



*What's all this  
about angels?*

*Geoffrey Bingham*



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## **1. Introduction: A Total View of the Creation**

We are told in Colossians 1:15-16, John 1:1-3 and Psalm 104:29-30 (of I Corinthians 8:3, Hebrews 1:2-3) that all things were created through the agencies of the Son and the Spirit, the Father being the Initiator of all that action: The Word (or Son) preceded the creation even of angels. In the Colossian reference the angels are called 'thrones, dominions, principalities and authorities'—a point which we will examine later. In this passage we are told that in the Son 'all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible...' What we need to see is that the entire creation is one (and one only) wholly functional unit.

Many readers of Scripture—sometimes including theologians and other scholars—think of heaven as one sphere and earth as another. If we are to think of them as two units then we must think of them as complementary halves of the whole, interdependent, and even interfaced. They constitute one entity—the entire creation. This must mean then that celestial creatures relate to man, and man to them. For many of us this is a strange thought. Rightly understood, it is a rich idea.

Genesis 1:31 speaks of creation as created and concludes that all things were good, 'ie. functional. This principle is endorsed by Ecclesiastes 3:11: 'You have made everything appropriate [beautiful, functional] in its own time'. Psalm 104 (cf. Psalm 148:5-6, Jeremiah 31:35-37) shows the functional order of creation. As we examine creatures which are earthly and those who are heavenly, then we see that they are 'all of the one piece'. They have been called into being to do God's will, and offer earthly and heavenly service to God and His creation. The idea of us sharing ministry with God's angels may sound strange, and even queer, but it is there in Scripture.

## 2. The Meaning of the Word 'Angel'

The Hebrew word simply means 'messenger' or 'envoy'. So too does the Greek word. This messenger is one who is in the celestial sphere and so in the presence of God. This is why he can be sent as an envoy of God. The term 'messenger' is used of both angels and men. For men as messengers see I Kings 19:2, Luke 7:24, and for persons see the prophet Haggai (Haggai 1:13), the priest (Malachi 2:7), and the Lord's messenger to prepare the way of the Lord (Malachi 3: 1).

The meanings of words are often discovered from contexts and synonymous uses. Hence the term 'sons of God' (Job 1:6, 2: 1, 38:7, Psalm 29: 1, 89:6), indicating a special relationship with God. Psalm 89:7 calls them 'the holy ones', 'sons of God', 'the council', and then in verse 8 calls the Creator 'the Lord of hosts', which seems to fit with verse 5, 'the assembly of the holy ones'. Psalm 82:1 says, 'God has taken his place in the divine council; in the midst of the gods he holds judgement'. Matthew 24:36 speaks of 'the angels of heaven', and Luke 2:13 as the 'heavenly host'. Psalm 8:5 speaks of man as being made a little lower than the Elohim, which can mean either God (cf. RSV), or the angels (cf. Heb. 2:7). In Daniel 4:13, 17 and 23 angels are called 'watchers' and in Daniel 10:13,120 and 21 they are called 'princes'. In Psalm 103:20-21 they are called ministers or 'servants' (cf. Hebrews 1:14) for they minister both to God and man. In Paul's writings they are called principalities, authorities, thrones and dominions. Many of these terms indicate their functions, but from the whole we can deduce something of the nature of angels.

## 3. The Nature of Angels: What Angels Do, and Are

### (1) IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

#### (i) Angels Created Before Men

Job 38:4-7 shows that angels, and not men were present at creation. No indication is given that they shared in creating. It

presupposes a heavenly creation prior to the terrestrial creation (Psalm 148: 1-6).

#### (ii) Angels Come to Human Beings

Angels related to men: to Abraham (Genesis 18: 1 f., 22:11 ), Hagar (Genesis 16:7, 21:17), to Lot (Genesis 19:1, 21), Abraham's servant (Genesis 24:7, 40), Jacob (Genesis 31:11, 32:1, 32:22-32, Hosea 12:4), Moses (Exodus 3:2), Israel as a nation (Exodus 14:19, 23:20, Isaiah 63:9, etc.), Balaam (Numbers 22), to Joshua (5:13f.), Israel and the judges (Judges 2: 1, 4, cf. 5:23), Gideon (Judges 6:11f.), Samson's parents (Judges 13), Elijah (I Kings 19:5f., II Kings 1:3, 15), Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego (Daniel 6:22, 9:21f., 10:5ff.), Zechariah ( 1:13 *passim*, 2:3, 4: 1ff., 5: 10, 6:4-5). (For appearances to men in the New Testament see below.)

#### (iii) The Purpose For Which Angels Come to Mankind

When we look at the purposes for which angels visited men we see the following:

To give comfort to Abraham in regard to the covenant, and to both Abraham and Sarah regarding the birth of a son; to Lot and his family in regard to fleeing from the city of Sodom; to Hagar to comfort her concerning the birth of Ishmael and also the future of Ishmael; to Jacob to assure him that God was watching over his interests; to Moses in regard to the liberation of the Israelites from Egypt, and to take them through the wilderness; to Balaam in his foolish intention to prophesy against Israel; to Joshua to show him that God was the Lord of hosts (the angelic army); to Gideon to tell him of the work God had for him to do; to Samson's parents to apprise them of the kind of man he would be, the way he should live and the secret of his strength; to Elijah following his victory at Carmel and his devastating reaction to Jezebel's threat, the angel giving him food; the angel of the Lord also gave him directions from God concerning the king of Samaria. In the Book of Daniel the three princes of Israel are saved from fire, Daniel is saved from the mouth of the lions, Gabriel the archangel answers his prayers and gives him a vision of the future, and another angel comes in response to prayer and fasting to help Daniel understand the visions he has seen. In Zechariah the angel who talks to the prophet is the one by which the

word of the Lord comes in prophetic-apocalyptic manner.

#### **(iv) Angels' and the Word of God**

We have seen that the primary meaning of angel is 'messenger', ie. that they bring God's message to men. Psalm 103:20 says, 'Bless the Lord, O you his angels, you mighty ones who do his word, hearkening to the voice of his word!' That is, true angels are obedient to God and obey His word. They thus bring the word of God to man. This is seen in Zechariah where the whole prophecy is mediated by angels. It is also seen in the giving of the law. Acts 7:38 and Galatians 3:19 show that the law came by angels. Both Stephen and Paul may be referring to Deuteronomy 33:2-5 where the angelic host is depicted as attending the giving of the law by God. In almost all of the visitations we have listed above, angels bring the special word of God that is needed for those they visit. In some cases this is a word of encouragement, of command, and sometimes it is the word of calamity. A strong example of the promise-command word is the appearance of the angel in the burning bush, speaking to Moses. Examples of the interpretative word are the angels who show Daniel and Zechariah the meanings of the prophecies they have seen and heard.

