

3. **He is associated with the Father and the Son.** The same passages that helped establish the divinity of the Holy Spirit because of His association and identification with the other Members of the Godhead also reveal His personality. This is particularly true of the baptismal formula (Matthew 28:19), the apostolic benediction (2 Corinthians 13:14), and the distribution of the gifts to the church (1 Corinthians 12:4-6). Oneness with the other Persons of the Godhead in name, fellowship, and work implies oneness with Them in personality.

We must keep in mind that when we use such terms as “person,” “personality,” and “being” with reference to any of the Members of the Godhead—except the incarnate Christ—we are using human terms to describe our concept of Deity. It is proper that we should use them if we remember that all we know about their meaning is what has been divinely revealed. We are not to speculate beyond God’s revelation. What has been disclosed to us is not the nature of God, but the relationships of the Members of the Godhead with each other, and relationships between them and us. The revelation of God has apparently been limited to what is necessary to enable us to comprehend the meaning and the operation of the plan of salvation. Under the Holy Spirit’s guidance we should pursue experimental knowledge in this area and not be overly concerned with what has not been revealed.<sup>6</sup>

### TOPICS FOR STUDY AND DISCUSSION

1. Can you find any distinctions in the Bible between the attributes of the Father and Son and those of the Holy Spirit? Enumerate the similarities you find and point out any differences.
2. What is the significance of the fact that the Holy Spirit is designated by so many different names and titles in the Bible and the spirit of prophecy writings?
3. Can you find evidence of worship accorded to the Holy Spirit as it is to the Father and the Son?
4. Discuss ways in which the Holy Spirit is affected by the actions of men.
5. Find all you can about the relation between Christ and the Holy Spirit during Christ’s life on earth. Use your Bible concordance and *Index to the Writings of Ellen G. White*.

<sup>6</sup> See *The Acts of the Apostles*, pages 51:3 to 52:1.

## The Angels

Ordinarily the Bible doctrine of angels would not be included under the same general heading as the doctrine of the Godhead. There is a particular reason for doing this, since we wish to make a unified study of all of the supernatural beings involved in the creation of this world, the fall of man, and his restoration to perfection through the plan of salvation. This will give us a complete background for the study of the plan of salvation that makes up the remainder of the book.<sup>1</sup>

Logically, the doctrine of angels follows the doctrine of God because angels are created beings engaged in His service. They are supernatural beings usually unseen by men; therefore, the only trustworthy information we have about them has come to us through divine revelation. As the Bible deals primarily with God’s relation to man, and gives us only a general view of God’s relation to the rest of the universe, so in speaking of angels it deals almost entirely with the part angels play in the affairs of men. With the Old Testament mentioning angels more than one hundred times and the New Testament more than 160 times, it seems unnecessary to list separately evidences for their existence. In this chapter we will give attention to the name, the nature, the characteristics, and the activities of angels.

### I. The Name “Angel”

The name “angel” came to us from the Greek word used to denote the office and function of these heavenly beings. The word is *aggelos* (pronounced *angelos*) and means “messenger.” *Mal’ak*, the Old Testa-

<sup>1</sup> “The connection of the visible with the invisible world, the ministration of angels of God, and the agency of evil spirits, are plainly revealed in the Scriptures, and inseparably interwoven with human history. There is a growing tendency to disbelief in the existence of evil spirits, while the holy angels that ‘minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation’ (Hebrews 1:14) are regarded by many as the spirits of the dead. But the Scriptures not only teach the existence of angels, both good and evil, but present unquestionable proof that these are not the disembodied spirits of dead men.”—*The Great Controversy*, page 511:1.

ment equivalent of *aggelos*, is translated "messenger" almost as often as it is rendered "angel." In both Hebrew and Greek the term is applied to human messengers as well as to heavenly messengers. See 1 Kings 19:2; Haggai 1:13; Malachi 2:7; Malachi 3:1; Matthew 11:10; Luke 7:24; Luke 9:52.

There are a number of other instances where the use of "angel" should be understood in the sense of "messenger" rather than in its usual connotation. These are the instances when "Angel," "my Angel," "Angel of the Lord," or a similar expression is used with reference to Deity. Genesis 48:15, 16; Isaiah 63:9; Acts 7:35 (cf. Exodus 3:2, 4); Acts 7:38 (cf. Nehemiah 9:13); Revelation 22:16. The expression "archangel," which is usually understood to mean "chief angel," or "first angel," can perhaps be better understood if it is viewed as "chief messenger." We believe that Christ is the Archangel. See *The S.D.A. Bible Commentary* on Daniel 10:13; 1 Thessalonians 4:16; Jude 9; Revelation 12:7. Recognizing the broader meaning of "angel" helps to eliminate the problem involved in describing Christ as "angel."<sup>2</sup>

## II. The Nature of Angels

Our information concerning the nature of angels is extremely limited and must be drawn largely from incidental statements referring to them.

**1. They are created beings.** Only the Members of the Godhead have original and underived life. 1 Timothy 6:16. All other creatures and things in the universe are created, and they are neither self-existent nor do they continue to exist through their own power. Colossians 1:16, 17.

Nehemiah 9:6

Psalms 148:2, 5

Angels are called sons of God (Job 1:6; 2:1; 38:7), apparently in the same sense that Adam is called the son of God (Luke 3:38)—as created beings.

**2. They are spirit beings.** The Bible calls angels "spirits" (Hebrews 1:14), but it does not define "spirit." The characteristics of angels give us a little insight into what spirit beings are like, but we do not understand their nature.

<sup>2</sup> See *Patriarchs and Prophets*, page 366:2.

