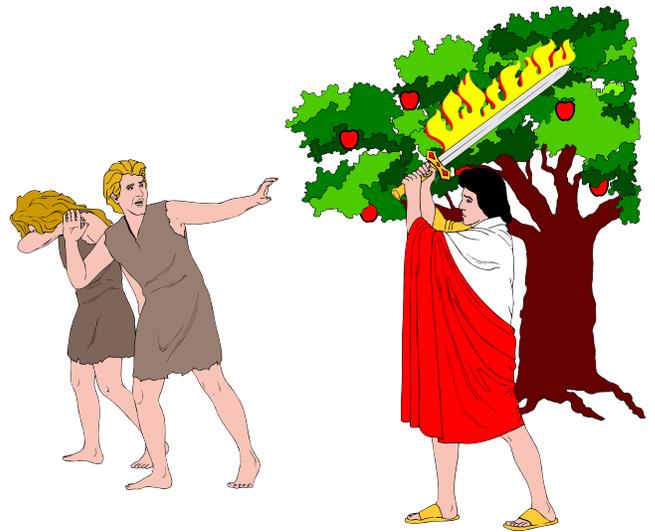


# Forerunner

Preparing Christians for the Kingdom of God

## THE MINISTRY OF ANGELS



*Ministering Spirits  
and Avenging  
Angels*

# Forerunner

Preparing Christians for the Kingdom of God

October-November 1995 Volume 4, Number 10

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## About Our Cover:

Within the past few years, angels have become tremendously popular. Books, articles, pictures, television programs and even movies feed this latest craze in America's popular culture. The only true source of information about these spirit beings, however, is the Word of God, and it gives us a broad description of the ways God uses them both to help His children and carry out His judgment upon sinners. (The Image Company)

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# IN THE GRIP OF DISTRUST

**M**ost of us are aware of a phenomenon that too often takes place within the church of God. It should not happen, but it does. This phenomenon is that if an attitude or trend begins to develop in the world, we can expect that it will soon enter the church. When it does, it shows that we are not as attuned to the Kingdom of God as we should be—that we are still too attached to the world.

A July 23, 1995, article in the *Washington Post*, by Liz Spayd, reports the findings of the National Opinion Research Center in Chicago:

Faith in both Congress and the White House is hovering at a 20-year low. Only 12 percent of the public say they have a great deal of confidence in the executive branch, and slightly less than 8 percent characterize their confidence in Congress as substantial.

Trust in other institutions is also on a gradually descending slope: Expressed support for science, medicine, organized religion, labor and education are all near their low point since researchers began their biennial surveys in the mid-1970s. Earlier Lou Harris polls patterned on similar questions suggest the decline may actually have begun in the 1960s.

“This is one of the most dramatic developments in public opinion in the post-World War II era,” says Darrell West, a professor of political science at Brown University. “There is a deep-seated distrust, not just of government but of all kinds of institutions that people once had great confidence in.”

The article suggests the Kennedy assassinations, the disillusionment over Vietnam, the Watergate break-in and subsequent cover-up, the Iran-contra affair of the Reagan administration, the Whitewater scandal, the accusations of extramarital affairs by President Clinton, the suicide of Vincent Foster, Waco, Ruby Ridge and the recent Oklahoma City bombing as prime motivations of this growing distrust. In each case the government is perceived as being the actual cause of the event or as hiding the evidence that would clearly reveal the culprits.

Coincidentally, the August 28, 1995, issue of *Time*

published a long article in which a large body of psychologists say that Americans’ very lifestyle is producing anxiety and depression in increasingly large numbers of people. Their lifestyle tends to isolate them from practices that were formerly communal affairs; individuals now bear family burdens that were once shared among many people. The frustration and perceived hopelessness of these situations creates depression. The psychologists accuse automobiles, suburban living, television, computers and abandoning the family farm among other things as causes of this problem. This problem, they say, has no solution because almost no one wants to give up his lifestyle.

As members of God’s church, we do not live isolated from what is going on in the larger society. When the massive doctrinal changes took place in our former association, many within the church reacted in much the same way as those in the world react to disturbing events in areas that greatly concern them. From both within and without, we have been very masterfully set up to withdraw, accuse and very possibly rebel.

## **The Arch-Enemy at Work**

Our dilemma is not nearly as complex or hopeless as the world’s. We can unerringly pinpoint the real cause and agent of the distrust now abounding in the hearts of many in the church. After all, the Devil began this whole mess called “the world” in the Bible, when he induced distrust for God’s Word in the minds of Adam and Eve.

Through distrust, Satan seduced Adam and Eve away from submitting to the most wonderful, lovable, giving, concerned, sensitive and helpful Personality in all creation—God. Can you imagine that? The Devil convinced them that God could not be trusted!

Distrust is a powerful incentive whose fruit is divorce. Our first parents sinned and division began. The world has not been united since. When there is distrust, faith evaporates. Fear, anxiety and depression escalate, and the motivation to be personally secure and free from the hassles of coping intensifies. The “fight or flight” mechanism kicks in.

In our recent history, the most devastating blow struck against the church has *not* been in the area of doctrine. Radical changes of doctrine have merely been the means by which more serious underlying problems have been

exposed. Except for a few doctrines, all the spin-off churches of God that have formed within the last several years believe basically the same things. The major differences between us are in the areas of policy and attitude. Despite the doctrinal confusion introduced through the leadership of the parent organization, the doctrinal base established through Herbert Armstrong survived in the new groups.

In my opinion, the most damage was caused in the area of trust and loyalty. Members of the church have become suspicious, fearful and distrustful. Alarmed and confused by the doctrinal changes, we are fearful of being hurt and misled further. We are unsure whether *anybody*—especially the ministry—can be trusted, so we do not trust many lay members either. As a result, our loyalty to God, His truth and to each other has broken down even while we deny that it has happened (see Matthew 24:12).

### Spiritual Free Agency

Professional sports has popularized the term “free agency.” It is a contractual concept by which a professional athlete, after serving, playing or performing under contract for a certain number of years, becomes free to negotiate a new contract with any other team. When that time expires, he is a “free agent.” He no longer “belongs” to the team with which he originally signed.

Though it is very financially rewarding to the players, this concept is playing a major role in destroying fan loyalty. Players, especially the very good ones, are becoming little more than “hired guns” who give their talents to the highest bidder. They move from team to team, wherever they feel it will be most lucrative for them to play. Free agency is exposing the public to the greed that lies at the foundation of each player’s heart and is turning people off by the tens of thousands. Fan loyalty to a team is being overcome by disgust.

The same negative force is at work in the church in the wake of the doctrinal changes. Many in the ministry are considered to be little more than hirelings to whom a paycheck, severance pay or retirement income and benefits mean more than the truth of God and the spiritual health of the sheep. Many of the sheep feel abandoned and unprotected.

This distrust of the ministry is producing a fairly large number of “independent” Christians. These people will not join with any group. They are going to float and/or just go it alone because, they say, their Sabbaths are so much better now that they are free to pursue their own studies and teach their own families. They are relieved that they do not have to put up with all the hassles in the congrega-

tion or listen to another boring sermon. Besides all this, they distrust the church government and/or do not care for the policies. I have heard all of these expressions of independence uttered or written more than I care to hear or see.

