

Guardians and Gallant Warriors

Angels, Demons and Other Flying Creatures – Part III

Selected Scripture

Introduction

In *Henry the IV*, William Shakespeare has two people conversing. One says to the other, “I can call spirits from the vasty deep.”

The other responds, “Why, so can I, or so can any man, but will they come when you call for them?”

From Shakespeare to Hollywood, the public has always been and will always be fascinated with the prospect of an encounter with an angel or any being from the spirit world.

John Randolph Price writes what he considers to be a “sure fire” four step approach to accessing angels.

- First, scan your consciousness for anything negative or shameful from the past and cast it all on the love of God within yourself.
- Second, look for negative traits, such as jealousy, resentment, and anger without yourself.
- Third, make a surrender of mind, emotions, and body to the spirit within.
- Fourth, meditate.

Having done all the above, you can be sure that an angel encounter is near. He writes, “At a certain point you will see a light up ahead, and you will know that you are approaching the angel.”

In a book entitled, *Ask Your Angels*, the reader is given a lot of methods and exercises for making angel contact and it all revolves around the acrostic “GRACE”. GRACE stands for:

- G – Grounding
- R – Releasing
- A – Aligning
- C – Conversing
- E – Enjoying

Ask Your Angels gives a five step program to getting what you want in life and tells the way in which the spirit world can deliver it. The five steps include:

- First – make a deliberate choice about what you want;
- Second – commit to getting it;
- Third – visualize the goal;
- Fourth – give thanks to the “Source of All”;
- Fifth – release the goal to the Universe, so it can then take over and deliver what you’ve ordered.

This convoluted spirit wishing has already become a fad. It is called “prosperity theology,” and it parades across church platforms all around America. The only difference is that the church inserts God’s name in steps number 4 and 5:

- First – choose what you want;
- Second – commit to getting it;
- Third – visualize the goal;
- Fourth – give thanks to *God*;
- Fifth – release it to *God*, so He can deliver what you’ve ordered.

In other words, “Name it – claim it – God will deliver it!”

One of the ways God delivers is through the angels.

It might sound spiritual, and biblical terminology might be used, but it is, in fact, nothing more than religious materialism. In reality, it is a doctrine of demons, and it merely enslaves a person to the idols of materialism in the name of God. It horribly reduces God to a cosmic genie who grants your wishes any time you wish them in the right way.

By the way, one of the things these authors emphasize is for you to interpret your dreams as messages from the angels. This too, is one of the next fads within the evangelical church.

It will not be long before we have experts telling Christians how to interpret their dreams. They will be calling their seminars and conferences names such as: “How to Dream Like Daniel,” or “The Wisdom of Joseph for Today,” or “Turning Dreams into

Deliverance.” Mark my words, this is the next fad within the church.

I had a lady come up to me some time ago, and say, “Stephen, I had a dream the other night and you were in it.”

I said, “Really.”

She said, “Yes, I dreamed that you were dialing on a telephone to heaven; you were going to call God and you knew the number!”

She continued, “You dialed ‘362,’ but I couldn’t make out the other numbers.”

I said, “Go back and dream some more – I want the rest of that telephone number!”

Listen to Colossians, chapter 2, verse 18,

Let no one keep defrauding you of your prize by delighting in self-abasement and the worship of the angels, taking his stand on visions he has seen, inflated without cause by his fleshly mind,

In other words, do not base your theology on angels and visions.

Special Consignment: On the Wings of Angels

Let us look at several things the Bible clearly teaches about the ministry of angels.

Angels obey the commands of God

1. First, angels obey the commands of God.

The word “angel” comes from the Greek word “angelos,” and it simply means “messenger”. Often throughout scripture, they are obeying the commands of God by delivering messages.

In the Old Testament, of course, angels were constantly arriving with messages for the servants of God. One of the most interesting accounts is in Numbers, chapter 22. An angel is sent to stop Balaam, the prophet who is willing to curse Israel for the right price. The angel stands in the way of the donkey carrying Balaam. Balaam begins to beat the donkey and the donkey turns another way. The angel again stands in the way, causing the donkey to press against a stone wall and in so doing, squash Balaam’s foot. Balaam angrily continues to beat the donkey and it tries to go another way. The angel once again, stands in front of it, so the poor donkey finally just lays down. The angel then becomes visible to Balaam. Balaam, at that moment, becomes as spiritually discerning as his donkey.

