

ANGELS

By Paul Penno Jr.
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The movie industry has spent \$200 million producing a film about the sinking of the Titanic. All the horror is re-enacted, and those who love horror will flock to feel vicariously for 3 1/4 hours the soul-wrenching terror of death in the icy waters of the North Atlantic. The 1912 disaster that took 1200 lives traumatized that generation and every one since that has tried to re-live it.

That awful April night to remember raises questions in people's minds. Where was God, that night? The stars were shining bright; the ocean was calm. Why didn't some angels come and plug the gash in the ship's bottom? How could Heaven watch helplessly while those multitudes of innocent passengers drowned?

One could ask the same question with even more pain, Why didn't Heaven intervene when in our generation the Nazis murdered those 6 million Jews and Gypsies? In anger, many people have concluded that there is simply no God anywhere, or if He exists, that He is cruel to permit this horror.

There is an answer: Satan is the prince of this world; Adam sold out to him; mankind have chosen Satan's rule just as the Germans chose Hitler's rule and neither Franklin Roosevelt nor King George VI for example could intervene in Germany for neither had jurisdiction there. We live in a world dominated by Satan, under his jurisdiction, and death came in, says the apostle Paul, because of the sin he

persuaded Adam to embrace. So "death passed upon all men," he says. But the first death those 1200 people suffered that awful April night in 1912 is not the real problem; the problem is the second death. And that's what Jesus has saved us from. We can be sure that every one who faced death that night (and they all had several hours to face it and prepare—it wasn't like a sudden plane crash), every one who cried out to the Lord in faith found repentance and acceptance. Rev. 20:13 says that "the sea [will give] up the dead which were in it." The Good News is that you and I can rejoice today in the everlasting life that Christ has given us.

We can understand how war breaks out in this dark, sinful world; but how could there be "war in heaven"? (Rev. 12:7) Heaven is a perfect place! Who started it?

The Bible says clearly that sin originated with Lucifer, the highest of the angels (Eze. 28:12-15; Isa. 14:12-14). He sought to spread rebellion. And many angels joined him ("the third part," Rev. 12:4). But who started the conflict that resulted in "the great dragon, . . . the Devil, and Satan [being] . . . cast out"?

A very wise writer says that Lucifer's new idea of "the . . . exaltation of self, contrary to the Creator's plan, awakened forebodings of evil in minds to whom God's glory was supreme" (GC 494). This quiet, clever, secret "exaltation of self" would have gone on and on had it not been that some "minds" loyal to God were "awakened" to oppose it. They were the ones who started the "war in heaven"!

They were not content to let this underhanded work proceed unopposed.

Our text seems clear: "And there was war in heaven: Michael and His angels fought against the dragon [that is, took the initiative]; and the dragon fought and his angels, and prevailed not; neither was their place found any more in heaven" (Rev. 12:7, 8). There is no suggestion that literal swords or guns were used. Two of three "parts" of the angels thought through the clever lies of Lucifer and his supporting angels, and rejected them; thus "their place" was no more "found . . . in heaven." Today the Holy Spirit still takes the initiative in opposing evil. Thank God! And we should cooperate with Him and stop opposing His initiatives.

Satan was "cast out into the earth" because our first parents welcomed him (Gen. 3). Now the cosmic controversy continues here until "our brethren . . . overcome him [Satan] by the blood of the Lamb," "and by the word of their testimony" (two things!), and "love not their lives unto the death" (vss. 9-12). When among them that original "exaltation of self" is renounced, the final victory will come. "Therefore rejoice, ye heavens." Why? Be "glad and rejoice, for the marriage of the Lamb is come" (19:6, 7). AT LAST!

What are "guardian angels"? Does everybody have one? Why do they protect some people and not others. It's good for us to ask questions. We need to know how to get those angels detailed to serve us. They are more efficient than armed bodyguards or the President's Secret Service aides.