***This approach may very well destroy them!*** In them, the principle that the church is a “spiritual organism” is stretched to its very limit! In this extreme approach, there can be no such thing as an “independent” Christian since a Christian is made part of Christ’s body when he receives the Holy Spirit. The spiritual body is one though it has many members (I Corinthians 12:20).

The independents like to give the appearance of being wise and strong—strong enough to stand alone and be independent, to be real leaders. But, in reality, they are just as devastated as anybody. In fact, they might be among the most devastated; their attitude and corresponding reaction are exposing the underlying problem. They are those who, in battlefield triage, would be left to die because they are too far gone, and little or nothing can be done for them.

### The Real Work of God

Genesis 1:26 expresses the specific purpose statement of the Bible. God, the Creator, the

Master Potter, is reproducing

Himself! This is **THE** work of God. He is in the process of making man in His image. That project is completed in two stages, the physical and the spiritual. When the physical aspect was completed at creation, the spiritual one

began. This is the overall project He is supervising.

God is already a unit: “Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one!” (Deuteronomy 6:4). God is one, but consists of more than one Person. When Jesus came, He proclaimed the gospel of the Kingdom of God. In doing this, He publicly announced the expansion of this unit to include others

besides the two Beings already revealed.

A kingdom is synonymous with a nation. It consists of large numbers of people, but it, too, is one. Indeed, the church is called “a holy nation” in I Peter 2:9, and though it has many members worldwide, it is one church. Thus, Jesus announced that the Kingdom of God will consist of many more personalities. He also told us how we can become a part of it and how it will be accomplished. Through these means the project stated in Genesis 1:26 will take a giant step toward fulfillment.

In John 17:11, 22, Jesus added another factor that further confirms our understanding of what is happening in God’s work. He requested of the Father that “they [the disciples, including us] may be one, as [in the same way] We are.” The Father and Son are obviously two different

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# A Christian on FIRE!

**H**ow many of us have lethargically begun to pray to our Father in heaven only to find ourselves daydreaming, studying the pattern on the wallpaper or on the floor tiles? We quickly get back to our prayer, and soon our mind begins to drift again. Soon, we are mentally playing out the scenario of what we are going to tell the boss when we see him again. We catch ourselves again, saying, "Let's see . . . where was I?" After making progress for a few minutes, the kids start fighting or the telephone rings or someone knocks at the door or the dryer buzzes at the end of the load or . . . we fall asleep!

Perhaps this does not describe a typical prayer for you—or maybe it does. Is your prayer life a daily, thirty-minute struggle? Is it a hum-drum obligation that seems to drag by? Or do you look forward to the time you spend with God? Do you approach your prayers with fresh ideas and a zest for the opportunity to be speaking with the Ruler of the Universe? Do you think of it as a chance to join forces with God and strengthen the bond between you and Him? I have a guaranteed method to invigorate your prayers—and it's absolutely free!

The witness of the heroes of faith listed in Hebrews 11 illustrates that a genuine relationship with God is pos-

sible. More than that, it is what God wants with each person whom He has called. In examining both the Old and New Testaments, we see that God's main purpose all along is to be joined with His sons and daughters for all eternity. What an opportunity we have!

We also learn that God is not a respecter of persons (Deuteronomy 10:17; Romans 2:11; I Peter 1:17). He plans to call all humanity to the opportunity for salvation, and He will set us all on the same path to His Kingdom. All of us will have to go through the same process to inherit eternal life! And that process is to develop a relationship with Him just as Abel, Enoch, Noah and the others of Hebrews 11 did.

## An Intimate Relationship



To God, a Christian is not just a number or an unrecognizable face in a sea of humanity. We are so individually precious to Him that He says, "For he who touches you touches the apple of His eye" (Zechariah 2:8; see Deuteronomy 32:10). He will leave the ninety-nine sheep within the fold and search for the one lost lamb (Matthew 18:10-14). God deeply appreciates His people, and

even though we spend our lives fighting our human nature and often stumbling back into sin, He graciously forgives us and mercifully attributes holiness and righteousness to us.

But God does not want us to be totally passive in our relationship with Him. Those who desire to attain eternal life and the reward that He promises must "diligently seek Him" (Hebrews 11:6). Although He initiates the relationship, we must respond by seeking Him out: "Seek the LORD, all you meek of the earth, who have upheld His justice. Seek righteousness, seek humility" (Zephaniah 2:3). Isaiah writes, "Seek the LORD while He may be found, call upon Him while He is near" (Isaiah 55:6). He wants us to be willing to pay any price to pursue and strengthen our relationship with Him (verses 1-3; Matthew 13:44-46).

It is essential for us to have an intimate, warm, personal feeling toward God the Father and Jesus Christ. He wants our relationship with Him to develop to the point where we are becoming like a man and woman in love. God expects from us the same responses as we expect from our mates. He desires warmth, affection, openness, kindness, respect, admiration, praise, confidence, trust and so on. Like a husband and wife, we



should want to grow old with God and build a solid, prosperous life with Him as the center of our lives.

God is so serious about this that He expresses it in sexual terms. Jesus says in John 17:3, “And this is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent.” He defines eternal life as being intimate with the Father and Christ—so intimate that we know everything about the God Family and how God lives and works and reacts to every situation. This intimacy is the foundation for invincible, implicit faith and undying love.

## Turning Up the Heat



God’s purpose is to make man in His image (Genesis 1:26-27), transforming us from carnal, fleshly beings of clay into immortal spirit beings of godly character (Romans 12:2). Once this is accomplished at our resurrection, Paul says, “We shall always be with the Lord” (I Thessalonians 4:17). Thus, we must deepen our relationship with Him if we really want to be with Him. This means we should approach Him with warmth, urgency and desire.

In several places in Scripture (II Timothy 1:6; Hebrews 10:24; II Peter 3:1), we are urged to “stir up” our spiritual lives as one would stir up a fire that had begun to cool. Any fire that is not tended and fed will go out. Our relationship with God is the same. The Ephesian church is an eternal witness to us of Christians who allowed their love for God and His truth to cool to the extent that God threatened to remove their lampstand (Revelation 2:4-5). The Laodicean church exhibits neither ardor nor coldness for God, and they, too, are warned (Revelation 3:15-16). The solution, God says, is to “be zealous and repent” (verse 19).

Our God cannot stand having a cool or even lukewarm relationship with His children! He hates it when we are passive and unresponsive to Him. He abhors the academic, ivory-tower approach that treats Him like a cadaver to be dissected and studied just for the sake of knowledge. As He told the Laodiceans, if we do not have

a heated, passionate relationship with Him, He will spew us out of His mouth (verse 16)!

The strength of our salvation is not based upon a thorough knowledge and understanding of doctrine. Can we fully understand God through doctrine alone? The Bible, the source of all doctrine, has been open to man’s most intelligent scholars, but has that really changed their lives? The real basis of our promised eternal life is the intimate, individual relationship that we have with our Father and His Son, Jesus Christ. We have a literal fellowship with a real Being.

Why is Abraham called “the father of all those who believe” (Romans 4:11)? God knew him intimately (Genesis 18:19)! God also knew David, a man after His own heart (II Samuel 7:20; Acts 13:22). Christ, as the Good Shepherd, knows His sheep (John 10:14). Paul says, “The Lord knows those who are His” (II Timothy 2:19), and David writes, “For the LORD knows the way of the righteous” (Psalm 1:6).

