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The Work of the Angels

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1. Knowing Our Allies

THE theme we want to study is the work of the angels. We will start by reading together some significant statements:

Christ's Object Lessons, p. 176:

We need to understand better than we do the mission of the angel visitants. It would be well to consider that in all our work we have the cooperation and care of heavenly beings. Invisible armies of light and power attend the meek and lowly ones who believe and claim the promises of God. Cherubim and seraphim and angels that excel in strength—ten thousand times ten thousand and thousands of thousands—stand at His right hand,

Hebrews 1

¹⁴ ...all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation.

We are clearly told here that “We need to understand better than we do the mission of angel visitants.” There’s another statement that reads almost the same, in the description of the incident where Peter was delivered from prison:

The Acts of the Apostles, p. 154:

We need to understand better than we do the mission of the angels. It would be well to remember that every true child of God has the cooperation of heavenly beings. Invisible armies of light and power attend the meek and lowly ones who believe and claim the promises of God. Cherubim and seraphim, and angels that excel in strength, stand at God’s right hand,

Hebrews 1

¹⁴ ...all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation.

These two statements are almost the same, and remind us of the fact that we do need to understand better the work of the angels.

Now, why didn't we understand the work of the angels? Why did we have such confused ideas about them? One reason is that there is a general confusion in the world about what angels are. In some pictures, angels are depicted like little babies with wings. So people tend to imagine that they look just like that! And so these beings are not taken very seriously.

Much has been studied about the Holy Spirit, about God, about Jesus; but the angels have never received a serious consideration. But it is very important to understand their work.

The Lord has given us much light in the past about the work of Jesus and we have seen how important it is. The work could never be finished without the proper understanding of what Jesus is doing now in the heavenly sanctuary. We could never fight the last battle against the powers of darkness without a proper understanding of who Jesus is, and what kind of work He is doing.

The same is true of the work of the Holy Spirit. If we do not understand who He is, and what work He does, then we are not fit for the last battle against the powers of darkness. The same is true of God the Father. If we do not understand Him and His work, we are unfit for the last battle.

We have studied the role that we shall play in this last struggle: the role of the 144,000. How important is that role? It is absolutely essential. Without the work of the 144,000 that is described in *Revelation* 14, the work could never be finished. If we have no clear concept that the last work is the presentation of God's character, then we cannot be a part of that number who finish the work. If nobody understood these truths, they could not cooperate with God in the finishing of His work.

Not only did we study the powers on the side of God's kingdom, but we also studied the powers on the side of Satan's kingdom—this was the main subject of last year's stud-

ies: the King of the North.¹ We studied his tactics, his character, the tricks he's using in order to put himself into God's church and deceive, if possible, the very elect. These studies were also very important and essential, because without an understanding of what the King of the North does, the work cannot be finished.

So these are the participants of the final battle. On one side stands Satan, with the King of the North and all the worldly powers. They work together to fight against God's people, and they use the same tactics and the same means that the King of the North has always used in history, only they use these tactics to perfection. They have perfected their ways, and therefore, their power is the greater. And Satan is working with them, not visibly, even though he becomes visible when he will counterfeit the coming of Christ. And he will come in such glory, that his followers will worship him.

We know also of the existence of evil angels who work on the side of worldly powers, and these evil angels are demons who work in some people. They are also agents that work on the hearts of other people, not only in them. They try to influence them, they try to influence rulers and powers in this world. We know that these beings even try to attack God's people physically. They also control the elements of nature, and so they are causing floods and cyclones and so forth. All these agents are actively at work even today, and will be increasingly so as we near the end of time and come to the last struggle, to the final battle.

So, we have on this side an army, and on the other side an army, who will fight together, and we need to understand their characters, and how they fight.

What we have not studied in the past is the work of the good angels. We know something about the evil angels, but we know very little about the good angels, and how they

¹ See the book, *The King of the North*, by Andreas Dura.

work, and how we are to cooperate with them. But it is so essential for the finishing of the work. Without them the work cannot be finished, as much as the work could not be finished without the 144,000, or without Jesus, or without the Holy Spirit. God has given to each agent in this battle a role that is indispensable, that is absolutely necessary for the success of that battle.

In the past we have never paid too much attention to that, but now we have a renewed interest especially in those statements which talk of the good angels. They are not “little babies with wings,” but very powerful beings.

Opening Up the Truth

First of all, we have the promise of their presence:

Christ’s Object Lessons, p. 59:

A knowledge of truth depends not so much upon strength of intellect as upon pureness of purpose, the simplicity of an earnest, dependent faith. To those who in humility of heart seek for divine guidance, angels of God draw near. The Holy Spirit is given to open to the rich treasures of truth.

The angels of God draw near to whom? There’s a condition:

To those who, *in humility of heart*, seek for divine guidance.

The cooperation of the of the heavenly angels, is promised especially to those who are humble. On the other hand that would mean that those who are proud cannot count on the cooperation of the angels. That would require that we understand what true humility is, in order to enable us to cooperate with these powerful beings.

A Sweet Presence in the Home

Christ’s Object Lessons, p. 102:

The apostle exhorts us:

1 Peter 1

¹⁵ As He which has called you is holy, so be you holy in all manner of conversation; because it is written, Be holy; for I am holy.

The grace of Christ is to control the temper and the voice. Its working will be seen in politeness and tender regard shown by brother for brother, in kind encouraging words. An angel presence is in the home. The life breathes a sweet perfume, which ascends to God as holy incense. Love is manifested in kindness, gentleness, forbearance, and long-suffering.

This quote mentions the presence of an angel in the home, and that there will be a sweet influence when an angel is present in the home. There are many people who are insensible to this kind of presence. Even the disciples were to a great degree. But people who are prepared to receive the ministry of the angels, will also feel their influence. And when they come into a home where the angel is present, they will realize that the influence is there.

Cooperation in Reaching the Lost

Let us read some statements of cooperation between man and the good angels.

Christ's Object Lessons, p. 196-197:

The value of a soul, who can estimate? Would you know its worth, go to Gethsemane, and there watch with Christ through those hours of anguish, when He sweat as it were great drops of blood. Look upon the Saviour uplifted on the cross. Hear that despairing cry,

Mark 15

³⁴ My God, my God, why have You forsaken me?

Look upon the wounded head, and pierced side, the marred feet. Remember that Christ risked all. For our redemption, heaven itself was imperiled. At the foot of the cross, remembering that for one sinner Christ would have laid down His life, you may estimate the value of a soul. If

you are in communion with Christ, you will place His estimate upon every human being.

And then it talks a little bit about the work we are to do for them, personal work, personal effort. Then it says,

In this work all the angels of heaven are ready to cooperate. All the resources of heaven are at the command of those who are seeking to save the lost.

This statement must be understood in the context of the Sabbath Rest² truth. If we go about to save the lost with our own planning, and our own ideas of to whom we should go and when we should go, then we can be very sure that even though we may be convinced that we do the right work, yet the holy angels will not go with us.

If we do not go ahead according to the Sabbath Rest principles, if God does not make the plans for us in the saving of souls, then we are following the King of the North, because the King of the North makes his own plans. He tries to build God's kingdom his own way. Therefore, if we make our own plans, we are inviting the cooperation of the evil angels.

In the religious world today, those who make their own plans for soul-saving are thereby cooperating with evil angels. And the evil angels give them all kinds of wonderful manifestations, which to them seem to be the proof that they are on the right side, while in fact, they are on the wrong side.

So the question is, do we have the cooperation of the good angels, or of evil angels? Let's read the statement again:

Christ's Object Lessons, p. 197:

In this work [i.e. the work that God has given us in the saving of souls] all angels of heaven are ready to cooperate. All resources of heaven are at the command of those who are seeking to save the lost. Angels will help you to reach the most careless and the most hardened.

² See the book, *God's Sabbath Rest*, by F. T. Wright.

And when one is brought back to God, all heaven is made glad; seraphs and cherubs touch their golden harps, and sing praises to God and the Lamb for their mercy and loving-kindness to the children of men.

Consider this sentence:

Angels will help you reach the most careless and the most hardened.

I have found in my experience that this is true. Before I knew the truth, especially regarding Sabbath Rest, I tried very hard to reach people. For example, one day I went to a park in the city, and there I found a drunkard on the bench. I thought,

“I want to help this person.”

I had a great desire to help that poor person, and I tried very hard, but all my efforts only led him to drink even more! I was also very inexperienced and so I was giving him money which he said he bought food with, but in reality he didn't. So my efforts were totally destroyed in this kind of work.

Since I have followed the Sabbath Rest principles, I find that when the Lord leads me, the doors are open already. Very typical examples are these: that people invite me to study with them and I find them absolutely ready and eager to listen to the gospel. And I marvel how this happens! I shouldn't marvel because the good angels have prepared the way. They are cooperating with those who work in agreement with God to save the lost.

Angels will help you to reach the most careless and the most hardened.

And the Lord opened the way even to people whom I did not expect to be interested. One example is my brother-in-law, a person with whom I went to school. He was one of these persons whom I least expected to accept the gospel. He was not a conservative person; rather he was very much in

the world. But the Lord opened his heart and for this reason he was ready to receive it, and he changed.

So this statement is very true. The angels can prepare the most careless and the most hardened, and when we come to them, they will be ready to hear the gospel.

Christ's Object Lessons, p. 232:

Let the worker for Christ remember that he is not to labor in his own strength. Let him lay hold of the throne of God with faith in His power to save. Let him wrestle with God in prayer, and then work with all the facilities God has given him. The Holy Spirit is provided as his efficiency. Ministering angels will be by his side to impress hearts.

How unable, how inefficient are we in comparison with the angels! When they open the hearts, it is so wonderful. It is so easy. But if they don't do it and we try to do it, it's so hard and frustrating. It is, in fact, impossible. So our first work is not to do self-appointed work, but our first work is to pray, and wait to see how the Lord leads us.

Christ's Object Lessons, p. 283:

Thus we are to serve God. He only serves who acts up to the highest standard of obedience. All who would be sons and daughters of God must prove themselves co-workers with God and Christ and the heavenly angels. This is the test for every soul. Of those who faithfully serve Him the Lord says,

Malachi 3

¹⁷ They shall be mine...in that day when I make up my jewels; and I will spare them, as a man spares his own son that serves him.

We must cooperate, not only with God and Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit, but also with the good angels.

Partnership with Angels

In the story of the unfaithful steward, he was going to be fired because he was unrighteous. But before he was finally

fired he made friends by telling to those who owed to his master a certain amount, that they should quickly write down that they owed less. And the master even recommended this steward, and said he had done wisely. And then Jesus said,

Luke 16

⁸ You see, the children of men do wiser than the children of God.

With this, Jesus did not mean that we should practice deceit. Rather, He was using this as an object-lesson to show farsightedness, to show good planning. And so likewise, the children of God should plan ahead, and He says,

⁹ Make yourselves friends by the means of the mammon of unrighteousness, that when it shall fail, they may receive you into eternal tabernacles.

Who are “they” that shall receive us into the eternal tabernacles?

Christ’s Object Lessons, p. 373:

“Make to yourselves friends by means of the mammon of unrighteousness,” Christ says, “that when it shall fail, they may receive you into the eternal tabernacles.” God and Christ and angels are all ministering to the afflicted, the suffering, and the sinful. Give yourself to God for this work, use His gifts for this purpose, and you enter into partnership with heavenly beings.

That’s a nice word, *partnership*. We know on this earth what partnership means. Partnership means that you understand the other partner. Marriage, for example, is a partnership. You cannot have a successful marriage unless you understand each other. You have the same aims, the same thoughts, the same ideals, and then you work together. Then you are really in a partnership. Heavenly angels will enter into partnership with us. What a wonderful promise this is!

Christ's Object Lessons, p. 373:

Your heart will throb in sympathy with theirs. You will be assimilated to them in character. To you these dwellers in the eternal tabernacles will not be strangers. When earthly things shall have passed away, the watchers at heaven's gates will bid you welcome.

You will feel as they feel. If they feel sorrow, you will feel sorrow, if they feel joy you will feel joy. People who are not used to cooperate with good angels here on earth, how would they feel if suddenly they would get into heaven? They would find all kinds of strange beings, whom they would not understand.

Let's suppose you are placed in the middle of such a tribe like the Masai in the wilderness of Kenya and there you have to live with them. These people would be strangers to you, for certain. They would follow customs—especially if they are not Christians, but are still heathen—they would follow customs and do things that you would not do at all. And you would not feel well among them. You would feel they are all strangers to you, absolute strangers. On the other hand, if you came to believers who were like you, you would feel at home with them; you would like to stay there.

And so the same is true of our work with the angels. If we are not acquainted with them here on this earth, we never would feel well in their presence, in their companionship in heaven. But if we work together with them here on this earth, then we make friends, we literally make friends with them. And when we come to heaven they will welcome us and we will welcome them.

The only difference between now and then will be that they will be fully visible then, while now most of the time they are invisible. In fact, there's a very beautiful statement in the book *Education* about meeting our guardian angel:

Education, p. 305:

Though the rulers of this world know it not, yet often in their councils angels have been spokesmen. Human eyes have looked upon them. Human ears have listened to their appeals. In the council hall and the court of justice, heavenly messengers have pleaded the cause of the persecuted and oppressed. They have defeated purposes and arrested evils that would have brought wrong and suffering to God's children. To the students in the heavenly school, all this will be unfolded.

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 cooperation in every work for humanity!

All the perplexities of life's experience will then be made plain. Where to us have appeared only confusion and disappointment, broken purposes and thwarted plans will be seen a grand over-ruling victorious purpose, a divine harmony.

That will be the result of conversing directly with our guardian angel. However, that privilege can be granted only to those who have made him their friend. If our guardian angel would be our enemy who stands in our way³ rather than the one who leads us, then we would not be fit to converse with him, as it is described here. So the condition is very clear: we must make friends with our heavenly angels. Even though they are invisible, we can make friends with them. And that means, we need to understand their kind of work, and to cooperate with them in it.

Christ's Object Lessons, p. 318:

In heaven it is said by the ministering angels: The ministry

³ *Numbers* 22:21-35.

which we have been commissioned to perform we have done. We pressed back the army of evil angels. We sent brightness and light into the souls of men, quickening their memory of the love of God expressed in Jesus. We attracted their eyes to the cross of Christ.

Their hearts were deeply moved by a sense of the sin that crucified the Son of God. They were convicted. They saw the steps to be taken in conversion; they felt the power of the gospel; their hearts were made tender as they saw the sweetness of the love of God. They beheld the beauty of the character of Christ.

But with the many it was all in vain. They would not surrender their own habits and character. They would not put off the garments of earth in order to be clothed with the robe of heaven. Their hearts were given to covetousness. They loved the association of the world more than they loved their God.

This shows how the angels work on the hearts of men, and with men, as they open their hearts to their influence. We have to be very grateful for the ministry of the angels when we read of how many things they are doing.

Bringing Miracles and Blessings

And the climax of all these statements is the following:

The Desire of Ages, p. 142-143:

Jesus added,

John 1

⁵¹ Verily, verily, I say unto you, hereafter you shall see heaven open and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of man.

Here Christ virtually says, On the bank of the Jordan, the heavens were opened, and the Spirit descended like a dove upon me. That scene was but a token that I am the Son of God. If you believe upon me as such, your faith shall be quickened. You shall see that the heavens are opened, and are never to be closed. I have opened them to you. The angels of God are ascending, bearing the prayers of the needy

and distressed to the Father above, and descending, bringing blessing and hope, courage, help, and life to the children of men.

The angels of God are ever passing from earth to heaven, and from heaven to earth. The miracles of Christ for the afflicted and suffering ones were wrought by the power of God through the ministration of the angels.

So how did Christ work His miracles? Through the ministration of angels.

The Desire of Ages, p. 143:

And it is through Christ, by the ministration of His heavenly messengers [which are angels], that every blessing comes from God to us.

What blessing comes from God to us through the ministration of angels? *Every* blessing. When we ask for the blessing of the Holy Spirit, for the Latter Rain, how does it come to us? It comes through Christ by the ministration of His heavenly messengers. Every blessing comes from God to us, through the angels. And the greatest blessing we are seeking for at the moment is that of the Latter Rain.

In taking upon himself humanity, our Saviour unites His interest with those of the fallen sons and daughters of Adam, while through His divinity He grasps the throne of God. And thus Christ is the medium of communication of men with God, and of God with men.

It is through the angels that we receive every blessing. Our prayers are lifted to heaven by the ministration of angels, and the answers come from heaven, again by the ministration of angels. Our prayers will go as fast to heaven and the answers will come as fast as the angels are able to carry them, isn't this so? Because they are carried by them. They bear our prayers to the Father above and they bring the answers back to earth.

The answer can only come back as fast as the angels can

move. How fast are they? How far away is the throne of God? Very, very far, if we measure it in human measurements. We measure it in light-years. The speed of light is 300,000 km per second (186,000 miles per second). In one second, light is able to go around the earth seven times. Even at that speed, light would take 2000 years to get to Orion. We know that it is from that constellation that Christ will come when He comes from the throne of His Father. So the throne of the Father is very, very far away.

If the angels would travel as fast as light, then we would have to wait a long time to receive the answers to our prayers. In fact, we would never receive them because we wouldn't live that long! But we can be assured that the angels are much, much faster. We cannot, with our laws, understand how they can travel so fast, but they certainly can.

The angels are incredibly quick in bringing our prayers to the Father and back from the Father. In one moment they can be at the throne and back again. So, when we look at the angels and the powerful praise that they give at the throne of God, we must not imagine that they are always there. They are constantly moving between heaven and the earth, and at a speed that exceeds every concept that we, as humans, can have. They move well beyond the speed of light, and so they can be at the throne of God and at the next moment near us.

So it is the angels who stand in God's presence who are serving us especially. What a comfort, what a strength we may find from this knowledge!

Christ's Object Lessons, p. 389:

The Lord declares,

Zechariah 3

⁷ If you will keep my charge,...I will give you places to walk among these that stand by,

—even among the angels that surround His throne. By co-operating with heavenly beings in their work on earth, we

are preparing for their companionship in heaven.

Hebrews 1

¹⁴ Ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them that shall be heirs of salvation,

—angels in heaven will welcome those who on earth have lived,

Matthew 20

²⁸ ...not to be ministered unto, but to minister.

In this blessed companionship we shall learn, to our eternal joy, all that is wrapped up in the question,

Luke 10

²⁹ Who is my neighbor?

So what we are doing now is very essential for our future work. Angels are not “little babies with wings,” but very powerful beings that are at our side. They are our friends, our best friends. And we shall make them our friends; the Lord invites us to do so.

What the conditions are to make them our friends, will fill the larger portion of the rest of this study.



The Law was given “by the disposition of Angels.” Acts 7:53
(Captivating Bible Stories 1913)

2. What the Angels Do For Us

THERE is one more statement that I would like to read with you that talks about the work of the angels:

Christ's Object Lessons, p. 341:

It is only through the grace of God that we can make a right use of this endowment. There is nothing in us of ourselves by which we can influence others for good. If we realize our helplessness and our need of divine power, we shall not trust to ourselves.

We know not what results a day, an hour, or a moment may determine, and never should we begin the day without committing our ways to our heavenly Father. His angels are appointed to watch over us, and if we put ourselves under their guardianship, then in every time of danger they will be at our right hand. When unconsciously we are in danger of exerting a wrong influence, the angels will be by our side, prompting us to a better course, choosing our words for us, and influencing our actions. Thus our influence may be silent, unconscious, but mighty power in drawing others to Christ and the heavenly world.

That is quite a statement. The angels will prompt us to a better course, they will speak to our conscience, choosing our words for us. And they influence our actions.

We have realized this in our own lives as well. When we do not start the day with committing our life into God's hands, then very soon we find that we have fallen somehow and have exerted a bad influence. And when we realize that we have exerted a bad influence, how depressing this is.

I have found that if I did not carefully commit myself to God's leadership and to the leadership of holy angels, that I could study something in the morning from the Bible, but because I was too hasty, I did the very thing which I read I should not do. And then how disappointed I was!

