

Angels—Their Place in God’s Plan

There is no detailed description of angels in the Bible, but we read many things about them which give us a concept of their creation. That they are a distinct order of beings seems clear from such statements as that found in Psalm 8:5 concerning man: “You have made him a little lower than the angels.” Psalm 103:20 says, “Bless the Lord, you His angels, who excel in strength, who do His Word, heeding the voice of His Word.”

Many scriptures indicate that angels are spirit beings, as Hebrews 1:14 explicitly states. The word angel means “messenger,” and sometimes is used in that sense without reference to an angelic being. But this usage reveals one of their important functions, since on many occasions angels were used to communicate messages from God to men. Acts 7:53, together with Hebrews 2:2, indicates that Moses received the law through the mediation of angels. Communication is suggested by their “ascending and descending” (Gen 28:12; Jn 1:51).

In Psalm 34:7 we are told that “the * angel of the Lord encamps all round those who fear Him, and delivers them.” So we see that one element of the service of angels is the protection of the children of God. From Matthew 4:11 we learn that they ministered to Christ at the conclusion of His temptation in the wilderness. It was an angel who released Peter from prison (Acts 12:7-11). Psalm 91:11 makes a general statement along this line.

Angels also sometimes execute the judgments of God, as when the angel stood with a drawn sword in the way of Balaam (Num 22). Also, the Lord indicated in His parable of the wheat and tares that it will be the angels who will remove from His kingdom the evil elements which would pollute it (Mt 13 :41, 49, 50). Angels are also said to be spectators of what we do, as in 1 Corinthians 4:9 and Ephesians 3:10. Daniel 7:10 indicates that besides these which are called into activity, a much larger host of angels are held in reserve. See also Matthew 26:53. It would be impossible to enumerate the many and varied ways in which angels serve the will of God, but I would point out that they also praise Him as their Creator (Ps 148:2).

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* The reference in Ps. 34:7 to “angel of the Lord” could possibly be the Lord Himself. However, there are references in the Scriptures to the protection of angels (2 Kings 6:17).