Please note: (1) We live in Enemy-controlled territory, his majesty the devil being "the prince of this world" (Jn. 14:30). (2) It is coming increasingly under his control "defiled under the inhabitants thereof; because they have transgressed the laws, changed the ordinance, broken the everlasting covenant. Therefore hath the curse devoured the earth," not merely in a physical sense but also morally (Isa. 24:5).

When "the princes of this world" expelled Christ from the world (1 Cor. 2:8) they chose a criminal in His place, and crucified Him (Acts 3:14, 15). Jesus is therefore *persona non grata* in this wicked world (cf. 1 Jn. 5:19). (3) But although He is in exile from this earth, He has sent His vicar, the Holy Spirit, to be with those who believe in Him (Jn. 14:16, 17; 16:7-13). His presence with God's people is equivalent to Jesus personally being with them (14:18). For centuries, the Holy Spirit has not only "comforted" Christ's loyal believers, He has also exercised a restraining power on the evil in the world (Rev. 7:1-4). If it were not for His continuing influence, we would all be at the mercy of the "notorious" who are NOT already incarcerated (as the FBI thought).

(4) Guardian angels are detailed to be "ministering spirits, sent forth [detailed] to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation"—Heaven's Secret Service agents sent to protect "royalty," who by faith have become members of the "family of God" (Heb. 1:14; Eph. 3:15; 1 Pet. 2:9).

(5) Common sense sees that those thus protected must be people whose lives are dedicated to "the King's business," to Jesus.

(6) We cannot hazard a guess about others, why they apparently didn't have angels' protection; good sense would tell us that when we pray "in the name of Jesus" we must sincerely be living for Him.

(7) Ask for an angel guard; that is, "pray without ceasing," as families. Then—let us not fear but believe that "the angel of the Lord encampeth round about them that fear [reverence] Him, and delivereth them" (Ps. 34:7). If you can read this, that means you have their protection thus far!

Millions of Christians are right now studying about angels. Go into almost any Bible Book Store and you will find many titles about this intriguing subject. One truth is clear in Scripture: Jesus said that each human being who believes in Him, whose heart responds to His love, is given a special "guardian angel." He says, "Take heed that ye despise not one of these little ones; for I say unto you, That in heaven their angels do always behold the face of my Father which is in heaven" (Mt. 18:10). It seems reasonable to understand this promise as meaning that God assigns an angel to each of us to be a kind of personal body-guard. But not only physical body-guard, but one who helps us spiritually as well, and sometimes the physical security is less important than the spiritual.

If we make a mistake, does this guardian angel forsake us? Sometimes in our zeal to frighten our children into not going to worldly places, we tell them that if they go, their guardian angel forsakes

them at the door. But fear will never produce genuine devotion to Christ. A good story to remember is that of Jacob. He had sinned grievously (the story is in Genesis 27). He repeatedly lied to his poor old blind father, Isaac; although we don't read that he was put under oath, his lies seem quite equivalent to perjury, lying under oath. He takes the name of God in vain in the course of his lying (vss. 19-22). Feeling guilty and polluted, he leaves home on his way to Mesopotamia. Tired at night, he lies down on the ground to sleep away his exhaustion and his guilty sorrow, probably not daring to pray. "I'm nuthin' goin' nowhere" he probably thought to himself. You know how when we have sinned, we don't feel like praying. Well, his angel did not forsake him! Young people need to learn that story; he had this dream of a ladder let down from heaven right where he was. Telling youth this story will NOT encourage them to presume against God's mercy; it will melt their hearts to appreciate His mercy. And that's far better than cowering in terror. Angels are our friends, not KGB agents looking for a case against us.

Angels are not human beings. And especially, they are not humans who have died. The Bible tells us that they were created higher than we were. Speaking of "man," it says, "Thou madest him a little lower than the angels" (Heb. 2:6, 7). They are not flesh and blood as we are, although they can assume the appearance of human beings on special occasions.

