiful faces! Look at those beautiful faces!" Then, let me tell you what she wrote.

"Mother died that evening with my father, older sister and myself by her side. She took a deep breath and smiled as if relieved to get a full breath of air into her lungs and those beautiful angels took her home. I still long to be held when I need my mother, and I remember holding her during her sickness, but I am always reminded that I have the everlasting arms of God to hold me and they are holding my mother so I can't be any closer to her than that. In answering our prayers God used the ministering of angels. I believe the beautiful faces that brought my mother so much comfort and a smile to her face were the faces of angels."

## **5. ANGELS PRAISE GOD WITH US**

Number five, angels praise God with us! Psalm 148:2 says, "Praise him, all his angels, praise him all his heavenly hosts." "Heavenly hosts" is a word to describe the angelic armies. It is a military word and the Bible says there is an innumerable number of angels and angels live and breathe to praise God! We are told in the book of Revelation that there are some angels who are created only to praise God day and night and they stay there at the throne of God and praise him night and day. These other angels as I told you who shuttle back and forth to heaven are sometimes in the presence of the Father and there they praise him, but I believe that those angels when they are here with us on earth I believe they still praise the Father!

As I told you last week I believe with all my heart that when we gather here to worship and praise the Lord that the angels are here. There is something about an atmosphere of praise and worship that is conducive to the activity and the presence of angels. I really believe that if God opened your spiritual eyes, it would scare most of us to death but if he opened your spiritual eyes as we are worshiping and we are praising the Lord I believe you could see God's angels encamped all around this place praising God with us. Chapters 4 and 5 of Revelation tells us that one day when we are in heaven, we will all gather around the throne of the Lamb and praise him "Worthy is the lamb that was slain!"

## **CONCLUSION**

Do you know what makes the angels rejoice? According to the Lord Jesus when one sinner repents, the angels rejoice. You may be here today and you have been hearing this stuff about these supernatural beings and all of these stories and you may be a little skeptical. You may be

saying, "I'm not sure if I believe any of that!" I want to tell you, you can't figure it out on a computer. You can't use a slide rule. You can't figure out God's activity in a test tube. You have to sometimes put your PhD and your intellectual questioning in the dust and say, "By faith I believe in God and I believe what God's word says about him!" Jesus said, you have to become as a little child to become a Christian. The problem with some of you is that you have become so intellectual and so skeptical that when you hear these stories about angels, you say, "I'm not too sure about that!" You see, friends, it's not so high you can't get over it; it is so low that some of you can't get under it. You have to become as a little child and with childlike faith say, "God, I don't understand you and I don't understand all your ways but I trust you I believe you not only with my life but with my eternity!"

## OUTLINE

ANGELS...

1. PRONOUNCE GOD'S MESSAGE TO US
2. PROVIDE FOR OUR NEEDS
3. PROTECT US FROM HARM
4. PRESIDE AT OUR DEATH
5. PRAISE GOD WITH US



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For the Joy...  
Pastor David Dykes