#### **(v) Angels and the Worship of God**

The seraphim of Isaiah 6 incessantly praise God. In Psalms 103:20 and 148:2, they are commanded to bless Him. Psalm 29:1-2 is a rich example of this: 'Ascribe to the Lord, O heavenly beings, ascribe to the Lord glory and strength. Ascribe to the Lord the glory of his name; worship the Lord in holy array.' See also Nehemiah 9:6, Psalm 97:7. Worship and service are the one in Biblical thinking, and so the angels are there to do His will (Psalm 103:20) and are often represented as being close to God. I Kings 22:19 speaks of 'the host of heaven standing between him on his right hand and his left.' Job 1:6 and 2:1 depict them as being present as in an assembly. That they serve Him is clear from the whole of Scripture (Psalm 103:20, Isaiah 45:12, cf. I Chronicles 21:27). There are, of course, rebellious angels, as we shall see, but then these are celestial creatures which have departed from the norm. For the most part we associate celestial creatures with the worship and service of God. Doubtless much of this impression comes from the New Testament, and especially the

#### **Book of the Revelation.**

Some of the ways in which they serve are as follows:

They report on the actions of men as part of the whole creation (Job 1:6ff., 2:1 ff., Zechariah 1: 11 — 'And they answered the angel of the Lord who was standing among the myrtle trees, "We have patrolled the earth, and behold, all the earth remains at rest." '); they bring messages to men (their main work: Numbers 22:35, Joshua 5:14, Judges 13:12ff, Job 33:23, etc.), especially messages connected with prophecy (Daniel 10:11, Ezekiel 40:4, Zechariah 4: 1-7). In this connection they announce coming events such as the destruction of Sodom, the births of Isaac, and of Samson. They sometimes attend God as He comes to the earth (Deuteronomy 32:2, Job 38:7). They act as guardians to Israel and different peoples of the earth, and even of places (Daniel chs. 10 and 11, Genesis 31:11, 13), especially caring for certain cities such as Jerusalem and specific persons such as those we have mentioned above, namely Hagar, Isaac, Jacob, Elijah, Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, and Daniel. Nor is their care limited to special persons, but to all who are God's people (Psalm 91:11, 34:7), whether communities or persons. They are also used to bring chastisement upon men and nations such as Sodom, Egypt, Meroz, Israel, the Assyrian host and evil-doers in general (Psalm 35:5-6). It would be difficult to nominate all the details of service relating to angels, but we shall gather many of these as we proceed with our study.

#### **(vi) Angels as They Relate to Calamity and Evil**

In the New Testament in places such as Revelation 12, II Peter 2, and Jude, we see that some angels have fallen and serve evil and not God. There are traces of this idea in the Old Testament also. In Psalm 78:49ff., we read of a company of 'destroying angels' who smite Egypt with the plagues, and in Job 33:22 of an angel of death (cf. I Chronicles 21:12,15f.). God sends a spirit to Saul which is called 'evil' (I Samuel 16: 14:23), and another spirit (angel) is to be a lying spirit in the mouths of the (false) prophets (I Kings 22:20-23). In Job 4:18 we read, 'Even in his servants he puts no trust, and his angels he charges with error'. In Daniel chapters 10 and 11 it is clear that certain angels are in conflict, some opposing God. The whole subject of Satan is raised in Job, for he accuses Job of acting only in his own interests. In Zechariah he is again seen in the role of accuser.

Revelation 12 connects the serpent in Eden with Satan, and it is possible that the principle expounded in Isaiah 14-and Ezekiel 28 refers to Satan.

It seems we have to distinguish between angels who are used to bring calamity where judgement is required, and angels who are of themselves evil. This is not easy, for even evil angels are used by God. It is sufficient to say here that evil angels misuse and abuse the powers God has given them. In Isaiah 24:21-22 (cf. Psalm 82:1) we are told that 'God will punish the host of heaven'. Judgement then will come to evil angels, but not, it would seem, to those angels who simply act as servants in the matter of executing God's judgements.

### **(vii) The Types and Orders of Celestial Beings**

When we come to this subject there is a vast amount of material. We will later deal with 'the angel of the Lord', but we find at least two angels named Michael and Gabriel. In Daniel 10:13 Michael is 'one of the chief princes', and in Daniel 12:1 he is called 'Michael, the great prince who has charge of your people' (ie. Israel). In Daniel 8:16 and 9:21 Gabriel is mentioned as a great power, and one sent by God to inform the prophet. An intriguing figure is the 'captain of the hosts of the Lord' (Joshua 5: 13ff), who may be identified with the angel of the Lord, or one of the archangels. There are other angels—one called 'the angel of death'—who have special functions, but then all celestials serve God.

It is when we come to the matter of Seraphim, Cherubim, Ophannim (wheels as in Ezekiel), Hayyoth (living creatures, in Ezekiel) that we are in an hierarchy of celestial creatures of whom we know little. We cannot deal with them here, except to say that the cherubim were important or they would not have formed the mercy seat on the ark of the covenant. Psalm 18:10 (cf. 99:1) depicts God riding upon the cherubim. Ezekiel 28 speaks of them as guardians in Eden, and Genesis 3:20-24 speaks of them as guarding the way to the tree of life with a flaming sword. Ezekiel in 10:5 identifies them with the living creatures of chapter 1.

We can conclude that such creatures were primary in the ministry of worship and service of God. This would include the Seraphim spoken of in Isaiah 6, who have been called 'burners', ie. they are holy and give a holy worship.

### **(viii) The Militant Angels: the Host of the Lord**

It seems difficult to escape the thought that many angels are militant, and that they are this in the service of God and man. In Joshua 5:13-14 there is one who is captain of the Lord's host, obviously the leader of the celestial army. God is 'the Lord of hosts', and 'the Prince of the host' (Daniel 8:11). We have seen that the host is concerned with the worship and service of God, but often in that service they have to be militant. They carry out God's judgements, destroying people and places and persons. We have noted that much of an hierarchy is apparent. In Psalm 68:17 we read, 'With mighty chariotry, twice ten thousand, thousands upon thousands, the Lord came from Sinai into the holy place'. Apart from the great numbers of celestial creatures (see also Deuteronomy 33:2), the 'mighty chariotry' is a symbol to suggest an army. In II Kings 2:11 one of these 'fiery chariots' translates Elijah, and in II Kings 6:17 the eyes of Elisha's servant are opened to view this angelic action: 'Then Elisha prayed, and said, "O Lord, I pray thee, open his eyes that he may see." So the Lord opened the eyes of the young man, and he saw; and behold, the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire round about Elisha.'

