

Know Your Bible

Here is a sentence from the Religious Herald: "There is no standard seminary nor first-class college in the North in which there is a single teacher who believes the doctrine of pre-millenarianism or uses the methods of interpretation by which pre-millenarians arrive at their conclusions."

It is only too patent that the religion of our day has been turned away from the Bible, the perfect revelation of God's will; from God, the Creator and Sovereign of the universe; from Christ, the Savior of the race. Men have torn the Bible from its niche, God from His throne, and Christ from His cross, and have in their stead, apotheosized themselves. It is no small wonder that but a remnant shall be saved; for infidelity, garbed in the robes of Christianity, stands in the pulpits of the churches, and sits in the chairs of the schools, pouring into the minds and hearts of mankind a deadly poison that will eternally destroy both the giver and the receiver.

Now, if ever, is the time for everyone who loves the Lord Jesus Christ and His appearing and His kingdom, to work and pray mightily for the early establishment of that kingdom in the earth, for "the night cometh, when no man can work."

34. ANGELS, MINISTERS OF MERCY

HAVING heard from the native mail runner that her husband was smitten with fever in the tiger jungles, Mrs. Scudder determined to leave the shelter of the mission compound at once and carry quinine to her stricken companion. So, hiring four Indian coolies, she packed an overnight bag and her nursing kit into a palanquin, climbed in beside her baggage, and ordered the carriers to bear her to the distant village, where the missionary lay delirious on the floor of a mud hut.

The Indians made good time down the jungle trail until nightfall. Then the roars that echoed up and down the wooded canyons unnerved them. Despite the mem-sahib's entreaties on behalf of her sick husband and herself, and heedless of all her expressions of confidence in a God that could bridle the jaws of the tigers, the palanquin carriers fled.

The lone white woman was thus left to her own devices, with naught but matchwood between her and the savage beasts. They circled the coffin like litter all night. One, more enterprising than his fellows, even nudged the frail box as he sniffed the scent of human flesh within. But, while jarred, the palanquin was not destroyed. The reason? During the darkness God watched over His praying child inside.

Ministers of God

Surely "the angel of the Lord encamps round about them that fear Him, and delivers them." Psalm 34:7. Every child of God is overshadowed by a minister of God's protecting mercy. His angels are "all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation." Hebrews 1:14.

Along with all the other benefits of the plan of salvation wrought through the death of Jesus, is the guardianship of angels. Their care is as much the Christian's lot as is the promise of forgiveness to all who believe. The Good Book assures the child of God that "He shall give His angels charge over thee, to keep thee in all thy ways." Psalm 91:11. Through His mighty wardens the loving Father assures you that He "will keep thee in all places whither you go." (Genesis 28:15), even if guilty, helpless, and alone—as was Jacob.

For our spiritual morale the Savior, who is "the same yesterday, and today, and forever" (Hebrews 13:8), has filled the pages of Holy Writ with examples of the intervention of angels in the affairs of those who have committed their ways to God. For instance, "the angel of the Lord" came to the rescue of discouraged Hagar "by a fountain of water in the wilderness" (Genesis 16:7) after she had fled before the harsh treatment of her mistress, Sarah.

Again, a heavenly messenger restrained honest Abraham on Mount Moriah when he had fully demonstrated his willingness to carry out an apparently unreasonable divine command. Genesis 22:11, 12. Later, an infallible angel guide went before the camp of Israel in all its journeys through the wilderness for forty years. Exodus 14:19, 20. Also, to the rescue of a people suffering the deserved consequences of apostasy in the days of the judges, celestial comforters came again and again with messages of encouragement. Judges 2:1; 6:11; 13:3.

An angel actually touched Elijah, when that weary servant of Jehovah was sleeping the sleep of exhaustion, awakened him, and, tenderly directing his gaze to food already provided for his consumption, advised the disheartened man, "Arise and eat." 1 Kings 19:5. So particular is the Father's care for the needs

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of each of His children, since “without respect of persons” He judges “according to every man’s work” (1 Peter 1:17) and need.

Thus, when the religious liberty of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego was violated, so that they were cast into a fiery furnace for refusing to bend the knee to a civil mandate invading the sphere of conscience, One “like the Son of God” stood with them in the ordeal, and the three worthies “came forth of the midst of the fire” without so much as the smell of smoke in their uninjured garments.

Daniel 3:25, 26. Later, when Daniel himself was put to dangerous discomfort for refusing to obey a political religious dictum which would have trammelled his convictions, this sufferer for conscience’ sake testified, “My God has sent His angel, and has shut the lions’ mouths, that they have not hurt me.” Daniel 6:22.