But we can be sure if we commit ourselves into the hands of heavenly angels, they will certainly do what is promised. They will prompt us to a better course, they will choose our words for us and influence our actions. And thus our influence is silent, unconscious and a mighty power in drawing others to Christ and the heavenly world.

This is a very good promise for each one of us. Let us turn to some more specific statements about what angels are doing. That was only a general overview which told us what kind of work they are doing, but it is always good to actually study practical examples of what they have done in the lives of others. And we will also learn more about the character of the angels.

Angels at the Resurrection

An interesting revelation is given to us in the resurrection of Jesus. This is from the chapter, “The Lord is Risen”:

The Desire of Ages, p. 779:

The night of the first day of the week had worn slowly away. The darkest hour, just before daybreak, had come. Christ was still a prisoner in His narrow tomb. The great stone was in its place; the Roman seal was unbroken; the Roman guards were keeping their watch. And there were unseen watchers. Hosts of evil angels were gathered about the place.

So this is a clear statement that shows us the existence of evil angels and what they are doing. They were gathered about the place.

Had it been possible, the prince of darkness with his apostate army would have kept forever sealed the tomb that held the Son of God. But a heavenly host surrounded the sepulcher. Angels that excel in strength were guarding the tomb, and waiting to welcome the Prince of life.

I do not understand how it was possible for the host of evil

angels to gather about the place when good angels were there. But evidently it is possible and the Lord suffers the evil angels to be there also. Likewise, in the places where God's people are meeting and hear the word of God, we may know that good angels are there: for example, the guardian angels of each saint. But as well there is a host of evil angels lingering around in order to exert their influence if they can. So let us read on:

The Desire of Ages, p. 779:

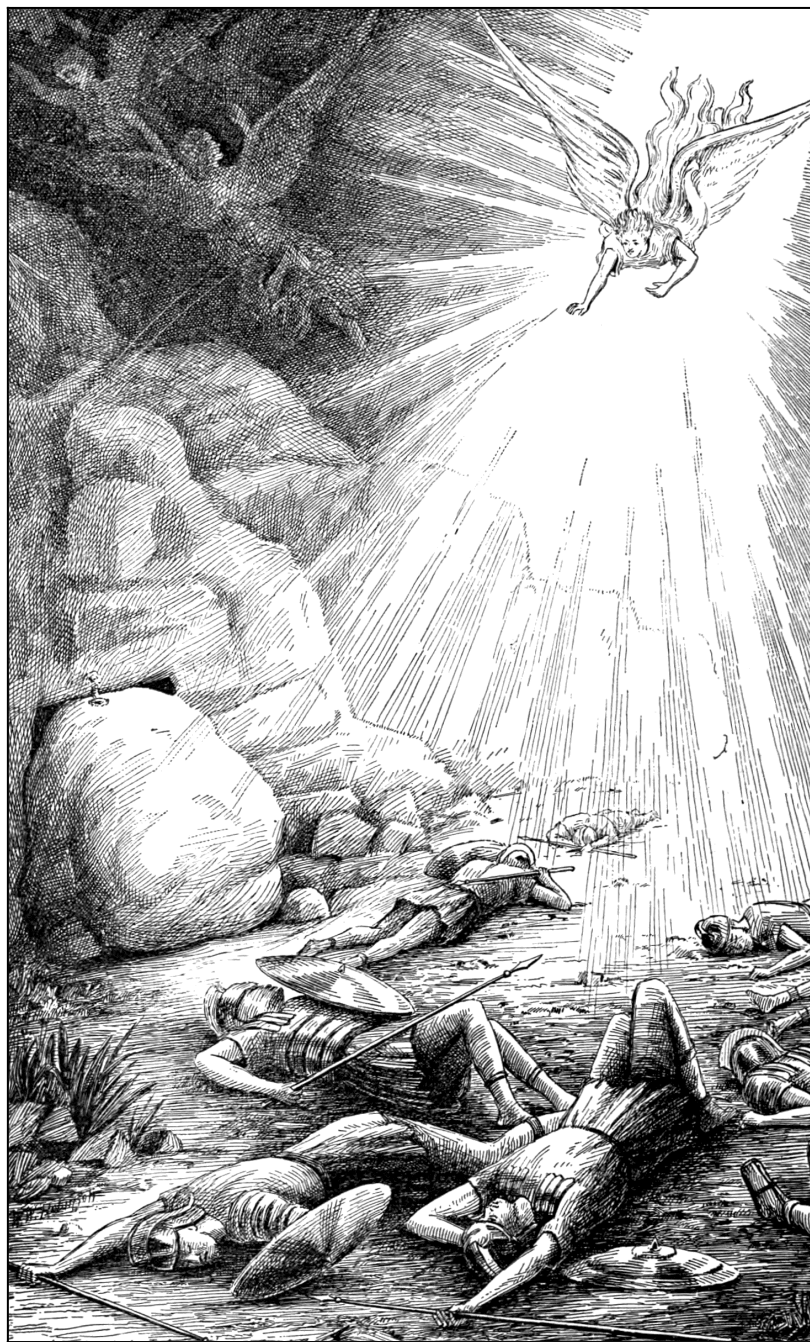
And, behold, there was a great earthquake: for the angel of the Lord descended from heaven. Clothed with the panoply of God, this angel left the heavenly courts. The bright beams of God's glory went before him, and illuminated his pathway. His countenance was like lightning, and his raiment white as snow: and for fear of him the keepers did shake, and became as dead men.

These soldiers were not timid people, they were not easily afraid of anything. There are such kind of persons, who seem to be ever fearless. And soldiers are those kind of people. They are trained to be that way, so they can go into war. But nevertheless, these soldiers trembled for fear when one angel came. So you can see what powerful beings the good angels are.

The Desire of Ages, p. 779-780:

Now, priests and rulers, where is the power of your guard? Brave soldiers that have never been afraid of human power are now as captives taken without sword or spear. The face they look upon is not the face of a mortal warrior; it is the face of the mightiest of the Lord's host.

This messenger is he who fills the position from which Satan fell. It is he who on the hills of Bethlehem proclaimed Christ's birth. The earth trembles at his approach, the hosts of darkness flee, and as he rolls away the stone, heaven seems to come down to the earth.



(Source: Christ Our Saviour, 1896)

The soldiers see him removing the stone as he would a pebble, and hear him cry, "Son of God, come forth; your Father calls You." They see Jesus come forth from the grave, and hear Him proclaim over the rent sepulcher, "I am the resurrection, and the life." As He comes forth in majesty and glory, the angel host bow low in adoration before the Redeemer, and welcome Him with songs of praise.

So these soldiers were able to behold the scene. That in itself is a miracle, because normally when the angel of the Lord appeared, the glory of his presence caused people to fall to the ground. And especially if they were sinful, they were not able to see anything at all.

But here the soldiers are able to behold what the angel is doing, how he rolls away the stone, how he calls forth Jesus, how Jesus comes forth. The reason they were able to behold this scene, is that they were specially strengthened by the Lord. But even though they were especially strengthened, they still trembled as if they were weak women or children.

This incident shows us again that the angels are powerful beings, they are not "little babies with wings." We must repeat this again and again, because that is the picture that is imprinted into our minds. It's natural, because everywhere angels are pictured like that.

Could a human being ever draw an angel so powerful as he is described in this resurrection scene? Never, else he would run away from the picture! So it is impossible. Even if you had personally witnessed it, you could only make a faint copy of the reality.

The Angel Gabriel

Who is this angel who came down from heaven and made these soldiers tremble and what is his name? It was Gabriel. Let us see this from the context.

He is described as the mightiest of the Lord's host. Then he

is described as the messenger who fills the position from which Satan fell. That is a certain angel and his name, we will see, is Gabriel. There is another statement that also talks of the same angel in the chapter, “Gethsemane”:

The Desire of Ages, p. 693:

The worlds unfallen and the heavenly angels had watched with intense interest as the conflict drew to its close. Satan and his confederacy of evil, the legions of apostasy, watched intently this great crisis in the work of redemption. The powers of good and evil waited to see what answer would come to Christ’s thrice-repeated prayer.

Angels had longed to bring relief to the divine sufferer, but this might not be. No way of escape was found for the Son of God. In this awful crisis, when everything was at stake, when the mysterious cup trembled in the hand of the sufferer, the heavens opened, a light shone forth amid the stormy darkness of the crisis hour, and *the mighty angel who stands in God’s presence, occupying the position from which Satan fell*, came to the side of Christ.

So who came to the side of Christ in Gethsemane? The mighty angel who occupies the position from which Satan fell. Let us look who this angel is:

The SDA Bible Commentary, vol. 5, p. 1123:

In the supreme crisis [it is referring to Gethsemane] when heart and soul are breaking under the load of sin, Gabriel is sent to strengthen the divine sufferer, and brace Him to tread His blood-stained path. And while the angel supports His fainting form, Christ takes the bitter cup, and consents to drink its contents. Before the suffering One comes up the wail of a lost and perishing world, and the words come from the blood-stained lips, “Nevertheless, if man must perish unless I drink this bitter cup, your will, not mine, be done.”

Who comes to support the Savior in Gethsemane? Gabriel! He is sent to strengthen the Divine Sufferer and here we read:

It is he who filled the position from which Satan fell.

So that makes this point very obvious that it was Gabriel who rolled away the stone as well. The angel who filled the position from which Satan fell was the mighty angel who made the soldiers tremble. But let us see who he is. There are two bits of information that are important in this connection:

1. He is the mightiest of the Lord's host;
2. He fills the position from which Satan fell.

The Purpose of Man's Creation

In order to understand this better, let us study the purpose that God had in mind when He created man. For what purpose did God create man? To fill the vacancies in heaven left by the angels who fell. Here is the statement that proves this:

The SDA Bible Commentary, vol. 1, p. 1082:

God created man for His own glory, that after test and trial the human family might become one with the heavenly family. It was God's purpose to repopulate heaven with the human family, if they would show themselves obedient to His every word.

Why did God want to repopulate heaven? Certainly not for His own pleasure, but for a necessity. Heaven is a place where each being that is created has a certain function, a certain task, which is essential.

We can compare this with an earthly factory. In a factory there are engineers and technicians and all kinds of workers. Let's suppose all of a sudden one-third of the employees of the factory would say,

"Good-bye, we are leaving you!"

What would happen with the production? It would greatly suffer, and might not even be possible at all, because you just can't fill the place of highly qualified engineers instantly. You don't find them like sand on the seashore. So it would be very, very difficult for the factory to continue to function. And

heaven is likewise.

Every angel, every inhabitant of an unfallen world, has his special post of duty. And this post of duty he just cannot leave; otherwise there would be great suffering and great loss for the whole functioning of the universe. This is so because God has given to each of His creatures a special task. He could have said,

“I’ll do everything myself.”

He would be able to do this, but that’s not how He did it. He gave to each person in the universe a certain task to do. And it is absolutely essential that this person does this work so that the whole heaven can function properly and can be a blessing for each one.

We see this as well on this earth. If we, as the people of God, don’t do our work, what happens with the work of God? It is delayed again and again and again. If a certain person does not fulfill his work, the work of God suffers. And especially if our task is highly qualified, like that of Moses. If he falls, then the loss is the greater than if somebody else, who has not such a responsible task, would fall.

But even so, the task of each one is important, and heaven cannot afford to lose one worker. It just can’t. For this reason it was necessary to repopulate heaven. And for this reason God created man.

Satan was very angry when man was created, because he wished that heaven should never be repopulated. He wished to teach God a lesson, to show God that without him it wouldn’t function. He wanted that God should be humbled and in the end invite Satan to come back to heaven, pleading,

“Come, I need you.”

That is what Satan expected God to say. But when God created man, he was absolutely horrified at the prospect that

now his place and the place of his angels would be filled again, which would cement their expulsion from heaven. For this reason, he immediately went to work to enlist mankind on his side in order to make it impossible that heaven should be repopulated. And sad to say, he was very successful. He was successful in deceiving Eve and in overcoming Adam. And in this way the plans of God to repopulate heaven, to make it function again, were for the moment thwarted.

Was the plan of God then destroyed forever? Certainly not. God is too wise and too powerful for His plans to be destroyed. The plan of redemption was put into operation in order to reclaim men, who then should occupy the vacant places that Satan and his angels left.

The SDA Bible Commentary, vol. 7, p. 949:

Those who walk even as Christ walked, who are patient, gentle, kind, meek and lowly in heart, those who yoke up with Christ and lift His burdens, who yearn for souls as He yearned for them—these will enter into the joy of their Lord. They will see with Christ the travail of His soul, and be satisfied. Heaven will triumph, for the vacancies made in heaven by the fall of Satan and his angels will be filled by the redeemed of the Lord.

These places will be filled, not now by the created beings, as they were in the beginning, but by the redeemed. Which places? The places that Satan and his angels made vacant. And these are highly qualified places. Then who would be the person to fill the vacant place that Satan has left? It must be a person redeemed from this earth, because the vacant places made by Satan and his followers will be filled by the redeemed.

But before God had redeemed souls to fill these places, how did the universe function with vacant places? Until that time the Lord had to do something, and it was Jesus, the mighty Connector, who did the work of these fallen angels for the

time being. And so the whole universe could continue to function.



The interest of the Angels in the Creation of Adam and Eve.
(Lutzelburger-Holbein, 1523 - British Museum)

God could have chosen to do the work himself or give it to His Son for all eternity; but that is not His way of working. He has given this work to other beings, and He works with these beings until they are ready. So He works with us, patiently, gently, and even the other angels work with us.

The fact that Gabriel is the angel who occupies the place of Satan after he vacated it, shows that Gabriel must be a redeemed human being. God would not give the place to an-

other angel, if He had already stated,

“I’m giving it to a redeemed human being.”

When God chooses a person for a specific post of duty, He will work with that person, until they are ready, or until they forever reject that position. And glad to say, Gabriel, or the redeemed human being who is now Gabriel, did not reject. He was being made ready for that position.

The Mightiest of the Lord’s Host

Let us come to the other factor that we read: that Gabriel is one of the mightiest of the Lord’s host:

The Desire of Ages, p. 780:

...it is the face of the mightiest of the Lord’s host.

So who would belong to the category of the mightiest of the Lord’s host? These must be the redeemed. To prove this, we shall study some statements together.

The SDA Bible Commentary, vol. 6, p. 1113:

The cross of Calvary challenges, and will finally vanquish every earthly and hellish power. In the cross all influence centers, and from it all influence goes forth. It is the great center of attraction...

Those who in the strength of Christ overcome the great enemy of God and man, will occupy a position in the heavenly courts above angels who have never fallen.

How is this possible? The angels have already been in heaven for thousands, maybe millions, of years. All this time they have been studying the sciences of heaven. All this time they have been in the presence of God. They have not been marred by sin. These are very powerful beings with a great experience and great power of righteousness. How could it be that we, poor human beings, could ever occupy a place higher than they?

Only because we have the seed of Christ. That is something

that is not fully manifest yet. It is manifested in deeds of righteousness done on earth. But then again, it is clothed with a sinful human body and a sinful human nature. So the glory of this seed is yet to be fully manifested. But by faith the Lord invites us to behold it already. In fact, we could not comprehend this wonderful providence that the Lord has made for us if it was not revealed to us.

Christ's Object Lessons, p. 162-163:

The work of redemption involves consequences of which it is difficult for man to have any conception.

1 Corinthians 2

⁹ Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, neither has entered into the heart of man, the things which God has prepared for them that love Him.

As the sinner, drawn by the power of Christ, approaches the uplifted cross and prostrates himself before it, there is a new creation. A new heart is given him. He becomes a new creature in Christ Jesus. Holiness finds that it has nothing more to require. God himself is...

Romans 3

²⁶ ...the justifier of him which believes in Jesus.

And,

Romans 8

³⁰ Whom He justified, them He also glorified.

Great as is the shame and degradation through sin, even greater will be the honor and exaltation through redeeming love. To human beings striving for conformity to the divine image there is imparted an outlay of heaven's treasure, an excellency of power, that will place them higher than even the angels who have never fallen.

That is what the work of salvation involves. There are consequences of which it is difficult for man to have any concept. It is only possible to grasp this by faith, because it is revealed to us. So, by faith we know that we shall occupy places that are higher than even the angels who have never fallen.

Who, then, will be the highest beings in the universe to

come? Certainly the redeemed. That again would indicate that the mightiest of the Lord's host should be a redeemed human being. So we have two facts:

1. Gabriel is the one who fills the position from which Satan fell, and this shows that he must be a redeemed being;
2. Gabriel is the mightiest of the Lord's host, and this also shows that he must be a redeemed being, because the redeemed are appointed to fill the positions which are in heaven, and they are qualified to occupy places even higher than the angels who have never fallen.

The Desire of Ages, p. 21:

The angels of glory find their joy in giving,—giving love and tireless watchcare to souls that are fallen and unholy. Heavenly beings woo the hearts of men; they bring to this dark world light from the courts above; by gentle and patient ministry they move upon the human spirit, to bring the lost into a fellowship with Christ which is even closer than they themselves can know.

It is a marvel in itself that the angels who have never fallen can serve those who are fallen and sinful, especially if we fall again into sin after we are born again. To the angels that must look inexcusable. They are so holy. It is natural for them to act righteously. And we are so slow in understanding, so inexcusable for falling into sin; yet we are the ones who are the objects of their love and service.

And they love to serve us. Not only do they serve us, but they love to serve us in such a way as to place us into a position higher than their own. That is humility. And those are the kind of beings with whom we shall make friends.

To make friends with somebody, means to have similar thoughts to his. You can't make friends with somebody who doesn't think like you. Believers cannot make friends with unbelievers: that's impossible. You can be friendly to them,

which is natural for a Christian, but you never can make them friends, companions, partners, co-workers: it is impossible.

But these beings, the angels who are so humble that they serve us down here to bring us into a position higher than themselves, to a position closer to Christ than even they themselves know; those are the kind of beings with whom we shall make friends, and with whom we shall become alike, or similar. That is what heaven desires.

Created Angels and Redeemed Angels

So Gabriel is a human being. But he's called an angel. How can a human being be called an angel? Doesn't this sound strange? Aren't angels and humans distinct? Why do we mix them up now? The truth is that the word "angel" means *messenger*, and this is what we will be when we come into heaven.

Jesus spoke of this to the Sadducees. They came to Jesus and asked Him concerning the resurrection. Their question was intended to be a trap for Jesus, so that He should have no answer. They wanted to embarrass Him. So they asked the question:

"A woman had several husbands who died in a row. Whose wife will she be in the resurrection?"

Jesus answered:

Matthew 22

²⁹ You are mistaken, not knowing the Scriptures nor the power of God.

³⁰ For in the resurrection, they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are like the angels of God in heaven.

The redeemed in heaven are "like the angels." When we come to heaven, we will be angels. "Angel" means "messenger," so we will be messengers. We will do a similar work, that the unfallen angels are doing today. Not only the unfallen an-

gels are angels, but there's another category of angels, and those are the redeemed.

A further proof of this fact is found in *Revelation* where Jesus is described as an angel. In *Revelation* chapter 10, he is described as the Angel with one foot on the sea and the other foot on the land. Ellen White states clearly that this angel is Jesus.

The SDA Bible Commentary, vol. 7, p. 971:

The mighty angel who instructed John was no less a personage than Jesus Christ. Setting His right foot on the sea, and His left upon the dry land, shows the part which He is acting in the closing scenes of the great controversy with Satan. This position denotes His supreme power and authority over the whole earth.

So Jesus is depicted as an angel. But what would we expect Jesus to be in heaven today? A redeemed human being, certainly. And He is, because there is a very clear statement that Jesus retains His humanity for all eternity. So He is a human being today.

At the same time He is depicted as an angel, not only in *Revelation* 10, but as we will see later, also in *Revelation* 8, and in *Revelation* 7. Jesus is the mighty Angel, even today, as a redeemed human being. And so will all His sons be likewise. In heaven they are also angels today.

There are several categories of angels in heaven. There are the redeemed angels, and there are the created angels. In the beginning there was only Christ, the mighty Connector, in this position. And there were the created angels far below Him. Man, at his creation, was a little lower than the angels.