Now many have wrongly concluded from this account that animals can see the spirit world. Some artists enjoy painting pictures of angels in which the dog by the bedside of a departing saint sees the angel, while the rest of the family grieve their loss.

Part of God’s judgment on Balaam was first delivered by stopping his donkey. This gives the implied message that God can work through a donkey just as easily as He can work through His prophet, if He chooses. God can give sight to a dumb animal into the spirit world if He chooses.

The point for Balaam was that he needed to stop acting like a stubborn donkey and start acting like an obedient prophet. And if he did, God would give him supernatural discernment as well.

In the New Testament, the activity of angels does not slow down. In fact, while the angels are mentioned 108 times in the Old Testament, they are mentioned 165 times in the New Testament.

Angels were perhaps, never more busy than around the time of the birth of Jesus Christ. An angel:

- appeared to Zacharias to tell him that his wife, Elizabeth, would have a son, and that they should name him John – he would become John the Baptist. Zacharias doubted the angelic messenger and the angel struck him mute. (Luke 1)
- delivered the message to Mary that she, a virgin, would conceive by the Holy Spirit and bear a son. She believed the messenger and, unlike her relative, Zacharias, was able to talk about it. (Luke 1)
- anonymously appeared to Joseph in a dream and explained the details of Mary’s pregnancy, which had obviously troubled this young fiancé. (Matthew 1)
- appeared in heavenly glory to a group of shepherds who were stunned and afraid. Then the angel was suddenly joined by as many as tens of thousands who began to chant in unison that the Savior had just been born. (Luke 2)
- came to Joseph and warned him to flee to Egypt with Mary and Jesus, away from Herod. Then later, told Joseph that Herod was dead and he could return home. (Matthew 2)

The Bible says in Hebrews, chapter 1, verse 7,

And of the angels He says, "Who makes His angels winds, and His ministers a flame of fire."

David wrote in Psalm, chapter 103, verses 19 through 21,

The Lord has established His throne in the heavens, and His sovereignty rules over all. Bless the Lord, you His angels, mighty in strength, who perform His word, obeying the voice of His word! Bless the Lord, all you His hosts, you who serve Him, doing His will.

Ladies and gentlemen, you need to remember that:

- Angels are not summoned by the wishes of man; they are sent by the will of God.
- Angels do not come down by the special prayers of man; they come down for the special purposes of God.

However, make no mistake, the angels do more than run a delivery service for the King of heaven.

Angels deliver the judgments of God

2. Secondly, angels deliver the judgments of God.

Psalm, chapter 78, verses 43 through 49, talks about the plagues of Egypt prior to the Israelite exodus from slavery.

When He performed His signs in Egypt and His marvels in the field of Zoan,

and turned their rivers to blood, and their streams, they could not drink.

He sent among them swarms of flies which devoured them, and frogs which destroyed them.

He gave also their crops to the grasshopper and the product of their labor to the locust.

He destroyed their vines with hailstones and their sycamore trees with frost.

He gave over their cattle also to the hailstones and their herds to bolts of lightning.

He sent upon them His burning anger, fury and indignation and trouble, a band of destroying angels.

One of the most graphic descriptions of angelic power from God to judge a human being is found in

the book of Acts. Turn to chapter 12 and notice verse 21.

On an appointed day Herod, having put on his royal apparel, took his seat on the rostrum and began delivering an address to them.

You need to understand that this is the same Herod who had recently put James to death in order to gain the support of the Jews. He knew the Jews would honor him for putting to death a leader of the divisive new sect that followed a criminal they had executed on a cross some months earlier.

Herod had so pleased the Jews that he also put Peter in prison, intending to do the same to him. We will look at that in a moment.

Notice, in verse 22, how the people responded to Herod's speech.

The people kept crying out, "The voice of a god and not of a man!"