In the New Testament this theme is richly developed.

### **(ix) The Angel of the Lord**

This is a vast subject on its own. Sometimes called 'the angel of the Theophany', meaning the angel who manifests God Himself, he has naturally been thought of as God by some, and as the Son of God by others. The term really means 'the angel of the presence [or face] of the Lord'. This angel appears to Hagar. It is with this angel that Abraham pleads for Sodom, and the angel later prevents Abraham's sacrifice of Isaac. Abraham promises his servant Eliezer that this angel will go with him as he seeks out a wife for Isaac. The angel who appears to Jacob (Genesis 31:11ff.) says, 'I am the God of Bethel', and when Jacob wrestles with this angel (Genesis 32:24ff.), he says, 'I have seen God face to face.' In his last words he speaks of God and the angel as identical (Genesis 48: 15f.).

The angel of the Lord is notably present in all the events of Israel, from Moses at the burning bush (Exodus 3), to Israel being led out of Egypt, being commanded to obey the angel (Exodus 23:20ff.), to

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Moses pleading for the presence of God with His people (Exodus 32:34–33: 17, cf. Isaiah 63:9). In Exodus 23:20ff., God identifies the angel with Himself in that the angel has authority to forgive and not to forgive transgressions, 'for he will not pardon your transgression: for my name is in him.'

Who then is this angel of the Lord who is also met in the New Testament? It is difficult to say other than to accept the fact that God has manifested Himself in him. God is present in this angel. We can be pardoned for thinking that the angel is 'an angel, yea, and more than an angel!' No wonder he has been thought of as the Logos, the Word of God.

### **(x) Conclusion to Angels in the Old Testament**

There is much we have not been able to cover, for the details regarding angels are many. However, what we have seen does communicate the fact that this mundane creation is under the care of angels as they are directed by God. The heavenly host relates to God, creation and man. In the New Testament these insights are greatly enlarged, and all we need to know about angels is made explicit.

## **(2.) ANGELS IN THE NEW TESTAMENT**

### **(i) Introduction.' All Activities of Angels**

With the background we have from the Old Testament it would be helpful to examine the materials of the New Testament under the headings we have already used. This, however, may prove tedious, so that we will commence the events surrounding the births of John and Jesus and work towards the final revelations concerning angels in the last book of the Bible, after which we will draw certain conclusions.

### **(ii) The Angelic Announcement Concerning John the Baptist**

The importance of the advent of John is shown by the fact that it is the angel Gabriel who tells of the coming birth-event. He reassures the troubled priest-father of John by saying, 'I am Gabriel, who stand in the presence of God: and I was sent to you and to bring you

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this good news' (Luke 1:19). His quote from Malachi 4:5 indicates the importance of John's prophetic ministry. This shows that angels are instrumental in carrying out the plan of God for His creation.

### **(iii) The Angelic Announcements Concerning Jesus**

It is Gabriel also who appears to Mary, announcing the birth of Jesus the Son of God through her (Luke 1:26-38). In Matthew 1: 18-25 we have the account of an unidentified angel who appears to Joseph—Mary's fiance—in a dream. Again the angel explains what God is doing regarding the birth of Jesus.

At Jesus' birth the angel of the Lord appears to the shepherds, announcing the good news of the birth of Jesus the Saviour. It is then that the angelic host appears, worshipping God for what He is doing, and telling men of the grace of God. Following the birth of Jesus and the coming of the Magi, an angel warns Joseph in a dream that he must hasten away from Palestine to Egypt. Again an angel appears to Joseph in a dream, and tells him that Herod the persecutor is now dead, and the family must return to Judea. Even so, another dream-warning is given and they avoid Judea, going to Galilee to live.

### **(iv) Jesus and the Angels**

#### **(a) His Teaching Concerning Angels**

What Jesus teaches is consistent with what we have seen in the Old Testament. In Matthew 24:51 he speaks of 'the devil and his angels'. He speaks of them as inhabitants of heaven (Matthew 22:30), and it is doubtless they who do God's will there ('Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven'). They are holy (Matthew 8:38) and obedient, for they help in the carrying out of God's plan. They are concerned for little children (Matthew 18:10), whatever that may mean. They are also deeply interested in the salvation of men and so rejoice when a sinner comes to repentance. The picture of them being filled with joy is a moving one (Luke 15, cf. Luke 1:8-14). It will be of importance to them to hear of those who have (and also have not) confessed Christ before men (Luke 12:8ff.).

These angels do not marry or give in marriage (Matthew 22:30). This may not mean they are sexless, although it does seem this would be the case. Angels are always spoken of as 'he', and the idea in

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Genesis 6: 1f., that angels cohabit with 'the daughters of men', may be insubstantial. Female angels are never mentioned, but seeing that all believers are 'sons of God' the question of sex may not arise.

Angels are linked with the ultimate fortunes of mankind. Jesus will come with the heavenly hosts at the end time. They will garner the harvest, discern the 'wheat and the tares', and assist in the judgement of evil men (Matthew 25:31, 16:27, 13:39-41, 49-50), and also of the devil and his angels (Matthew 25:41). However, the time of these events is not known to angels—intelligent as they are—but only to the Father (Matthew 24:36).

In John 1:51 Jesus teaches that angels ascend and descend upon him, which is probably a reference to Jacob's dream regarding angels ascending and descending a stairway. Jesus is saying that the rise and fall of angels, and so the rise and fall of nations, is dependent upon him.

### (b) The Angels Who Relate to Jesus

We have seen how angels relate to his birth and his protection following that event. During his temptation we are told that 'angels came and ministered to him' (Matthew 4:11). We do not know what this means, but it may include physical and emotional aid. If we can accept the text of Luke 24:43, then an angel also helped him in Gethsemane when he was suffering. Apart from these two events he seems not to have drawn upon celestial help. He did inform the Jews who came to the garden to apprehend him that had he—Jesus—wished, then he could call on legions of angels to fight his cause (Matthew 26:53). He did not, in fact, do that.

At the time of *Jesus' resurrection* angels are active. Matthew 28:2-8 reports that *an* angel of the Lord descended from heaven and rolled away the stone over the tomb of Jesus. His was a brilliant appearance, scaring to the women, who are told to bear the news of the resurrection to the disciples. Mark reports this angel as a young man (16:3-8), who is obviously identical with the angel of Matthew 28. Luke 24:1-8 speaks of two men (angels) in dazzling apparel who tell the message of Jesus' resurrection. John 20:12 speaks of two angels sitting in the tomb where Jesus had lain. Mary of Bethany sees these and asks for the body of Jesus, who in fact is standing near to her.