Hebrews 2

⁷ You made him a little lower than the angels; You crowned him with glory and honor.

This refers to the creation of man. Man was created a little

lower than the angels. But after his fall, man was much lower than before his fall. Christ came down to that level where man was after the fall in order to save him out of that pit, and to place him in a position which is higher than even that of the angels who have never fallen.

So there are three categories of angels in the universe:

1. Redeemed angels: they occupy the highest positions in the universe, they are the mightiest angels;
2. Unfallen Angels: they were created before the earth existed, and remained faithful when Lucifer started the rebellion.
3. Fallen angels: the demons and the spirits who also sometimes appear and imitate dead people.

That is the invisible world today, the heavenly universe. We will have a different concept of angels when we realize that some of them are our fellow brethren! In the book of *Revelation*, John fell down before that angel who showed him some wonderful things of the judgment on the harlot and the New Jerusalem. Twice he fell before him and wanted to worship him. And what did the angel say?

Revelation 22

⁹ See you do it not: for I am your fellowservant, and *of your brethren* the prophets, and of them which keep the sayings of this book: worship God.

What he revealed to John has a new significance to us today. We see that these angels understand us in our situation because they have been in the same situation exactly as we are. When we feel weakness, they know what it means to feel that weakness. When we feel the temptation, they know what it means to feel that kind of temptation.

These angels are highly qualified to be our guardians. They are highly qualified to lead the work of God in this time because they have led the work of God in the past, even on this

earth, as we shall see.

So that is the character of the angels. Isn't this good to know? I find it to be a great encouragement and comfort.





Angel with a Harp
(Stories from Bible History, 1885)

3. The Angel Gabriel

THERE is more than one group of angels. There are the created angels, who have never fallen; there are the redeemed angels; and there are the fallen angels: the demons and spirits of the devil.

Since we know that the angel Gabriel must be a redeemed person, the next step is to study who the angel Gabriel was, when he was a man on earth. If we think of the men who have been redeemed, which one could be the angel Gabriel?

When did the angel Gabriel appear first in history? In the book of *Daniel* when he was given the explanation of the vision in chapter 8, there was a voice saying to the angel Gabriel,

“Come now, Gabriel, it’s your turn. Go and explain to Daniel the vision.”⁴

And Gabriel obeyed; and from that time onward you will find that Gabriel always was active in explaining visions and leading the Church of God, as we will see later. So the angel Gabriel began his work evidently in the time of Daniel.

In the time of Daniel, which redeemed humans were in heaven? There were three: Enoch, Moses and Elijah. Concerning Enoch, we have already learned, in our studies on the Melchizedek priesthood, that he is Melchizedek.⁵ So only two remain: Moses and Elijah. One of these two must be Gabriel. And we know that the most pre-eminent of the two, the one who was most like Christ in many ways, was Moses.

The Greatness of Humility

But we need to understand in more detail why Moses was chosen by God to be the mightiest of the Lord’s host. And for

⁴ *Daniel* 8:16.

⁵ See the book, *Melchizedek* by F. T. Wright.

this reason, we need to study the principles of true greatness. What makes a person great in heaven's sight? Why is he exalted? Why is he the greatest? And as we study this, we will understand better why, in heaven, Moses is the mightiest of the Lord's host.

Proverbs 15

³³ The fear of the Lord is the instruction of wisdom; and before honor is humility.

So the Bible makes it very clear that before there is honor, there is humility.

Proverbs 18

¹² Before destruction the heart of man is haughty, and before honor is humility.

So before someone is honored in heaven, there is humility in him. One aspect of humility, we have seen already in the angels, is that they seek to promote us. They seek to put us in a position that is even higher than their own. That is humility.

1 Peter 5

⁵ All of you, be submissive to one another and be clothed with humility. For God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble.

This text tells us that we should submit to each other. This is to be clothed with humility. God resists the proud, but He gives grace to the humble.

So one very nice definition here is "submission." If a person finds himself unable to submit to God, or to the truth that comes from God's messengers, or to submit to reproof that might be given him, or he cannot submit to his parents, or cannot submit to the head of the family, then he definitely lacks humility. Humility is this gift which enables us to submit to one another. And this gift will exalt us.

In the world today, there's a different philosophy. The philosophy in the world says that if you submit, you lower your-

self. But in heaven the values are changed around. In heaven those who are able to submit, are considered the greatest.

Mark 9

³⁴ ...they had disputed among themselves, who should be the greatest.

³⁵ And He sat down, and called the twelve, and said unto them, If any man desire to be first, the same shall be last of all, and servant of all.

That is the law in the kingdom. And if we do not follow this law, then we certainly will never reach to that stage of the highest angels, which God intends for each one of us.

Isaiah 57

¹⁵ For thus says the High and Lofty One who inhabits eternity, whose name is Holy: I dwell in the high and holy place...

The first part of the verse proclaims the power and majesty of God, and our first thought is...

“Well, that kind of God cannot be humble.”

But then it continues,

¹⁵ ...I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also who has a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble and to revive the heart of the contrite ones.

With whom does God dwell? With the humble. And, as we have read, the angels work diligently for us, to lead us into a fellowship with Christ which is even closer than they themselves can know.⁶ That is because God dwells with the humble. To what do the angels endeavor to lead us? To true humility. Only in this way will God dwell with us, and we with God.

There are many promises that show us that if we submit, then we shall surely be exalted:

⁶ *The Desire of Ages*, p. 21.

James 4

¹⁰ Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord and He will lift you up.

Since we understand that humility means submission, we could also read:

“Submit yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and He will lift you up.”

One example that tells us very clearly why God lifts up, or exalts, someone is described in *Philippians* chapter 2, which is the clearest chapter on humility.

Philippians 2

⁵ Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus,

⁶ Who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God,

⁷ But made himself of no reputation, taking the form of a servant, and coming in the likeness of men.

⁸ And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross.

This is ultimate humility. If you want the clearest definition of humility, you find it here. First of all, it says, Jesus did not consider it robbery to be equal with God. I always found this expression difficult to understand until I found an object lesson for it.

When you go to Africa and you want to catch monkeys, you just have to put a box there, with a little hole, and put food in the box. When the monkeys sense the food and come there and grab it with their hand, they will hold tightly onto it; but they won't be able to pull it out. And that's when the hunter can catch the monkeys, because they cling to the food.

I also saw how monkeys hold on to what they have: they really cling to it; they won't let it go. That is what it means to hold on to something like a robbery:

“...to cling to, to consider it a matter to be grasped, to hold on to.”

That means to hold it as robbery. Jesus did not consider it a robbery to be equal with God. He was willing to lay this down.

Philippians 2

⁷ But made himself of no reputation...

He came to this earth and made himself of no reputation. When He came to this earth and was born in a manger in Bethlehem, did He appear to be the One equal to God? He really made himself of no reputation at all. Then He grew up in Nazareth as a child from a poor family, and even in His public ministry He was misunderstood again and again. He made himself of no reputation; He was a nobody in this world as far as the thinking of the other people was concerned.

⁷ ...taking the form of a servant...

Furthermore, He came in the form of a servant. How wonderful it was when He washed the disciples' feet! He was a real servant.

⁷ ...and coming in the likeness of men.

⁸ And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross.

Coming in the likeness of man, and being found in the appearance of man, He humbled himself and became obedient to the point of death. So humility in Christ is shown even in that He was submissive to the point of death, even to the death of the cross: not only death, but the shameful death of a criminal.

⁹ Therefore [for this reason, and no other], God has also highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name:

¹⁰ That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and those on earth, and of those under the earth.

¹¹ And that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

Why was Jesus exalted? Why does everybody bow before Him? Why does everybody praise Him? Is it because He is the Son of God? Or is it because He is equal with God, and has so much glory?

The reason is because He humbled himself and became obedient, even to the point of death. That is the very reason why He was exalted, and that is the very reason why the redeemed are exalted. This humility is a gift, a very special gift, that we cannot get by ourselves. We can get it only with the gift of the seed of Christ.

But, as we receive this gift, it must grow in us. This gift is the entrance-card to heaven. It is the necessary qualification to make us the greatest in the heavenly kingdom. As it was with Jesus, so it is with everyone else as well. The redeemed are exalted in the same way as Jesus. First of all, they have the promise that they shall inherit the New Earth:

Matthew 5

⁵ Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth.

Here is cause and effect. The cause is “meekness” and the result is “they shall inherit the earth.” To inherit the earth means “to rule as kings and priests,” as is said in *Daniel*, and this means to have very high positions in the heavenly courts. These high positions are promised to those who are meek, for they shall inherit the earth.

True and False Humility

Before we go on to study this humility, how it is expressed in the lives of the faithful people of God and how it enables us to cooperate with the angels, let us have a quick look at what humility is *not*. We need to understand this also, because very

often people do not distinguish between true and false humility. The Bible speaks of a false humility also:

Colossians 2

¹⁸ Let no one defraud you of your reward, taking delight in *false humility* and worship of angels, intruding into those things which he has not seen, vainly puffed up by his fleshly mind.

Paul was here warning against certain kinds of teachers who were trying to look into the things which are not revealed, puffing themselves up as though they knew something, but in reality knowing nothing. And he says that they have a false humility.

²⁰ Therefore, if you died with Christ from the basic principles of the world, why, as though living in the world, do you subject yourself to regulations,

²¹ Do not touch, do not taste, do not handle,

²² Which all concern things which perish with the using; according to the commandments and doctrines of men?

²³ These things indeed have an appearance of wisdom in self-imposed religion, false humility, and neglect of the body, but are of no value against the indulgence of the flesh.

Some people try to gain humility by their own efforts, by their own works, by not doing this and not doing that. But all this is not true humility. Humility comes as a gift, and this gift needs to be cultivated. And as it is cultivated, it will not lead us to this false humility, but to the true humility.

Testimonies, vol. 3, p. 335:

My young sister, you are living an imaginary life. You cannot detect or realize a blessing in anything. You imagine troubles and trials which do not exist; you exaggerate little annoyances into grievous trials. This is not the meekness which Christ blessed. It is an unsanctified, rebellious, unfilial discontent.

Meekness is a precious grace, willing to suffer silently, willing to endure trials. Meekness is patient and labors to be

happy under all circumstances. Meekness is always thankful and makes its own songs of happiness, making melody in the heart to God. Meekness will suffer disappointment and wrong and will not retaliate. Meekness is not to be silent and sulky. A morose temper is the opposite of meekness; for this only wounds and gives pain to others, and takes no pleasure to itself.

Both the apostle Paul, and Ellen White, are writing the same things about this false humility: it is a person who runs around with sackcloth all day and with a sad face in order to show everybody how humble he is. That, for sure, is a false meekness. But a false meekness could be seen also in a person who is shunning his responsibility, who, if the Lord wants to call him to do something, he says,

“No, I cannot do it.”

This kind of false humility is described by the man with the one talent:

Matthew 25

²⁴ Then he which had received the one talent came and said, Lord, I knew you that you are a hard man, reaping where you have not sown, and gathering where you have not strawed:

²⁵ And I was afraid, and went and hid your talent in the earth: lo, there you have that is yours.

Christ's Object Lessons, p. 363:

But when we give ourselves wholly to God and in our work follow His direction, He makes himself responsible for its accomplishment. He would not have us conjecture as to the success of our honest endeavors. Not once should we even think of failure. We are to cooperate with One, who knows no failure. We should not talk of our own weakness and inability. This is a manifest distrust of God, a denial of His word.

When we murmur because of our burdens, or refuse the responsibilities He calls upon us to bear, we are virtually say-

ing that He is a hard Master, that He requires what He has not given us power to do. The spirit of the slothful servant we are often feign to call humility.

But true humility is widely different. To be clothed with humility does not mean that we are to be dwarfs in intellect, deficient in aspiration, and cowardly in our lives, shunning burdens lest we fail to carry them successfully. Real humility fulfills God's purposes by depending upon His strength.

True humility is a mistrust in our own ability but, at the same time, a trust in the ability of God. That would sum it all up very nicely: a distrust in our own ability, but a trust in God's ability. We will not make our lack of ability an excuse for not doing what the Lord gives us to do, because He will enable us to do everything that He commands.

A humble person is *not* someone deficient in aspiration, cowardly, a dwarf in intellect, who shuns burdens lest he would fail to carry them through. That is not what we are studying here, but we are studying the true humility which is submission to God and His mighty powers, which is submission to reproof, submission to one another, submission in whatever the Lord gives us to do. In this, Christ gave the best example, and for this reason He was exalted.

The Meekness of Moses

Let us come back to Moses and look at his character. We open the story of where Aaron and Miriam rebelled against Moses.

Numbers 12

¹ Then Miriam and Aaron spoke against Moses because of the Ethiopian woman whom he had married; for he had married an Ethiopian woman.

² And they said: Has the Lord indeed spoken through Moses? Has He not spoken through us also? And the Lord heard it.

How did Moses react to that? Did he defend himself? Was he angry with Aaron and Miriam? The Bible does not say ex-

actly how Moses reacted, except that the next verse has something to say about him:

Numbers 12

³ Now, the man Moses was very humble, more than all men who were on the face of the earth.

This short verse speaks volumes. If Moses was very humble, more than all men on the face of the earth, what was he then, in the sight of heaven? He was the greatest, certainly, because the humblest is the greatest in the sight of heaven. Humility is greatness.

Moses wrote this of himself. Did you know this? That is in *Numbers*, and the book of *Numbers* was written by Moses. So Moses was writing that Moses was the humblest man on the face of the earth. Is this humility? If somebody stands up before the people and says,

“I am the humblest man on the face of the earth!”

What would you think of him? That he is very proud. But Moses was not writing this in order to promote himself before anybody. He wrote this under Inspiration. It was not the opinion of Moses, that Moses was the meekest man, it was the opinion of God. It was the Holy Spirit who inspired him; and what he wrote down there, was not something that promoted him among the people. Proof for that is found here:

Thoughts from the Mount of Blessing, p. 14:

Patience and gentleness under wrong were not characteristics prized by the heathen or by the Jews. The statement made by Moses under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, that he was the meekest man upon the earth, would not have been regarded by the people of his time as a commendation; it would rather have excited pity or contempt.

That was the context under which he wrote this down. But Jesus places meekness among the first qualifications for His kingdom. In His own life and character the divine beauty of

this precious grace is revealed.

Moses wrote down about his meekness under Inspiration and in a time when this was not valued at all. Is meekness valued today by the people generally? No. The word “meekness” has a positive meaning in our minds because we know from the Bible that meekness is something good, but the character of meekness is not really appreciated, as we see it in the life of Jesus, as we see it in the life of Moses, as we will study it, and as we will also find as we exercise this gift. In the sight of heaven, however, the values are so different.

The Greatness of John the Baptist

Another person who was called the greatest was John the Baptist. He was called, by Jesus, the greatest prophet ever risen. And why did Jesus call him so?

The Desire of Ages, p. 219:

Matthew 11

¹¹ Verily I say unto you, Among them that are born of women there has not risen a greater than John the Baptist.

In the announcement to Zacharias before the birth of John, the angel had declared,

Luke 1

¹⁵ He shall be great in the sight of the Lord.

In the estimation of Heaven, what is it that constitutes greatness? Not that which the world accounts greatness, not wealth or rank, or noble descent, or intellectual gifts, in themselves considered.

If intellectual greatness, apart from any higher consideration, is worthy of honor, then our homage is due to Satan, whose intellectual power no man has ever equaled. But when perverted to self-serving, the greater the gift, the greater curse it becomes.

It is moral worth that God values. Love and purity are the attributes He prizes most. John was great in the sight of the Lord, when, before the messengers from Sanhedrin, before the people, and before his own disciples he refrained from

seeking honor to himself, but pointed all to Jesus as the promised One. His unselfish joy in the ministry of Christ represents the highest type of nobility ever revealed in man.

Why was John the Baptist called the greatest prophet? Because he said:

John 3

³⁰ He must increase and I must decrease.

Jesus continues,

Matthew 11

¹¹ ...but the least in the kingdom is greater than he.

How can the least in the kingdom be higher or greater than the greatest prophet? And furthermore, greater than he who was so meek?

The Desire of Ages, p. 220:

The prophet John was the connecting link between the two dispensations. As God's representative he stood forth to show the relation of the law and the prophets to the Christian dispensation. He was the lesser light, which was to be followed by a greater.

The mind of John was illuminated by the Holy Spirit, that he might shed light upon his people; but no other light ever has shone or ever will shine so clearly upon fallen man as that which emanated from the teaching and example of Jesus. Christ and His mission had been but dimly understood as typified in the shadowy sacrifices. Even John had not fully comprehended the future, immortal life through the Saviour.

Aside from the joy that John found in his mission, his life had been one of sorrow. His voice had been seldom heard except in the wilderness. His was a lonely lot. And he was not permitted to see the result of his own labors.

- It was not his privilege to be with Christ and witness the manifestation of divine power attending the greater light.
- It was not for him to see the blind restored to sight, the sick healed, and the dead raised to life.

- He did not behold the light that shone through every word of Christ, shedding glory upon the promises of prophecy.

The least disciple who saw Christ's mighty works and heard His words was in this sense more highly privileged than John the Baptist, and therefore is said to have been greater than he.

So Jesus was saying,

“John the Baptist saw me only from afar. He saw me as the Lamb of God; but those who are living after John the Baptist can see my works, they can see my suffering and what I do for you.”

Not all of us might study about Jesus in the forms of prophetic symbols, but we know the actual history, and this is a mighty privilege which even John the Baptist did not have, because he died before it all unfolded. Jesus was saying that the least in the kingdom is more privileged than John was. Let's consider now why John the Baptist is considered so great in the sight of heaven.

The Desire of Ages, p. 178-179:

For a time the Baptist's influence over the nation had been greater than that of its rulers, priests, or princes. If he had announced himself as the Messiah, and raised a revolt against Rome, priests and people would have flocked to his standard. Every consideration that appeals to the ambition of the world's conquerors Satan had stood ready to urge upon John the Baptist. But with the evidence before him of his power, he had steadfastly refused the splendid bribe. The attention which was fixed upon him he had directed to Another.

Now he saw the tide of popularity turning away from himself to the Saviour. Day by day the crowds about him lessened. When Jesus came from Jerusalem to the region about Jordan, the people flocked to hear Him. The number of His disciples increased daily. Many came for baptism, and while Christ himself did not baptize, He sanctioned the adminis-

tration of the ordinance by His disciples. Thus He set His seal upon the mission of His forerunner. But the disciples of John looked with jealousy upon the growing popularity of Jesus...

The disciples of John came to him with their grievances, saying,

John 3

²⁶ Rabbi, He that was with you beyond Jordan, to whom you bear witness, behold, the same baptizes, and all men come to Him.

Through these words, Satan brought temptation upon John. Though John's mission seemed about to close, it was still possible for him to hinder the work of Christ. If he had sympathized with himself, and expressed grief or disappointment at being superseded, he would have sown the seeds of dissension, would have encouraged envy and jealousy, and would seriously have impeded the progress of the gospel.

John had by nature the faults and weaknesses common to humanity, but the touch of divine love had transformed him. He dwelt in an atmosphere uncontaminated with selfishness and ambition, and far above the miasma of jealousy. He manifested no sympathy with the dissatisfaction of his disciples, but showed how clearly he understood his relation to the Messiah, and how gladly he welcomed the One for whom he had prepared the way. He said,

²⁷ A man can receive nothing, except it be given him from heaven.

²⁸ You yourselves bear me witness, that I said, I am not the Christ, but that I am sent before Him.

²⁹ He that has the bride is the bridegroom: but the friend of the bridegroom, which stands and hears him, rejoices greatly because of the bridegroom's voice.

John represented himself as the friend who acted as a messenger between the betrothed parties, preparing the way for the marriage. When the bridegroom had received his bride, the mission of the friend was fulfilled. He rejoiced in the happiness of those whose union he had promoted. So John had been called to direct the people to Jesus, and it was his joy to witness the success of the Saviour's work. He said,

John 3

²⁹ ...this my joy therefore is fulfilled.