We read who they are: they are “all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation?” (1:14). You can’t “see” a “spirit.” But angels are sent by the Father on a mission to each one of us who believes. You may never hear an angel speak to you audibly with your physical hearing, but that’s not the point. As a “spirit” the angel comes to you with a message that may be deeper yet clearer than human language can put it. And it will always be in total harmony with the Bible. And it will always be to lift you up, never to cast you down.

For example, you are tempted to discouragement. You don’t clearly know the reason; a dark cloud seems over you which is deeper than words. Have you ever been in that situation? I have!

Then you remember the invitation of Jesus to come to His Father in prayer. You kneel, and you wait before Him, no rushing off in a frenzy; just “wait on the Lord: be of good courage, and He shall strengthen thine heart: wait, I say, on the Lord” (Ps. 27:14).

Let me assure you: He will send one of His “ministering spirits,” an angel, to give you a message of encouragement. It may not be in words your physical ear hears, but it will be a far deeper message that comes in a conviction of truth. Your heart burden will be lifted.

You will never be proud because you have a special connection with heaven. You will never “think of yourself more highly than [you] ought to think; but . . . think soberly, according as God hath dealt to every one the measure of faith” (Rom.

12:3). You will hold your head high in self-respect, knowing you are a “servant” of everyone just as Jesus was. He came “not to be ministered unto, but to minister” (Matt. 20:28). And then you will know your true joy in life.

There are more than one hundred million of angels. “Ten thousand times ten thousand and thousands of thousands” is the number given by the prophet. Every one of them are ministering spirits to this planet. “Are they not ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation?” They form a very intimate and interesting relationship between heaven and earth. Every heir of salvation has a ministering angel.” “The angel of the Lord encampeth round about them that fear Him, and delivereth them.” Psa. 34:7.

There are different orders of angels. There are the seraphims and the cherubims. All the angels do not have the same office. There are seven who have the vials of wrath to pour out upon the wicked during the seven last plagues. They administer judgments on the wicked. It was an angel who smote Herod, “and he was eaten of worms and gave up the ghost.”

Some have power over fire; others over water. Angels have charge of nations, and when a people or nation or even a ruler of the nation has filled up the cup of his iniquity the word comes from the holy watcher, “Hew the tree down and destroy it.” So it is God that “Increaseth the nations, and destroyeth them: He enlargeth the nations, and straiteneth them again. He taketh away the heart of the chief of

the people of the earth and causeth them to wander in the wilderness where there was no way. They grope in the dark without light, and He maketh them to stagger like a drunken man." It was angels that opened the prison doors for the disciples, while their keepers were asleep, and led them forth. Angels that had charge over beasts preserved Daniel in the lions' den. The angel of the Lord closed the lions' mouths. They answered the prayer of the prophet when he sought the Lord for an understanding of the vision. The angel in the cloud led Israel out of Egypt and through the wilderness. They preserve a record of men's lives, even of every word they speak; and by this record men will be justified or condemned in the day of Judgment.

There are fallen angels. These become the messengers of Satan to counterwork the work of God. There are more than fifty millions of them. But the angels of God excel in strength, hearkening to the words of God. At the day of Judgment everything will be made to appear as recorded in the books by the angels. How important then that our lives are such that good angels accompany us in all the walks of life.

The apostle to the Gentiles admonishes all: "Be not forgetful to entertain strangers; for thereby some have entertained angels unawares." Heb. 13:2. There are two ways in which angels have been entertained. First, by their coming in the person of men as they appeared to Abraham and Lot; second, by entertaining the servants of God. Not that the servants of God themselves are