Jesus says very plainly that the first and great commandment is to “love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind” (Matthew 22:37-38). If we are not following this great law, then we need to rekindle the heat in our relationship with God!

## Zeal



No circumstance should stand in the way of our love and devotion for God. Joseph maintained his relationship with God in an Egyptian jail (Genesis 39:20-23).

Though Jeremiah was thrown into a dungeon filled with mire, he remained faithful and God helped him (Jeremiah 38:5-13). Though Daniel was threatened with being thrown to the lions, he continued to pray three times each day (Daniel 6:1-10). David endured jokes and sarcasm and was estranged from his brethren because he worshipped God (Psalm 69: 7-9). Nothing should separate us from the love of God (Romans 8:38-39).

This unstoppable dedication to God is zeal. *Merriam Webster’s Collegiate Dictionary* defines *zeal* as “ea-

gerness and ardent interest in pursuit of something: fervor,” and lists “passion” as its synonym. It is the positive expression of the emotion whose negative expression is jealousy.

Why does God want us to be zealous? Because He is zealous, and He wants us to be just like Him! He requires of us only what He is Himself. God is described in Isaiah 59:17 as “clad with zeal as a cloak.” Zechariah writes, “Thus says the LORD of hosts: ‘I am zealous for Zion [the church] with great zeal; with great fervor I am zealous for her’” (Zechariah 8:2).

God is passionately intolerant toward anything that competes for our love and fellowship; He is not willing to share us with anything else. In fact, one of His names is Jealous, meaning “ardently desirous” (Exodus 34:14), for He calls Himself what He is. He wants us to make no covenant with or worship any other god (verses 14-15). Even within the Ten Commandments, He tells us that He will brook no rivals (Exodus 20:5).

The traditional image of Jesus characterizes Him as passive, indulgent and weakly good-natured. How wrong could it be! Our Savior was passionate about His and our relationship with God. When He turned over the tables of the moneychangers (John 2:13-17), His disciples remembered Psalm 69:9: “Because zeal for Your house has eaten me up.” Before He chose His disciples, He prayed all night (Luke 6:12). When He prayed earnestly to His Father before His arrest, He actually perspired blood (Luke 22:44)! When He returns to take up rulership over the earth, “The LORD shall go forth like a mighty man; He shall stir up His zeal like a man of war. He shall cry out, yes, shout aloud; He shall prevail against His enemies” (Isaiah 42:13). Our Elder Brother and the church’s future Bridegroom is zealous just like the Father!

In the Old Testament, God greatly rewarded a man for his zeal for Him. Phinehas, Aaron’s grandson, stopped a terrible plague that God had sent upon Israel after the men committed fornication with the women of Moab. God praised him highly:

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# Dead to the Law?

The apostle Peter admits that many of the things that his fellow apostle Paul wrote are hard to understand, and because of this, he warns, some people distort Paul's writings to their own destruction (II Peter 3:15-16). This is still happening today. People—some sincerely and some not—are constantly twisting what Paul said in an attempt to show that the law of God is abolished.

A favorite target of the “no-law” advocates is Romans 7:4. In this scripture, Paul writes that a Christian is “dead to the law” and is now “married to another.” From these statements, some conclude that God no longer requires a Christian to obey His laws. Unfortunately, those who force such an interpretation on this verse fail to understand the profound truths that the apostle is explaining in this section of Scripture. To understand what Paul is really saying, we need to take a closer look at this scripture and its context.

We must first examine and understand the principles that Paul was expounding in Romans 6 because they lay the necessary foundation for correctly comprehending the teaching in chapter seven. In Romans 6:3-7, Paul explains how we have been buried with Christ in baptism, that our “old man” has been crucified along with Him, and that we have consequently been freed from sin.

Throughout the remainder of chap-

ter six, he illustrates to us that we are now servants of righteousness and must put sin completely out of our lives. Freed from this bondage to sin, we can concentrate on producing godly fruit and grow spiritually. The chapter ends with the well-known reminder that “the wages of sin is

**“Therefore, my brethren, you also have become dead to the law through the body of Christ, that you may be married to another, even to Him who was raised from the dead, that we should bear fruit to God.”**

death, but the gift of God is eternal life” (verse 23).

## The Law's Dominion

In chapter seven, Paul further expands on this theme, drawing an analogy to help the members of the church in Rome to understand more fully the principles that he had just introduced in chapter six. He begins by stating that the law has “dominion” over a man only as long as he lives (verse 1). Some have interpreted this to mean that, now that we have died with Christ, the law is no longer binding on Christians. Indeed, some modern translations of the Bible translate this verse to say just that. However, note how Paul uses this word “dominion” in other places.

In Romans 6:9, Paul speaks of Christ's immortality now that He has been resurrected, saying, “Death no longer has dominion over Him.” During the period that Christ was a flesh-and-blood human being, He could die, and He did die on the cross. Now, however, death no longer has any power over Him, because He is an immortal Spirit Being.

In verse 14, Paul uses the same word to describe our relationship with sin. “For sin shall not have dominion over you.” Here he shows how our past sins have been forgiven, and we have access to Christ's atoning grace for forgiveness of future sins. Therefore, sin no longer has the power to

condemn us to death.

Throughout Romans 6 and 7, the Greek word translated “dominion” is *kurieuo*, meaning “exercise lordship over.” Paul uses this term in the context of having power over something. In Romans 6:9 and 14, he states that death and sin no longer have *power* to harm us or to cause any adverse effect in our lives.

Now we can better understand Paul's meaning in Romans 7:1. In this verse, Paul explains how the law has “power” over a human being only while he lives. He means the law has power to condemn us as a sinner and, consequently, condemn us to death only as long as we are alive. Once we have died, the penalty for sin has been

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## A Ready Answer

“Be Ready Always To Give An Answer” – I Peter 3:15 (KJV)

# The Ministry of Angels

**W**alk into any bookstore and you will find many books—perhaps even a whole section—on angels. One major network aired a prime-time, dramatic series called “Touched by an Angel.” Other popular television shows, movies and print media deal with angels, demons and the supernatural on a regular basis.

In many religions, angels are gaining popularity as “personal guides and protectors.” An increasing number of people—Christians of every stripe, New Agers, Hindus, Buddhists, even Jews—are calling upon their personal spirit or guardian angel for guidance during the course of their daily lives. Much of this popularity has come about as a result of the New Age religions’ heavy emphasis on “spiritualism” and its frequent appearances in the media.

But are they really angels? Yes, but not the benevolent, holy angels who serve God. In reality, these spirit guides are demonic beings ready and willing to fill the empty place in the hearts and minds of misguided people, deceiving them into accepting them as angels of light (II Corinthians 11:14-15). Ultimately, this leads to the person rejecting the sovereignty of the true God.

In contrast, the angels who remained loyal to God are powerful, responsible, purposeful, faithful and obedient beings who have been given the responsibility of ministering to God’s elect. As revealed in the Scriptures, God’s angels work and act far differently than popularly expressed today by those who are fascinated with them.