At the time of Jesus' ascension two angels are present (Acts 1:10-11).

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Angels then have been present prior to his birth, at his birth, at his temptation and in Gethsemane. Also they are present at the time of his resurrection and ascension. In only two of these events are angels said to minister to him.

### (v) The Apostolic Church and Angels

#### (a) In the Book of Acts

The first action of an angel is in Acts 5:17-21, where an angel wakes the apostles who are sleeping in prison, bidding them proclaim the gospel in the temple court; which they do.

In Acts 8:26 Philip is directed by *an* angel of the Lord to go south on a certain road. On doing this he meets the Ethiopian eunuch, treasurer to the queen of Ethiopia. When this happens the Spirit then takes over from the angel, which is an interesting point.

In Acts 10:1-8 *an* angel of God appears to the Gentile centurion Cornelius and asks him to call the apostle Peter from Joppa. The angel informs Cornelius that his prayers and acts have been noted by God. At the Joppa end the Holy Spirit is directing Peter.

A further appearance of *an* angel of the Lord is seen in Acts 12:6-11, where Peter is released by him from prison. This angel has the power to pass guards without himself or Peter being seen, and to cause a gate to open of its own accord. In the same chapter and at about this time *an* angel of the Lord smites the proud Herod as he is being acclaimed (sycophantically) as a god.

#### (b) In the Epistles

Paul's teaching in I Timothy 3:16, 'seen of angels', must refer to the fact that the angels watch the events of Jesus' birth, life and death. Some add to this the proclamation of the news of his triumph by Jesus to 'the spirits in prison,' ie. the fallen angels. Paul may also be referring to the fact that angels watch the plan of God being worked out (Ephes. 3:10). They certainly take part in it, for II Thessalonians 1:7 speaks of the angels accompanying Christ on his return. Paul talks of angels (as well as men) viewing the apostles as a spectacle. Perhaps this refers to both kind of angels, ie. good and evil. The latter are spoken of much. In Romans 8:38 such seek to separate believers from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus. In

II Corinthians 10:13-14 Satan and his henchmen appear as angels of light. In Colossians 2:18 (*passim*) angels are worshipped, and if they are the 'elemental spirits' of Galatians 4:8-11, then they are evil angels. Paul also sees Satan used by God for certain disciplinary purposes. There is the curious passage of I Corinthians 5:1-5 where an incestuous man is delivered to Satan 'for the destruction of the flesh', and in II Corinthians 12:7 Paul calls his 'stake in the flesh' *angelos Satana*, 'an angel [messenger] of Satan'. This affliction keeps Paul from pride.

Paul has a clear view of authorities, dominions, and principalities as both of the evil and good kind. In Colossians 2:14 (*passim*) Paul sees the evil angels as defeated by the Cross in the atoning work of Jesus. In Galatians 1:4, 8-11, and 6: 14, along with Colossians 2:20-23 and Ephesians 6:10-12 he sees these evil powers as attacking the people of God. The power of the Cross, however, is the Christian's defence against such, whilst in I Corinthians 10:3 and Ephesians 6:10-18 (cf. Romans 13:12, I Thessalonians 5:8) the church has weapons which can overcome these evil powers. In I Corinthians 6:3 Paul says that we (the church) will judge angels. That humans should judge angels is 'an intriguing thought. In I Corinthians 15:24-28 Paul is saying that Christ is presently putting down (defeating forever) the principalities and powers, wresting from them the kingdoms they have. Their defeat will be the ultimate triumph of the Kingdom of God.

The writer of Hebrews has much to say and teach about angels. He is the one who quotes Psalm 103:20-21 that angels are servants who do God's will and so minister to the heirs of salvation (cf. Psalms 34:7, and 91:11). However, for the most part he compares angels with Jesus, pointing out that they are inferior in nature and subordinate in function to him. Like Stephen in Acts 7:30f., and Paul in Galatians 3:19, the writer says the law given at Sinai was by (the mediation of) angels. In Hebrews 1:6, and 12:22 the writer sees angels as worshipping creatures. In the latter reference he speaks of 'innumerable angels in festal gathering'. In 13:2 he probably refers to the incident of Abraham being visited by angels (Genesis 18:lff.), and Lot also by two who were mistaken for men by the inhabitants of Sodom. The principle is that 'at any time a person visiting and having a special need may be an angel.

In I Peter 1:12 the writer simply says that angels desire to look into the deep things of the gospel. In 3:22 he places, the true angelic

powers in the presence of God, and sees them as subject to Christ. Paul makes this point in Ephesians 1:19ff. In II Peter 2:4 the writer speaks of rebellious angels. In 2:9-11 he speaks of men who revile the truly glorious angels, whereas angels for their part do not pronounce judgement upon them! Jude 8-10 repeats this thought in much the same language.

On the whole the Epistles repeat the ideas of angelology found in the Old Testament, the Gospels and the Acts.

### (c) Angels in the Book of the Revelation

It is here that we derive a mine of information regarding angels. There are nearly 80 mentions of them in this one prophecy. Probably the easiest way of seeing these angels and their powers and functions is to trace them through in a concordance.

In 1: 1 God sends *His* angel to John with the revelation (prophecy) which John must see. In 22:16 Jesus says, 'I have sent my angel to you with this testimony for the churches.' In 1:20 to 3:14 the seven angels of the churches (seven churches, each having an angel) are mentioned. Some see these 'angels' as simple messengers to the churches, others as the leaders or pastors, or bishops of the churches, whilst some see them as 'the watchers' or 'guardians' of the respective assemblies. They have responsibility for the churches. In 3:5 Christ speaks of confessing the names of the faithful saints 'before my Father, and before His angels.'

Angels in this prophecy often 'proclaim with a loud voice' (5:2), 'a loud voice like a lion roaring' (10:3). In chapter 14 four times different angels cry 'with a loud voice'. In 18:2 an angel cries with 'a mighty voice'. In 19:17 another angel cries with a loud voice. There are also loud voices and mighty voices from the throne, so that a loud voice must mean authoritative and far-reaching, indicating the special position that angels hold.

Worship is part of the ministry angels hold. In 5:11-14 the countless angels and celestial creatures cry with a loud voice in praise to Christ. In 7:11-12 the angelic throng bursts into praise when the fruits of salvation are seen—a multitude of people out of every nation and people and kindred and tongue, standing before the throne. In 19:1-8 it seems impossible that within all the celestial praise there are not the angels present.