³⁰ He must increase, but I must decrease.

Looking in faith to the Redeemer, John had risen to the height of self-abnegation. He sought not to attract men to himself, but to lift their thoughts higher and still higher, until they should rest upon the Lamb of God. He himself had been only a voice, a cry in the wilderness. Now with joy he accepted silence and obscurity, that the eyes of all might be turned to the Light of life.

³⁰ He must increase, but I must decrease.

If John had said this in the full understanding of the mission of Christ, it would have been very noble. But he said this even not fully understanding the mission of Christ, and that reveals his meekness. Do you see why John the Baptist is called the greatest in heaven? Because he is the meekest.

The same that is true for John the Baptist, is true also for Moses. He was the meekest man on the face of the earth, and for this reason he was the greatest. In God's kingdom true humility is true greatness. Therefore, the meekest man must be the greatest man. Moses was the meekest man on the face of the earth, as we have read; therefore, he must have been the greatest man.

Ministry of Healing, p. 475:

The divine command found him [Moses] self-distrustful, slow in speech, and timid. He was overwhelmed with the sense of his incapacity to be a mouthpiece for God. But he accepted the work, putting his whole trust in the Lord. The greatness of his mission called into exercise the best powers of his mind. God blessed his ready obedience, and he became eloquent, hopeful, self-possessed, fitted for the greatest work ever given to man. Of him it is written:

Deuteronomy 34

¹⁰ There has not risen a prophet since in Israel like unto Moses whom Jehovah knew face to face.

We read here that he was the greatest. Why was he the greatest? Simply because he was the meekest.

Matthew 18

³ Assuredly I say unto you, unless you are converted and become as little children, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven.

⁴ Therefore whoever humbles himself as this little child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven. And whoever receives one little child like this in my name, receives me.

So, who is the greatest in heaven? He who “humbles himself as this little child.” This is what Moses had done. He humbled himself as a little child, and therefore, he was the greatest in the kingdom of heaven. He was not only the greatest on this earth, as we have read, but as he humbled himself as a child, he was also the greatest in the kingdom of heaven. And this is the reason why he is the mightiest of the Lord’s host.

Some are puzzled by the fact that Moses is called the greatest prophet who has ever arisen. Likewise, Jesus testifies the same of John the Baptist, that he is the greatest prophet ever born of women. Who was the greater? John the Baptist, or Moses? By asking this kind of question, we show that we do not understand what true meekness is.

True meekness does not want to be greater than the others. True meekness is not competitive: here is one greater and here is one smaller! True greatness considers only one standard, and that is perfection: the perfection that we find in Christ. So in this sense Moses was the greatest, because he had reached the highest pinnacle of true humility. Likewise, John the Baptist was the greatest, because he also reached the highest level of humility. So it is possible for both to be the greatest prophets who have ever arisen.

To make a parallel to this, let us turn quickly to *Daniel*, chapter 10. There we read something about the archangels, or chief princes, as they are called here. Gabriel speaks to Daniel,

and says that he fought against the prince of the kingdom of Persia:

Daniel 10

¹³ But the prince of the kingdom of Persia withstood me twenty-one days; and behold, Michael, one of the chief princes, came to help me, for I had been left alone there with the kings of Persia.

When we speak of a chief prince, we usually think of one person only. But here we see that Michael is one of the other chief princes. Another chief prince would be Gabriel, another chief prince would be Melchizedek, and another chief prince was, for certain, Elijah. These mighty men actually are now in heaven serving, because they have learned true humility on this earth. And this is the privilege of each believer.

The Beauty of Humility

Let us turn to a few other statements that teach us about humility. Humility is submission. And there's a very nice statement in this connection:

1 Peter 3

¹ Likewise you wives, be submissive to your own husbands, that even if some do not obey the word, they, without a word, may be won by the conduct of their wives,

² When they observe your chaste conduct accompanied by fear.

³ Do not let your beauty be that outward adorning of arranging the hair, of wearing gold, or of putting on fine apparel;

⁴ But let it be the hidden person of the heart, with the incorruptible ornament of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is very precious in the sight of God.

⁵ For in this manner, in former times, the holy women who trusted in God also adorned themselves, being submissive to their own husbands,

⁶ As Sarah obeyed Abraham, calling him lord, whose daughters you are if you do good and are not afraid with any terror.

This wonderful scripture tells us something of humility and beauty. In heaven, humility is beauty. And likewise, in the mind of the true Christian, true humility will be beauty.

But in the mind of the worldly-minded person, beauty will be pride, or pride will be beauty. And the best place you can see this is in the fashions. When you look into the world, you see people trying to attract attention to themselves by certain fashionable things: by “outward adorning,” as it says here, by “arranging the hair,” or “wearing gold,” or putting on “fine apparel,” and so forth. As it was in the time of the apostles, so it is likewise today.

What is the reason for these outward fashionable things? It is to draw attention to oneself. A true Christian will not be attracted to these things. He will rather be attracted to the other beauty, which is true humility. So, if somebody wants to make sure to find the right wife (or the right husband), what will they look for? They will look for the beauty which is described in *1 Peter* chapter 3.

First of all, they need humility in themselves. If they have this humility, they will naturally be attracted to such a partner who has the beauty of a true character, the character of service at any cost to oneself.

But if they do not have this character in themselves, they will look to the outward appearance, and the character will not matter so much. And for certain, they will be very disappointed once the marriage is formed and the beauty of the early years fades away.

True beauty is true humility, true service; it is true submission. And this is so opposite to what the world believes. We need to read this scripture again and again and again. The world always sees beauty and greatness in pride; but in heaven and in the true Christian minds, true beauty will be humility, and true greatness will be submission.

The Strength of Meekness

Another very nice statement about this true humility is to be found here:

Thoughts from the Mount of Blessing, p. 15-16:

When we receive Christ as an abiding guest in the soul, the peace of God, which passes all understanding, will keep our hearts and minds through Christ Jesus. *Philippians 4:7*. The Saviour's life on earth, though lived in the midst of conflict, was a life of peace. While angry enemies were constantly pursuing Him, He said,

John 8

²⁹ He that sent me, is with me: the Father has not left me alone; for I do always those things that please Him.

No storm of human or satanic wrath could disturb the calm of that perfect communion with God. And He says to us,

John 14

²⁷ Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you.

Matthew 11

²⁹ Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me, for I am meek and lowly in heart: and you shall find rest.

Peace and rest go together with humility. If we are proud, we will never come to this rest.

Thoughts from the Mount of Blessing, p. 16-17:

Bear with me the yoke of service for the glory of God and the uplifting of humanity, and you will find the yoke easy and the burden light.

It is the love of self that destroys our peace. While self is all alive, we stand ready continually to guard it from mortification and insult;...

We stand always ready to guard it, and when it is attacked, immediately it is defended!

...but when we are dead and our life is hid with Christ in God, we shall not take neglects or slights to heart. We shall be deaf to reproach and blind to scorn and insult.

1 Corinthians 13 [RV]

⁴ Love suffers long and is kind; love envies not. Love vaunts not itself, is not puffed up,

⁵ Does not behave itself unseemly, seeks not its own, is not provoked, takes not account of evil;

⁶ Rejoices not in unrighteousness, but rejoices in the truth;

⁷ Bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.

⁸ Love never fails.

Happiness drawn from earthly sources is as changeable as varying circumstances can make it...

Even the positive happiness is changeable when it has worldly sources.

...but the peace of Christ is a constant and abiding peace. It does not depend upon any circumstances in life, on the amount of worldly goods or the number of earthly friends. Christ is the fountain of living water, and happiness drawn from Him can never fail.

The meekness of Christ, manifested in the home, will make the inmates happy; it provokes no quarrel, gives back no angry answer, but soothes the irritated temper and diffuses a gentleness that is felt by all within its charmed circle. Wherever cherished, it makes the families of earth a part of the one great family above.

And the “family above” are the angels. True peace and true happiness are to be found in this humility which is able to bear all things, which does not take neglects or slights or bad talking or any hurts to heart. It just is dead to these things.

When people say bad things about us, if people neglect us, if people despise us, or don’t appreciate us, all that does not matter. We are dead to these kinds of mistreatment if the gift of humility is growing in us.

And this is the kind of character that Moses had. Therefore he is the greatest among the heavenly host.

4. The Life of Moses

LET us now consider the life of Moses, step by step. We will see how he learned humility, and how humility was manifested in his life.

Training for Heaven

Because we are studying Gabriel, and we know that Moses is Gabriel, we are especially interested to see how Moses was qualified to be the mightiest of the Lord's host. And this qualification began already on earth, and even before his birth, with his conception.

Our life begins from the earliest moments. And not only is the earthly life determined by the earliest moments, but our future life as well. So we should accustom ourselves to think not only of this earthly life, but also of the future life. We continue our life there. Our life on this earth is a very short period compared with eternity. It is only a short preparation time for the higher service that we will do when we are in heaven.

The life of Moses on earth, short as it was in comparison with eternity, was an important preparation for his life later. What Moses did on earth, he likewise did in heaven. And this is a lesson for each one of us. What we do on earth, we will do in heaven. If we don't like the service that God has appointed to us on this earth, we won't like it in heaven either. But if we love the service God has given to us on this earth, we will love it in heaven as well. It is the same service that we shall do. Therefore, let us test ourselves, how we relate to the service that we are doing on this earth.

I'm speaking now of the spiritual service. If we would talk of physical things, like repairing cars or making furniture or things like this, then we know that heaven will have different materials, and therefore, it will be different. But the kind of

spiritual service I give, I will also give in heaven. If I have the responsibility on earth as a parent, I will continue that kind of responsibility in heaven.

From the Earliest Moments

Let us now look at how Moses was prepared to become the mightiest of the Lord's host. First of all, in the first paragraphs of the chapter "Moses," which begins on page 241 in *Patriarchs and Prophets*, we read of the great oppression under which the children of Israel suffered. The king of Egypt tried to obliterate the children of Israel from the face of the earth. And for this reason he gave them very hard work. He made the work ever harder and harder.

Finally when he saw that nothing succeeded, he made a decree that every male born of the Hebrew women should die. He gave this task to the midwives that they should kill the male babies. What a cruel command that was! But the midwives, because they were god-fearing, did not carry out the king's command. It did not matter to them what they risked, they just didn't carry it out. The result was that for the time being the command was not carried out. But the king was determined to have it accomplished.

Under that situation Moses was conceived. Can you imagine a more difficult situation to be conceived in than that? Being slaves, being terribly oppressed, and even being under the death decree. Would you like to be pregnant under such a situation, knowing that if your child is a male child, he is appointed to be killed, and knowing that there is no escape from it? That is awful, isn't it?

How would mothers usually react if they are pregnant under such a situation? It would be a very, very difficult pregnancy. They would live in fear all the time. They would even try to hide the fact that they are pregnant, and mothers are sometimes driven to be desperate under such situations. If a

child is then born after all, how would you expect that the child to be like? a very humble child? Rather a very fearful child, that would shun and run away from responsibilities.

When we look at the situation this way, we look at only one side of the story. We must also look at the mother of Moses and how she reacted in that situation. The situation may be adverse, but if the mother reacts correctly, then the child will have a great advantage. The more adverse the circumstances are, the greater the possibilities of true humility, provided the mother reacts correctly. Let us see how the Bible describes the reaction of the mother under those circumstances.

Hebrews 11

²³ By faith Moses, when he was born, was hidden three months by his parents, because they saw he was a beautiful child...

“They saw that he was a beautiful child.” What does that mean? What is beauty, in the language of heaven? It is character, it is humility. So what they saw in Moses already was that he was a humble child, a wonderful child.

²³ ...and they were not afraid of the king’s command.

This was the best kind of reaction. Not being afraid of the king’s command meant they had a great level of faith. And this great level of faith was transmitted to Moses even while he was in the womb. So when he was born, he already had received a great education in true humility,—which is true faith,—under the most adverse circumstances.

Because the mother did not fear the king’s command, later Moses was also able to stand fearless before Pharaoh, even though Pharaoh was looking for his head. Why was he able? Because he had received that education from his earliest moments.

Even though the pregnancy of Moses was under difficult circumstances, it was an education in humility. It does not

matter under what circumstances we are, it only matters how we react to the circumstances, and that determines whether we will be humble or proud. Circumstances do not form us, rather it is the gift of God which forms us and which makes us react rightly in these circumstances.

Furthermore, Moses was born in a slave nation. That again is something that contributed to his humility. Imagine if Moses had been born as a king's son, as the Pharaoh's son. What would the mother have thought? She would have thought of pride, of great prosperity, of worldly greatness for her son. That is how kings mothers think. So what is the result when the children are born? Proud children. This is the reason why kings are usually proud.

Moses' whole situation into which he was born was already an education in meekness. However, then came his education in Egypt. Before we come to this, let us look at the birth of Moses again, and the events after his birth.

The mother of Moses made a basket and put Moses into it, and put it on the Nile. She did this in obedience to God's promptings, otherwise that would have been very dangerous. On the Nile there are crocodiles. It would require faith to put your child in a basket, and let it float along, among the crocodiles. Only because Moses' mother did not fear the king's command, only because she had faith, could she do this.

And the Lord ruled over the whole matter. He led Pharaoh's daughter to the place and she adopted Moses to be her son, and then he received an education in Egypt.

Training in Egypt

Was his education in Egypt an education in humility? Certainly not. It was an education in pride. Satan did everything to blot out the humility that Moses had and to make him a proud man, and thereby destroy his ability for service. Satan understood very well that the deliverer of Israel should come,

and he did everything at his command to destroy the ability of Moses. And the best way to do it would be to make him a proud man.

This is the reason why Satan permits wealth to come to some people. He uses wealth to make people proud. This is why he permits them to come into high positions in a firm. It tends to make them proud. Satan does not try to hinder this; he rather tries to promote it. At the same time, it does not need to make a person proud. That is not a predetermined outcome. It all depends on how the man reacts to these circumstances.

The temptations of high positions in the world, temptations of wealth, are greater than the temptations of poverty and the temptations under oppression. When Satan is not successful to oppress someone and thereby lead him away from God, he will often give him wealth. In the past, he has often been successful this way.

This was the very temptation under which Moses was coming now. Satan was working all the forty years very hard. However, and that is a mighty testimony for early education, Moses remained very firm in all those years.

Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 245:

By the laws of Egypt all who occupied the throne of Pharaohs must become members of the priestly caste; and Moses, as the heir apparent, was to be initiated into the mysteries of the national religion. This duty was committed to the priests. But while he was an ardent and untiring student, he could not be induced to participate in the worship of the gods. He was threatened with the loss of the crown, and warned that he would be disowned by the princess, should he persist in his adherence to the Hebrew faith. But he was unshaken in his determination to render homage to none save the one God, the Maker of heaven and earth.

What a wonderful character! Moses was not intimidated by

these threats. That means he rather would have sacrificed being the next Pharaoh before giving up his faith. The Bible states it even stronger:

Hebrews 11

²⁴ By faith Moses, when he came of age, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God than to enjoy the passing pleasures of sin.

How few have been able to withstand that kind of temptation, the temptation of wealth and position! Usually when men have tasted those things, Satan was successful. Moses had this gift of humility, and he cherished it, so that when he was in Egypt, he would rather suffer affliction with his people than to enjoy the pleasures of being called the Pharaoh of the mightiest nation of the world.

How easily Moses could have argued like this:

“Well, let me first become Pharaoh. I will just worship as a form, and then when I'm Pharaoh, I will deliver the people.”

How many reason similarly:

“Let me first get on to the top of the ladder, and then I will serve the Lord's cause.”

But is this correct reasoning? Will this ever happen? Never. There is only one safe path, and this is the path of true greatness, the path of true humility. A person who follows this path would rather suffer than enjoy the pleasures of sin. That is the kind of character we find in Moses. And this is one of the reasons why he is called the greatest.

Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 246:

But he was unshaken in his determination to render homage to none save the one God, the Maker of heaven and earth. He reasoned with priests and worshipers, showing the folly of their superstitious veneration of senseless objects.

None could refute his arguments or change his purpose, yet for the time his firmness was tolerated on account of his high position and the favor with which he was regarded by both the king and the people.

Hebrews 11

²⁴ By faith Moses, when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter;

²⁵ Choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season;

²⁶ Esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt: for he had respect unto the recompense of the reward.

Moses was fitted to take pre-eminence among the great of the earth, to shine in the courts of its most glorious kingdom, and to sway the scepter of its power. His intellectual greatness distinguishes him above the great men of all ages. As historian, poet, philosopher, general of armies, and legislator, he stands without a peer. Yet with the world before him, he had the moral strength to refuse the flattering prospects of wealth and greatness and fame,

²⁵ Choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season.

Moses had been instructed in regard to the final reward to be given to the humble and obedient servants of God, and worldly gain sank to its proper insignificance in comparison.

So we should view it. The life we are living on this earth, is just a very short time, in comparison with eternity. What are seventy years compared with eternity? They are nothing. And this little time is the very time in which we are preparing for the work of eternity.

If we spend these decisive moments wrongly, we can be sure that it will cripple our usefulness for eternal life. On the other hand, if we make good use out of this little time, we shall find the joy of walking among the greatest of the mightiest of the Lord's host, of walking among Gabriel and Elijah and Melchizedek and others. That is what God intends for us.

While we look at the positive aspect of Moses' firmness in Egypt, we must not overlook that, nevertheless, he was, to a certain degree at least, influenced by this education that he received at the court. He was at the court for twenty-eight years. He was twelve years old when he came to it, and forty years of age when he left it. Moses had imagined that because he was such an able General, that God would deliver the people through his leading of armies. And he imagined that the whole thing would happen by the use of weapons, and such means.

One day he saw an Egyptian mistreating an Israelite, and he became very angry. His heart was on the side of God's suffering people and so he immediately slew the Egyptian. He buried him quickly and thought that nobody had seen it except the Hebrew and that everything was going on like normal. He hoped, in fact, even that the Hebrew would tell his fellows, and they would all understand that the time of their deliverance had come.

But instead of this, the people misunderstood the whole thing, and it became known to the Egyptians, through whom it was then quickly spread. Moses had to flee from the court.

Re-education in the Wilderness

When Moses fled into the wilderness, he then became a shepherd. And this work as a shepherd was very humiliating. Imagine, twenty-eight years he was educated as the future Pharaoh, the President or King, of the mightiest nation on earth at that time.

Imagine that for twenty-eight years you would be systematically educated to become the President of the USA, with all that belongs to the position: with all the pomp, extravagance, and luxury. You had a lot of servants all the time who would serve you; you would get the best education, the best food, everything the best. And then suddenly you would be given

the job of a shoe-shiner; all of a sudden, from today to tomorrow. That would be humiliation!

Normally a person would break down under such a change; but not Moses. Moses accepted the work of a shepherd; and since he accepted that work, through that work the Lord taught him mighty lessons of humility. So when Moses was in Midian, his education was greatly furthered.

The Ministry of Healing, p. 474:

The education that Moses had received in Egypt was a help to him in many respects; but the most valuable preparation for his lifework was that which he received while employed as a shepherd.

Moses was naturally of an impetuous spirit. In Egypt a successful military leader and a favorite with the king and the nation, he had been accustomed to receiving praise and flattery. He had attracted the people to himself. He hoped to accomplish by his own powers the work of delivering Israel.

Far different were the lessons he had to learn as God's representative. As he led his flocks through the wilds of the mountains and into the green pastures of the valleys, he learned faith and meekness, patience, humility and self-forgetfulness. He learned to care for the weak, to nurse the sick, to seek after the straying, to bear with the unruly, to tend the lambs, and to nurture the old and feeble.

The work as a shepherd over sheep prepared Moses for the work as a shepherd in Israel. And the work as a shepherd in Israel prepared Moses for the work as a shepherd of the universe. So as Moses was prepared with this humble work as a shepherd to be the leader of Israel, so likewise we are prepared with our humble work here on earth for a higher work in heaven. Can you see the parallel?

What Moses was learning here was very essential:

1. To nurse the sick—there are sick sheep all the time.
2. To seek after the straying—there are sheep who run

away—and all the efforts he did for them in seeking for them taught him many valuable lessons.