## The Angels’ Function

Angels are personal spirit beings, each having a mind of greater capacity and ability than ours. They are capable of attitudes, purposes and intentions. But as wonderful and powerful as angels are, they have no authority apart from God. In Matthew 28:18, Christ said, “All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth.” Our Savior has complete control over all spirit beings. We should, therefore, direct all our requests for our needs to God, not to angels.

As the chief servants of God Almighty, angels do His will in all things, whether toward His future sons or against the wicked. The Bible shows some of the ways God uses them to carry out His will. Against sinners, God used them to destroy Sodom for its perversions (Genesis 19:1, 13); to curse Meroz because the people refused to help Israel (Judges 5:23); to bring pestilence upon Israel when David numbered them (II Samuel 24:15-17); to kill Herod for not giving glory to God (Acts 12:23); and to avenge those who persecute the saints (Psalm 35:5-6).

Conversely, the ministry of the holy angels to the elect includes guiding, providing for, protecting, delivering, comforting and gathering. The author of Hebrews calls them “ministering spirits sent forth to minister for those who will inherit salvation” (Hebrews 1:14). *To minister* means “to do service for.” Holy angels are sent forth to do service for the saints, the elect of God, those going on to perfection and inheriting eternal life. They are here to save us from accidents or premature death and to help us attain

eternal life. The ministry of angels to the elect is an inspiring and encouraging proof of God’s care and concern for us.

An analogy may help to explain how the holy angels minister to us today under God’s direction. Consider the relationship between a wealthy man’s young son and the man’s servant. Being older and more knowledgeable, the servant is responsible for caring for the boy even though he has much less potential than the son. When the son has matured, he inherits his father’s wealth, influence and power. But the guardian remains at the same stature. As servants, angels are older, more knowledgeable, more powerful, and since they are spirit, they are better developed mentally. Yet our potential as sons of God is far greater than the angels (Hebrews 2:6-8; I Corinthians 6:2-3).

## How Angels Serve

God has commissioned His angels to guide events for the benefit of the elect. When Abraham spoke to his servant about finding a wife for Isaac, he said, “He [God] will send His angel before you” (Genesis 24:7). Later, the servant repeated Abraham’s instructions to Bethuel and Laban, Rebekah’s father and brother: “The LORD, before whom I walk, will send His angel with you and prosper your way” (verse 40). *Prosper* in this context means “to make successful.” Abraham knew that God would send one of His angels to oversee the servant’s efforts of finding a wife for Isaac and make the trip a success. By using an angel to guide specific events, God provided Rebekah for Isaac.

The angels also provide for the

elect, especially in times of need. In I Kings 19:1-8, Elijah escaped into the wilderness from Jezebel, who had just massacred most of the prophets of Israel. While the prophet slept, an angel appeared. "Then as he lay and slept under a broom tree, suddenly an angel touched him, and said to him, 'Arise and eat'" (verse 5). So Elijah ate the cake and drank the water that the angel provided for him. Then he laid down again. "And the angel of the LORD came back the second time, and touched him, and said, 'Arise and eat, because the journey is too great for you'" (verse 7). Elijah rose, ate and drank again and traveled a great distance on the strength of that food for forty days and forty nights. The angel was the instrument through which God provided for His prophet. He does the same for us, using angels to perform the specific tasks necessary to maintain our lives.

The angels sometimes have to comfort God's people. In Acts 27, Paul is taken to Rome to be brought before Caesar. While he was on a ship at sea, a tempestuous wind arose, and the situation became critical. Afraid that the ship would run aground or sink, the crew began lightening the ship, even to the point of throwing the ship's tackle overboard. After many days of unrelenting, torrential rain and rough seas, they thought they were going to die. But an angel appeared to Paul and said, "Do not be afraid, Paul; you must be brought before Caesar; and indeed God has granted you all those who sail with you" (Acts 27:24). The specific responsibility of assuring Paul that they would survive was performed by God's angel.

In the future, God will commission His angels to gather the elect to Christ at Jerusalem. When He returns in great power and glory, Jesus will "send His angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they will gather together His elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other" (Matthew 24:31). God plans ahead. He has already determined the specific duties the holy angels will perform at our

Savior's return.

## Protection and Deliverance

God often sends His angels to protect and deliver His elect. After David pretended madness before Abimelech, who drove David away, David wrote, "The angel of the LORD encamps all around those who fear [revere] Him, and delivers them" (Psalm 34:7). Here we see that God expects loyalty and obedience as a prerequisite to giving His protection. Similarly, Psalm 91 shows that God has given His angels charge over us: "For He shall give His angels charge over you,



to keep you in all your ways. They shall bear you up in their hands, lest you dash your foot against a stone" (Psalm 91:11-12).

When Daniel became one of the three main governors in the Medo-Persian Empire in the sixth century BC, he distinguished himself above the other governors and satraps. King Darius considered placing Daniel over the whole realm. The other governors became extremely jealous and conspired to have Daniel killed. These politicians played upon the king's vanity, convincing him to sign a decree demanding that whoever petitioned any god or man other than Darius during the ensuing thirty days must be cast into a den of lions.

Daniel knew about the decree, but as he had done most of his life, he continued praying and giving God thanks on his knees three times a day. The politicians very quickly reported Daniel to the king. Saddened by Daniel's predicament, but obligated to the law of the Medes and Persians, Darius commanded that the sentence be carried out. After spending a night in the lions' den, Daniel told an amazed Darius, "My God sent His angel and shut the lions' mouths, so that they have not hurt me, because I was found innocent before Him; and also, O king, I have done no wrong before you" (Daniel 6:22). Here, Daniel indicates two reasons why God sends his angels to protect and deliver His people: He was innocent of breaking God's law and he respected the leadership God had placed over him (Romans 13:1-5). God uses His angels to keep His faithful servants from harm.

God continues to deliver His servants through angels in New Covenant times. James, the son of Zebedee, had just been killed by King Herod Agrippa I, which pleased the Jews. Confident that he had the backing of the people, Herod seized Peter during the Days of Unleavened Bread and put him in prison to await execution. The church offered constant prayer to God for him (Acts 12:1-5).

On the night before Herod planned to execute him, Peter was awakened by an angel. "Now behold, an angel of the Lord stood by him, and a light shone in the prison; and he struck Peter on the side and raised him up, saying, 'Arise quickly!' And his chains fell off his hands" (verse 7). As a parent would treat a child, the angel awakened Peter and instructed him in every detail. Knowing that Peter was groggy, the angel carefully instructed Peter to dress himself and tie on his sandals. Peter thought he was having a vision. Not until he saw that he was outside the city

Please see page 15

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# IN THE GRIP OF DISTRUST

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personalities, yet they are also a unit that Jesus is requesting that others be joined with.

How can a person, independent from consistent fellowship with the body of Christ, the church, still be a part of it? A person thinking this way is sliding away from God's intention, as His Word clearly shows. He fully intends we be an active member of a physical body as well as the spiritual organism. Is the church *only* a spiritual organism? If the spiritual organism is the only important aspect, why even have congregations? Is it possible that congregations play a major role in preparing us for God's Kingdom? Let's look at this from another angle.

God intends mankind to be an active and contributing part of a physical community. "And the LORD God said, 'It is not good that man should be alone; I will make him a helper comparable to him.' . . . Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and they shall become one flesh" (Genesis 2:18, 24).

