

Angels and Demons.

(Angels in the Dispensations of Law and Gospel)

Question 1—*Under what divisions may we contemplate the ministry of angels?*

Answer—In Scripture, we find the angels sometimes designated as angels of the LORD, JEHOVAH (יהוה); and other times as angels of God, Elohim (אלהים).

The second name אֱלֹהִים, *God*, or *Divinity*, from the root אלה, meaning to swear, or curse, *cf.* Gen. 24:41; Lev. 5:1. God is He who swears, or makes oaths, *cf.* Heb. 6:16, 17. Thus, the name of Aaron's wife, Elisheba means "my God has sworn" or "God is an oath," *cf.* Ex. 6:23. This name seldom appears in the Old Testament applied to the angels but, when it does, it is always significant; thus, the angels of God are the ones ascending and descending upon Jacob's ladder, *cf.* Gen. 28:12. Wherefore, we find by that same ladder, Christ, halting man can ascend to the Living One, Who stands above it, even JEHOVAH, *cf.* John 1:51. These angels are ministers of His grace, *cf.* Heb. 1:14; thus, it was an angel of God that delivered the Hebrew children from the fiery furnace, Dan. 3:28; and who shut the mouths of the lions for Daniel himself, Dan. 6:22. So, too, when Hagar was in distress, it was an angel of God which called unto her in comfort, *cf.* Gen. 21:17.

The first is that Name revealed through covenant by which men are made to know something of the absolute and unchangeable nature of the One Who gives life to all others, the Creator, *cf.* Ex. 20:7; hence, this Name is understood to express the self-existent One, *cf.* Ex. 3:13-15. As such, the angels, as angels of the LORD, are angels of His power, *cf.* 2 Thess. 1:7 (ἀγγέλων δυνάμεως αὐτοῦ); for they assist in ministering judgment because they must minister according to that unchanging nature, as searching winds and consuming flames, *cf.* Heb. 1:7. Thus, it was two angels of the LORD, which appeared with JEHOVAH and went forth to destroy Sodom, *cf.* Gen. 18:1, 2; 19:1, 13.

Notice, Peter says that judgment must begin with the house of God, 1 Pet. 4:17. These angels first visit Abraham, making a trial of the faith of the elect, *cf.* Job 10:6; which should have strengthened the faith of both Abraham and Sarah, but Sarah failed, laughing in unbelief, even after having received the divine promise, *cf.* Gen. 17:17 with 18:9-15. Yet, the sins of believers are not like those of unbelievers, *cf.* Deut. 32:5; so, without a direct rebuke of the sin, the angels turn toward Sodom in judgment, Gen. 18:16. However, even here, these angels of the LORD minister grace to those in covenant with God, *cf.* Gen. 19:14-16; wherein we see that these are not necessarily different angels but different considerations of these angels as they worship the true God, in and through His Son, Jesus Christ, *cf.* Heb. 1:5, 6. Thus, the angel who announced the birth of Samson is sometimes called the angel of the LORD and sometimes an angel of God, *cf.* Judg. 13:6, 15. As the angel of the LORD, he gives strict commands as to the discipline to be observed, *cf.* Judg. 13:13, 14. While as the angel of God, he came again to the woman in answer to prayer to bring assurance to her and her husband, Manoah, *cf.* Judg. 13:9. As an angel of the LORD, he represented the Name of the One with Whom we must be reconciled to be saved, *cf.* Judg. 13:15, 16; and, as an angel of God, he ascends the flame of the sacrificial offering toward heaven, as Jacob's ladder, *cf.* Judg. 13:19, 20. In this angel, we see the uniting of the Names of the LORD and God in a figure of what the Psalmist prophesied, Ps. 85:10, 11.

This distinction between these administrations, as angels of the LORD and angels of God, is not so easily traced in the New Testament, because it is not written in Hebrew and because now is a day of grace, *cf.* 2 Cor. 6:2. The New Testament brings in a time when the angels will manifest more of the grace covenanted so that the Name of the LORD will not appear in its fearful aspects to the elect of God, *cf.* 2 Cor. 4:6. This unity of Names is manifest to us in the righteous LORD, Ps. 11:7; becomes, in the Person of Jesus, our Righteousness, *cf.* Jer. 23:6.

Question 2—*What are we told of the ministry of angels at the giving of the law?*

Answer—Under these previous considerations, then, we must contemplate the ministry of the angels broadly and with respect to the dispensations of both the law and the gospel, *cf.* John 1:17.