3. To bear with the unruly and to tend the lambs. To nurture the old and the feeble. Through this work, Moses was drawn nearer to the Chief Shepherd. He became closely united to the Holy One of Israel. No longer did he plan to do a great work. He sought to do faithfully, as unto God, the work God committed to his charge. He recognized the presence of God in his surroundings.

Moses was accustomed to be admired by the people, he was used to flattery or praise. Now all of a sudden, he had to deal with these foolish, stubborn sheep. They wouldn't praise him, they wouldn't flatter him; they would rather run away. And they would need protection all the time, from lions, and all kinds of things; and they would be unruly at times.

As Moses changed from his former spirit to the other spirit, this was not an easy thing. To change from a life where he was used to praise and flattery, to a life where he had to deal with the unruly was a battle; a very hard battle, a battle “as for life,” as the following description states:

Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 248:

Moses had been learning much that he must unlearn. The influences that had surrounded him in Egypt—the love of his foster mother, his own high position as the king's grandson, the dissipation on every hand, the refinement, the subtlety and the mysticism of a false religion, the splendor of idolatrous worship, the solemn grandeur of architecture and sculpture—all had left deep impressions upon his developing mind and had molded, to some extent, his habits and character.

Time, change of surroundings, and communion with God could remove these impressions. It would require on the part of Moses himself a struggle as for life to renounce error and accept truth, but God would be his Helper when the conflict should be too severe for human strength.

So we should not be surprised when we also find it very difficult to learn humility. It is a struggle *as for life*, especially as we have been used to a life of pride, honor, praise, and protection. We, as citizens of a free world, are spoiled in this respect. We are protected on all sides. Social protections and civil rights protections are surrounding us, and we are accustomed to standing on our own feet and saying:

“Well, this is my legal right.”

I have experienced how hard it is to be humbled, when we are used to these kinds of rights. When I went through the iron curtain to the Eastern Block countries, I was sometimes very badly treated. The border officers didn’t respect me as a citizen of a free country who had civil rights. They would shout at me as though I was a little child, as though I was a criminal and had done something wrong. And this is when my temper tended to boil up, and I said in my heart,

“What are they doing here with me? Am I not a citizen of a free country? They’re not permitted to treat me like this.”

This experience revealed to me my own pride. I can imagine that a similar temper and thinking was in Moses. It must have been very difficult for him to give up these things.

Let us remember, we are spoiled people. And when the time comes that our civil rights will be taken away, when the time comes that the people, instead of protecting us, begin to persecute us, it will be a very difficult time for some of us. Then to accept this situation and to suffer with God’s people, instead of rising up against it with a proud nature, will be extremely hard. As it was for Moses a conflict *as for life*, the same will be the case with us also.

Likewise, if we are raised up in a family where the child got everything that it wanted, and where the child could rule in the house, and then all of a sudden this child has to subject itself,—in the workplace, or in another family, into which that

person marries,—it is very hard to cope with for that person; very hard indeed. It is a struggle *as for life*.

The true Christian will learn this grace, but still it will be a struggle. To be submissive is not something that is natural to our natures, nor is it naturally educated into us.

Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 248:

In all who have been chosen to accomplish a work for God, the human element is seen. Yet they have not been men of stereotyped habits and character, who were satisfied to remain in that condition. They earnestly desire to obtain wisdom from God and to learn to work for Him. Says the apostle:

James 1

⁵ If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that gives to all men liberally and upbraids not; and it shall be given him.

But God will not impart to men divine light while they are content to remain in darkness. In order to receive God's help, man must realize his weakness and deficiency;...

We must allow the Holy Spirit to reveal our pride.

...he must apply his own mind to the great change to be wrought in himself;...

And that is the very thing the Holy Spirit invites us to do.

...he must be aroused to earnest and persevering prayer and effort. Wrong habits and customs must be shaken off; and it is only by determined endeavor to correct these errors and to conform to right principles that the victory can be gained.

Many never attain to the position they might occupy, because they wait for God to do for them that which He has given them power to do for themselves. All who are fitted for usefulness must be trained by the severest mental and moral discipline, and God will assist them by uniting divine power with human effort.

So our minds must be occupied to this great change from

pride to humility which must be wrought in us, so that we become co-workers with the angels, so that we actually are able to finish the work.

That was the wonderful training that Moses received in Midian, the training as a shepherd, learning to deal with the unruly and with those who ran away and those who needed protection.

Time of the Deliverance

At the end of that training, Moses was the meekest man on the face of the earth.

Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 255:

The divine command given to Moses found him self-distrustful, slow of speech, and timid. He was overwhelmed with a sense of his incapacity to be a mouthpiece for God to Israel.

That is what Moses was like after this training. God came to him and told him,

“You shall be the leader of my people, to lead them out of Egypt.”

Moses was just overwhelmed. He said,

“I cannot do it, I am unable.”

Then the Lord assured him,

“I will be with you.”

At first, the reaction of Moses, when God called him, was an expression of true humility. He showed how little he trusted in his own strength to deliver Israel.

Exodus 3

¹¹ And Moses said unto God, Who am I, that I should go unto Pharaoh, and that I should bring forth the children of Israel out of Egypt?

But, after the Lord assured him again and again that He would do the work, that Moses would be only used as an instrument, and Moses still refused, that was going one step too far.

Exodus 3

¹² And He said, Certainly I will be with you; and this shall be a token unto you, that I have sent you: When you have brought forth the people out of Egypt, you shall serve God upon this mountain.

Exodus 4

¹ And Moses answered and said, But, behold, they will not believe me, nor hearken unto my voice: for they will say, The Lord has not appeared unto you.

¹⁰ And Moses said unto the Lord, O my Lord, I am not eloquent, neither heretofore, nor since You have spoken unto your servant: but I am slow of speech, and of a slow tongue.

¹³ And he [Moses] said, O my Lord, send, I pray You, by the hand of him whom You will send.

This was not humility anymore, but was more on the side of pride. When a person loses sight of God, and only sees his own weakness, this is not true humility, but it is false humility, as we have learned.

Moses finally accepted the call. And when he accepted the call, he accepted it forever. Never again did Moses walk away from his task. From this we can learn very much. Let's look at how Moses finally accepted the call.

Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 255:

The greatness of his mission called into exercise the best powers of his mind. God blessed his ready obedience, and he became eloquent, hopeful, self-possessed, and well-fitted for the greatest work ever given to man. This is an example of what God does to strengthen the character of those who trust Him fully, and give themselves unreservedly to His commands.

A man will gain power and efficiency as he accepts the re-

sponsibilities that God places upon him, and with his whole soul seeks to qualify himself to bear them aright. However humble his position, or limited his ability, that man will attain true greatness, who, trusting to divine strength, seeks to perform his work with fidelity.

Had Moses relied on his own strength and wisdom and eagerly accepted the great charge, he would have evinced his entire unfitness for such a work. The fact that a man feels his weakness is at least some evidence that he realizes the magnitude of the work appointed him and that he will make God his Counselor and his Strength.

So it will be in every work that God gives us. We will never feel that we are able to do it, unless we are proud. However, when the Lord gives us the work, He also gives the promise that He will give us the ability.

One very good example is the education of children. The education of children is a work that seems to overstretch our ability at times; there's more work involved than we feel able to do. We wish to make no mistakes in the education of our children; but we are not perfect. Here we make mistakes, and there we make mistakes, so what shall we do?

The only way out of this dilemma is to trust in the ability of the Lord to do this work, and to have the meekness in submitting ourselves totally to His guidance. Even if we have false concepts, the Lord will still be able to give a perfect education to our children and to counteract our mistakes. This is something we see in the education of Jesus by His mother Mary, who was not perfect either.

Similarly, we also have other tasks that overstretch our abilities. But then it is our privilege to trust fully in God, that He who gave the command will also give the ability. Whenever we find ourselves very eager to do a work for the Lord, which He has not given to us, we actually show how unable we are to cooperate with the angels, and how much pride there still is within us.

Moses, having revealed this wonderful humility, came to the point where he finally accepted the call: and this acceptance he never forgot. How often do people say,

“Yes, I’ll do this work.”

But then when difficulties come, they forget their solemn promise and turn their back on the truth. Not so with Moses. His dedication to do the job was very early tested. He was sent to the land of Egypt. There he went before Pharaoh, and he asked Pharaoh to let the people go into the wilderness, so that they may worship. Pharaoh said,

“Who is the God that sent you? I have no need to obey you, who are from a slave nation.”⁷

It’s a miracle in itself that Pharaoh did not destroy him. But the angels restrained him, and protected Moses. When Moses came back into the encampment of the elders, soon there were changes that took place. First of all, there was the command from the king that they should not only make the bricks, but they should also go and cut the straw for the burning of the bricks. He doubled the work, and he said,

“You must do it in the same time as before.”⁸

This was impossible for these poor men to do. They worked very hard; but as they were not able to do it, the taskmasters beat them hard. And so their lot became very hard after Moses visited with Pharaoh. The people turned against Moses and said to him,

“Moses, what have you done? Why did you go to the king? You have made life only harder for us. It would have been better if you had never appeared on the scene. It would have been better for you, had you stayed in Midian.”⁹

⁷ *Exodus* 5:2.

⁸ *Exodus* 5:6-19.

⁹ *Exodus* 5:20-21.

In such a situation, how would you feel? Wouldn't you be tempted to think:

"It would have been better for me to have stayed in Midian. Since I've been here, the troubles only became bigger, instead of getting solved. The Lord sent me to bring the people out, but I've made it harder for the people; and the people despise me for that. So I should rather withdraw again."

Wouldn't this be a natural reaction for many? But true humility will not lead us into such a path. True humility will lead us to hold on to the work that the Lord has given us, regardless of what difficulties come. This becomes especially hard when our work is not appreciated; when it is seemingly not crowned with success, but with failure. Then the temptation is very great to lay down the whole thing and let it be.

Finally the plagues came, and after the last plague the power of Egypt was broken, and the people were free to go out. They went out and were led by the cloud to the shores of the Red Sea. There, at the shores of the Red Sea, they were led to a place where there were mountains around. And, all of a sudden, the Egyptians were seen coming behind them.

That was a time for the children of Israel to murmur and to cry and to shout. And all their murmurings and shoutings were directed against Moses:

"Why have you led us here? You should have let us stay in Egypt. It would have been better to die there than to die here in the wilderness."¹⁰

And they accused Moses of having led them astray. It was not reasonable to talk like this. The cloud had clearly led them. They all saw the cloud. But in this moment of despair, nobody wanted to remember that the cloud had led them. And they behaved as if Moses was the leader.

¹⁰ *Exodus* 14:11-12.

Moses had undertaken the work under one condition: that not he, but God would be the Person who would lead the children of Israel out of Egypt. That was the condition. If he had to be that person, he would never have accepted the work. He knew that he was just incapable of doing such a work. And the very thing that he had not wanted to do, was charged upon him:

“*You have led us out.*”

That is a great temptation, a very great temptation. And if there would have been pride in Moses, at that point of time at least, he would have said,

“Well, I quit the work.”

Usually when you love a person, and you want to help him, and you do your best to help him, but this person just can’t appreciate it; instead, he despises you, he hates you, and he says again and again that you did wrong to him, how do you react? What is the normal reaction?

“Well, you don’t want my services, then do without me.”

And you say goodbye and turn away from him. Isn’t this the usual reaction? When two people come together and one serves the other, and the other one doesn’t appreciate it, the one who serves says,

“You don’t appreciate my services, so you don’t want them. So do without me.”

This is how Moses could have reacted. But the reaction of true humility acts like Jesus. He came down to this earth and became of no reputation. So likewise, even though Moses was their God-appointed leader, in this sense he became of no reputation in that they all charged him of doing something wrong. But Moses did not turn away from the people; rather he very calmly told them that the Lord would deliver them.

And amazingly, it calmed down the people. It is surprising how such an unreasonable throng, that cried so wildly in confusion, could be calmed down.

Often I have been in a situation with a lot of unconverted children. When they get into confusion and begin to cry, it is very difficult to control them. I imagine that Moses was in a similar situation. But the Spirit of God was with him as he faithfully did his work. And there came order into the camp; they even went into the Red Sea at the command of God through Moses, which gave them success. The waters parted, and they went through.

Later, when they were on the other side in the wilderness, there came difficulties again and again—the bitter water,¹¹ the lack of food,¹² then the lack of water,¹³ and then no food, that is no flesh food.¹⁴ Then they had other needs and grievances and annoyances. And what did the people always do when they had these kinds of difficulties? Repeatedly? They murmured. But how? Against whom? Everything against Moses.

“Moses, it’s your fault that we are here.”

This was a great pressure, and it required quite a mature humility to have patience with these people. Humility is patience, even under the most severe circumstances. Moses endured this pressure, and never abandoned the people to themselves.

Counsel of Jethro

The next incident where the humility of Moses was revealed, is when he was in the wilderness and his father-in-law, Jethro, came to him and gave him counsel.

¹¹ *Exodus* 15:22-25.

¹² *Exodus* 16.

¹³ *Exodus* 17:1-7.

¹⁴ *Numbers* 11:31-35.

Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 300-301:

As Jethro remained in the camp, he soon saw how heavy were the burdens that rested upon Moses. To maintain order and discipline among that vast, ignorant, and untrained multitude was indeed a stupendous task. Moses was their recognized leader and magistrate, and not only the general interests and duties of the people, but the controversies that arose among them, were referred to him. He had permitted this, for it gave him an opportunity to instruct them; as he said,

Exodus 18

¹⁶ I do make them know the statutes of God, and His laws.

But Jethro remonstrated against this, saying,

¹⁸ This thing is too heavy for you; you are not able to perform it yourself alone...You will surely wear away.

And he counseled Moses to appoint proper persons as rulers of thousands, and others as rulers of hundreds, and others of tens. They should be...

²¹ ...able men, such as fear God, men of truth, hating covetousness.

These were to judge in all matters of minor consequence, while the most difficult and important cases should still be brought before Moses, who was to be to the people, said Jethro,

¹⁹ ...to God-ward, that you may bring the causes unto God:

²⁰ And you shall teach them ordinances and laws, and shall show them the way wherein they must walk, and the work that they must do.

This counsel was accepted, and it not only brought relief to Moses, but resulted in establishing more perfect order among the people.

The Lord had greatly honored Moses, and had wrought wonders by his hand; but the fact that he had been chosen to instruct others did not lead him to conclude that he himself needed no instruction. The chosen leader of Israel listened gladly to the suggestions of the godly priest of Midian, and adopted his plan as a wise arrangement.

How would a proud person react when he would be approached like that? There are several possibilities. He could say,

“What have you to tell me? I’m the leader of the people, not you. Therefore, I will not accept your counsel.”

Also, a sign of pride is if a person thinks that only he can do the work. A very typical example would be if the father in the household says,

“Only I can do the work.”

And he thinks that all the other members of his family are just unable to do it; so he must do everything, and soon he will be overworked. So Moses could have easily said,

“Only I can do it.”

There’s no controversy about the fact that he was very able, and that he could take this opportunity, when the people came to him, to explain the law to them. It was a good opportunity. But the work just became too big, and it was necessary to distribute responsibilities. This is what his father-in-law saw, what Moses did not see it at that point of time. And Moses accepted the counsel which is a sign of humility.

It is a sign of humility if even the leader of God’s people can accept counsel. This counsel was accepted, and it not only brought relief to Moses, but resulted in establishing more perfect order among the people.

We should consider a bit more what kind of temptation it was when the people of Israel murmured against Moses—where he manifested this great patience.

When Moses was in the court of Egypt, he had the prospect of becoming the king’s heir, of becoming the Pharaoh—the king of the whole earth—because Egypt was the world power. When he exchanged this to suffer affliction with his people,

that was quite a great sacrifice. But the very people for whom he suffered affliction, were the ones who despised him, who rejected him. Can you see this temptation? He could have said,

“If only I had remained at the court, and not suffered with this stubborn people!”

He could have said,

“Well, if I had only remained in Midian! At least there I had my peace; but now I’m here, constantly exposed to the attacks of these unreasonable people.”

Moses was a very cultured man, but the people were very uncultured. And so it was quite a stress for him to bear this all the time.

Giving of the Law

The next incident was the giving of the Law on Mount Sinai. Moses went into the Mount to be with God two times for forty days. This was a major education in true humility. Can you imagine a better education in true humility than to be in the presence of God? There is none like this because God is humble. That is one of His great attributes, to be truly humble.

It is difficult to view God as a meek God because we are used, on this earth, to look at powerful men and the powerful men are not meek, but proud. There’s no politician, who being very powerful, would at the same time be truly meek. There are different grades of pride; some are more proud than others; but power and pride always go together. We never see power and meekness go together. But with God, it is so; with Him, power and meekness are combined in one person.

So when we are in the presence of God, and commune with Him face to face, and receive His instruction, that is a true lesson of humility. There on the Mount, Moses learned what we

have read in *Philippians* 2, that Jesus did not count it robbery to be equal with God, but humbled himself to become a servant, even so far as to become obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross.

When Moses saw all this, he was just enraptured; he gazed at this glorious humiliation, this glorious meekness; and he became more and more like God. The God that he talked with was Jesus; I think we understand that. When Moses came to this point where he became more and more like God, he also understood Him better and better. He understood His words with a depth that, I believe, is unequaled by our understanding. We just cannot understand the words of God as deeply as Moses understood them.

While Moses was there up in the mountain, God revealed to him what was happening down in the valley. Moses was very shocked about this.

Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 317-318:

Moses, in the Mount, was warned of the apostasy in the camp, and was directed to return without delay. “Go, get down,” were the words of God.

Exodus 32

⁷ Your people, which you have brought out of the land of Egypt, have corrupted themselves.

⁸ They have turned aside quickly out of the way which I’ve commanded them. They have made them a molten calf and have worshiped it.

God might have checked the movement at the outset, but He suffered it to come to its height, that He might teach all a lesson in His punishment of treason and apostasy.

Notice that God said to Moses,

“Get down, your people *which you brought* out of the land of Egypt, have corrupted themselves.”

Was this again a test for Moses? Yes, a very great test. How often does it happen when the children are naughty, the fa-

ther says to the mother:

“*Your child* is naughty!”

And when the child is good, the father says:

“Look, how good *my child* is!”

And the mother the same. She says,

“Look, how naughty *your children* are!”

And if they are good,

“How good *my children* are!”

Here, God said to Moses,

“*Your children*, i.e. *your* people, which *you* have brought out of Egypt, they have corrupted themselves.”

At this, Moses could have protested, and said,

“They are not my people, and it was not I who brought them out of Egypt. It’s your fault.”

If Moses would have reacted like this, it would be clear that he would not have learned much in the presence of God. But he *had* learned much. He was very humble, and so he was not offended that God said this. Furthermore, God said to him,

Exodus 32

¹⁰ Let me alone that my wrath may wax hot against them and that I may consume them; and I will make of you a great nation.

Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 318:

The people of Israel, and especially the mixed multitude, would be constantly disposed to rebel against God. They would also murmur against their leader and would grieve him by their unbelief and stubbornness. And it would be a laborious and soul-trying work to lead them through to the promised land. Their sins had already forfeited the favor of

God, and justice called for their destruction. The Lord, therefore, proposed to destroy them, and make of Moses a mighty nation.

What an offer! When Moses was shown the apostasy down in the valley, it must have been a great shock and disappointment. He had given up his wonderful career in Egypt; he had given up his peaceful life in the wilderness of Midian in order to lead this people, and all he reaped was apostasy, apostasy, apostasy, murmur, murmur, murmur. That is disappointing, isn't it? That would be a reason to say,

“Now I'll throw down my work.”

But Moses did not need to say this, because God offered it to him. In effect, He said,

“Now, I release you from your job again; and I will start anew, and make you again a leader—this time your children shall be the chosen children.”

How wonderful! The people of Moses! Not the people of Israel, but the people of Moses would be the people who would finish the work! When God said this to Moses, how would a person that did not have such deep meekness react immediately? He would immediately say,

“That is wonderful. Make me a big nation. I like that idea. Furthermore, You are right. If we continue to lead them, the mixed multitude will always make troubles, and we will never get to our goal; so let us start anew.”