Perhaps verse 18 could be rephrased as, "It is not good that man be independent." Our God establishes principles and patterns in His Word from which we can extract wisdom, the practical application of truth. Some of the most basic and fundamental patterns for His purpose are established very early in Genesis.

What is He showing here? That, in relation to God's purpose, the most and the best will *not* be produced in us if we are alone. If we are independent, we remove ourselves from the circumstances that will produce the most toward His purpose. In this specific context, God is not commanding everyone to marry, but He is clearly showing that marriage is better than remaining single.

Everyone understands from his own experiences that the more people who comprise a unit or community, the greater the number and intensity of problems. This occurs largely because our carnality drives us to compete rather than cooperate. Sometimes a person desires so strongly to be independent of this kind of community relationship that he separates himself in order to be completely free from the suspicions, distrust, offenses and other hardships that occur within a group. To put it another way, it is very similar to a soldier running away from the battlefield to protect himself.

In its rawest form, it is selfishness and self-interest. It can be a self-serving avoidance of being useful, of contributing steadfast strength and encouragement, of being a right example to others or of being found wrong and corrected. If nothing else, we are detaching ourselves from the unit to which God intends we show allegiance and give service.

## A Lesson from History

Daniel 8:5-7 gives a historical insight that is helpful in this regard:

And as I was considering, suddenly a male goat came from the west, across the surface of the whole earth, without touching the ground; and the goat had a notable horn between his eyes. Then he came to the ram that had two horns, which I had seen standing beside the river, and ran at him with furious power. And I saw him confronting the ram; he was moved with rage against him, attacked the ram, and broke his two horns. There was no power in the ram to withstand him, but he cast him down to the ground and trampled him; and there was no one that could deliver the ram from his hand.

God's description of Greece, their army and the manner in which they fought is instructive. Greece's army was invincible in its time. Nobody ever fought with the lightning ferocity and cunning of Greece before this time or perhaps since. They created "blitzkrieg" warfare, which Adolph Hitler openly admitted that he copied from the ancient Greeks.

One historian speculated that the ferocity of the Greek army was produced by their approach to life and especially politics. Even though the Greek system had people filling governing offices such as mayor or burgess, they did not have a representative system like ours. Their society was close to a pure democracy. Each Greek male was taught that *he* was responsible to participate and contribute to the

governing of the community. One result of this was that individual citizens felt responsible to the community, and leadership qualities were produced in them that made each Greek male feel as though he was the leader of his community even though he really was not.

These qualities carried through into their warfare. The individual soldier not only took orders from his captain, he also thought independently to act for the benefit of the regiment. This frequently became necessary in the heat of battle when the leader was incapacitated by wounds or other distractions. Another quickly assumed his role, and there was no loss of leadership.

Thus, a factor that made the Greek fighting machine so invincible was that when their "shepherd" was smitten, the "sheep" did not scatter. The individual Greek soldier would not run off to protect himself from the confusion and danger of the battle when his commander fell. Instead, he helped his unit regroup because he was responsibly committed to its well-being and the accomplishment of its goals rather than his personal well-being.

There are times when it is necessary to flee or withdraw for a while. Jesus said to flee persecution (Matthew

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***If we are independent, we  
remove ourselves from the  
circumstances that will  
produce the most toward His  
purpose.***

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10:23). It is obvious that, on occasion, discretion is the better part of valor. But such times should be only a brief interval during the time of God's working with a person or with His church.

On the other hand, I do not want people to "jump" just anywhere in order to be with a group. There are equally dangerous ramifications of being with the wrong group. We should very thoroughly consider where we will fellowship.

## The Church Shattered

The church is under attack. A powerful persecution is under way, and many sheep have been scattered. But what I am hearing from "independents" are cries such as, "I'll never follow another man!" or "No man is going to tell me what to do!" or "Beware of any group that has a hierarchical governmental structure."

While a limited amount of wisdom may be in such thinking, these independents may be failing to see a very real problem because they are looking in only one direction. While they critically examine others, problems of equal or greater magnitude in the areas of ignorance of God's Word, of respect for government or gross intolerance for another's weaknesses may be in them.

They have reacted by divorcing themselves from any group and "floating" among many groups. Their attitude is such that, even when they do attend, they are in reality just passing through. It is very much like the modern practice of a man and woman living together without commitment. Each "takes" what they can get from the relationship, but one is always free to leave if things do not go quite as planned.

Daniel writes:

Then I heard the man clothed in linen, who was above the waters of the river, when he held up his right hand and his left hand to heaven, and swore by Him who lives forever, that it shall be for a time, times, and half a time; and when the power of the holy people has been completely shattered [*scattered*, KJV], all these things shall be finished. (Daniel 12:7)

Surely the enemy has attacked, and the sheep are scattered! Jesus says,

And when he [the true shepherd] brings out his own sheep, he goes before them; and the sheep follow him, for they know his voice. Yet they will by no means follow a stranger, but will flee from him, for they do not know the voice of strangers. (John 10:4-5)

We had good reason to flee our former association: The voice of a stranger was heard within it, and we could not

follow him. But is it possible that the "independents" still do not hear the True Shepherd's voice? Could they have fled for different reasons? This is why these people may be in very real danger. They cannot come to any shepherd because their confusion and governmental problems are preventing it.

## Shepherds of God's Flock

The apostle Peter called Jesus "the Chief Shepherd" (I Peter 5:4). But this same Peter also admonished earth-bound men, elders of the church, to be shepherds to the church of God:

The elders who are among you I exhort, I who am a fellow elder and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that will be revealed: **Shepherd the flock of God** which is among you, serving as overseers, not by constraint but willingly, not for dishonest gain but eagerly; nor as being lords over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock. (I Peter 5:1-3)

Many of the independents maintain the notion that they are going to follow only Christ. The unspoken (and sometimes spoken) charge is that there is no need for the ministry. If that is so, why then does God consider scattered sheep as *not* being in a fold? Notice Jeremiah 23:1-4:

"Woe to the shepherds who destroy and scatter the sheep of My pasture!" says the LORD. Therefore thus says the LORD God of Israel against the shepherds who feed My people: "You have scattered My flock, driven them away, and not attended to them. Behold, I will attend to you for the evil of your doings," says the LORD. "But I will gather the remnant of My flock out of all countries where I have driven them, and bring them *back to their folds*; and they shall be fruitful and increase. I will set up shepherds over them who will feed them; and they shall fear no more, nor be dismayed, nor shall they be lacking," says the LORD.

This same principle is expressed in Ezekiel 34.

The independents are scattered, but they think they are in the fold. If their premise is correct, then why all the instruction in the Bible about gathering those who are scattered? The Bible gives the impression that a person is not in the fold unless he is with the group. Why else did Jesus give the parable of leaving the ninety-nine sheep to rescue the one not with the flock? It is interesting that Jesus depicted the separated sheep in His parable in Matthew 18:12-14 as having gone astray, and in Luke 15:4-7 as being lost.

Jesus has set certain men in His church as shepherds to

tend His flock under Him. They are described in Ephesians 4 as His gift to the church. In giving this gift to the church, He in turn gave gifts to them to enable them to perform their job. Like all others, some perform their appointed tasks faithfully (Matthew 25:21, 23), while others are unjust stewards of their responsibilities (Acts 20:30).