Obviously Herod reveled in this form of demigod worship. But God had other lessons to teach, as well as a plan to protect the church from further executions of its leaders at that time. Continue to verses 23 and 24.

And immediately an angel of the Lord struck him because he did not give God the glory, and he was eaten by worms and died. But the word of the Lord continued to grow and to be multiplied.

The king was probably killed by intestinal roundworms which can grow to a length of ten to fourteen inches long. Clusters of roundworms can obstruct the intestine which can cause severe pain and ultimate death.

Following Herod's death, the church experienced further growth and the word of God found receptive hearts everywhere.

You cannot help but see the contrast here. There is the growth and multiplication of worms, which brings death, against the growth and multiplication of the word, which brings life.

The angel's judgment of worms against Herod is a graphic picture of the torment of hell. We are told in the Gospel of Mark, chapter 9, verses 47b through 48, that,

. . . to be cast into hell, [is to enter a place] where the worm does not die, and the fire is not quenched.

The word for worms in Acts, chapter 12, is the same word that is used in Mark, chapter 9.

Someone might say, “How could God ever devise such a terrible place of punishment.”

That is not the question. We have already been told that hell is designed for the devil and his angels (Matthew 25:41).

The really mind-blowing question to me is, “How could you ever read about this place, and be warned of its torment, and be given a description of its anguish and yet, still refuse to admit your sinfulness and accept the gift of eternal life through faith in Jesus Christ?”

King Herod became at this moment a description of humanity that worships itself and suffers hell. Josephus, the first century Jewish historian, wrote about this event with some detail – he wrote that Herod Agrippa was “overcome by more intense pain, exhausted after five straight days by the pain in the abdomen, he departed this life in the 54th year of his life.”¹

Now, do not make the mistake of thinking that this idea was the independent idea of the angel, as if he were thinking, “Hey, I think I’ll give Herod worms.” No, this was God’s idea – and the angel was given the power to deliver the judgment.

As frightening as this account may be, it is equally as comforting to know that while angels can be a terror to the enemies of God, they can be protectors and servants of God’s children as well.

Angels assist the lives of believers

3. My third point of angel activity is that they assist the lives of believers.

Just before Herod met his death by worms, as you may remember, he had placed Peter in prison to gain even more points in the popular polls. Look at Acts, chapter 12, again, at verses 5 through 7.

So Peter was kept in the prison, but prayer for him was being made fervently by the church to God.

On the very night when Herod was about to bring him forward, Peter was sleeping between two soldiers, bound with two chains, and guards in front of the door were watching over the prison.

And behold, an angel of the Lord suddenly appeared and a light shone in the cell; and he struck Peter’s side and woke him up, saying, “Get up quickly.” And his chains fell off his hands.

That was not a very nice way to wake someone. I can just see Peter – stunned and rubbing his eyes.

Continue to verses 8 through 11a, as the angel tells Peter, “Don’t just stand there Peter, get dressed!”

And the angel said to him, “Gird yourself and put on your sandals.” And he did so. And he said to him, “Wrap your cloak around you and follow me.”

And he went out and continued to follow, and he did not know that what was being done by the angel was real, but thought he was seeing a vision.

When they had passed the first and second guard, they came to the iron gate that leads into the city, which opened for them by itself; and they went out and went along one street, and immediately the angel departed from him.

When Peter came to himself, he said, “Now I know for sure that the Lord has sent forth His angel and rescued me . . .

I just can’t help but say, “No, Peter, what was your first clue?!” I love that, “Now I know for sure”.

He is not the only one in this story who is slow to catch on! While Peter has been sleeping in the prison, the believers are elsewhere, dozing through a prayer meeting. They look intense, but they are just mouthing words. They are gathered and are praying, no doubt, for Peter’s rescue. Look at verses 12 through 16.

And when he realized this, he went to the house of Mary, the mother of John who was also called Mark, where many were gathered together and were praying.

When he knocked at the door of the gate, a servant-girl named Rhoda came to answer.

When she recognized Peter’s voice, because of her joy she did not open the gate, but ran in and announced that Peter was standing in front of the gate.

They said to her, “You are out of your mind!” . . .

