

## How do angels relate to mankind?

First, note the response of angels to God's loving provision *of* the opportunity of redemption for sinful man. There was apparently no provision for redemption for the angels who rebelled against God. They were immediately cast out of heaven and sentenced to the Lake of Fire. Read I Corinthians 4:9 and I Peter 1:12. Peter wrote that good angels look with wonder upon the salvation that is offered to us and never provided for the angels who joined Satan in his rebellion.

In I Peter 1 we see some of the things that those good angels marvel at. I Peter 1:2 talks of being **"sprinkled with His blood."** Angels have never seen the potential for the cleansing of sin for the fallen angels that is available to us because of the sacrifice of Jesus.

Read I Peter 1:3. Fallen angels have never been offered the new life available to us because of the provision of Jesus for our redemption. Angels marvel that God would love mankind so much that He would enter our world as one of us, so He could redeem us.

Read I Peter 1:4. The angels marvel at all God has in store for those who belong to Him. Read I Peter 1:8. Angels marvel at the wonder of our redemption while too often we take it for granted, forgetting what it was like before we made that commitment to Jesus.

Despite the fact that angels do not fully grasp the fullness of God's redemptive provision for mankind, angels have been assigned the responsibility of helping with the task of evangelism. In Acts 8:26 we read that an angel led Philip to the Ethiopian treasurer and in Acts 10:1-8 we find that an angel lead Cornelius to Peter. In addition to that, angels will help in the reaping of the fruits of evangelism at the end of time. Read Matthew 13:39. Read Luke 15:10. When God rejoices the angels join Him. Do we rejoice over the things that cause God to rejoice?

The Bible notes some of the specific things that God has assigned to angels to do for us. It is tremendously important to remember that any blessings angels provide to us are because of the love of God. Angels always minister at His direction. As noted last week, angels are never to be worshipped nor are we ever to direct prayer requests to them for assistance. Praise for what they do is always directed to God from whom the blessing always flow. The primary reason for noting that angels serve us is to give us another reason to praise God for His care and provision.

Angelic activity can be divided into two categories, general activity in the world and specific activity on behalf of us as individuals.

By way of general activity, it was via the angels that God gave us major parts of the Bible. Read Hebrews 2:2. How the Holy Spirit used angels to communicate God's Word to the writers of Scripture or the extent to which He used them is not known. We must marvel, however, at the fact that angels who know so much about God because they are in His presence were used by God to reveal some of that knowledge to us.

Another significant general activity of angels is the restraining of evil activity. Scripture has various examples. For example, Genesis 18 and 19 records the angelic activity in both restraining evil men from doing harm to Lot and then in leading Lot and his family away from Sodom. Read also II Kings 6:8-17.

In Kenya during the 50's the Mau Mau, who were Kenyan freedom fighters rebelling against the British, were all set to attack the Kijabe mission station and slaughter the missionaries and the children who were there. When they saw angels ringing the compound they wisely decided not to attack it. I have talked to Kenyan men who were there, and they have verified that fact. God's angels were there at His direction to protect His children.

We have no idea how ugly sin would be were it not for the restraining activity of angels at the direction of God. Sin left unrestrained would result in activity that would make events such as the Holocaust seem like child's play. We often wonder why God does not restrain sin more, but He has set limits on it and eventually God will put an end to sin and all it impacts. Temporarily God has allowed Satan to be the Prince of this world, but he is limited and that will not be forever.

We have no way of knowing the extent to which God uses angels to protect us. Perhaps when we get to heaven we will understand how often God sent His angels to protect and care for us. There are times when we get a hint that He is protecting us like when we have a near miss of a car accident, but we will discover when we are with Him that He has protected us a lot more than we can ever imagine.

In a more personal way, there is the question of “*guardian angels.*” Does each of us, as a Christian, have a guardian angel? Before I answer that let me note that nowhere in Scripture is there any indication that everyone has an angel watching over them. Hebrews 1:14 talks of ministering spirits or angels that watch over the heirs of salvation, which is a description of a Christian. Read Psalm 91:11. Then read Psalm 91:14 to discover to whom that promise is made. Read Psalm 34:7, That is not to say that God does not send His angels to care for non-Christians, especially in response to the prayers of Christians, but it is not automatic. God said He sends the rain on the just and the unjust and He can send His angels to care for the unjust also.

But do we as Christians have a guardian angel? Historically the church has been divided on that. Some of the early church leaders talked of a guardian angel only for Christians. Others said every soul that is born has one. Many of the reformation leaders rejected the idea completely.

There are 2 verses that are used to show that Christians have a guardian angel. First, read Matthew 18:10. In that passage the angels could be in heaven not on earth, depending on how the Greek is translated. If they are in heaven, then they hardly qualify as a guardian angel here on earth.

In Acts 12:1-15 Peter had been released from prison by an angel and went to the house where Christians were praying for him. A servant girl answered the door but instead of letting him in rushed to tell the others that Peter was there. Read Acts 12:15. In this passage it was a confused household who declared that, and it was not his angel, but Peter himself. We are not given any confirmation that indeed he even had an angel, only that they thought so.

Elsewhere, whenever there is talk of angels looking over us it is always in the plural indicating that God has charged many with our care. Angels are available continually at God's command and God is the one who cares for us, not angels.

The idea of our having a personal guardian angel is very appealing. It is great to think that we have with us an angel whose sole responsibility is me. If you think we have one, we must be extremely careful how we respond to that belief. We need to guard against giving glory directly or indirectly to the angel who is there to help and not to God. Dr. David Jeremiah wrote, *"Angels are sent, but the messenger is never more important than the sender."*

The second danger is that it is too easy to assume that if we have an angel always with us, we are safer than we really are and therefore forget our constant dependence upon God who is always with us. God is our strength and the One who cares for us.

There is one other role of angels and men. I believe an angel will escort our souls to heaven when the time comes for us to die. We will not be alone. Luke 16:19-31 is the parable of the rich man and Lazarus. Read verse 22. It is fascinating to note that there is no mention of an angel in relationship to the death of the rich man. It is the Christian who has had the sting of death removed, so he will be ushered from this life into the presence of God at the time of death.

Angels are God's servants and because God loves us with such an infinite love He directs the angels, who were created to serve Him, to care for us on His behalf. What a marvelous God we have!