

Our Day In The Light Of Prophecy

effect is wrought.

A specific example of everlasting fire in the punishment of evil is given in Scripture. Sodom and Gomorrah, those wicked cities of the plain," were destroyed by a rain of fire from heaven. These cities, Inspiration says, "are set forth for an example, suffering the vengeance of eternal fire,." Jude 7. The fire was everlasting, eternal, in its effects. The cities of the plain were everlastingly consumed. But the fire went out when the destruction was complete. Unquenchable fire is fire that cannot be quenched. It consumes utterly, until nothing is left; then it goes out of its own accord.

4. "Where Their Worm Dies Not." - Jesus warned of the certain destruction of sin and sinners in the fire of Gehenna; for this is the word translated "hell" in Mark 9: 43.

Hades, which is often translated "hell," is the grave, not the place of punishment. Gehenna, here used of the place of punishment, was the name of the valley where the refuse of Jerusalem was cast for burning. The map of Jerusalem, in any ordinary Bible with maps, shows just outside the southern wall a gorge marked "Valley of Hinnom" (Gehenna). It was here that the people, in the olden times, had sacrificed their children to Moloch.

In order to put an end to these abominations, Josiah polluted it with human bones and other corruption. 2 Kings 23: 10, 13, 14."- Hastings's "Dictionary of the Bible." Here the fires consumed the refuse, and the fire and worms utterly destroyed the carcasses of beasts flung into the place of destruction. It was regarded as a place accursed, and the smoldering fires became symbolical of the fires of the judgment.

The use of this illustration, instead of arguing that the wicked are never destroyed but always live, conveys the opposite idea. What went into the fires of Gehenna was utterly consumed, nothing being left. This was used by Christ as a figure illustrative of the utter destruction of the unrepentant sinner in the day of visitation. This must suffice. The positive teaching of Holy Scripture is that sin and sinners will be blotted out of existence. There will be a clean universe again when the great controversy between Christ and Satan is ended.

28. ANGELS: THEIR MINISTRY

The one verse of Scripture which, perhaps, most comprehensively sums up the ministry of the angels of God, is this: "Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation?" Hebrews 1:14. This scripture shows us how truly all heaven is engaged in working for the salvation of this poor world, which has wandered from the fold of God. It will surely be a time of rejoicing among all the angelic host when Christ, the Good Shepherd, brings back this lost world, cleansed from sin, once more to the fold of God's perfect creation.

The angels rejoiced when this world was created. The Lord said to Job: "Where was thou when I laid the foundations of the earth? . . . when the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy?" Job 38: 4-7.

Before ever this world was created, or man upon it, the angels had been created by the eternal Son, in whom all things consist. For angels are not redeemed men, neither will the redeemed in the world to come ever become angels. Angels are a different order of beings from men, a higher order in creation. We read:

"What is man, that Thou art mindful of him? Or the son of man, that Thou visits him? Thou made him a little lower than the angels; Thou crowned him with glory and honor." Hebrews 2:6,7. In the life to come, by the wondrous power of Christ's transforming grace, redeemed men are to be made equal to the angels, as Christ stated: "Neither can they die any more. For they are equal unto the angels; and are the children of God, being the children of the resurrection." Luke 20: 36.

This lifting of sinful man to an equality with the angels, at least in the possession of life and immortality, is an illustration of the gospel principle, "Where sin abounded, grace did much more abound." - Romans 5:20. But the declaration of equality with angels is a denial of identity with angels. Angels existed before man, and redeemed man will still be man, distinct from the angelic order, though the associate of angels in the service of God.

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Attendants at the Throne of God

When the prophet Isaiah was given a view of the heavenly temple, he saw different orders of angels attending the throne of God: “I saw also the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and His train filled the temple. Above it stood the seraphim: each one had six wings; with twain he covered his face, and with twain he covered his feet, and with twain he did fly. And one cried unto another, and said, Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of hosts.” Isaiah 6: 1-3.

Ezekiel beheld them in glory, attending the moving throne of the Almighty. “The living creatures ran and returned as the appearance of a flash of lightning.” Ezekiel 1:14. Daniel beheld the angelic host gathered in the most holy place of the temple above, as the time came for the opening of the work of the investigative judgment, the cleansing of the sanctuary. Seeing the throne of God set for this final work of Christ's ministry, the prophet says:

“Thousand thousands ministered unto Him, and ten thousand times ten thousand stood before Him: the judgment was set, and the books were opened.” Daniel 7:10.

God's Messengers

The word “angel” means messenger. To and fro these angelic messengers have gone in the service of their Creator. A view of their ever-watchful service is given in the words of the psalmist: “Bless the Lord, you His angels, that excel in strength, that do His commandments, hearkening unto the voice of His word.” Psalm 103:20.

Bearers of Tidings

They visited Abraham's tent with warning of Sodom's overthrow. Genesis 18. They visited Lot in the city, and urged him to get his family out. Genesis 19. As Jacob, in fear but repentance, was about to meet Esau, whom he had deceived, “the angels of God met him.” Genesis 32. “This is God's host,” he said, and he knew that the God of Abraham and Isaac, and his God, also, had not forsaken him.