When God came down upon Mount Sinai, to give His chosen people the law which was to govern them, a great host of angels accompanied Him from heaven, *cf.* Ps. 68:17. That mount presented an awful appearance when the LORD spake unto the children of Israel from it, and uttered in their ears the moral law under the form of the Ten Commandments, a thick cloud rested upon it, and lightnings and thunders roared, *cf.* Ex. 20:18. It was full of smoke because the LORD descended upon it in fire, and the smoke thereof ascended as the smoke of a furnace, and the whole mount quaked greatly, *cf.* Ex. 19:18. The angels, who are spirits, and those ministers who are as a flame of fire, surrounded the mount in one grand encampment, *cf.* Ps. 104:4. So, when the eternal Lawgiver came down to announce His law to His chosen people, He appeared in the state of a sovereign, with His ministering servants of wrath present to show how fearful a thing it would be to break the law and fall into the hands of the Living God, *cf.* Dan. 7:10. Therefore, while within, the rich and beautiful glory of the LORD appeared unto Moses and the rulers of the people, *cf.* Ex. 24:9-11; in the eyes of the people below the mount, His glory was like a devouring fire, *cf.* Ex. 19:16-23.

Such is the striking representation of the piercing nature of God's moral law and the fiery infliction of its punishments, it is a fiery law ministered by angels, *cf.* Deut. 33:2. To this the Psalmist alludes in one of his figures to indicate the protection with which Zion is encircled, Ps. 68:17. It is to this that Paul refers when he says that the law was ordained, or given through, angels in the hand of a mediator, Gal. 3:19. It was this which enabled him elsewhere to speak of the law as a word spoken by angels, Heb. 2:2.

Finally, in the case of Stephen, the martyr, as he addresses the Jewish council, he sets forth the leading points in the history of the chosen people, from Abraham to the murdering of Christ, *cf.* Acts 2:23. This discourse was designed to bring out both the faithfulness of God toward His people and their unfaithfulness toward Him, *cf.* Jer. 2:13. He finishes by bringing to the foreground their crowning act of unfaithfulness in crucifying the Lord of glory, where they show themselves to have betrayed the highest trust and proved themselves unworthy of the greatest honor ever granted to a people and that in the sight of the angels, from which they received the law, Acts 7:51-53. Fearful, then, was that guilt, and terrible would be the punishment, *cf.* Matt. 21:43; yet, if such was the case with them, bearing in mind that we have not only the word spoken by angels, but also the clearer and more alluring word spoken by the eternal Son of God, the apostle indicates our guilt will be greater if we neglect or refuse to obey Him, *cf.* Heb. 2:3.

Question 3—*What are we told of the ministry of angels since the coming of the gospel?*

Answer—As noted, the coming of the day of grace has meant that the character of the angels as executing judgments has receded a bit, without wholly vanishing away, *cf.* Acts 12:23. Though their influences may not be perceived, they are still active ministering to the heirs of salvation, *cf.* Ps. 91:11, 12; Acts 10:3, 4. Sometimes, they appear to those unto whom they minister, for comfort, *cf.* Acts 27:23; sometimes, they are not so apparent, even for our testing, *cf.* Heb. 13:2.

It is in the book of Revelation that we see the pervasive working of the angels in the ministry of redemption; indeed, it was through an angel that Jesus showed to His disciples the glorious visions of that Revelation, *cf.* Rev. 1:1. Yet, though angels minister, they do not mediate; therefore, when the book of prophecy was about to be opened, a strong angel asked, who is worthy? but no created being, man or angel, was found, only the Son of God, *cf.* Rev. 5:2-5. Later, four angels are seen standing on the four quarters of the earth, holding the four winds of the earth, that the wind should not blow on the earth, nor on the sea, nor on any tree to do any hurt until the servants of God had been sealed, Rev. 7:1-3. Seven angels sound to the nations the seven trumpets of warning, announcing the coming destruction, Rev. 8:2, 7, 8, 10, 12, 13; 9:1, 13; 10:1, *etc.* Unto seven angels it is committed to pour out the vials of God's wrath upon the earth, Rev. 16:1-4, 8, 10, 12, 17; 17:1; 18:1, 2. To another angel, it is given to take hold of Satan and cast him into the bottomless pit, Rev. 20:1. To another to take John in the spirit to see the Bride, Rev. 21:9, 10.

Question 4—*May we commune with the angels?*

Answer—While we are nowhere in Scripture counselled to commune with angels, we have every reason to believe that they commune with us, often without us being aware, *cf.* Heb. 13:2. As children of God, we have come by faith into the great assembly in which we find them to be present by myriads, *cf.* Heb. 12:22. Yet, just as we are to have no communion with the souls of the dead, including just men made perfect, *cf.* Deut. 18:10-12; we have no justification for seeking after these angels any more than to seek after the dead for revelation, *cf.* Isa. 8:19. In this day of grace, God has opened unto us the mystery of His counsel in the Person of His Son, wherefore, we ought to have recourse to His word, *cf.* Isa. 8:20; Heb. 1:1, 2. It is true the angels do provide for us as guardians, *cf.* Ps. 34:7; 91:11, 12; and they are acknowledged as being fellow servants with the saints of God, *cf.* Rev. 22:9; however, this is not told us to press us to commune with them, which is to leave ourselves open to seducing spirits, *cf.* 1 Tim. 4:1. Whether or not angels can, as some good and godly have affirmed, suggest holy thoughts, stir up holy motions, or other like things is not to be thought too fantastical, since we know that they are able to trouble water and manipulate material things, *cf.* John 5:4; 1 Kings 19:5-7.