For the rest we have angels who exercise authority in their various

spheres, and at the times appointed for them. There are the seven angels of the seven churches; the angel who proclaims concerning the book with the seals (5:2). The Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse might well be seen as angels (6:1-8). In 7:1-3 we see four angels who have authority over the four winds. At this point they are holding them back. In 8:2 we read of 'the seven angels who stand before God', that is they are seven who serve Him. In 6:7 there are the seven angels who will blow the trumpets of God's judgements. In 15:1, 6ff., 16:1, 17:1 and 21:9 seven angels are also spoken of, and they too pour out judgements from the seven bowls of plagues which they hold, so that they are of great importance and function. The two sets of seven certainly figure largely in the execution of God's judgements. One of these seven angels carries John away in the Spirit ( 17: 3 ) to explain the 'mystery of Babylon' to him—a most important matter, especially in relation to the destruction of Babylon as the world system. In 10:1-10 there is 'another mighty angel' who has 'a loud voice like a lion roaring'. He proclaims that God's plan is about to be completed. In 12:7ff., Michael and his angels battle with the red dragon and his angels. The first angels have great authority, enough to cast the dragon and his angels down from heaven to earth. In 14:16 we have 'another angel flying in midheaven with an eternal gospel'. He uses a loud voice to proclaim a message to every nation. He is followed (verse 8) by an angel announcing the (imminent) fall of Babylon, and a third angel (verses 9-11) warns against receiving the mark of the beast, ie. against being part of the system controlled by the devil and his angels. In 14:14-20 we see two great harvests or judgements on the earth. The first reaper may be Christ or—it is possible—an angel. Certainly the second reaper is an angel, and his harvest is one of terrible judgement. In 18:1 an angel 'having great authority' comes down from heaven to proclaim the present fall of the great city, Babylon, and to explain why it has been judged and the judgement executed.

Following this judgement the angel has a more pleasant task (19:9) regarding the invitation to the marriage feast of the Bride and the Lamb. Doubtless in 19:14 'the armies of heaven' are equivalent to 'the heavenly host' of which Christ is Leader. At this point there is 'an angel standing in the sun' and he, too, uses a loud voice to invite those who will to come to 'the great supper of God'. This is to destroy (eat the flesh of) kings, captains, mighty men, etc. Following this judgement of evil 'an angel from hearers, holding... the key of

the bottomless pit, and a great chain'. This one has the power and authority to seize the devil and lock him in the pit for 1,000 years.

In 21:9 another (presumably) of the seven angels comes to show John the Bride, the wife of the Lamb, and he too carries John away in the Spirit. He shows John the heavenly City and then gives him the dimensions of it, and reveals the nature of that City. In 22:8-11 the same angel speaks of the time being near for the fulfilment of the prophecies John has heard and seen.

It can be seen then that the angels have great authority in the affairs of heaven and earth, yet even so are the servants of God, and do not merely have authority of their own.

**On the Negative Side of Angels.** Here we see—as in chapter nine—that evil angelic powers torment mankind and seek to gain control of him and the creation. In chapter twelve the dragon (the devil) and his angels foment rebellion and conflict in heaven. Doubtless the actions of evils seen in chapters 11, 12 and 13 are part of evil angelic action, as indeed the evil that has always operated in Babylon, the Anti-Holy City. Doubtless too the judgement of the lake of fire (19:20-21, 20:10) was for the evil angels, as well as evil men in accordance with Matthew 25:51, as Jesus had prophesied. In all the events manipulated by evil, the book of the Revelation speaks of them having been given authority (ie. they were permitted) to do certain things, but they do not innately have that authority.

**Conclusion on Angels in the Revelation.** It would be difficult to draw together all the activities of angels. Each action as it is described is real, but then it is symbolic in form, hence we do not know the actual action. Generally, however, we can gather that angels are involved in the universal authority of God. They have areas of operations, particularly regarding the judgements of God. They are involved in praise, but perhaps most of all in the carrying out of God's salvific plan for man and creation. They are filled with joy at the fulfilling and fulfilment of that plan. At the same time they do not seek to be worshipped. In 19:10 and 22:8-9 John is forbidden to worship the angel, the angel himself chiding the prophet. He is told, 'Worship God.'

Regarding the militant aspect of this heavenly host (cf. 19:14 and *passim*), we must not make the mistake of thinking of angels in direct military terms. Their Lord (Christ) wins the nations by the Sword, ie. the Word of God (1:16, 2:12, 19:15), and the last battle is won by the very fire of that Word (20:9).

## 4. Conclusions Regarding Angels, Their Natures, Uses, Functions & Ministries

### (i) Introduction to Our Conclusion

Having set out much of the material as it is given in the Scriptures, we are now required to examine it and draw out—if possible—some principles concerning the angelic portion of creation, and especially its relationship to that creation, primarily keeping God and man in mind.

We might as well realise that very little of explicit explanation is given to us. Here and there glimpses of this angelic system are seen, but our natural way of attributing human elements to divine creatures is not helpful. They are a species—if we may use that term—on their own, and as such we must seek to understand what is necessary for our sharing the creation with them.

### (ii) The Basic Purpose of Angels in the Creation

At the creation 'the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy!' The angels were delighted with the creation. It was this creation over which they were placed, and for which, under God, they were responsible. This is seen from the following:

- (a) The angels are innumerable, and doubtless their large number is required in order to keep the universe in good order. See Deuteronomy 32:2, Job 25:3, 33:23, Psalm 68:18, Daniel 4: 13, 17, 7:10, 8:16, 9:21, 10:5f., 12:1, Luke 2:13, Hebrews 12:22, Revelation 5:12, 19:1.
- (b) The systematic orders of angels and other celestial creatures is such that each angel appears to have his own tasks and functions to fulfil. There is firstly the angel of the Lord, then the archangels. If we include the four living creatures of Revelation, and if they are to be identified with those of Ezekiel 1, then these creatures are close to God, perhaps closest apart from the angel of the Lord. If the celestial elders are not men, then they too follow the four creatures. There are many orders of angels, such as thrones, principalities, authorities and dominions. These have control of certain principdoms and other situations,