Ministry to Christ

In the days of Jesus, Mark records that “angels ministered unto Him” in the wilderness of temptation. Mark 1:13. And he it remembered, Christ enjoyed no privileges that His believers may not. Likewise, in His Gethsemane, when His soul was torn between the horrors of the cross and His love for lost sinners, “there appeared an angel unto Him from heaven, strengthening Him” (Luke 22:43) for the ordeal. So they will strengthen then the Christian in his hours of agonizing decision when called upon to choose between bearing the cross for others and selfish indulgence.

Our Savior is our example in all things. 1 Peter 2:21. Angel ministry in His earthly life is His pledge of the same help to us in ours. Hebrews 4:15; 2:17; 1 Corinthians 10:11. Peter, unjustly cast behind walls, bars, and armed guards, experienced the miraculous when “the angel of the Lord came upon him, and a light shined in the prison: and he smote Peter on the side, and raised him up, saying, Arise up quickly. And his chains fell off from his hands.” Acts 12:7. The mighty deliverer, moreover, was so tender as to advise the apostle, “Gird thyself, and bind on thy sandals. . . . Cast thy garment about thee, and follow me.” Verse 8. His small comforts not forgotten in the urgency of the larger issue, Peter passed well clad through opened iron gates into the freedom of the cool night air.

The appearance of angels to men after the death of Christ is the assurance that their services are also at our demand. In fact, all the Biblical instances of supernatural supervision of men’s affairs, a few of which we have cited, are “written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope.” Romans 15:4.

Surely it is already obvious that angels of God are not just good thoughts, as potent as these may be. For who would care to rely upon the power of his imagination alone when faced with tigers, lions, or the flames of a fiery furnace?

Neither are these supernatural creatures the spirits of the departed dead. True, there are spirits that torment certain individuals. But these are the evil angels that fell from heaven with Satan. Revelation 12:7-9; 2 Peter 2:4. They frequent the halls of spiritualism, frighten the superstitious near graveyards, and afflict the weak minded. But even these are not the spirits of the wicked who have gone to death before us. We are definitely told that angels were in existence before any human being had ever died. Genesis 3:24. In fact, it is evident they witnessed the creation of this world. Job 38:11; Isaiah 14:12.

Angels Are Created Beings

All angels are created beings, but they are of a higher order than man. Psalm 8:4, 5. Yet they are real. They have faces, feet, and wings. Isaiah 6:1, 2. In fact, they have whole bodies. Daniel 10:5, 6; Ezekiel 10:12. They even eat. Psalm 78:25; Genesis 18:8. They are able to assume materiality or remain invisible, as their duties may demand. Genesis 19:2, 5; Hebrews 13:2. Their might is atomic: Thus one angel smote 185,000 Assyrian troops threatening the existence of God’s people in the days of Hezekiah; and one caused the tomb of Christ to open, and to make the keepers of Christ’s grave as dead men. 2 Kings 19:35; Matthew 28:2-4.

How securely, then, may we rest in their care! For each one of us has his own guardian angel from childhood, and this watchful being represents the needs of his particular ward before the Father. Matthew 18:10. As one writer has depicted, “He [God] would sooner send every angel out of glory to the relief of faithful souls, to make a hedge about them, than have them deceived and led away by the lying wonders of Satan.” Thus, YOU, reader, may believe that in the time of “terror,” “pestilence,” “darkness,” and “plague” “there shall no evil befall thee,” since a mighty companion will “keep thee in all thy ways.” Psalm 91:5-11.

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Even when life's journey is ended, and we lie cold in the tomb, still an angel watch care does not cease. For on the grand morning of the resurrection they will gather each one of the redeemed from his musty vault and present him to Jesus, the great Life giver. Matthew 24:31; 1 Thessalonians 4:16, 17.

In the meantime the heavenly watchers are also interested in the work of the investigative judgment now going on, as described in Daniel 7:9, 10. They keep the records of our lives; and when Christ comes to reward each one according to his work, good angels not only gather the righteous to Jesus for eternity, but they also act as the executors of God's wrath upon the wicked. Matthew 13:38-42.

In view of the mercy of these mighty beings toward the saved, on the one hand; and, on the other, their vengeance on the unrepentant-well might we pray that we may have their protection on the day of final rewards!

What joy to commune with our guardian angels when sin is forever a thing of the past! In the better land "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!"

God's Great Love

Take heart, then, fearful one! Thank God for the display of His love in the provision of guardians so like their Creator in unselfishness that they labor unceasingly to raise ungrateful human beings to a level of fellowship with Jesus-a fellowship more intimate than they can ever enjoy, seeing they have never had to be saved from sin. Because good angels have never fallen, they have not felt drawn to Jesus with the cords of such tender love as have we. Rejoice, then, in the high prospect of enjoying in the here after advantages even superior to those possessed by sinless creatures! Let us accept their ceaseless services, ourselves to their protection and guidance. Surely in a civilization as complex as ours, and in an age so ominous, we need a higher source of security than earth has to offer.