To whom much is given, much is required, and so the minister will have to answer for his use of those gifts. James makes it very clear that the teacher will receive the stricter judgment (James 3:1). But the independent has a strong proclivity to paint all with one brush, perhaps forgetting that he also will have to stand before the judgment seat of Christ to answer for his use of his gifts and for his possibly too critical judgments.

## The Need for Human Leadership

What is the independent looking for? Is he looking for a pastor completely unstained by any hint of defect in character or expression of personality? Where will he find him? Is he looking for a leader with absolutely perfect doctrine? What is it? Is he looking for a teacher who has exquisite ability to express the teaching with clarity and beauty? Is he looking for the fruits of that person's ministry? I think a person should look for these things. It would be wonderful to find such a person, but at the same time we must realize that finding all of them in perfection in one man will be very difficult. Especially in this difficult time, one should not make his search with the attitude that he will settle down and take root only when he finds a pastor who deserves to have him in the congregation!

God makes it very clear that other shepherds besides Christ are necessary for leading and caring for His people. Zechariah 10:2 says, "For the idols speak delusion; the diviners envision lies, and tell false dreams; they comfort in vain. Therefore the people wend their way like sheep; they are in trouble because there is no shepherd." The context makes very clear that God is speaking of human leaders.

Moses understood the need for human leadership even though Israel had the cloud to follow in the wilderness. The context shows God's clear assent to Moses' proposal.

Then Moses spoke to the LORD, saying: "Let the LORD, the God of the spirits of all flesh, set a man over the congregation, who may go out before them and go in before them, who may lead them out and bring them in; that the congregation of the LORD may not be like sheep which have no shepherd." And the LORD said to Moses, "Take Joshua the son of Nun with you, a man in whom is the Spirit, and lay your hand on him; set him before Eleazar the priest and before all the congregation, and inaugurate him in

their sight. And you shall give some of your authority to him, that all the congregation of the children of Israel may be obedient" (Numbers 27:15-20).

Making a diligent and honest search for a true shepherd of the church of God is everyone's responsibility. It is imperative that we find a fold where we can be properly fed and where we can serve. The enemy has scattered the flock through the extensive doctrinal changes, and God has permitted it for our good.

God does nothing that is not for our good. Undoubtedly, a sorting of His people is taking place through the choices we make about which group we choose to fellowship with. In the broadest sense, this situation is enabling

Him to evaluate who really loves truth (II Thessalonians 2:10). Perhaps the sorting will permit Him to work with us to an even greater extent.

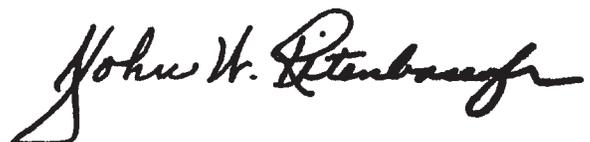
At any rate, it is a daunting challenge for all of us to make clear sense of what is going on and where all this is headed in the immediate future. One thing is certain: Romans 8:28 is still in the Bible, and only good can develop from this for those who truly love God.

He is still on His throne. But remember, it is not God's will that we be separate from a group. Lone sheep are the ones most easily "picked off" by the predators prowling along the perimeter of the flock. Safety, service, love and strength is within the fold.

Jesus says in Matthew 16:18, "I will build My church, and the gates of Hades [*hell*, KJV; the grave] shall not prevail against it." These very words of Christ clearly show He had a corporate body of human beings in mind, not just a spiritual organism. He used *ekklesia*, meaning an assembly of people, a group, and He confirmed this by using *Hades*, a pit into which dead bodies are cast. He thus shows His church to exist continuously as flesh-and-blood human beings.

It is clearly His will that all those having the Spirit of God be fellowshiping and serving together on a regular basis (Hebrews 10:25). A person may delude himself into thinking he can better serve Christ and prepare for the Kingdom of God free from all the pressures of a congregation, but the Word of God shows otherwise. He could even be condemning himself to the flames of the Lake of Fire by showing God that he is not pleased to associate with God's own sons and daughters, His holy people. The "independent" must repent of his independence if he wants to glorify God, truly serve His people and become spiritually mature.

In Christian love,



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# A Christian on **FIRE**

continued from page 6

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Behold, I give to him My covenant of peace; and it shall be to him and his descendants after him a covenant of an everlasting priesthood, because he was zealous for his God, and made atonement for the children of Israel. (Numbers 25:12-13)

## Keep the Fires Burning



Since we are “[grow- ing] up in all things into Him who is the head— Christ” (Ephesians 4:15), we must begin intensifying our relationship with the Father and Jesus Christ. Through prayer, study, meditation and fasting, we need to work hard and diligently at becoming better acquainted with God until we **KNOW ABSOLUTELY** how he lives, works and acts in every situation.

We need to learn to be open and frank with God as we discuss our fears, problems and concerns, as well as our hopes, triumphs and pleasures. When in distress, we must learn to turn to Him immediately in faith and expectation of help. During peace and prosperity, we should lavish God with praise and appreciation for His providence. We have to remember that the Father and Christ are real, living and desirous of our companionship and interaction.

Nor can we forget to involve God with us in doing good works in zeal, for that is why we have been called and redeemed (Titus 2:14). Any good work that involves God will surely be successful! Paul tells the Galatians, “It is good to be zealous in a good thing always” (Galatians 4:18).

If we begin doing these things, truly strengthening our bond with our God, our spiritual lives will catch fire! With God participating with us in every situation, even mundane acts will take on greater significance. Our lives will once again have deep meaning and direction. And you will never fall asleep on your knees again!

—Al Legg

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# Dead to the Law?

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paid, and the law has no more power to condemn us.

## Analogous to Marriage

In verses 2 and 3, Paul continues to discuss our relationship to the law and begins to draw the analogy from a human relationship, marriage, which illustrates the points that he was making in chapter six. He explains how a woman is bound by the law to her husband for as long as he is alive. However, marriage is “till death do us part.” Death breaks the marriage bond. Therefore, if the wife marries another man while her first husband is still alive, the law has the power, the authority, to condemn her as an adulteress. However, if her husband dies, the marriage bond is broken, and if she remarries, the law cannot condemn her as an adulteress.

Note that the law to which Paul is referring in these verses is clearly the Ten Commandments. The seventh commandment is the law forbidding adultery. Here Paul plainly states that this law against adultery is binding on Christians! How can the law be binding and not binding at the same time? It defies logic!

In verse 4, Paul explains the marriage analogy and how this relationship of a woman to her husband bears upon our relationship to the law and Christ. “Therefore, my brethren, you also have become dead to the law through the body of Christ.” Just as the woman in his example cannot be condemned by the law as an adulteress if her first husband dies, so we cannot be condemned by the law because our “old man of sin” has died.

In other words, we have become dead *in the eyes of the law*! At the time of our baptism, the old man of sin was put to death and buried in a watery grave (Romans 6:4). Because Jesus Christ died in our stead, and we have been buried with Him in baptism, the law regards us as having died. Therefore, the penalty for sin (Romans 6:23) has been paid, and the law no longer has power to condemn us to

death for our sins.