Moses did not accept this offer. When Moses rejected this offer, he rejected it on the ground of his meekness, and understanding of God's character. When God offers us a blessing, and we reject that blessing, that does not necessarily mean that we are meek; it means quite the opposite: it means that we are proud. But here Moses understood God in a different way than a superficial listener would understand him. When

God said,

“Let me alone that I may destroy them,”

—what would a superficial listener understand? That God would like to withdraw from this people. He would like to make me a people, so let Him do what He likes. But Moses understood these words in a different way.

Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 318:

“Let me alone, that I may consume them,” were the words of God. If God had purposed to destroy Israel, who could plead for them? How few, but would have left the sinners to their fate. How few, but would have gladly exchanged the lot of toil and burden and sacrifice repaid with ingratitude and murmuring, for a position of ease and honor, when it was God himself that offered the release.

But Moses discerned ground for hope where there appeared only discouragement and wrath. The words of God: “Let me alone,” he understood, not to forbid, but to encourage intercession, implying that nothing but the prayers of Moses could save Israel.

So, how did Moses understand the words: “Let me alone?” It was an invitation,

“Please, now it’s your work to plead for them.”

The cooperation of Moses with the Angel Jesus was required. Here we have a typical work of cooperation. Jesus could do one part for the people: He could deliver them; and Moses could do another part for the people: he could plead for them. And this is exactly what the Lord invited him to do, and this is exactly how Moses understood the Lord.

He could never have understood the Lord in this way if he had not been so deeply acquainted with Him through this staying with Him two times forty days.

Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 318:

God had signified that He disowned His people. He had spoken of them to Moses as: “*your* people, which *you* brought out of Egypt”; but Moses humbly disclaimed the leadership of Israel. They were not his, but God’s. “*Your* people, which *you* have brought forth with great power, with a mighty hand. Wherefore,” he urged, “should the Egyptians speak and say: for mischief did He bring them out, to slay them in the mountains and to consume them from the face of the earth?”

When God said to Moses: “Your people,” what did He mean? He meant to say,

“You are in a certain way connected with these people, and therefore, you are able to plead for them.”

He did not mean that Moses was the real leader of the people, but what He said was:

“Because you have been made a special instrument for them, now you can be the instrument for their salvation by pleading for them.”

This is exactly what Moses understood, and therefore, he rejected the offer of becoming a great nation. Look what humility led Moses to do:

1. It led Moses to reject to become Pharaoh, the king of the mightiest nation back then.
2. It led Moses to reject a peaceful life in Midian and exchange it for a life of leading an unruly people.
3. It led Moses to reject the offer of becoming a great nation himself, but rather to suffer more with that people who were so unruly and so unthankful to him.

That is humility, isn’t it? Let us always remember this when the Lord has given us certain tasks, and we are tempted to let them go, because these tasks become so difficult.

Finally Moses went down from the mountain, sentences were executed against the leaders of the apostasy, the plague broke out among the people, and the whole thing became so bad that the people feared that everybody would be consumed. And so they pleaded with Moses to go to God and pray for them, and Moses promised that he would do that.

Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 362:

As the people were aroused to see the enormity of their guilt, terror pervaded the entire encampment. It was feared that every offender was to be cut off. Pitying their distress, Moses promised to plead once more with God for them.

Exodus 32

³⁰ You have sinned a great sin: [he said,] and now I will go up unto the Lord; peradventure I shall make an atonement for your sin.

And he went. And in his confession before God, he said:

³¹ Oh, this people have sinned a great sin, in that they have made them gods of gold.

³² Yet now, if You will forgive their sin—and if not, blot me, I pray You, out of the book which You have written.

The answer was:

³³ Whosoever has sinned against me, him will I blot out of my book.

³⁴ Therefore now go, and lead the people into the place of which I've spoken unto you. Behold, my Angel shall go before you. Nevertheless, in the day when I visit, I will visit their sin upon them.

On what ground did Moses go again into the presence of God to plead for this people? On the ground of his own compassion? Certainly not. He had compassion, but that was not the ground. The ground was that it was according to the plan of God. He was simply obeying God, even in going to plead for his people.

If he would have done this on his own account, if there was no command from God to pray for these people, would he have been successful? Certainly not. How could he? Would

Moses plead for those who cut themselves off from God's mercy forever? Would he plead for Korah, Dathan and Abiram, after their rebellion was sure? Certainly not.

So when Moses went to God to plead for the people, he did this on the ground that there was hope. The Lord himself had inspired this hope in him, and he still remembered the words,

"Let me alone."

Which actually meant,

"Come and plead, so that I may save them."

In fact, the real meaning of the words are,

"Let me *not* alone."

It sounds strange, doesn't it? The words,

"Let me alone,"

—really meant,

"*Don't* let me alone, but come and plead for these people."

When Abraham had pleaded with Christ, this pleading was very much in agreement with Christ, not against Him. It would be impossible that Moses or Abraham had a better character than God. They just reflected the character of God. So when they pleaded for the people, they did this in agreement with the heavenly Father.

When Moses went up to the mountain, he reached a climax in his education in humility. That is what true humility will lead to, in every child of God. He said,

"Blot me from the book of life."

What does this actually mean? It means,

"I am prepared to lay down even my eternal life for these people."

Can you imagine a greater sacrifice than this? There is none. There is not a greater sacrifice than to be prepared to lay down one's eternal life for the people. But even for this wonderful spirit of sacrifice, Satan has a counterfeit. For example, if I have children, and my children go into the world, and I feel very pained because of this, and I go before God and I demand that He save my children, and I tell God,

"If You don't save them, I don't want to be in heaven either."

Is this humility? It looks very much like what Moses did, doesn't it? At least from the outside. But it is quite the opposite. It is a stubborn demand to God; it is actually trying to change God. It is saying,

"I am wiser than You. You must save my children. That is my demand to You. And if You don't do this, then You can blot me out too. Then I have no interest in heaven either."

That was not the spirit of Moses when he approached God. His spirit was:

"I know You love this people. I know You have given me the task to plead for them. Therefore, I would go so far as that You could blot my name out of the book of heaven, if thereby the people can be saved."

Here Moses indicated that he was prepared to make the ultimate sacrifice. True humility will lead every one of us to that place where we are prepared to lay down our life for the brethren. And this life is not only the temporal life, but eternal life.

It is not possible that one of us can give our life for another, only Jesus' life could atone for our sins. This is something that Moses was told here. But we must be prepared for the ultimate sacrifice: to give everything, even our name in the book of life, for our brethren, if God has given us the task to work

for them. That is how far true humility will lead us.

This is what makes us great in the sight of heaven; that enables us, or qualifies us, for the greatest position. It is paradoxical: what we give away enables us; and what we cling to disables us, or makes us unfit.

In the willingness of Moses to lay down his life for the brethren was revealed this ultimate humility, and this fitted him to be Gabriel, the mightiest of the Lord's host, who had the great privilege to roll away the stone and call forth the Son of God from the grave. But to this we will come later.

Meditate about this thing and think it carefully through. Let us ask ourselves the question,

“Would I be willing to make this sacrifice?”

If we see that we are not ready to make the sacrifice, then let us plead to the Lord for this meekness that Moses had, so that we are prepared for companionship with that mighty angel, Gabriel. That is what the Lord wants to do for us. Remember:

- Moses had given up a possibility, or a prospect of being the king of the mightiest kingdom on this earth.
- He had given up a peaceful life in Midian.
- He had given up the possibility of being a great nation himself and being eased from this burden of leading this unruly people.
- And finally, he was prepared even to give up his name from the book of life if that would result in success for his task.

This is humility; it will make any sacrifice. After this event, Moses led the people successfully for a while; but it was not very long before they murmured again; for flesh they murmured, and for other things they murmured, until Moses, not long after this event, lost his patience.

This is a very serious warning to each one of us that even after great experiences we can fall again. We have experienced and seen for ourselves too, that after each special spiritual event, there is a great temptation, and very often it happens that we fall, like Elijah did after the great event on Mount Carmel.

After His great baptism, Jesus was severely tempted. And so, after a camp-meeting, usually there is a time when we are specially attacked by Satan. I think you have experienced a similar thing. We must be prepared for this. And if Moses could fall after this, then we can too. Let's consider the circumstances under which he fell.

Murmurings of the People

When they had to leave Mount Sinai, the people were filled with spiritual awe. They were full of happiness and they even wanted to stay there. They liked it there at Mount Sinai, it was a wonderful place where God's glory had been revealed. But when the trumpet sounded, everybody made ready to leave.

Numbers 10

³³ And they departed from the mount of the Lord three days' journey: and the ark of the covenant of the Lord went before them in the three days' journey, to search out a resting place for them.

³⁴ And the cloud of the Lord was upon them by day, when they went out of the camp.

Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 376-377:

God himself directed the Israelites in all their travels. The place of their encampment was indicated by the descent of the pillar of cloud; and so long as they were to remain in camp, the cloud rested over the tabernacle. When they were to continue their journey it was lifted high above the sacred tent. A solemn invocation marked both the halt and the departure.

Numbers 10

³⁵ It came to pass, when the ark set forward, that Moses said, Rise up, Lord, and let your enemies be scattered; and let them that hate You flee before You.

³⁶ And when it rested, he said, Return, O Lord, unto the many thousands of Israel.

A distance of only eleven days' journey lay between Sinai and Kadesh, on the borders of Canaan; and it was with the prospect of speedily entering the goodly land that the hosts of Israel resumed their march when the cloud at last gave the signal for an onward movement. Jehovah had wrought wonders in bringing them from Egypt, and what blessings might they not expect now that they had formally covenanted to accept Him as their Sovereign, and had been acknowledged as the chosen people of the Most High?

Yet it was almost with reluctance that many left the place where they had so long encamped. They had come almost to regard it as their home. Within the shelter of those granite walls God had gathered His people, apart from all other nations, to repeat to them His holy law. They loved to look upon the sacred mount, on whose hoary peaks and barren ridges the divine glory had so often been displayed. The scene was so closely associated with the presence of God and holy angels that it seemed too sacred to be left thoughtlessly, or even gladly.

At the signal from the trumpeters, however, the entire camp set forward, the tabernacle borne in the midst, and each tribe in its appointed position, under its own standard. All eyes were turned anxiously to see in what direction the cloud would lead. As it moved toward the east, where were only mountain masses huddled together, black and desolate, a feeling of sadness and doubt arose in many hearts.

As they advanced, the way became more difficult. Their route lay through stony ravine and barren waste. All around them was the great wilderness:

Jeremiah 2

⁶ ...a land of deserts and of pits,...a land of drought, and of the shadow of death,...a land that no man passed through, and where no man dwelt.

The rocky gorges, far and near, were thronged with men, women, and children, with beasts and wagons, and long lines of flocks and herds. Their progress was necessarily slow and toilsome; and the multitudes, after their long encampment, were not prepared to endure the perils and discomforts of the way.

They all expected that the cloud would move forward directly to Kadesh, the entrance to the land of Canaan, which was eleven days' journey only. But to their disappointment, the cloud moved to the east, where there were only mountains, and difficult places. And as they marched onward towards that place, it became stony and hard; it was not easy to walk there.

At that place the people began to murmur again, so soon after this wonderful experience on Mount Sinai. They complained about the route that Moses was taking. It was Moses who was taking that route, according to their thinking. But it was not Moses, it was the cloud. But again and again they charged Moses with misleading them. It went on like this.

Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 377:

After three days' journey open complaints were heard. These originated with the mixed multitude, many of whom were not fully united with Israel, and were continually watching for some cause of censure. The complainers were not pleased with the direction of the march, and they were continually finding fault with the way in which Moses was leading them, though they well knew that he, as well as they, was following the guiding cloud. Dissatisfaction is contagious, and it soon spread in the encampment.

After a while they asked for flesh. They were not satisfied with the simple manna that God was giving them, even though it was very good for them, and there was not one sick person among them. But they found reason to complain with the food, and they murmured so terribly that a great plague broke out among them.

Numbers 11

¹ And when the people complained, it displeased the Lord: and the Lord heard it; and His anger was kindled; and the fire of the Lord burnt among them, and consumed them that were in the uttermost parts of the camp.

² And the people cried unto Moses; and when Moses prayed unto the Lord, the fire was quenched.

³ And he called the name of the place Taberah: because the fire of the Lord burnt among them.

Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 379:

The fire of Jehovah burnt among them and consumed them that were in the uttermost part of the camp. The most guilty of the complainers were slain by the lightning from the cloud. The people in terror besought Moses to entreat the Lord for them. He did so, and the fire was quenched. In memory of this judgment he called the name of the place Taberah, “a burning.” But the evil was soon worse than before.

After pleading for them, the evil broke out so quickly again, worse even than before. Can you imagine that? You just escaped death, and you begin to do the same thing that brought you to the brink of death, and even worse than before!

Instead of leading the survivors to humiliation and repentance, this fearful judgment seemed to increase their murmurings. In all directions the people were gathered at the door of their tents, weeping and lamenting.

Numbers 11

⁴ The mixed multitude that was among them, fell a-lusting: and the children of Israel also wept again and said, Who shall give us flesh to eat?

⁵ We remember the fish that we did eat in Egypt freely; the cucumbers, and the melons, and the leeks, and the onions, and the garlic:

⁶ But now our soul is dried away: there is nothing at all besides this manna before our eyes.

How sad! This manna was specially provided by God. It had

everything that was essential, it was a very good food, and yet they desired to have again the food of Egypt.

Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 379-380:

The heart of Moses sank. He had pleaded that Israel should not be destroyed, even though his own posterity might then become a great nation. In his love for them he had prayed that his name might be blotted from the book of life rather than that they should be left to perish. He had imperiled all for them, and this was their response. All their hardships, even their imaginary sufferings, they charged upon him; and their wicked murmurings made doubly heavy the burden of care and responsibility under which he staggered. In his distress he was tempted even to distrust God. His prayer was almost a complaint.

Is this understandable? Very much so. We should have great sympathy for Moses, because the burden he bore, none of us have ever borne. This burden was made doubly heavy by the reaction of the people, all the time. And it is understandable that he found it very hard to bear. We could, from a distance, very easily say,

“Well, he should have given the burden to God; He is the Burden-Bearer.”

But we all know how it is when we are in a difficult situation, and how easily we tend to forget that we can give the burden to God. The burden is so great that we just seem to think it is too great to be given to God. And so, Moses was tempted to complain, his prayer was almost a complaint, it was on the border-line.

Numbers 11

¹¹ Wherefore have You afflicted your servant? and wherefore have I not found favor in your sight, that You have laid the burden of all these people upon me?

¹² Have I conceived all this people? have I begotten them, that You should say unto me, Carry them in your bosom, as

a nursing father bears the sucking child, unto the land which
You swore unto their fathers?

¹³ Whence should I have flesh to give to all these people? for
they weep unto me saying: Give us flesh that we may eat.

¹⁴ I am not able to bear all these people alone, because it is
too heavy for me.

This complaint led to the choosing of the seventy elders,
who then received the spirit of prophecy and prophesied.

Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 380:

...yet serious evils would eventually result from their pro-
motion.

When these seventy elders were gathered, two of them
were not among the group. There were only sixty-eight who
prophesied, and two were left in the encampment. They began
to prophesy there; and when this was happening, Joshua was
quite angry with that. He thought that it was disorderly.

Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 381:

Again evidence was given of the lofty, unselfish spirit of
their leader. Two of the seventy, humbly counting them-
selves unworthy for so responsible a position, had not joined
their brethren at the tabernacle. But the Spirit of God came
upon them where they were, and they too exercised the
prophetic gift.

On being informed of this, Joshua desired to check such ir-
regularity, fearing that it might lead to division. Jealous for
the honor of his master, he said,

Numbers 11

²⁸ My lord Moses, forbid them.

The answer was,

²⁹ Do you envy for my sake? Would God that all the Lord's
people were prophets, and that the Lord would put His
Spirit upon them!

A person who is meek and in a very high position, will not
be envious in the least for that position, not in the least; quite
the opposite. Moses desired that all would prophesy. So it will

be with everyone of God's true people; they will never try to defend their position, rather they would serve the others, as the angels do, to promote them to a position which is even higher than they themselves can know.

And this is the privilege of each one of us to do, and even of those who are leading God's people. Isn't this their work, service like that of the angels? Certainly. They serve us for the purpose of leading us to the "Latter Rain," so that we all shall become prophets. A selfless service evidently will lead us to this wonderful event, and the unselfish spirit of service is revealed in this.

Complaint of Miriam and Aaron

It's amazing that even though Moses was tempted to complain in this one instance, he still had a very unselfish spirit, a very wonderful spirit of meekness, which was revealed here. And even more so a little later at Hageroth, the next encampment after leaving Taberah, where a still more bitter trial awaited Moses:

Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 382-383:

Aaron and Miriam had occupied a high position of honor and leadership in Israel. Both were endowed with the prophetic gift and both had been divinely associated with Moses in the deliverance of the Hebrews.

Micah 6

⁴ ...I sent before you Moses, Aaron and Miriam...

—are the words of the Lord by the prophet Micah. Miriam's force of character had been early displayed when as a child she watched beside the Nile the little basket in which was hidden the infant Moses. Her self-control and tact, God had made instrumental in preserving the deliverer of His people. Richly endowed with the gifts of poetry and music, Miriam had led the women of Israel in song and dance on the shore of the Red Sea. In the affection of the people, and in the honor of heaven, she stood second only to Moses and Aaron.

But the same evil, that first brought discord in heaven,

sprung up in the heart of this woman of Israel; and she did not fail to find a sympathizer in her disaffection. In the appointment of the seventy elders Miriam and Aaron had not been consulted, and their jealousy was excited against Moses. At the time of Jethro's visit, while the Israelites were on their way to Sinai, the ready acceptance by Moses of the counsel of his father-in-law, had aroused in Miriam and Aaron a fear that his influence with the great leader exceeded theirs.

In the organization of the council of elders, they felt that their position and authority had been ignored. Miriam and Aaron had never known the weight of care and responsibility which had rested upon Moses. Yet, because they had been chosen to aid him, they regarded themselves as sharing equally with him the burden of leadership. And they regarded the appointment of further assistance as uncalled for.

We know that the appointment of the seventy elders was the result of a momentary weakness of Moses' faith. But it was not right for Aaron and Miriam to criticize it, especially since it was jealousy which led them to do it.

At first, Miriam and Aaron would not criticize Moses openly. They would not even talk with him; they rather would let him feel that they were not in agreement with him by avoiding this topic possibly, very carefully, and passing funny remarks, maybe, about this, that, and the other, towards others. Moses must have felt already that there was some estrangement. The envy deepened more and more until it broke out in Miriam's and Aaron's open complaint.

If a stranger—one of the mixed multitude—had complained, that would have been bad enough. But it was those nearest to Moses who complained, those who should have stood by him the firmest, those who were the nucleus of the camp: they began to murmur, and that was the greatest test for Moses; it was the hardest thing for him.

If those who stand nearest to us, begin this kind of work,

that is a very great test of humility. And how did Moses pass this test? He passed it wonderfully, because it was about this event that the Bible testifies,

Numbers 12

³ Now the man Moses was very meek, above all the men which were upon the face of the earth.

It is amazing that he lost his patience for a moment when he complained about his burdens, but then right after he showed tremendous meekness when he was severely tested by Aaron and Miriam's behavior.

Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 383:

Moses felt the importance of the great work committed to him as no other man had ever felt it. He realized his own weakness and he made God his Counselor.

Aaron esteemed himself more highly and trusted less in God. He had failed when entrusted with responsibility, giving evidence of his weakness of character by his base compliance in the matter of the idolatrous worship at Sinai.

But Miriam and Aaron, blinded by jealousy and ambition, lost sight of this. Aaron had been highly honored by God in the appointment of his family to the sacred office of the priesthood. Yet even this now added to the desire of self-exaltation.

Numbers 12

² And they said, Has the Lord indeed spoken only by Moses? Has He not also spoken by us?