Peace and poise in the midst of perplexity may be yours, dear reader. Cast "all your care upon Him; for He cares for you." 1 Peter 5:7. Trust Jesus not only for forgiveness of all your past (1 John 1:9); but also resign yourself to the care of His ministers of mercy. A loving Father says to you and to me today, even as He promised His children in the days of long ago, "Behold, I send an Angel before thee, to keep thee in the way, and to bring thee into the place which I have prepared." Exodus 23:20.

MINISTERS TO MANKIND

The Bible is a book of angels. From beginning to end, the Sacred Volume is radiant with their beneficent ministry. As prophet and seer traced truth on parchment or scroll, angels looked over their shoulders and viewed with delight the messages written. Yes, before creation was begun, and after redemption is ended, we find them continually rolling back the curtains of the sky and coming and going on the shimmering wings of light.

Back in eternity the Father and the Son laid the plan of redemption, when "the counsel of peace" was "between Them both." Jesus volunteered to die for guilty man. Then the angels prostrated themselves at the feet of their Commander and offered to become a sacrifice for the lost. But an angel's life could not pay the awful debt. Only a Creator could be a Redeemer.

When the plan was laid before the angels, in expressible joy filled heaven. They were happy. Through the celestial courts there echoed the first strains of that song which was to ring out above the hills of Bethlehem "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men ... The great army of angels were to have a part in the work of human redemption."

Writing of this plan, Peter says, "Which things the angels desire to look into." 1 Peter 1:12. The Greek says, "bend over," as did the cherubim over the mercy seat on the sacred ark. Paul says, "We are made a spectacle [or theater] unto the world, and to angels." 1 Corinthians 4:9. This is the only theater the Christian should countenance. On the stage, men are before hundreds for only an hour. In the world they are before the angels for life.

When the earth came fresh from the hands of its Maker, it was beautiful beyond description. Angels viewed it with delight and rejoiced at the wonderful works of God. Above the newly created world,

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as it lay fair and unblemished by sin, under the smile of God, and bathed in the light of heaven, “the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy.” Job 38:7.

Heavenly beings witnessed the faith of Abraham and the submission of Isaac on Mount Moriah. The sacrifice was not for the patriarch alone, nor was it solely for succeeding generations. It was for the instruction of all the sinless beings of heaven. It was not so difficult now for angels to grasp the mystery of redeeming love.

“There is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repents,” for they helped to bring him to repentance. To the angels a soul is priceless, because he may by and by wear a starry crown, hold a palm branch of victory, and sing a song of experience that even the angels can never learn.

They are “all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation.” They speed on rapid wings to do God’s will, and may be entertained unawares.

They came to Joshua on the battlefield, to Elijah while he was asleep, and to Cornelius while he was at prayer. A star of shining angels guided the Wise Men to the Babe in the manger of Bethlehem. The angels were with Christ throughout His entire ministry on earth. At the beginning an angel told the wondering Joseph, “You shall call His name JESUS.” The celestial choir sang a glory song over His birth in the manger and ministered to Him in the wilderness of temptation and in Gethsemane, while the bloody sweat stained His holy brow. They guarded His grave in the beautiful garden, were in the empty tomb, and when He departed from Olivet, they told His disciples to watch for His return.

When Jesus comes the second time in majesty, all heaven will be emptied of angels. For “the Son of man shall come in His glory, and all the holy angels with Him.” Then “He shall send His angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together His elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other.”

When the last trumpet sounds, and the voice of the Almighty cries, “Awake!” waiting angels make straight for the abodes of the righteous and for the rent tombs of God’s children. As the graves burst asunder, guardian angels that have camped about the saints will be the first to grasp their hands and greet them. Then, with the living righteous, they are caught up to meet their Lord.

WHO ARE THE ANGELS?

What task has been allotted to the sinless angels? Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation?” Hebrews 1:14.

What is one of the earliest Biblical accounts of angels engaged in errands of mercy to men? When the morning arose, then the angels hastened Lot, saying, Arise, take thy wife, and thy two daughters, which are here; lest you be consumed in the iniquity of the city.” Genesis 19:15.

How did angels assist in the giving of the law?

“Who have received the law by the disposition of angels, and have not kept it.” Acts 7:53.

In what special type of revelation has God frequently employed the angels?

“The revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave unto Him, to show unto His servants things which must shortly come to pass; and He sent and signified it by His angel unto His servant John.” Revelation 1:1.

In what other service do angels engage on behalf of believers?

