

Guardian Angels

Our question for this month's issue of our newsletter is: "Is the belief that everyone has a guardian angel biblical?"

We do not know very much about angels and what Scripture gives us is not always easy for us to understand. Let us see, then, what Scripture says to this question.

There is only one passage in Scripture that suggests the idea of *personal* guardian angels and that is Matthew 18:10, "Take heed that ye despise not one of these little ones; for I say unto you, That in heaven their angels do always behold the face of my Father which is in heaven."

The little ones are the little children about whom Jesus had been speaking in the previous verses. Thus, if these verses do teach that there are personal guardian angels assigned to individuals they teach that only little children have these specially appointed angels to watch over them.

There are other problems, however, with this passage. Even if it gives ground for believing in guardian angels, it says that these angels are not on earth with those they guard but in heaven: "Their angels do always behold the face of my Father which is in heaven." That is certainly not the idea that most people have when they think of guardian angels.

It is impossible, therefore, to prove that there really are guardian angels assigned to each believer on a permanent basis. The "doctrine" of guardian angels has no real Biblical support. Nevertheless, Scripture does teach that angels are guardians in a more general way. Hebrews 1:14 calls the angels "ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation." They are the servants of believers and are sent by God for their salvation, though even then it is not so easy to ascertain what exactly they do.

That this may include guarding God's people is suggested in Scripture by the passages that picture the angels making war with Satan and his hosts (Rev. 12:7; Jude, 9) as well as by certain Old Testament passages that show them exercising this function (II Kings 6:13-17). Daniel 10:21 and 12:1 are especially important in that Michael, who always appears in Scripture as a warrior among the angels, is called "your prince" and "the great prince that standeth for the children of they people."

But we cannot even say for sure what kind of guardianship the angels exercise. Whether it is entirely spiritual or whether they actually protect us physically as well, we do not know.

If the angels fight on our behalf we do not know very much about that warfare. Revelation 12 describes only one battle that marked Christ's ascension and the casting out of Satan as the accuser of the brethren. Jude describes a struggle over the body of Moses.

In the end, though, whether or not we each have a personal guardian angel is not important. If it were Scripture would tell us more and it does not. What we do know is that God Almighty uses all things for our good, including the angels (Rom. 8:28). As one writer puts it, "If we have an omniscient, omnipotent, all-loving God with us, what does it really matter whether there is a finite angel along side of us or not?"

RHH