I can just hear them saying, “Listen, we’re trying to pray for Peter and you’re interrupting us with some wild story. Now pipe down. Let’s see, where were we? Oh yea, ‘And Lord, help Peter!’”

. . . But she kept insisting that it was so. They kept saying, “It is his angel.”

But Peter continued knocking; and when they had opened the door, they saw him and were amazed.

This is encouraging. If you ever get caught up in the false teaching that God only answers prayers that you pray with unwavering faith, then read through this text a few times. If you ever think that God is not really listening to you because you have not mastered the art of prayer without doubt, then take a close look at this prayer meeting.

They finally open the door to close Rhoda's mouth, poor girl, and there stands Peter! And they were amazed, "What do you know?! God answered our prayers!"

By the way, a lot of speculation has been based on the fact that these believers said, in the latter part of verse 15,

... ***"It is his angel."***

Many would say that this is proof that every believer has an angel guarding him – otherwise known as their guardian angel.

There is a big difference between what the Bible reports at times and what the Bible teaches us to do. In other words, there is a difference between what the Bible communicates and what it commands.

The Bible, in this verse, is simply giving us the response of these people. It is not necessarily telling us that their response was true.

So, what does this refer to then? If you go back to beliefs of Judaism, around the first century especially, it was commonly believed that a guardian angel was designated to each believer. It was also believed that the guardian angel took on the appearance of their human assignment and even went so far as to resemble the human's voice.

So, while the Bible never tells us this is true, it simply reports that these Jewish believers thought it was true.

You might ask, "But what about Psalm, chapter 91, verse 11?"

That verse tells us,

For He will give His angels charge concerning you, to guard you in all your ways.

While this verse definitely teaches that angels are servants of God to guard the believer, it does not say that we each have one angel. This verse tells us that all believers have all the angels. It is simply telling us that the entire host of heaven is devoted to seeing the will of God carried out on earth, and that no

demon, no event, no tragedy, no obstacle can keep God's will from being performed in and through our lives.

John Calvin, the reformer, said that if a believer cannot take assurance that all the angels are aiding in unseen ways the life of the believer, certainly he will take no comfort in believing that only one angel is so assigned.

There is another verse that indicates the angelic collaboration with the Triune God in serving the believer. Look at Hebrews, chapter 1, verses 13 and 14.

But to which of the angels has He ever said, "Sit at My right hand, until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet"? Are they not all ministering spirits, sent out to render service for the sake of those who will inherit salvation?

We are not told how and where and when. We are certainly never told to pray to them, to look for them, or to depend upon them. God simply uses angels to perform His will on behalf of the believer, whenever He chooses.

Corrie ten Boom was raised in Amsterdam. Her family was sent to a concentration camp during the terror of Hitler, for their service in hiding Jews in their home. Last year, I had the privilege of touring that home. I walked up the stairs to her bedroom, which housed a small linen closet that served as the door to a small closet where Jews hid when the S.S. came looking. Corrie's family was discovered and they were sent to Ravensbruck. Let me read from one account of the time when Corrie and her sister Betsie arrived at the concentration camp.

"It was very cold and the sisters had already spent two days and nights outside. They were waiting in line to get into the administration building. There, the Nazis were taking all the possessions of the new arrivals, including their clothes, and giving them only a thin dress, an undershirt, and a pair of wooden shoes. When they got into the building, Corrie had an inspiration. She instructed Betsie to take off her woolen undergarments that she had arrived in, roll them up, and put them in a corner. She whispered to Betsie, 'The Lord is busy answering our prayers. We shall not have to make the sacrifice of all our clothes.'"

"After they had been undressed, showered and handed the shabby clothes, Corrie writes, 'I hid the roll of underwear under my dress. It bulged out obviously through my thin dress, but I prayed, 'Lord,

surround me with angels so the guards cannot see me.’”