“The angel of the Lord encamps round about them that fear Him, and delivers them.” Psalm 34:7.

In the judgment how will they assist the Judge of all the earth?

a. They will assemble the books of record. “I beheld till the thrones were cast down, and the Ancient of Days did sit. . . . thousand thousands ministered unto Him, and ten thousand times ten thousand stood before Him: the judgment was set, and the books were opened.” Daniel 7:9, 10.

b. They will act as witnesses in the heavenly court. “I say unto you, Whosoever shall confess Me before men, him shall the Son of man also confess before the angels of God: but he that denies Me before men shall be denied before the angels of God.” Luke 12:8, 9.

Who will accompany Jesus when He returns?

“The Son of man shall come in the glory of His Father with His angels; and then He shall reward every man according to his works.” Matthew 16:27.

NOTE: “All through the ages, the holy angels have acted an important part in the salvation of man. They have been the messengers of God, going between heaven and earth, bearing to the throne of Jehovah the prayers of His people, and bringing from that throne His blessing, help, and strength to His tempted, tried, and trusting children. These very angels have watched by the side of the people of God during their

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lifetime. . . . So when the Son of God comes to earth the second time, to bring His people life and immortality, these holy beings come with Him, not as silent witnesses of His glory and might and majesty, not as mere interested spectators of the marvel of the resurrection from the dead, but as His active agents in that stupendous event.” - I. H. Evans, *The Ministry of Angels*, pages 210, 211.

What will then be their happy task?

“He shall send His angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together His elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other.” Matthew 24:31.

35. IS GOD’S PUNISHMENT FOR SIN JUST?

If it is unjust for God to burn the wicked eternally, how then will He punish them?

WHAT is punishment? What is its central idea? What are its necessary implications? Is true punishment ever arbitrary? Is it ever needlessly severe? Punishment obviously implies law, and law implies authority. Unless it be sanctioned by a penalty, no law can have any binding force. In his *Christian Ethics* Dr. Mark Hopkins says: “Punishment is the infliction of a previously declared penalty by the will of the lawgiver, for the sake of sustaining the authority of the law.” The penalty threatened must be of such a character as will tend to protect the law from violation. It may be the infliction of pain of whatever kind the offender is capable of suffering, or deprivation of any pleasure or privilege or possession he might otherwise enjoy.

There can be no penalty threatened or punishment inflicted where there is no law or authority. One person may, in a spirit of retaliation, inflict pain or loss upon another who has offended him; but if he has no authority over him, he cannot punish him.

It would be manifestly improper to call such an infliction punishment. A man who, without authority of law, shoots or beats or otherwise inflicts injury upon a person who trespasses upon his rights, does not punish him. Nor can a ruler or magistrate punish one who is not under his jurisdiction. Even a parent could not justly inflict punishment upon a child who had passed entirely from under his authority. For law and authority, and reciprocal obligation, are always implied in the idea of punishment. To be subject to punishment, a person must owe allegiance to the power or authority that punishes him. Irresponsible power may inflict suffering, loss, torment, upon a helpless victim; but that would not be punishment in any true sense of that word.

Why Must God Punish?

It is not because God possesses supreme power that we are liable to punishment at His hands, but because we are subjects of His government, are under the protection of His law, and owe Him allegiance. God is not only the giver of all the blessings we enjoy, but the author and sustainer of our lives. It is, accordingly, possible for us to forfeit not only these secondary blessings, but also the primary boon which includes them all, that is, life itself, and to become liable to what is called, in human government, “capital punishment.” All jurists assent to the fact that a criminal who is sentenced to imprisonment for life is still entitled to the protection of the government that punishes him; he has the right to claim its protection against any unjust treatment. If, however, instead of inflicting capital punishment or imprisonment upon the government were to banish him from its domain, confiscate his property, and so withdraw from him all legal protection, he would no longer be amenable to the government nor, of course, liable to its punishment.

Is not the same true of the divine government? Assuredly it is. Yet conventional theology teaches that God decrees to inflict unending torment upon irreclaimable sinners after He has judicially and irreversibly cut them off from His government, and so withdrawn from them all protection and favor. Since our lives are in His hands, and we are momentarily dependent upon Him for continuance of life or being, He has a perfect right to inflict upon us the death penalty if we, by rebellion against His government, forfeit our right to His protection and favor. But does it not outrage every conception of right and justice to conclude that, because God has the power, He has the right to perpetuate the life of the impenitent sinner solely for the sake of pursuing the helpless victim with never ending vengeance, after He had cut the victim off from all relation to His government? To conclude that God would exercise a power so utterly capricious and arbitrary, so hopelessly hostile even to our human sense of justice and reason, would strike every