At a discouraging time in the history of Israel, an angel appeared to Gideon, bringing the message, “The Lord is with thee,” and calling him to the work of delivering his people. Judges 6. As Daniel's prayer reached heaven, even while he still prayed, the angel Gabriel “being caused to fly swiftly,” touched him, and said:

“O Daniel, I am now come forth to give thee skill and understanding. At the beginning of thy supplications the commandment came forth, and I am come to show thee.” Daniel 9: 21-23. So close is the communication between heaven and earth.

The gladdest tidings ever brought from heaven to earth since the promise of the Deliverer to Adam in Eden, were brought by angels to the shepherds of Bethlehem. First, one angel appeared, saying:

“I bring you good tidings of great joy. . . . For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, which is Christ the Lord.” Such tidings to earth could never be the mission of one lone angel, when all heaven longed to cry the news to a lost world.

“And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God, and saying, Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men.” Luke 2: 13, 14.

Unseen in Halls of Government

One incident related in the book of Daniel draws aside the curtain, and shows how angels doubtless often have worked unseen in kingly courts or halls of legislation. Daniel had prayed for three weeks for light in certain matters that the angel Gabriel had begun to unfold to him. When at last the angel came, overpowering the prophet with the glory of his presence, it was with a statement, first, of the reason for the delay in responding to his prayer. The angel said:

“From the first day that thou did set your heart to understand, and to chasten thyself before thy God, thy words were heard, and I am come for thy words. But the prince of the kingdom of Persia withstood me one and twenty days: but, lo, Michael, one of the chief princes, came to help me; and I remained there with the kings of Persia. Now I am come to make thee understand what shall befall thy people in the latter days.” Daniel 10: 12-14.

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Messengers of Deliverance

The story of deliverance wrought by angels is too long to tell. One need only think of the angels taking slow-moving Lot by the arms and setting him out of Sodom (Genesis 19). Of the angel finding Elijah under a bush in the desert, and first baking a cake for the hungry man before speaking the word to his discouraged heart (1 Kings 19). Of Elisha praying that the young man's eyes might be opened to see that there were more angels with them round about than all the Syrians encamped against them:

“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.” 2 Kings 6: 17.

An angel shut the mouths of the lions when Daniel was cast into their den. Daniel 6. An angel smote off Peter's irons in the prison at Jerusalem, opened the doors, and led him forth. Acts 12. Amid the angry waves sweeping over the foundering ship in the Adriatic, Paul the apostle bade the despairing crew be of good courage, “for there stood by me this night the angel of God, whose I am, and whom I serve, saying, Fear not.” Acts 27: 23, 24.

All through the ages, the angels of God have been standing by. Daniel, and Peter, and Paul are dead; but the angels still live. “Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation?” Hebrews 1: 14.

Guardian Angels

That means that every child of God is under the guardianship of the angels. “The angel of the Lord encamps round about them that fear Him, and delivers them.” Psalm 34: 7. Thank God, we are never left alone. Every child of God has a guardian angel commissioned by the loving Father to watch over him. Christ said: “Take heed that you 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.” Matthew 18: 10.

This does not mean that trials never will come, or troubles. In the midst of the trial, the angel of the Lord will stand by to strengthen and to bring help from the God of all comfort. It was in the midst of the fiery furnace that the “form of the Fourth” appeared, walking with the three Hebrew children - Jesus Himself treading the fiery way with them. And when Jesus, in the days of His flesh, was sinking under the crushing burden in Gethsemane, “there appeared an angel unto Him from heaven, strengthening Him?” Luke 22:43.

Our Savior, who knows the comforting power of angel ministry, is the Captain of the heavenly host, and has commissioned them all as ministering spirits to the heirs of salvation. When He comes in glory for His people, Christ will have “all the holy angels with Him.” As the voice of Jesus awakens His sleeping saints and they rise immortal from the opened graves, “He shall send His angels. . . . and they shall gather together His elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other.” Matthew 24:31.

The angels who have watched over the heirs of salvation through all the ages, know where they are, and they know how to gather them, with their loved ones, to meet the Lord. The angels who rejoiced when the Lord laid the foundations of the earth, who mourned when man fell, who have all along been working with Christ, their leader, to rescue the lost, will yet rejoice when the Lord brings home His own. What a day will that be in heaven!

29. THE TIME OF THE END

Thou, O Daniel, shut up the words, and seal the book, even to the time of the end: many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall be increased.” Daniel 12:4. Thus the words of the angel, spoken nearly twenty-five hundred years ago, announced the opening of a new era of enlightenment when the latter days should come.

The Time

At the end of the long period of predicted tribulation of the church - the twelve hundred and sixty years of Daniel's prophecy - the world entered upon this era of “the time of the end.”

“They shall fall by the sword, and by flame, by captivity, and by spoil, many days. . . . And some of them of understanding shall fall, to try them, and to purge, and to make them white, even to the time of