## III. Characteristics of Holy Angels

°Look up each of the following texts so you will be acquainted with the statements or circumstances describing their characteristics.<sup>3</sup>

1. They possess great power. 2 Thessalonians 1:7; Psalm 103:20; 2 Peter 2:11; Matthew 28:2.
2. They are glorious beings. Luke 9:26.
3. They are not to be worshiped. Colossians 2:18; Revelation 22:8, 9.
4. They do not marry. Matthew 22:30; Mark 12:25.
5. They are not subject to death. Luke 20:35, 36.
6. They apparently have great knowledge, but they are not all-wise. Matthew 24:36; 1 Peter 1:12.
7. They travel swiftly. Daniel 9:21-23.
8. They are great in number. Revelation 5:11; Hebrews 12:22.

## IV. The Activities of Angels

It would be interesting to follow the activities of an angel for a single day. How much greater the interest would be to trace the activities of all the angels who have influenced a single human life from birth to death. At best, all we can do from the Bible record is piece together a composite picture from the brief glimpses of angel activities we have been given and from other allusions. The picture, once formed, is comforting and encouraging, revealing the deep interest of God in His human sons and daughters and His provision for us.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>3</sup> "Experience in spiritual things widens the vision of saints and angels, and both increase in capability and knowledge as they work in their respective spheres."—*Counsels to Teachers*, page 426:3.

"We cannot see and could not endure the glory of angelic ministrations if their glory was not veiled in condescension to the weakness of our human nature. The blaze of the heavenly glory, as seen in the angels of light, would extinguish earthly mortals."—*Selected Messages*, b. 1, pp. 96:3 to 97:0.

See *The Great Controversy*, pages 511:3 to 512:0.

<sup>4</sup> "The Lord Jesus Christ, the divine Son of God, existed from eternity, a distinct Person, yet one with the Father. He was the surpassing glory of heaven. He was the commander of the heavenly intelligences, and the adoring homage of the angels was received by Him as His right."—*Selected Messages*, b. 1, pp. 247:4 to 248:0.

See *The Acts of the Apostles*, page 153:1.

*The Great Controversy*, pages 512:2 to 513:0.

"Heaven and earth are no wider apart today than when shepherds listened to the angels' song. Humanity is still as much the object of heaven's solicitude as when common men of common occupations met angels at noonday, and talked with the heavenly messengers in the vineyards and the fields.

1. They carry out the commandments of God. Psalm 103:20.
2. They ministered to Christ during His earthly life. Matthew 4:11.
3. They help guide the affairs of nations. Daniel 10:5, 6, 10-14.
4. They protect and deliver God's people. Psalm 34:7; Genesis 19:11; Psalm 91:11. °Find three instances of protection or deliverance. There are examples in the life of Hezekiah, Elisha, Daniel, Peter, Paul, and others.
5. They minister to and encourage God's people. Hebrews 1:14. Protection and deliverance are part of this ministry, but there are also other phases of it. °See 1 Kings 19:5-8; Genesis 32:1, 2; Matthew 18:10; Matthew 28:2-7.
6. They convey God's instruction and give enlightenment. Daniel 9:22; Matthew 1:20-24; 2:13, 19; Luke 1:11-19; 1:26-35; 2:9, 10; Acts 8:26.
7. They will appear with Christ when He returns. Matthew 24:31; 25:31; Matthew 13:39, 49, 50; 2 Thessalonians 1:7, 8.

Few Bible truths have deeper personal appeal to the Christian than does angel ministry. The knowledge that heavenly messengers minister to human beings is of untold assurance and strength to children as well as to adults. Angels are more than messengers and guardians: they are "fellow servants" of those who "keep the sayings of this book" (the book of Revelation), as they were fellow servants of the ancient prophets who were God's spokesmen. Revelation 22:9; 19:10. We work side by side with, and may receive the ministry of, these unseen heavenly beings who have ready access to the throne of God and who share with us the blessings they receive.<sup>5</sup>

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To us in the common walks of life, heaven may be very near. Angels from the courts above will attend the steps of those who come and go at God's command."—*The Desire of Ages*, page 48:4.

See *The Desire of Ages*, page 21:1; *Christ's Object Lessons*, page 176:2. *Selected Messages*, b. 1, p. 17:1.

*The S.D.A. Bible Commentary*, vol. 7, pp. 922-924.

<sup>5</sup> See *The Great Controversy*, page 513:1.

"The angels appointed to minister to the children of God have at all times access to His presence."—*The Great Controversy*, page 513:0.

"Every redeemed one will understand the ministry of angels in his own life. The angel who was his guardian from his earliest moment; the angel who watched his steps, and covered his head in the day of peril; the angel who was with him in the valley of the shadow of death, who marked his resting place, who was the first to greet him in the resurrection morning—what will it be to hold converse with him, and to learn the history of divine interposition in the individual life, of heavenly co-operation in every work for humanity!"—*Education*, page 305:2.

## TOPICS FOR STUDY AND DISCUSSION

1. See your Bible concordance for references to angels in the four Gospels. Give special attention to what Jesus said about angels.
2. Read Acts 12:1-23 and *The Acts of the Apostles*, pages 143-154. What insight into the characteristics and ministry of angels do you gain from Peter's experience?
3. What is the work of angels in punishment and destruction? See Acts 12:23 (cf. *The Acts of the Apostles*, page 152:1); Isaiah 37:36; Genesis 19:11; Joshua 6:20 (cf. *Testimonies*, vol. 3, p. 264).
4. Find examples of times when angels appeared as men or in other visible forms. In addition, note times when angels appeared in visions or dreams. What added understanding is brought to you by these incidents? (See also *The Adventist Home*, page 445:1-3, or *Testimonies*, vol. 6, pp. 341, 342.)
5. Point out the differences between angels and men. Give Bible evidence.