Paul continues in verse 4, “. . . that you may be married to another, even to Him who was raised from the dead, that we should bear fruit to God.” In the analogy of the woman and her husbands, the first husband is the old man of sin to whom we were “married” prior to conversion. After the old man of sin died at baptism, we are now free to marry Christ. Just as He died and was resurrected, so our old man of sin has died, and we have been raised out of the watery grave of baptism a new man, empowered to bear righteous fruit in service to God.

In verse 5, Paul explains how that before we were converted, our sinful natures brought us under the death penalty. He shows that the carnal, sinful mind is so hostile toward God (Romans 8:7) that knowledge of God’s commandments actually stirs a desire in an unconverted person to commit even greater sins.

Finally, Paul gives the conclusion of the matter in verse 6. We have now been delivered from the power of the law. The law no longer has authority to condemn us to death because our old man of sin has died, and Christ has paid the penalty for sin in our stead. Now that God has given us His Holy Spirit, we now “serve in the newness of the Spirit and not in the oldness of the letter.” In other words, we now keep not *just* the letter of the law, but we *also* keep God’s laws in their full spiritual intent and purpose as Jesus Christ magnified them throughout His ministry.

So we see that, far from being abolished, the laws of God are now *even more binding* on Christians. Because of the atoning sacrifice of Christ, our sins have all been forgiven, and we now live transformed lives in which we keep God’s laws of love through the indwelling power of the Holy Spirit.

We have indeed died in the eyes of the law, and our “life is hidden with Christ in God” (Colossians 3:3). As we grow and overcome, God’s laws become written on our hearts and minds until we finally are resurrected and inherit God’s Kingdom, where we will keep His laws of love perfectly for all eternity!

—Earl L. Henn

# *The Great Conspiracy*

**H**ave you ever heard about individuals who have conspired to control the nations of the world with their wealth and power and who are the real force behind the things that happen in the world? They are supposedly the ones who put various leaders in power and control them with their influence so that the foreign policy of many nations is dictated by these conspirators. They supposedly are the real causes of the wars and strife between races, ethnic groups and whole nations and are the causes of depressions and other economic problems.

Is this true? Do these individuals really exist? Are there really powerful individuals behind the scenes who are “pulling the strings” and who shape the destiny of the whole world while the vast majority of people on earth do not even know they exist? The answer from your Bible is a resounding “Yes!” The Bible reveals that not only do such individuals exist, but that they are the real rulers of this world and are used by God to carry out the fulfillment of prophecy!

At the time of His temptation by Satan, the Devil took Jesus Christ up on a high mountain and showed Him all the kingdoms of the world. Satan offered to give them to Jesus if He would be willing to worship him (Luke 4:5-8). In verse 6 Satan boasts, “All this authority I will give You, and their glory; for this has been delivered to me, and I give it to whomever I wish.” Notice that the Devil has authority over the whole world, and he delegates authority to whomever he wishes.

Jesus referred to Satan as the “ruler of this world” (John 12:31; 14:30;

16:11). Christ recognizes Satan as the present ruler of the world. However, Satan does not rule alone. He has a whole army of fallen angels, called demons, at his disposal. The apostle Paul refers to these evil rulers in his letter to the Ephesians. “For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places” (Ephesians 6:12). These demons may number in the multiple millions (compare Revelation 5:11 and 12:3-4).

God gives us an occasional glimpse in His Word about how these evil forces are used by Him to influence the rulers of nations. One such vignette occurs in I Kings 22. When Ahab, the evil ruler of Israel, was trying to decide whether to fight against Syria to retake Ramoth Gilead, Jehoshaphat, the king of Judah, persuaded him to consult his prophets first. All of his prophets told him to proceed with the battle because God would give him a great victory. However, Micaiah, a true prophet of God, told him that God had allowed an evil spirit to put lies into the mouths of Ahab’s prophets. This is because it was God’s purpose that Ahab be killed in the battle. Ahab shunned Micaiah, took the advice of his own prophets and was killed while fighting the Syrian armies.

In His prophecies regarding those things that will happen close to the second coming of Jesus Christ, God clearly describes how He permits Satan to influence the nations of the world in order to fulfill His end-time prophecies. In Revelation 12, God describes how there will be a great

war in heaven sometime near the second coming of Jesus Christ. Satan and his demons will be cast down to the earth and will bring about great persecution on the Church of God.

Therefore rejoice, O heavens, and you who dwell in them! Woe to the inhabitants of the earth and the sea! For the devil has come down to you, having great wrath, because he knows that he has a short time. (Revelation 12:12)

In Revelation 13, John describes a great beast, representing a world ruling empire and its ruler that will exert sway over the whole earth in the end time. “Now the beast which I saw was like a leopard, his feet were like the feet of a bear, and his mouth like the mouth of a lion. And the dragon gave him his power, his throne, and great authority” (Revelation 13:2). The dragon, a biblical symbol of Satan, will give the same power and authority to the ruler of this future empire as he promised Jesus Christ in the temptation described in Luke 4:5-7!

Notice Revelation 13:4: “So they worshipped the dragon who gave authority to the beast; and they worshipped the beast, saying, ‘Who is like the beast? Who is able to make war with him?’” Satan finally gets his wish to have someone worship him!

God goes on to explain how Satan and his demons are permitted by God to utilize supernatural power to deceive the nations of the earth and to persecute the people of God in the end time.

He [the false prophet] performs

great signs, so that he even makes fire come down from heaven on the earth in the sight of men. And he deceives those who dwell on the earth by those signs which he was granted to do in the sight of the beast, telling those who dwell on the earth to make an image to the beast who was wounded by the sword and lived. (Revelation 13:13-14)

The prophecy also describes how Satan and his demons will be allowed to use their great powers as rulers of this world to influence men to form a monolithic government that will control all aspects of people's lives. This government will have the power of life and death over the earth's inhabitants and will force people to commit idolatry. Those who refuse will be killed. Also, the economies of all nations will be controlled and people will not be able to participate in commerce unless they are abiding by the rules of the government. Because these things run contrary to God's way, this will be a time of severe trial and testing for the people of God (Revelation 13:15-18; Matthew 24:21-22).

Another clear example where God shows the "behind-the-scenes" activity and influence of demons on this world's affairs is in the gathering of the armies to fight Jesus Christ at His second coming:

And I saw three unclean spirits like frogs coming out of the mouth of the dragon, out of the mouth of the beast, and out of the mouth of the false prophet. For they are spirits of demons, performing signs, which go out to the kings of the earth and of the whole world, to gather them to the battle of that great day of God Almighty. (Revelation 16:13-14)

When this occurs, the human beings involved in these decisions will have no idea that they are being influenced by spirit beings. Satan and his demons are invisible and accomplish their work by broadcasting attitudes and putting thoughts in people's minds. These thoughts and attitudes

seem normal and natural to the people involved, yet their result is utterly inhuman and unnatural, such as the Holocaust, the Inquisition, "the killing fields," "ethnic cleansing," "total war" and the like. What has occurred throughout all of human history will happen again.

It has been said that human history is little more than a chronicle of man's wars. These wars are the result of men being influenced by invisible, evil spirit beings ever since Adam and Eve sinned and were cast out from the presence of God (Genesis 3:22-24). No people and no generation have ever been immune from Satan's attempts to keep men separated from God.