- including the nations or peoples of the earth.
- (c) Creation, although innately dynamic, is a *fixed order* (Psalm 74:7, 148:6-7, Jeremiah 31:35-36, 33:20, 25). Jeremiah 33:20 and 25 speak of 'the ordinances of heaven and earth'. In Job 38:33 God asks Job, 'Do you know the ordinances of the heavens? Can you establish their rule on earth?' Obviously the principles by which heaven and earth operate, ie. man has his function (Genesis 1:28ff.) and the angels have theirs. All constitute the one creation. Very clearly angels are to help men, especially those who are God's elect people.
- (d) Creation is brought into being with a view to its *telos*, its purposeful consummation and climax. There is more than a hint of this in Genesis 1:28. 'For a little while lower than the angels' (Psalm 8:5, Hebrews 2:5f.) suggests an ultimate elevation of man beyond the angels, and this is confirmed in I Corinthians 6:2, and perhaps Matthew 25:41. In the New Testament this *telos* is spelled out in the glorification of man (cf. Isaiah 43:6-7), who will be to the praise of the glory of God (I Corinthians 2:6-10, II Corinthians 4:16f., Ephesians 1:12-14, Revelation 21:7), and as such, surely higher than angels. Because of the dynamic forward-moving of the (fixed) celestial and terrestrial orders, the service of angels and men is necessary. Therefore it must be functional. That is why angels must be the servants of God, doing His will (Psalm 103:20-21, 'Servants that do His will'; I Kings 22:19; Nehemiah 9:6, 'And Ezra said, "Thou art the Lord, thou alone; thou hast made heaven, the heaven of heavens, with all their host, the earth and all that is on it, the seas and all that is in them; and thou preservest all of them; and the host of heaven worships thee..."'; Psalm 148:2, Hebrews 1:1, etc.). We see throughout the Old Testament and New Testament that this is what they do.

We conclude then that God's entire creation is a functional universe with 'ordinances of heaven and earth', which mean that functional principles of operation obtain, and within those operations both men and angels—and all other creatures—combine to do the will of God and so fulfil His plan.

### (iii) The Functions and Operations of Angels

#### (a) Angels are watchers

This term comes from Daniel 4:13, 17, and 23, where Nebuchadnezzar has seen them in a dream. The thought is that such angels watch all things on the earth, much as human watchmen do the same in their function. Ezekiel 1:17-18 shows the four living creatures moving towards any point at any time, and having numerous eyes, obviously to see what is happening. The idea of angels seeing is in Zechariah 1:10, where they 'patrol the earth'. In 4:10 there are seven which are 'the eyes' of the Lord which range through the whole earth'. In their 'watching' the angels know good and evil, having to discern it (I Samuel 29:9, II Samuel 14:17). In I Samuel 14:20 the function of the angel is 'to know all things that are on the earth'. Note that angels are not by nature omniscient. They have *to learn* all things (cf. Ephesians 3: 10, I Peter 1: 12). In watching also there must be doing (II Samuel 19:27). Angels know how to do what is good. Note in the New Testament that the angelic powers are watching the outworking of the plan of God through the church (Ephesians 3:10-11), and this may include both good and evil angels. In I Corinthians 11:10 the angels watch the church, especially in regard to the decorum of worship-behaviour. In I Timothy 3:16 we see also the activity of angels watching the event (and events) of Christ. These, to them, are greatly significant. In the Book of the Revelation they watch over mankind, over the earth, the winds, and many other things, at God's commands.

#### (b) Angels are guardians

Watching and guardianship are really two sides of the same coin. When angels know and discern then they can *do*. Part of their doing is guarding men and places from evil. In Genesis 28:10-22 Jacob sleeps and has a vision of angels. Their rise and fall relates to him, and God promises him He will always be with him. Doubtless this dream-manifestation is the angel of the Lord (see below), and doubtless it is this angel who will preserve him. We have seen the angel of the Lord is guardian to Hagar and Ishmael (Genesis 16 and 21). In Exodus 23:20-23 God speaks of His angel, saying, 'I will send an angel before you *to guard you on the way and bring you to the place*

which I have prepared.' This 'the angel of his presence' (cf. Exodus 33:14, 34:9, Numbers 20:16, Isaiah 63:9) guards them unceasingly. The angel of the Lord watches over Israel by thwarting Balaam in his wrong use of the gift of prophecy (Numbers 22:31-35). The same idea is present in the 'watching' of Ezekiel 1:17-18, Zechariah 1:10, 4:10 and perhaps in Psalm 121:4: 'He that keepeth Israel shall neither slumber nor sleep'. Psalm 34:7 says, 'The angel of the Lord encamps around those who fear him, and delivers them', and Psalm 91:11-13 amplifies this: 'For he will give his angels charge of you to guard you in all your ways. On their hands they will bear you up, lest you dash your foot against a stone. You will tread on the lion and the adder, the young lion and the serpent you will trample under foot.' The angel watching over Elijah is concerned for the prophet (I Kings 19:4ff.). In Daniel 3:28 it is the angel who delivers the three Jewish princes from the fiery furnace and in Daniel 6:22, Daniel from the mouth of the lions.

In the New Testament the angel warns Joseph and Mary concerning Jesus and Herod's intention to kill him. The angels release the apostles from prison on one occasion, and Peter, singly, on another. Watching and keeping, then, are functions of the angels.

#### (c) Angels exercise authority in the heavens and the earth

We have seen that the terms 'thrones', 'principalities', 'authorities', and the like, are not empty words. They are areas allotted to angels, and constitute areas of rule and operations. II Peter 2:4 speaks of angels sinning, and Jude 6 says they 'did not keep their own position but left their proper dwelling'. This could mean either that they refused to rule where commanded, or that they ruled on their own (selfish) account, and not on God's. This brings up the whole matter of good and evil angels, which we will discuss next, but at this point it is evident from passages such as Daniel 10 and 11, and the New Testament references to these powers, that angels do rule in allotted areas. In addition to this (or perhaps along with it), we see that some angels control 'the four winds of the earth', others watch over the land and sea, the green grass and the trees (whatever these may symbolise), whilst some have the authority of judgement. By this kind of ruling the fixed ordinances of heaven and earth are preserved and operate functionally.