angels, but the Saviour said of them, "Their angels do always behold the face of My Father which is in heavenly." "The angel of the Lord encampeth round about them that fear Him, and delivereth them." Matt. 18:10; Ps. 34:7. Therefore by showing hospitality to the true servant of God, they entertain the angels who accompany him. The names of such individuals, the location of their dwellings, and the occupations which they follow, are well known among the angels of God. To Cornelius the angel said concerning Peter, "And now send men to Joppa, and call for one Simon, whose surname is Peter; he lodgeth with one Simon a tanner, whose house is by the seaside. He shall tell thee what thou oughtest to do." Acts 5:5, 6. The protection and blessings that are afforded by these angels, who are ministering spirits, are also brought to the households of those who have manifested this hospitality. They are also receiving Christ; for He identifies Himself with His servants. "He that receiveth you, receiveth Me; and he that receiveth Me, receiveth Him that sent Me. He that receiveth a prophet in the name of a prophet, shall receive a prophet's reward, and he that receiveth a righteous man in the name of a righteous man shall receive a righteous man's reward, and whosoever shall give to drink unto one of these little ones a cup of cold water only in the name of a disciple, verily I say unto you, he shall in no wise lose his reward." Matt. 10:40-42.

IN hymns and prayers and exhortations we often hear of "angels and archangels." In the Bible we find no such expression for it is not an admissible

one. Archangel means the chief or head of angels. Now while there must necessarily be among the armies of Heaven many angels who are high in authority, there can be but one who is chief of all. The same people who use the term "archangels," often use the term "arch-enemy" or "arch-deceiver." In this case they have reference to Satan, the chief enemy of God and men. Knowing that Satan is the prime instigator of all evil, they do not think it necessary to specify who is meant when they say "arch-enemy." There could be but one. So there could be but one archangel.

The Scriptures enable us to tell with exactness who the archangel is. In 1 Thess. 4:16 Paul says: "For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first." In John 5:26-29 we read the words of Christ. "For as the Father hath life in himself; so hath he given to the Son to have life in himself; and hath given him authority to execute judgment also, because he is the Son of man. Marvel not at this; for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth." Here we learn that it is the voice of the Son of God that calls the dead from their graves. The previous text says that it is the voice of the archangel; therefore, the archangel is the Son of God. Then certainly there can be but one archangel; for in all things Christ has the preeminence.

Again we come to the same conclusion by a comparison of Jude 9 and Dan. 10:21. Jude says:

"Yet Michael the archangel, when contending with the devil he disputed about the body of Moses, durst not bring against him a railing accusation." In the book of Daniel (chap. 8:16; 9:21) we find that the angel Gabriel was commissioned to interpret the visions of the prophet. In chapter 10:21, before he begins a most important revelation, he says: "There is none that holdeth with me in these things, but Michael your prince." Here the expression, "Michael your prince," has undoubted reference to Christ, but we have already learned (Jude 9) that Michael is the archangel. Dan. 10:13 strengthens the position that Michael, the archangel, is Christ, for we there read (margin) of "Michael, the first of the chief princes." This is in harmony with what was said before, that although the armies of Heaven must have many leaders, there could be but one head over all, and that is Christ.

WHEN Christ spoke of the condition of the righteous after the resurrection he said, "Neither can they die any more; for they are equal unto the angels." Luke 20:36. Thus the angels in Heaven are immortal. But there is another feature in which the saints will resemble the angels, and that is in their holiness. This quality is a characteristic of the angels. This is so well known that an angel is almost a symbol of purity. When they are mentioned in the Bible the adjective "holy" is often applied to them. The servants of Cornelius told Peter that their master had been "warned from God by an holy angel." Acts 10:22. In Matt. 25:31 Christ himself applied the term to all the angels of Heaven. He said: "When the Son of man shall come in his

glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory." Without these direct statements as to their character, we would know that they are holy, for Christ says of these "ministering spirits," they "do always behold the face of my Father which is in Heaven." Matt. 18:10. And only the pure and holy in heart can see God. Matt. 5:8; Heb. 12:14.