Yes, there is a great conspiracy. It is a conspiracy for the minds of men. As long as Satan and his demons are still ruling this world, they will con-

tinue to be the invisible force behind the things that occur on the world scene. They will continue to broadcast attitudes of envy, jealousy, lust and greed as well as all of the other wrong and sinful ways that are the root cause of all of this world's misery and suffering.

Thankfully, God's prophecies show us that Jesus Christ has qualified to depose Satan as the ruler of this world (John 12:31; 16:11). When Christ returns to the earth in power and glory, Satan will be bound and will no longer be permitted to broadcast attitudes or exercise sway over any nation or any individual (Revelation 20:1-3). At that time, the wonderful world tomorrow will begin, and the earth will have a thousand years of peace, happiness and prosperity. May God speed that day!

—Earl L. Henn

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## The Ministry of Angels

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walls and that the angel had left him did he realize what had transpired. He said, "Now I know for certain that the Lord has sent His angel, and has delivered me from the hand of Herod" (verse 11).

After this, Peter went to Mary's house, the mother of John Mark, where many of the brethren had gathered to pray. When Peter knocked at the door, a girl named Rhoda came to answer. When she recognized Peter's voice, she was so startled that, instead of opening the door, she ran to tell the brethren that Peter was standing outside. Even though she insisted, they did not believe her. "So they said, 'It is his angel'" (verse 15). Although they were praying for God to intervene, they were in disbelief that God had answered their prayers so miraculously. God had intervened, sending his angel to deliver Peter from certain death.

### "Worship God"

Angels were created to be ministers, agents and helpers in God's creation. The holy angels who have

remained loyal to God realize that He made them to be servants of the God Family. John writes in Revelation 22:8-9: "I fell down to worship before the feet of the angel who showed me these things. Then he said to me, 'See that you do not do that. For I am your fellow servant. . . . Worship God.'"

Under God's direction the ministry of angels is to guide, provide for, protect, deliver, comfort and watch over the elect. These holy angels of God are greater beings than we are now but our potential is far greater. They are loyal and dedicated servants of God commissioned to help us attain salvation. Yet angels are helping us to attain levels in the God Family far greater than they have. They will remain servants while we become born sons of God! How many human beings could function with a pure attitude without jealousy toward those who will soon be in authority over them? We may have underestimated the loyalty and dedication of God's holy angels!

We should certainly appreciate the work of these "ministering spirits sent forth to minister for those who will inherit salvation." They do so much for us that we never see. Praise and thank God for His loyal angels!

—Martin G. Collins

# BIBLE STUDY: SATAN'S ORIGIN AND DESTINY

Most, if not all, of the cultures of the earth express a belief in some kind of evil being. This belief is often personified as a supernatural, godlike being who takes great pleasure in cruelty and perversion. As the god of the Underworld, Hades or hell, the Egyptians had Seth; the Greeks, Pluto; the Romans, Dis. The Western world, of course, calls this personal embodiment of evil Satan the Devil. With him come countless other wicked beings known as demons.

Where did Satan come from? Some cultures, philosophies and religions believe that good and evil have always existed in a dualistic balance like *yin* and *yang* or light and darkness. Others believe that God created the Devil to test mankind and preside over the eternal punishment of the wicked. What is the truth? Using the "here a little, there a little" principle (Isaiah 28:9-13), we can uncover Satan's origin and destiny in the pages of the Bible!



1. In what state was the earth created? Genesis 1:1-2; Job 38:4-7; Psalm 104:30; I Corinthians 14:33.

**COMMENT:** God originally created the earth with such perfection and beauty that the angels shouted with joy! Our Creator does all things in an organized manner and completes all His works in exquisite splendor. But the earth had somehow become formless and chaotic so that God had to refashion it before man could be created.

2. Who was Lucifer? Isaiah 14:12-15; Ezekiel 28:12-17.

**COMMENT:** "Lucifer" means "Light-Bringer" or "Day Star." Ezekiel calls him "the anointed cherub who covers," which means he was one of the chief angels whose wings covered God's throne in heaven. He is specifically shown to be a created being, possibly the most beautiful, wise and perfect of God's creations.

But this mighty angel grew proud and vain in his beauty. He began to become envious of God's authority over the universe, and over maybe millions of years, he schemed to induce other angels to support him in an attempt to overthrow God. When he finally led one third of the angels (Revelation 12: 4) to war against God in heaven, God cast him and his angelic troops back to the earth (Luke 10:18).

3. How did Lucifer become Satan? Ezekiel 28:15-17.

**COMMENT:** God had created Lucifer a perfect spirit being, but He also gave him free moral agency, that is, the ability to choose to follow good or evil. Lucifer chose to become Satan the Devil, the Adversary, by allowing sin to mold his character. His rebellion against God sealed and hardened his evil nature, and now he opposes all that is good, right and godly (Matthew 13:38-39; I Peter 5:8; Revelation 9:11; 12:9-10).

4. Are Satan and his demons bound to this earth? II Peter 2:4; Jude 6.

**COMMENT:** When God cast them back down to earth, He placed restrictions on their powers and limited them to "their proper domain" or "first estate," that is, the earth. Here, they await their judgment for their rebellion. "Hell" in II Peter 2:4 is *tartaroo*, a place of restraint for the wicked. Though Satan himself may appear before God's

throne in heaven, he and his demons can do only what God allows (Job 1:6-12; 2:1-7).

5. Is Satan "the god of this age [*world*, KJV]"? II Corinthians 4:4.

**COMMENT:** By blinding the minds of men to the true gospel of God, Satan has set himself up as a counterfeit of the Creator God. As the prince of the power of the air, he broadcasts his evil, rebellious attitudes to all humanity, and except for a few whom God has called out of his deceptions, the whole world lives under his sway (Ephesians 2:1-3; I John 5:19; Revelation 12:9).

6. Has Satan been disqualified as ruler of this earth? John 12:27-33; 14:30; 16:11; Colossians 1:13; 2:15; Hebrews 2:9, 14-15.

**COMMENT:** When Jesus Christ lived a perfect life and died for the sins of men, He qualified to dethrone Satan. The "god of this world" has been defeated! However, he remains active among us until the King of kings returns and sets up His government on earth.

7. Will Satan attempt to ruin God's plan before Christ returns? Revelation 12:7-9, 12-17; 16:12-16; 19:17-21; 20:1-3.

**COMMENT:** The Devil will again go on the offensive against God with the same results: He is cast back down to earth. In his anger over his defeat, he will savagely persecute God's people and gather the armies of man to fight against Christ when He comes. He and his human agents will be soundly defeated, and Satan will be bound in the bottomless pit for a thousand years.

8. What is Satan's ultimate fate? Revelation 20:7-10.

**COMMENT:** After the thousand years of imprisonment, Satan will be released for a short while. During his parole, he will again unite some of the nations and take them to war against God's people. But this rebellion will be summarily ended when God sends fire out of heaven to destroy them. Because he is spirit and cannot die, the Devil will then be sentenced to eternal torment in the Lake of Fire. Finally, God and man will be rid of their chief enemy, and peace will flourish for all eternity!