**(d) Angels operate for the judgements of God**

This is seen in both Old and New Testaments. Angels of judgement come to Sodom and Gomorrah. In Egypt God brings plagues upon the Egyptians who refuse freedom to Israel. Psalm 78 speaks of the plagues which forced Egypt to let God's people go, and verse 49 tells of the angels who executed God's judgements: 'He let loose on them his fierce anger, wrath, indignation, and distress, a company of destroying angels.' In II Samuel 24 (cf. I Chronicles 21) we read of the judgement executed by an angel for David's numbering of the people. In I Kings 22:17-23 there is the story of how an angel will deceive the deceiving prophets, and so bring Ahab the king to destruction. In I Kings 19 and II Chronicles 32 we have the story of the angel of the Lord who brought judgement on the Assyrian army. Isaiah 36:37 recounts this. In the New Testament we have the story of the angel smiting the boastful Herod. We hear Christ speaking of the angels coming with him in the Parousia (Matthew 16:27, cf. 26:64, Daniel 7:14f.), and in Matthew 13:41ff. he says the angels will separate the 'wheat from the tares, ie. the good from the evil, and destroy that which is evil. Likewise in Matthew 13:47ff. the parable of the good and bad fish points to the same principle. All of this accords with I Thessalonians 1:7, where these angels are said to effect the vengeance of God upon evil.

In the Book of the Revelation the subject is opened widely. Angels are used to effect judgement in the opening of the seven seals by the slain Lamb, and by the angels who sound the seven trumpets and pour out the seven bowls, which are bowls of plagues and wrath. Christ and an angel, or perhaps two angels in Revelation 14: 14-20, effect the two harvests of the earth, the latter being without doubt a massive judgement. Angels are linked with the destruction of Babylon and its judgement (16: 17-21, 18: 1 ff.). The announcement of the judgement of leaders of the earth which had related to the dragon and Babylon, as also the beast and the false prophet, is made by an angel (Revelation 19; 17-21).

In all these judgements the angels simply show themselves as the willing and obedient servants of God, doing His will.

**(e) Angels are Messengers**

This of course is the basic ministry of angels. Now, however, we can see the messages that they bring to mankind. It is to be observed that Psalm 103:20-21 says that angels do His will wholly. Doubtless evil angels do not wish to do His will. There is then a difference between good men and good angels. Good men will *desire* to do God's will (of. Psalm 1, Romans 7:13-25, especially verse 21), but will not always do it. Angels do do it, although (of. Daniel 10 and 11) evil angels will seek to prevent them. Prophets, being men, will always be suspect. There have been false prophets, and doubtless evil angels, but the element of error is present in man. Not so in the good angels. They have no subjective elements which can alter a message. They simply and purely communicate the message of God. In this they witness to God.

An example of this witness is the songs of the angels in Revelation chapters 4 and 5. There they communicate the will of God in both creation and redemption. Doubtless all their songs and messages, throughout history, are the true messages of God. We need not here nominate all those messages such as were given to Abraham, Hagar, Jacob, Moses, the judges, prophets, kings, priests, Jesus, the apostles and the prophet John in the Revelation. Added up they form a significant and valuable body of truth concerning God, creation and man, and the plan of God itself.

**(iv) Good Angels and Evil Angels: The Problem**

The crux of the matter is contained in the conflict between good and evil celestial powers. All originally created good, a course of the angels became rebellious, opposed to God, and so proved to be evil. God did not create their evil! It is difficult to fully follow the change in loyalty to God to loyalty to Satan, the devil.

It could be that some clues are afforded by Isaiah 14 and Ezekiel 2, where the kings of Babylon and Tyre are addressed. In Isaiah the king (or the angel) is seen to be ambitious to be 'above the stars of God', ie. to be over the angels. The same principle is in Ezekiel, where this angelic one has fallen in love with himself and has high ambitions. Revelation 12 shows the rebellion of angels, although it does not place it in a specific time in history. We gather generally from these passages and II Peter 2:4, Jude 6, that under Satan a host of angels rebelled against God. They then constitute the thrones, powers, principalities and authorities which oppose the people of God. Colossians 2:14-15, Romans 8:38, Ephesians 6:12, and

probably Galatians 4:8 and Colossians 2:16-23 show us how evil are these angels, and how they seek to subvert mankind. I John 5:19 and Ephesians 2:1-3 show us that man is in the grip of Satan and his evil powers. 'The devil and his angels' is a term used by Christ (Matthew 25:41), and he speaks of their evil action in Matthew 13:36-50.

When we ask what the kingdoms and principedoms are, then we are led to Matthew 4:8-10, where Satan claims that all the kingdoms are given into his authority. This is a complex matter. The New Testament speaks specifically of *the world*, meaning an evil system controlled by Satan and his angels, which has captured man to do his (Satan's) will (cf. I John 5:19, Ephesians 2:1-3, II Timothy 2:26). This world has its own 'wisdom' (II Corinthians 1:20), its own lusts (I John 2:15-17), and its own fashions (I Corinthians 7:31). However it is in the matter of the peoples (nations) of the earth that we are concerned. Four passages—Genesis 28:10ff., Deuteronomy 32:8-9, Daniel chapters 10-11, and John 1:51—form a teaching which, if true, must mean the following:- Jacob saw the angels ascending and descending, meaning that he saw the nations (of the various angels), rising and falling. An old Jewish writing says that Jacob was disappointed until God told him that he (ie. the angel of the Lord) would be his special angel, so that his people's future was assured. We have seen that Moses was also told this, and Isaiah 63:9 confirms the fact. Deuteronomy 32:8-9—if our interpretation is true—means that nations were placed under 'the sons of God', ie. the angels. The Hebrew version has 'the sons of Israel', but the present translation seems to fit best, as Israel is again said to have God as its 'angel'. This makes sense of Job 1:6, where the sons of God come before Him, possibly to report. (Job 2:lff. shows that Satan has been going up and down the earth, and to and fro, seemingly not as a 'watcher' so much as a critic! He obviously has the whole earth in mind, and seemingly, for himself.) Psalm 29:1 shows these courtiers present at the court of the King. Psalm 82:1 says, 'God has taken his place in the divine council; in the midst of the gods he holds judgement', showing us that God shares government somehow with angels. Incidentally, this explains the word 'god', often applied to angels, for these have a high office. The word 'Elohim' is a word meaning 'god' or 'gods' and is sometimes linked with the idea of angels (cf. Psalm 8:5 where translation can be 'little lower than God' or 'little lower than the angels'). Psalm 89:6-7 underlines this thought.

The passage of Daniel chapters 10-11 shows that with the mention

of princes of Persia and Greece that such princes have control of those nations. It is not quite clear whether each nation has angels vying with one another for control, ie. there are two (or more) angels—one good, one bad—seeking to control the destiny of the nations. Certainly in a corporate sense good and bad angels battle to retain or gain the nations.