IN what does the holiness of the angels consist? What is it that makes them holy? It must be in that they do the will of God. That the will of God is done in Heaven, is evident from Matt. 6:10; and since there are none in Heaven except the angels who do the will of God, it is a necessary consequence that they are the ones to whom Christ refers. God is holy, and the doing of his will would make one like him, holy. From Rom. 2:17, 18 we learn that God's law is his will; and that this is the will which the angels perform, and which constitutes their holiness, is plainly stated in Ps. 103:20: "Bless the Lord, ye his angels, that excel in strength, that do his commandments, hearkening unto the voice of his word." The perfection of the angels, then, is due to the fact that they keep the perfect law of God.

CHRIST taught his disciples to pray, "Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in Heaven." Matt. 6:10. This shows that a time will come when the commandments of God will be kept on earth even as the angels now keep them in Heaven. This will be in the new earth, wherein righteousness shall dwell. 2 Peter 3:13. But although the change of the earth from old to new will be quickly effected, and although man's change from mortal to immortal

will be brought about in the twinkling of an eye, the change to holiness is a gradual work. "Heaven is not reached at a single bound." The work of sanctification is a progressive work. Therefore the fact that the commandments of God will some day be kept by men on earth even as they now are by the angels in Heaven, shows that they who hope to be among the equals of the angels must now be keeping the commandments of God.

EVIL ANGELS.

WE read in 2 Peter 2:4 that "For if God spared not the angels that sinned, but cast them down to hell, and delivered them into chains of darkness, to be reserved unto judgment." This shows conclusively that the angels were once on probation as Adam was in the garden of Eden, and that those who are now called the holy angels have had their characters tested, so that they are now placed beyond the reach of temptation. It shows also that the angels who sinned can have no hope of a restoration to the favor of God. Peter says that God "delivered them into *chains of darkness*." We can understand what this means by comparing a few texts. From 2 Peter 2:19; Fal. 3:22, 23; Rom. 7:14 we learn that sin is bondage. The person who is in the darkness of error is in a state of bondage. Moreover, we learn from 2 Thess. 2:9-12 that those who persist in rejecting light will finally be given up to believe a lie. The same thing is taught in Rom. 1:28. That is, those who persistently sin in the face of great light, will finally be left in the bondage of sin without hope of escape. This is what is doubtless meant by the angels that sinned being delivered

into chains of darkness. They had light and knowledge greater than man had, as they were a higher order of creatures than he was. In the face of this light, and in defiance of the love and mercy of God, they deliberately chose the way of darkness. Having once chosen the bondage of sin, their choice was irrevocable. They were in "chains of darkness" that could not be broken. And so until the Judgment day ends their miserable careers, they are in darkness. They are darkness itself. Darkness and error are inseparable from them. Wherever they are, their presence contaminates; and their sole aim is to perpetrate lying wonders which shall lure men away from the truth into the same chains of darkness with themselves. Let us never forget to pray, "Deliver us from evil."

CARE OF GOOD ANGELS FOR MEN.

BUT if "the rulers of the darkness of this {91} world" are actively engaged in trying to overthrow us, and drag us down to eternal ruin, we have the assurance that "angels that excel in strength" are "ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation." Heb. 1:14. Every "little one," every child of God, has one for his especial guardian. Matt. 18:10; Acts 12:15. Not only so, but all the heavenly host are intensely interested in the whole human race, and anxious for the conversion of each sinner. Says Christ: "I say unto you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth." Luke 15:10. When Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea, there was joy in Heaven. It was not sufficient to send a single angel to announce his birth, but a

multitude of the heavenly host must accompany him to sing their joy at the good tidings which should be to all people. So great was the joy among the angels over the fact that fallen man's Redeemer had actually come, that it would seem that they could not remain quiet in Heaven. They must flock to witness the joy of the humble shepherds, and to proclaim their own.

SEEING then that "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life" (John 3:16); that "God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us" (Rom. 5:8); that Christ is at the right hand of God making intercession for us (Rom. 8:34); and that all the holy and mighty angels of God are interested and loving messengers of light and strength to those who are striving against sin, may we not even in the face of Satan's hosts say: "In all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us. For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." Rom. 8:37-39.