“The guards checked everyone. Not a bulge escaped their eyes. The woman just in front of me had hidden a woolen vest under her dress; it was taken from her. They let me pass by, they obviously did not even see me. Betsie, right behind me, was searched. But outside awaited another danger. On each side of the door were women who looked everyone over for a second time. They felt over the body of each one who passed. I knew they would not see me, for I was still surrounded. I was not even surprised when they passed right by me, but within me rose the jubilant cry, ‘O Lord, if Thou does so answer prayer, I can face even Ravensbruck unafraid.’”

There is another verse that is so intriguing to me. It is found in Hebrews, chapter 13, verse 2. Begin with verse 1.

Let love of the brethren continue. Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for by this some have entertained angels without knowing it.

What an interesting motive for demonstrating love. You might be demonstrating it to an angel who has taken human form to receive from you the proof of your salvation – love for one another.

By the way, the operative phrase in this verse is “without knowing it.” The verb and the tense indicate that the person never knew it happened – not during and not after. That seems to take care of a lot of interesting stories in which the person discovers it a second later.

This verse is saying to demonstrate your love, and you may even entertain angels without ever knowing about it – at least until heaven, when your faithfulness is rewarded by God.

Angels control the kingdom of Satan

4. One more activity of angels is that they control the kingdom of Satan.

Turn to Revelation, chapter 12, verses 7 through 9.

And there was war in heaven, Michael and his angels waging war with the dragon. The dragon and his angels waged war,

and they were not strong enough, and there was no longer a place found for them in heaven.

And the great dragon was thrown down, the serpent of old who is called the devil and Satan, who deceives the whole world; he was thrown down to the earth, and his angels were thrown down with him.

Look at Revelation, chapter 20, verses 1 through 3.

Then I saw an angel coming down from heaven, holding the key of the abyss and a great chain in his hand.

And he laid hold of the dragon, the serpent of old, who is the devil and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years;

and he threw him into the abyss, and shut it and sealed it over him, so that he would not deceive the nations any longer, until the thousand years were completed; after these things he must be released for a short time.

By the way, how many angels will it take to throw Satan into the abyss at the end of the Tribulation? How many angels had to get together to take on the dragon?

One. One angel, empowered by God, will be sufficient to toss the old dragon into the pit. Just one!

The theology of today, based on stories and fiction, seems to indicate that the angels might lose – the angels are outnumbered and underdeveloped. Believers are in danger because there are not enough strong angels around to help.

This is not so, according to the record of scripture. When the history of the world comes to a final end, just one anonymous angel casts Satan into the abyss and into, ultimately, the lake of fire.

Special Citation: Angels Up Close

Let me briefly mention scripture passages on angels and other flying creatures for you to read on your own time.

Cherubim

A vision of the cherubim is in Ezekiel, chapter 1. They have four faces that face north, south, east, and west. They can take off in any direction without ever having to turn their faces or their bodies. Their wings make a sound like a water fall.

Seraphim

You can read about the seraphim in Isaiah, chapter 6. They fly about the throne of God and continuously chant, “Holy, Holy, Holy . . .”.

Michael the archangel

Of all the hundreds of millions of angels, both fallen and holy, we are given the names of only three of them: Lucifer or Satan, Michael the archangel, and Gabriel.

Michael is mentioned in Daniel, chapter 10, Jude, verse 9, and Revelation, chapter 12. He is commonly seen as a warrior and may very well be the general of God’s army of warrior angels.

Gabriel

Gabriel is constantly showing up with messages. He had a message for Daniel, in Daniel, chapter 9, as well as for Zacharias and for Mary, in Luke, chapter 1.

Other Angel Moments

Other angel sightings that are biblically based are found when you study:

- the rapture of the church (I Thessalonians 4:16);
- the tribulation on planet earth (Revelation 16);
- the final battle against hell (Revelation 20);
- the final execution of God’s judgment (Revelation 20:15).

Final Thoughts on Holy Angels

Let me give three final thoughts about the holy angels. In our next discussion, we will begin a discussion about the fallen angels, or the kingdom of demons. Of holy angels:

1. Their service is largely unseen by the Christian.
2. Their obedience is absolutely exemplary for the believer.
3. Their victory has been totally guaranteed by God.

ⁱ Larry Richards, Every Good and Evil Angel in the Bible (Nashville, TN, Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1998), p. 173.