This then makes sense of Jesus' saying in John 1:51, 'And he said to him, "Truly, truly, I say to you, you will see heaven opened, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of man." ' Jesus must mean, 'All the angels [ie. the nations] have their rise and fall according to my will and work.' There is much point, then, in the Pauline Epistles where Jesus not only creates the principalities, thrones, dominions, and so on (Colossians 1:15-17), but by the Cross he has also defeated the evil powers (Colossians 2:14-15, Hebrews 2:14-15) and so crucified the world (Galatians 6:14, cf. 1:4-5). He has been raised above all these (Ephesians 1:19-21) and is head over all. Hence they cannot separate us from the love of God (Romans 8:38), and indeed he is 'putting them all down' (I Corinthians 14:24-28, cf. Revelation 11: 17-18, 12: 10, and especially 11: 14: 'Then the seventh angel blew his trumpet, and there were loud voices in heaven, saying, "The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ, and he shall reign for ever and ever." '). It also makes sense for human beings to be in conflict with evil angels (Ephesians 6: 12, Revelation 15:3, 17: 12-14, cf. I John 2:13-14, 4:4, 5:4, James 4:7, I Peter 5:6-10).

We have already seen that the angelic host in heaven is militant, but the weaponry must not be thought of in human military terms. It is always holiness, the word of God, the sword of the Holy Spirit, the truth, by which battle is done. This truth (the word of God) must ultimately triumph, since untruth, anti-truth, and falsehood are not basically (ontologically) viable.

**SPECIAL NOTE:** In this whole matter of the origin or rise of evil, Psalm 74:12-19 is often thought to contain a story of creation where Leviathan (Satan or an evil archangel) opposed God in the matter of creation. Psalm 89:8-9 is said to contain the same or a similar thought. Job 26:12-14 is thought to be a fragment of the same, hence 'His hand pierced the fleeing serpent'. Whilst Rahab is generally thought to signify Egypt, it is the principle of (proud) Egypt that is here typified. The fact that God has armies (Job 25:2) underlines the fact of the conflict. Isaiah 51:9-10, which again refers to Egypt, is

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thought to have some reference to the earlier creational conflict. This may or may not be so, for it is a mystery which was in the beginning (Genesis 1:1), that the earth was 'without form and void 'and darkness was on the face of the deep'. Some see a previous creation that was extant but has become a chaos. It is this because of some conflict of evil. Now it is open to a new work of God's creation. This theory would certainly explain the prior creation of angels, and so their presence at the later creation, in accordance with Job 38:7.

**The problem of Genesis 6:1-4, of which various interpretations are possible:-** One is that angels can (and did) cohabit with human females, producing a race of Nephilim or giants. The objection against this is that the New Testament speaks of angels 'neither marrying nor giving in marriage'. For this reason some have said angels are sexless. A counter-objection to this statement is that *that it is in heaven* that they do not do this. On earth it may be different. Sexual activity is not an element of heaven; and angels may have sexual powers. If they have, it is difficult to understand why they should possess such abilities. They seem pointless. The alternative explanation is that 'the sons of God' are descendants of Seth (cf. Genesis 4:25ff.), and that 'the daughters of men' are the female descendants' of Cain. Whatever the explanation, it seems neither view can be asserted dogmatically.

### (v) The Relationships Between Men and Angels

God and man have affinity since man was made in the image of God, and also because the Son has become man. Hebrews states clearly that 'he did not take on himself the form of angels'. This affinity ('deep calls unto deep; like unto like') means that man has closer relationships with God than with angels. Angels are of an entirely different order, although they often appear as men. It is difficult for humans therefore to relate to angels. One of the obvious reasons is that they are invisible. Even so man is inextricably linked with angelic powers. They watch over him; they come to him to deliver messages; they are kind to men, always reassuring them that they need not fear this supramundane 'intrusion'. They act as guardians to the human race. Angels of children always behold the face of the children's Father in heaven. Good angels strive for the good welfare of nations. They co-operate with God in defeating evil and effecting judgement.

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Humans tend to worship angels. This is seen in Joshua 5:14, Zephaniah 1:5 (cf. Colossians 2:18ff., Jeremiah 8:2), and in a more positive sense in Revelation 19:10 and 22:9. The reason angels should not be worshipped is that angels are 'fellow servants' with those who 'hold the word of God and the testimony of Jesus'. In other words, *their affinity with man lies in function*, ie. both are servants of God. This affinity is strengthened because *both are creatures*. The reason why humans should gladly relate to angels is that angels are beautiful, goodly to look upon. This is seen in the living creatures, the cherubim and the seraphim. However it is their moral quality which is seen as beautiful. Always the angels appear in glory and glowing. Satan seeks to be looked upon as 'an angel of light'. In Samuel 29:9, II Samuel 14:17, 19, and 19:27, the statements are, 'You are blameless as an angel of God', '... like an angel to discern good and evil', '... like an angel... therefore do what seems good to you.'

In fact angels are all that is good. They are servants of mankind. This is seen in 'servants to the heirs of salvation'.

Most of all, human beings are unable to cope with what is beyond the three dimensions and the five senses. They know there is a supramundane world. Often they fear evil angelic powers, and dread that which is occultic. It is an incredible relief and security to know that—under God—the angelic host, army, princes, functionaries and the like, all have the matter in hand. The good angels contain the evil ones so that the creation cannot be destroyed and irreparably infected by evil. God has left nothing outside the ministry and control of angels. Whilst man has a mandate to be steward to the earth, and the creation, yet his powers are limited to the mundane. This is what has developed man's affinity with angels. He is glad of their help and grateful for their operations.

### 5. Thy Kingdom Come on Earth

The prayer is, 'Thy Kingdom come on earth, as it is in heaven.' Does this mean that good men of God wish for God to have the same obedience on earth as is found amongst the true angelic creatures? The answer must be, 'Yes!' Yet it may mean even more. It may mean, 'May all celestial creatures come to be part of our visible-invisible

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creation. May we all be one in the affairs of the Father.' This is probably the real meaning behind it all, for that is what will happen.

We have said before that all the redeemed will be as the angels. They will not procreate since God's entire elected family will be completed. They will be glorified since that is God's aim for His family. All will be like His Son. In another sense they will be 'as the angels' in that they will give unswerving adoration and service to God, and to the universe. A reading of the last chapters of the Revelation does not blur the distinctions between heaven and earth, but it does seem to make them one, interfaced—so to speak—and the current idea of time and space seems to give way to a total and unified creation. Heaven is here as there, and the earth here is related to the Holy City which descends from heaven.

God, men and angels—without blurring the distinctions and merging the realities—shall be one. Then we will know so much that as yet we do not know. Christ will bring his own with him, and he will be accompanied by innumerable angels in festal garments. That will be a wonderful day.

Praise God in the heights and in the depths, and praise Him for His glorious angels!

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