Regarding themselves as equally favored by God, they felt that they were entitled to the same position and authority.

So what Aaron and Miriam were saying, was:

“The Lord has given us light also, and with this light we must now correct Moses.”

It is one thing to come to the messenger with counsel, which, when it turns out to be the wrong counsel, is willingly withdrawn again. But it is another matter to come with the

spirit of trying to correct the messenger, as Aaron and Miriam did. This spirit of trying to correct, trying to have others adjust to what they thought they were entitled to, that was the same spirit of rebellion that Lucifer manifested in heaven.

This terrible sin was one of the worst sins that happened in that encampment. That the whole complaint was borne by Moses in uncomplaining silence is the most striking evidence of his real humility, of true meekness.



The accusations of Aaron and Miriam
were borne by Moses in uncomplaining silence.
(The Bible and Its Story, 1909)

Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 384:

Their accusations were borne by Moses in uncomplaining silence. It was the experience gained during the years of toil and waiting in Midian—the spirit of humility and long-suffering there developed—that prepared Moses to meet with patience the unbelief and murmuring of the people and the pride and envy of those who should have been his unswerving helpers. Moses...

Numbers 12

³ ...was very meek, above all the men which were on the face of the earth,

—and this is why he was granted divine wisdom and guidance above all others.

What was the reason that he was granted divine wisdom and guidance? Because of his meekness. Here we find a similarity with Christ. Why was Christ exalted above every other name, so that every knee should bow before Him? Because of His meekness, because He humbled himself.¹⁵

Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 384:

Says the Scripture,

Psalm 25

⁹ The meek will He guide in judgment, and the meek will He teach His way.

The meek are guided by the Lord because they are teachable, willing to be instructed. They have a sincere desire to know and to do the will of God. The Saviour's promise is,

John 7

¹⁷ If any man will do His will, He shall know of the doctrine.

And He declares by the apostle James,

James 1

⁵ If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God that gives to all men liberally and upbraids not, and it shall be given him.

But His promise is only to those who are willing to follow the Lord wholly. God does not force the will of any; hence He cannot lead those who are too proud to be taught, who are bent upon having their own way. Of the double-minded man—he who seeks to follow his own will, while professing to do the will of God—it is written,

⁷ Let not that man think that he shall receive anything of the Lord.

Here is a wonderful description of what true meekness is. Meekness is willingness to follow the Lord wholly; meekness is willingness to be taught, to be instructed, to be teachable. If a person murmurs against the messenger, as Aaron and Miriam did, they show that they are not willing to be teach-

¹⁵ *Philippians* 2:5-11.

able, to be instructed; and accordingly, there is no light in them. They cannot be taught by God—that is impossible.

If we want to be taught by the Lord, we must be teachable, willing to be instructed. We must have the spirit of submission: submission to reproof, submission to the truth that comes from the messenger, submission to one another, as the Bible says.

1 Peter 5

⁵ Likewise, you younger, submit yourselves unto the elder. Yea, all of you be subject one to another, and be clothed with humility: for God resists the proud, and gives grace to the humble.

This was the spirit of Moses even though he had this high position. We have seen the evidence of this already when he accepted the counsel of Jethro and when he accepted reproofs from God. Moses was willing to be instructed and he was teachable. That is evident in his change of attitude in the wilderness of Midian. Again and again Moses gave evidence of that fact. And if Aaron and Miriam had possessed the same spirit, they would never have murmured against Moses.

Korah, Dathan, and Abiram

After this wonderful story, which shows the meekness of Moses, there is the story of Korah and Dathan and Abiram. These people tried to take the position of Moses, and again, the meekness of Moses was revealed in not fighting for his position; rather the Lord made this matter clear.

How easily could Moses, after Korah, Dathan and Abiram found such a great following, have said,

“Well, these people don’t want me, so I’ll leave them. I’ll leave them to Korah, Dathan, and Abiram; and I’ll go somewhere else.”

The truly meek person will not do this. He will hold on

firmly to what the Lord has given him to do. So Moses did not run away, he held firmly on to his work.

The Smitten Rock

Let us come to the story of the smitten rock. That is a story where we find the only mistake of Moses which hindered him to enter into Canaan. So far, the life of Moses has been an almost uninterrupted life of humility, with the small exception where he almost complained and the seventy elders were called. But apart from this, Moses' humility really stands supreme.

But here at the smitten rock, he publicly gave an evidence of impatience, which is lack of meekness. It is also pride. This was not the real character of Moses; it was a momentary failing under impulse. It was not carefully planned, and it happened under great pressure. But this event had a very bad influence on the people, and finally prevented him from entering into Canaan.

Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 413-414:

Just before the Hebrew host reached Kadesh, the living stream ceased that for so many years had gushed out beside their encampment. It was the Lord's purpose again to test His people. He would prove whether they would trust His providence or imitate the unbelief of their fathers.

They were now in sight of the hills of Canaan. A few days' march would bring them to the borders of the Promised Land. They were but a little distance from Edom, which belonged to the descendants of Esau, and through which lay the appointed route to Canaan. The direction had been given to Moses,

Deuteronomy 2

³ ...turn northward.

⁴ And command the people, saying, You are to pass through the coast of your brethren the children of Esau, which dwell in Seir; and they shall be afraid of you:...

⁶ You shall buy meat of them for money, that you may eat;

and you shall also buy water of them for money, that you may drink.

These directions should have been sufficient to explain why their supply of water had been cut off; they were about to pass through a well-watered, fertile country, in a direct course to the land of Canaan. God had promised them an unmolested passage through Edom, and an opportunity to purchase food, and also water sufficient to supply the host. The cessation of the miraculous flow of water should therefore have been a cause of rejoicing, a token that the wilderness wandering was ended.

Had they not been blinded by their unbelief, they would have understood this. But that which should have been an evidence of the fulfillment of God's promise was made the occasion of doubt and murmuring. The people seemed to have given up all hope that God would bring them into possession of Canaan, and they clamored for the blessings of the wilderness.

Before God permitted them to enter Canaan, they must show that they believed His promise. The water ceased before they had reached Edom. Here was an opportunity for them, for a little time, to walk by faith instead of sight. But the first trial developed the same turbulent, unthankful spirit that had been manifested by their fathers. No sooner was the cry for water heard in the encampment than they forgot the hand that had for so many years supplied their wants, and instead of turning to God for help, they murmured against Him, in their desperation exclaiming,

Numbers 20

³ Would God that we had died when our brethren died before the Lord!

That is, they wished they had been of the number who were destroyed in the rebellion of Korah.

Again the people complained, this time for water. The reason was that the water stopped to flow. Usually wherever they were, there was a rock, and from this rock water gushed forth, and they always had abundant water to drink. The Lord

told them:

“You don’t need this water anymore, because you shall go through the land of the Edomites, and from them you will get water.”

And so the water stopped accordingly. That should have been an encouragement to them, because they were on the border of Canaan; but they complained.

This was already the second generation. It was not the generation of people who were at Mount Sinai, and who were guilty of all the complaints that we have studied so far. This was the next generation. This generation seemed to look more promising at first, but they murmured just as the previous generation had done. They seemed to be as unreasonable as the people who were before them, who died in the wilderness. What would be the natural conclusion to draw from that?

“If this generation murmurs as the first generation did, and the first generation did not come into the Promised Land because of their murmuring, what must happen now? Again, there’s probably no chance of entering the country!”

And this was the very lifework that Moses had dedicated himself to. Moses had devoted his whole mind and soul to the task of bringing the people into Canaan. That was what he wished and desired above anything else. And the prospect of a failure of that work was terrible for him. He just couldn’t bear that thought.

He had given up to be the king of the mightiest nation back in Egypt; he had given up a peaceful life in Midian; he had given up the prospect of becoming a great nation when God tested him; and he was even willing to lay down his life for the people: all for the sake of bringing them into the Promised Land.

He even bore with the disappointment when they could not enter the land and that a whole generation had to die in the

wilderness. He wandered with them for forty years, and shared with them their hardships. Moses and Joshua suffered with the others. They willingly suffered, because they wanted the people to go with them too, they didn't want to go alone into the Promised Land.

So, when the people began murmuring as before, how unbearable that was for Moses! He quickly went with Aaron before the Lord, and the Lord instructed them to speak to the rock again. So they went; but they were so full of disappointment, that they hit the rock and accused the people, and said:

“You rebels, shall we bring you forth water?”

Were they rebels? They were. But when Moses said “You rebels,” was he saying the right thing? It was the truth, but he didn't say it rightly, because he said it out of disaffection, out of anger; and even the truth must not be spoken angrily. It is amazing how severely the Lord dealt with Moses on this account. But it is a great lesson for us.

Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 419:

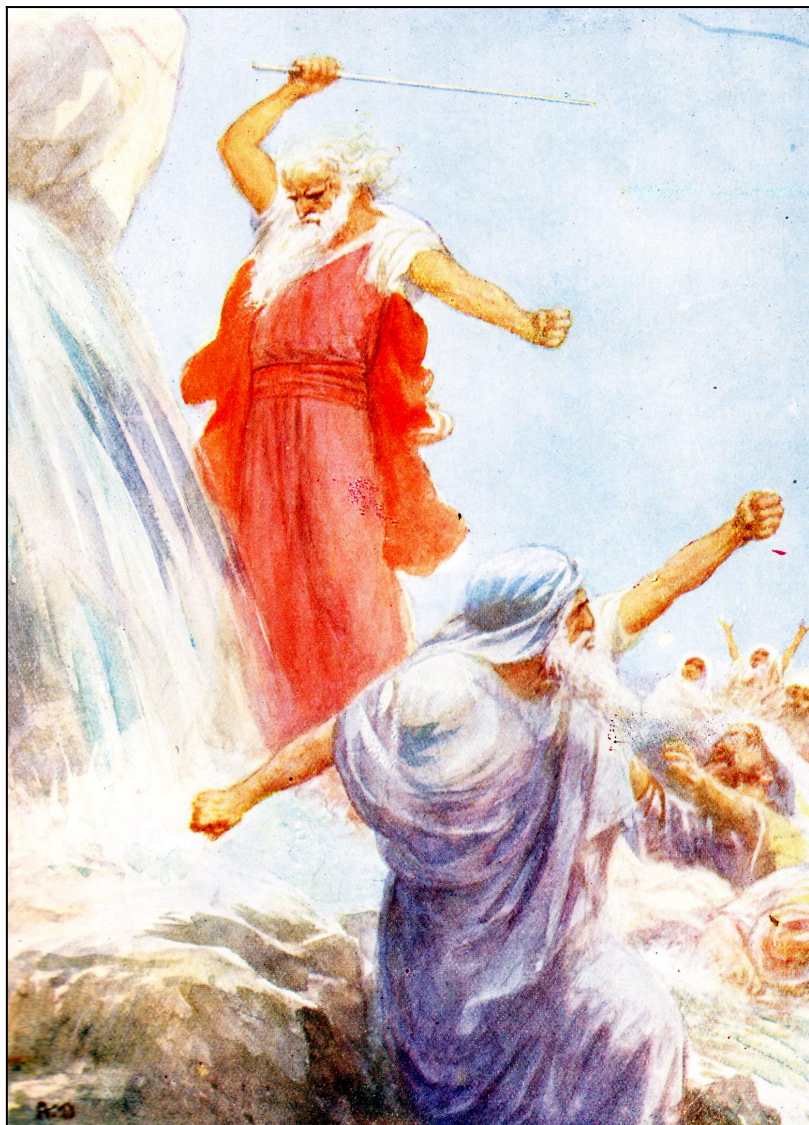
Bitter and deeply humiliating was the judgment immediately pronounced.

Numbers 20

¹² The Lord spoke unto Moses and Aaron, Because you believed me not, to sanctify me in the eyes of the children of Israel, therefore you shall not bring this congregation into the land which I have given them.

With rebellious Israel they must die before the crossing of the Jordan. Had Moses and Aaron been cherishing self-esteem or indulging a passionate spirit in the face of divine warning and reproof, their guilt would have been far greater. But they were not chargeable with willful or deliberate sin; they had been overcome by a sudden temptation, and their contrition was immediate and heartfelt.

The Lord accepted their repentance, though because of the harm their sin might do among the people, He could not remit its punishment. Moses did not conceal his sentence, but



Moses strikes the Rock in Anger
(His Word in Pictures website)

told the people that since he had failed to ascribe glory to God, he could not lead them into the Promised Land. He bade them mark the severe punishment visited upon him, and then consider how God must regard their murmurings

in charging upon a mere man the judgments which they had, by their sins, brought upon themselves.

He told them how he had pleaded with God for a remission of the sentence and had been refused.

Deuteronomy 3

²⁶ The Lord was wroth with me for your sakes, [he said,] and would not hear me.

On every occasion of difficulty or trial the Israelites had been ready to charge Moses with having led them from Egypt, as though God had had no agency in the matter. Throughout their journeyings, as they had complained of the difficulties in the way and murmured against their leaders, Moses had told them, "Your murmurings are against God. It is not I, but God, who has wrought in your deliverance." But his hasty words before the rock: "Shall we bring water," were a virtual admission of their charge, and would thus confirm them in their unbelief and justify their murmurings.

The Lord would remove this impression forever from their minds by forbidding Moses to enter the Promised Land. Here was unmistakable evidence that their leader was not Moses, but the mighty Angel of whom the Lord had said,

Exodus 23

²⁰ Behold, I send an Angel before you, to keep you in the way, and to bring you into the place which I have prepared.

²¹ Beware of Him and obey His voice...for my name is in Him.

So, for the sake of the people, it was necessary that Moses should be punished. And the punishment was that he could not lead the people into the Promised Land. As he was so committed to that work, it was the hardest punishment God could ever give him. He had given up everything, and in the end he could not do it. But the fact that Moses bore the sentence uncomplainingly, that he accepted it, is once more proof of his meekness. He could have been very disappointed with God, and could have said,

"Well, here I made a little mistake at the end, yet I have

made so many sacrifices: I've borne the hardships with this people, I've refused to be made my own nation, I have done this, that, and the other. And now a little mistake at the end, and You refuse me that? You are not being just."

But Moses did not say that. He accepted the sentence even though he had a very sad heart about it; and this, to me, is a very great evidence of the meekness of this man.

Closing Work

Finally, the Lord called him to the mountain. It is to be found in *Patriarchs and Prophets*, chapter 43, "The Death of Moses." And in this chapter we are informed about the great combination of justice and mercy to be found in God. On the one hand, His justice in the sentence of Moses, that he was not permitted to lead the people to the land of Canaan; and on the other, His mercy in overruling that very sentence for a very blessed purpose.

What we find in God is that He takes the consequences and turns them into a blessing for us. The only way He can do this is if we meekly accept the sentence. If we rebel against His sentence, then it is not a blessing, but turns into a curse. And this is because God is not able to deal with things that we do not give Him. But if we give Him even the consequences of our mistakes, then He can turn them into blessings. This we will see in the life of Moses.

Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 469:

The great Ruler of nations had declared that Moses was not to lead the congregation of the Israel into the goodly land, and the earnest pleading of God's servant could not secure a reversing of His sentence. He knew that he must die. Yet he had not for a moment faltered in his care for Israel. He had faithfully sought to prepare the congregation to enter upon the promised inheritance.

When you know that you are doing the last work, how do people normally do it? Let's take a man who is shortly to re-

tire from service in a firm and go on pension: how will he do his work? Will he do it very diligently till his last day? Unless he is very conscientious, he will not do it carefully, will he? He will let time run out leisurely.

But Moses was not this kind of a character: he did his work faithfully to the very last. This again shows his meekness. He was doing the work, not for any selfish reasons, but only because of the spirit of service that was in him. He accepted the sentence, and yet he faithfully sought to prepare the congregation for entering into the Promised Land.

Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 469-470:

At the divine command, Moses and Joshua, repaired to the tabernacle, while the pillar of cloud came and stood over the door. Here the people were solemnly committed to the charge of Joshua. The work of Moses as a leader of Israel was ended. Still he forgot himself in his interest for his people.

Wonderful, these words! “Still he forgot himself in his interest for the people.” That is meekness.

In the presence of the assembled multitude, Moses, in the name of God, addressed to his successor these words of holy cheer:

Deuteronomy 31

²³ Be strong and of a good courage; for you shall bring the children of Israel into the land which I swore unto them: and I will be with you.

He then turned to the elders and officers of the people, giving them a solemn charge to obey faithfully the instructions he had communicated to them from God.

As the people gazed upon the aged man, so soon to be taken from them, they recalled with a new and deeper appreciation his parental tenderness, his wise counsels, and his untiring labors. How often, when their sins had invited the just judgments of God, the prayers of Moses had prevailed with Him to spare them.

Their grief was heightened by remorse. They bitterly remembered that their own perversity had provoked Moses to sin, for which he must die. The removal of their beloved leader would be a far stronger rebuke to Israel than any which they could have received had his life and mission been continued. God would lead them to feel that they were not to make the life of their future leader as trying as they had made that of Moses.

God speaks to His people in blessings bestowed; and when these are not appreciated, He speaks to them in blessings removed, that they may be led to see their sins and return to Him with all the heart.

So the sentence was a blessing to the people as well. And in what way was it a blessing for Moses? Let's look.

Last Vision

At first Moses was led to the mountain. He went there alone—nobody could go with him; and while he was on the peak of Mount Pisgah, he began viewing the countryside. In fact, it was such a clear day that he could look over the whole country. And while he was looking at it, he was saying:

“This is the country to which I could have led the people.”

But then, his gaze was somehow strengthened in such a way that it became a vision, and he saw the country, not as it was, but as it would blossom under the rulership of God when His people were there. And then, he saw not only the time of the people of Israel in that country Canaan, but he saw more of the future. And a panoramic view of the Land of Promise was presented to him.

Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 475:

He was permitted to look down the stream of time and behold the first advent of our Saviour. He saw Jesus as a babe in Bethlehem. He heard the voices of the angelic host break forth in the glad song of praise to God and peace on earth. He beheld in the heavens the star guiding the wise men of

the east to Jesus, and a great light flooded his mind as he recalled those prophetic words,

Numbers 24

¹⁷ There shall come a Star out of Jacob, and a Scepter shall rise out of Israel.

He beheld Christ's humble life in Nazareth, His ministry of love and sympathy, and healing; His rejection by a proud, unbelieving nation. Amazed, he listened to their boastful exaltation of the law of God while they despised and rejected Him by whom the law was given. He saw Jesus upon Olivet as, with weeping, He bade farewell to the city of His love.

As Moses beheld the final rejection of that people so highly blessed of Heaven, that people for whom he had toiled and prayed and sacrificed, for whom he had been willing that his own name should be blotted from the book of life; as he listened to those fearful words,

Matthew 23

³⁸ Behold, your house is left unto you desolate.

His heart was wrung with anguish, and bitter tears fell from his eyes in sympathy with the sorrow of the Son of God.

Can you imagine that? That must have been a very difficult vision for him to behold: that people, for whom he had sacrificed everything, to see them finally rejected. What a bitter message this was for him!

Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 475-476:

He followed the Saviour to Gethsemane and beheld the agony in the garden, the betrayal, the mockery and scourging—the crucifixion. Moses saw that, as he had lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so the Son of God must be lifted up, that:

John 3

¹⁵ Whosoever would believe on Him should not perish, but have eternal life.

Grief, indignation and horror filled the heart of Moses as he viewed the hypocrisy and satanic hatred manifested by the Jewish nation against their Redeemer, the mighty Angel

who had gone before their fathers. He heard Christ's agonizing cry,

Mark 15

³⁴ My God, my God, why have You forsaken me?

He saw Him lying in Joseph's new tomb. The darkness of hopeless despair seemed to enshroud the world. But he looked again, and beheld Him coming forth a Conqueror, and ascending to heaven, escorted by adoring angels, and leading a multitude of captives. He saw the shining gates open to receive Him, and the host of heaven with songs of triumph welcoming their Commander.



Moses sees the Promised Land
(Historiae Sacrae, 1700)

The vision is wonderful. I cannot remember that any of the prophets were given such a clear vision of Jesus. They all saw Him in symbols and types. But Moses was given a very clear vision of what was going to take place up to the resurrection.

Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 476:

And it was there revealed to him that he himself would be

the one who should attend the Saviour, and open to Him the everlasting gates.

So it was revealed to Moses here, on Mount Pisgah, that he would be the one who should attend the Saviour on this earth. That is, Moses, as Gabriel, would be one of the special guardian angels of Jesus.

Maybe we should read one statement only to make this point very clear. In *The Desire of Ages*, the chapter: “To My Father and Your Father,” on page 832, it talks of the two angels who instructed the disciples, who saw their ascending Saviour, and told them that He should come again.

The Desire of Ages, p. 832:

These angels were of the company that had been waiting in a shining cloud to escort Jesus to His heavenly home. The most exalted of the angel-throng, they were the two who had come to the tomb at Christ’s resurrection; and they had been with Him throughout His life on earth.

One of the angels who had been at the tomb was the one who rolled away the stone.¹⁶ And this was obviously Gabriel. So Gabriel, for sure, was an angel who attended the Saviour on this earth. He was one of the guardian angels, as we read here.

In the vision that Moses received, he saw that he should be the one who should attend the Saviour, and who should open for Him the everlasting gates. Moses, through the whole vision that he received here, was being prepared for that kind of service. He understood that Jesus must suffer, and that He would be resurrected again. He saw it clearer even than the angels who had never fallen.

We will see this later when we study about the life of Christ, how the understanding of Moses and the other redeemed angels enabled them to teach the created angels a

¹⁶ This is shown in *The Desire of Ages*, chapter 82, “Why Weepst Thou.”

very important lesson at that point of time.

So we see here that Moses indeed was one of these two guardian angels of Christ; in other words, he was Gabriel.

Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 476:

It was there revealed to him that he himself would be the one who should attend the Saviour and open to Him the everlasting gates. As he looked upon the scene, his countenance shone with a holy radiance. How small appeared the trials and sacrifices of his life when compared with those of the Son of God! How light in contrast with the...

2 Corinthians 4

¹⁷ ...far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory!

He rejoiced that he had been permitted, even in a small measure, to be a partaker in the sufferings of Christ.

Things were light again. He felt, as Ellen White reveals that we will say in heaven, “Heaven is cheap enough!”¹⁷ And this we will say after much suffering on this earth. Quite remarkable, isn’t it? “Heaven is cheap enough.” The Lord invites us to behold at least something of this glory of the future; and this will enable us to not take the difficulties on this earth too seriously; not to permit ourselves to be pressed down by these things.

Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 476:

Moses beheld the disciples of Jesus as they went forth to carry His gospel to the world.

So, he looked even beyond that time.

¹⁷ *Early Writings*, p. 17: “We all went under the tree and sat down to look at the glory of the place, when Brethren Fitch and Stockman, who had preached the gospel of the kingdom, and whom God had laid in the grave to save them, came up to us and asked us what we had passed through while they were sleeping. We tried to call up our greatest trials, but they looked so small compared with the far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory that surrounded us that we could not speak them out, and we all cried out, ‘Alleluia, heaven is cheap enough!’ and we touched our glorious harps and made heaven’s arches ring.”

He saw that, though the people of Israel “according to the flesh” had failed of the high destiny to which God had called them, in their unbelief had failed to become the light of the world, though they had despised God’s mercy and forfeited their blessings as His chosen people—yet God had not cast off the seed of Abraham; the glorious purposes which He had undertaken to accomplish through Israel, were to be fulfilled. All who through Christ should become the children of faith, were to be counted as Abraham’s seed; they were inheritors of the covenant promises; like Abraham, they were called to guard and to make known to the world the law of God and the gospel of His Son.

Moses saw the light of the gospel shining out through the disciples of Jesus to them “which sat in darkness” (*Matthew* 4:16), and thousands from the lands of the Gentiles flocking to the brightness of its rising. And beholding, he rejoiced in the increase and prosperity of Israel.

This was quite a contrast to many Christians of that time, who could not rejoice in this increase and prosperity of Israel. They rather felt that these heathen were competitors. They felt that they took away the specialness of Israel.

The leaders in Jerusalem did not look with favor to that rich incoming of the Gentiles; they were rather envious that so many of the Gentiles should come in. They thought that only the Jewish believers should come into the Christian Church, whereas Moses was rejoicing at the increase and prosperity of Israel. These leaders could have done likewise.

Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 476-477:

And now another scene passed before him. He had been shown the work of Satan in leading the Jews to reject Christ, while they professed to honor His Father’s law. He now saw the Christian world under a similar deception in professing to accept Christ, while they rejected God’s law. He had heard from the priests and elders the frenzied cry:

John 19

¹⁵ ...Away with Him!

Luke 23

²¹ ...Crucify Him, crucify Him!

And now he heard from the professedly Christian teachers the cry: "Away with the law!" He saw the Sabbath trodden underfoot, and a spurious institution established in its place.

Again Moses was filled with astonishment and horror. How could those, who believed in Christ, reject the law spoken by His own voice upon the sacred mount? How could any, that feared God, set aside the law, which is the foundation of His government in heaven and on earth? With joy Moses saw the law of God still honored and exalted by a faithful few. He saw the last great struggle of earthly powers to destroy those who keep God's law.

He looked forward to the time when God shall arise to punish the inhabitants of the earth for their iniquity, and those who have feared His name shall be covered and hid in the day of His anger. He heard God's covenant of peace with those who have kept His law, as He utters His voice from His holy habitation and the heavens and the earth do shake. He saw the second coming of Christ in glory, the righteous dead raised to immortal life, and the living saints translated without seeing death, and together ascending with songs of gladness to the City of God.

This all was for a purpose. We may ask,

"Why was Moses shown all these things just before his death, when he could tell nobody about this vision?"

Normally a prophet receives a vision so that he can share it with others. Moses passed it on to nobody. We only know of it through Ellen White, who herself had the Spirit of Prophecy. The reason for this is that Moses needed to be prepared to play a role in all these events as the angel Gabriel. Moses saw in detail all the events, even of the last times, in order to be mentally and spiritually prepared for these events, so that he could play an important role, as he continues to do, even till the very end time.

Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 477:

Still another scene opens to his view—the earth freed from the curse, lovelier than the fair Land of Promise so lately spread out before him. There is no sin, and death cannot enter. There the nations of the saved find their eternal home. With joy unutterable, Moses looks upon the scene—the fulfillment of a more glorious deliverance than his brightest hopes have ever pictured. Their earthly wanderings forever past, the Israel of God have at last entered the goodly land.

Again the vision faded, and his eyes rested upon the land of Canaan as it spread out in the distance. Then, like a tired warrior he lay down to rest.

Resurrection

And he died.

Deuteronomy 34

⁵ So Moses the servant of the Lord died there in the land of Moab, according to the word of the Lord.

⁶ And He buried him in a valley in the land of Moab, over against Beth-peor: but no man knows of his sepulchre unto this day.

⁷ And Moses was a hundred and twenty years old when he died: his eye was not dim, nor his natural force abated.

Angels came to bury him. Then soon afterwards Jesus came to take him out of the tomb.

Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 478:

Had not the life of Moses been marred with that one sin in failing to give God the glory of bringing water from the rock at Kadesh, he would have entered the Promised Land, and would have been translated to heaven without seeing death.

That would have been a great privilege. But it was even a greater privilege to receive that vision, to go through the tomb, and be resurrected. Through this he experienced something that could help others who would go through a similar experience.

Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 478:

But he was not long to remain in the tomb. Christ himself, with the angels who had buried Moses, came down from heaven to call forth the sleeping saint. Satan had exulted at his success in causing Moses to sin against God, and thus come under the dominion of death. The great adversary declared that the divine sentence—"Dust you are, and unto dust shall you return" (*Genesis* 3:19)—gave him possession of the dead. The power of the grave had never been broken, and all who were in the tomb he claimed as his captives—never to be released from his dark prison-house.

For the first time Christ was about to give life to the dead. As the Prince of life and shining ones approached the grave, Satan was alarmed for his supremacy. With his evil angels he stood to dispute an invasion of the territory that he claimed as his own. He boasted that the servant of God had become his prisoner. He declared that even Moses was not able to keep the law of God.

Why do you suppose that Satan was so angry that Moses should be resurrected? Because Moses was going to take the place in Heaven that Lucifer had occupied. Satan was quite happy that his place in Heaven was vacant. He himself wanted to go back to that seat with his schemes of changing the kingdom; that was his idea. If another should be established into that place, it would be closed to him forever. So he was very eager to hinder his rival from getting into this place. And he argued, very logically too:

"Well, you cast me out because of sin, and here you have another sinner. So you cannot, by the principles of righteousness, install him into my place in heaven. He is not more righteous than I am."

Those were his arguments. Jesus could have said much at that point of time. He could have told him,

"Well, you were the cause for his sin, etc."

But Jesus refrained from disputing with him.

Jude 1 [NIV]

⁹ But even the archangel Michael, when he was disputing with the devil about the body of Moses, did not himself dare to condemn him for slander but said, The Lord rebuke you!

The Story of Redemption, p. 173-174:

Satan claimed the body of Moses, because of his one transgression; but Christ meekly referred him to His Father, saying,

Jude

⁹ The Lord rebuke you.

Christ told Satan that He knew Moses had humbly repented of this one wrong, that no stain rested upon his character, and that his name in the heavenly book of records stood untarnished. Then Christ resurrected the body of Moses, which Satan had claimed.

Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 478-479:

Christ did not stoop to enter into controversy with Satan. He might have brought against him the cruel work which his deceptions had wrought in heaven, causing the ruin of a vast number of its inhabitants. He might have pointed to the falsehoods told in Eden, that had led to Adam's sin and brought death upon the human race. He might have reminded Satan that it was his own work in tempting Israel to murmuring and rebellion, which had wearied the long-suffering and patience of their leader and, in an unguarded moment, had surprised him into the sin for which he had fallen under the power of death. But Christ referred all to His Father, saying:

Jude

⁹ The Lord rebuke you.

The Saviour entered into no dispute with His adversary, but He then and there began His work of breaking the power of the fallen foe, and bringing the dead to life. Here was an evidence that Satan could not controvert, of the supremacy of the Son of God. The resurrection was forever

made certain. Satan was despoiled of his prey; the righteous dead would live again.



The Body of Moses is Resurrected

(Historiae Sacrae, 1700)

That is the wonderful story of the resurrection of Moses. How soon after his death was he resurrected? There's another statement which tells us:

Early Writings, p. 164:

Moses passed through death, but Michael came down and gave him life before his body had seen corruption. Satan tried to hold the body, claiming it as his. But Michael resurrected Moses and took him to heaven.

So when did Michael come to take Moses? Before his body had seen corruption. And that is not very long. A body decays very quickly in a warm country like that. So it must have been very soon after he died. Then Moses was resurrected practically at the same time that he died.

Thousand-Year Training Period

Between the death of Moses and his first appearance as Gabriel, how many years passed? A thousand years. Let's look at a statement:

The Desire of Ages, p. 98:

To the question of Zacharias, the angel said,

Luke 1

¹⁹ I am Gabriel that stand in the presence of God; and am sent to speak unto you, and to show you these glad tidings.

Five hundred years before, Gabriel had made known to Daniel the prophetic period which was to extend to the coming of Christ.

How long, before Gabriel appeared to Zacharias, did he appear to Daniel? Five hundred years. And let's turn to another statement:

The Desire of Ages, p. 421:

Upon Mount Pisgah, fifteen centuries before, Moses had stood gazing upon the Land of Promise. But because of his sin at Meribah, it was not for him to enter there.

So how many years between the time Moses appeared on the Mount of Transfiguration, and his vision on Mount Pisgah? Fifteen centuries. A thousand and five hundred years before he appeared at the Transfiguration, he was on Mount Pisgah viewing the Land of Promise. But five hundred years before he appeared to Zacharias, he had appeared to Daniel. Therefore, from his vision on Pisgah, to the time he appeared to Daniel is a thousand years.

This is also consistent with the time between the translation of Enoch, and his appearance as Melchizedek to Abraham. From the translation of Enoch to the appearance of Melchizedek, there were just a little over thousand years. And, from the translation of Elijah, to his appearance on the Mount of Transfiguration was again, about a thousand years.

There is another period of a thousand years mentioned in the Bible: the millennium. We shall spend this time in heaven. How will that time be spent? What will we do there?

Revelation 20

⁴ And I saw thrones, and they that sat on them; and judgment was committed to them. And I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded for the witness to Jesus and for the word of God, who had not worshiped the beast or his image and had not received his mark on their foreheads or on their hands. And they lived and reigned with Christ for a thousand years.

⁵ And the rest of the dead did not live again until the thousand years were finished. This is the first resurrection.

⁶ Blessed and holy is he who has part in the first resurrection. Over such the second death has no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ and shall reign with Him a thousand years.

Here we read of a special period of reigning for a thousand years. What do you imagine that we will do during those thousand years? What was the concept that we were taught? That we will sit in judgment. This is true, but our idea is often something like this: that we will, after our resurrection, sit on thrones, and we will begin to investigate the cases of the wicked and evil angels, and say:

“Look, he has done this: therefore he should get this punishment. Look at this bad person, he is so wicked: he should get this punishment. And this other one? It is right for him that he shall be beheaded. And for him, it is right for him that he should burn for so and so long...”

Isn't this the usual concept? This judgment is described in *The Great Controversy*, in the chapter, “The Desolation of the Earth,” the second-last chapter of the book. It speaks of the captivity of Satan for a thousand years, when there will be no one whom he can deceive. Then it says,

The Great Controversy, p. 616:

During the thousand years between the first and the second resurrection, the judgment of the wicked dead takes place. The apostle Paul points to the judgment as an event that follows the second advent.

1 Corinthians 4

⁵ Judge nothing before the time until the Lord come, who both will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and will make manifest the intents of the hearts.

Daniel declares that when the Ancient of Days came, judgment was given to the saints of the Most High. At this time the righteous reigned as kings and priests of God. John, in the *Revelation*, says,

Revelation 20

⁴ I saw thrones, and they that sat upon them; and judgment was given to them...

⁶ ...they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with Him for a thousand years.

It is at this time that, as foretold by Paul, that the saints shall judge the world. In union with Christ they judge the wicked, comparing their acts with the Statute Book, the Bible, and deciding every case according to the deeds done in the body. The portion which the wicked must suffer, will be meted out according to their works, and it is recorded against their names in the Book of Death.

Satan also and evil angels are judged by Christ and His people. Says Paul,

1 Corinthians 6

³ Know you not that we shall judge angels?

And Jude declares that:

Jude

⁶ The angels, who kept not their first state, but left their own habitation, He has reserved in everlasting chains under darkness unto the judgment of the great day.

Why did it take a thousand years for Moses to first appear as the angel Gabriel? Obviously he had to learn something. It was very necessary for him to continue his schooling which

was started on earth. We must not get the idea that when we come into heaven, we'll immediately take places high above the angels, and they will just come and learn from us. We will learn from them very much in the beginning, as we learn here on this earth as well.

The Great Controversy, p. 677:

There immortal minds will study with never-failing delight the wonders of creative power, the mysteries of redeeming love. There is no cruel, deceiving foe to tempt to forgetfulness of God. Every faculty will be developed, every capacity increased. The acquirement of knowledge will not weary the mind or exhaust the energies. There the grandest enterprises may be carried forward, the loftiest aspirations reached, the highest ambitions realized.

All the treasures of the universe will be open to the study of God's redeemed. Unfettered by mortality, they wing their tireless flight to worlds afar—worlds that thrilled with sorrow at the spectacle of human woe, and rang with songs of gladness at the tidings of a ransomed soul. With unutterable delight the children of earth enter into the joy and the wisdom of the unfallen beings. They share the treasures of knowledge and understanding gained through ages upon ages in contemplating of God's handiwork.

So, we will obtain a lot of knowledge, and wisdom, from these unfallen beings, who through ages upon ages have studied God's handiwork. At the same time they will have to learn from us too, but this will come only with the time. It evidently took Moses a thousand years until he was ready to do his special work, the special work as the angel Gabriel, the mightiest of the Lord's host. At that point of time it was handed over to him, as we will see later, from another person, who had filled this position beforehand.

A thousand years are a necessary learning, training period. And not only Moses learned for a thousand years, but likewise Enoch did before he did his special work as Melchizedek

and appeared to Abraham. Likewise Elijah underwent a thousand years of training before he did his special work that was revealed on the Mount of Transfiguration. And likewise what will we do during these thousand years? We will learn. It will be a time of schooling.

That does not contradict the statements of the Spirit of Prophecy and the Bible; rather it throws light on these things. Let us look how we will judge. There's a way of judgment which condemns others, and does nothing more. But there's another way of judgment, and this is the judgment that we will exercise, which is part of the learning, training period.

We will investigate the cases, not in order to condemn the wicked, but rather in order to understand better the relationship between cause and effect. What we will say at the end is:

“Well, this is the cause, therefore that must be the effect.”

- At that time we will begin to understand what we never understood on earth: how cause and effect are met in the judgment of the wicked at the end of the thousand years.
- We will see more clearly than we see now, how sins from the past laid the foundation for destruction in the future.
- We will see as never before, the awfulness of sin.
- And we will see how sin brings destruction upon itself.

This will be our diligent, intense study in the thousand years. And then, after we have gone through that schooling, we shall be ready to take our places among Gabriel and Elijah and Enoch and all the others, who have already been studying these things in heaven, unhindered by mortality and a sinful human nature.

Then let us begin to revise our concepts about what we will do during the thousand years. We will be in a school. We will

be learning. We will not condemn, because that kind of condemning is Satan's work; he likes to do that. But God's character is different. He does not condemn, but rather He just evaluates the things.

After the wicked have made their decision, there's no possibility for them to return, even though God would give them the opportunity; but they won't return. They have made their final decision. So this will be seen very clearly too by the righteous. All this will become very clear.

Let us leave this thought on Moses' training period of the thousand years; and with this we want to conclude the whole study on Moses. His life on earth, with all the events, was preparing him to become the mightiest of the Lord's host. And even his failure, where he struck the rock at the entrance of Canaan, would not hinder him to become the mightiest of the Lord's host, because he meekly pleaded for forgiveness; he meekly accepted the sentence; and because he faithfully did his work to the end.

Elijah also made a very serious mistake. But likewise, he was forgiven and he was translated. In our life on this earth, there may be mistakes, but still the Lord has a very, very high purpose for each one of us, even to walk among seraphim and cherubim and Gabriel and the mightiest of the Lord's host; which means that we will share their high positions.

5. The Work of Gabriel

WE WANT to consider the work of Moses as Gabriel. But before we do this, we should study how this special role was fulfilled in the Old Testament times even before Moses became the angel Gabriel.

The Angel of the Lord

Our attention is drawn to a special Angel, who is always called “the Angel of the Lord” in the Old Testament. He is first named so in His encounter with Hagar. We should take a closer look again at this Angel of the Lord, how He appeared to God’s people in the Old Testament, what He did, how the people cooperated with Him and were successful; also how the people did not cooperate with Him, and therefore failed.

We shall see that cooperation brings success. We shall also see under what condition cooperation is not possible with the Mightiest of the Lord’s host—with the Angel of the Lord—and how we can easily fail to cooperate with Him and these other mighty beings. We’ll turn to the Scripture accounts step by step.

The first time angels appeared to mankind was, in the Garden of Eden when Jesus talked with Adam and Eve face to face; and He had many helpers, the other angels, who talked with them. And later, an angel, a cherub, guarded the Garden of Eden.

Appearing to Hagar

Later on, the Angel of the Lord appeared to Hagar. Hagar was the maid of Sarah, and because Sarah could not produce a child, she suggested to Abraham to take Hagar as a wife, which Abraham did. After Hagar produced a son, she felt that she had an equal place with Sarah. This caused a conflict, since Sarah felt that she was the rightful wife in the house.

What led Hagar to complain against Sarah? Was it humility

or pride? Obviously, pride. Hagar was an Egyptian woman who was quite proud. And she could not bear to be the maid of Sarah; she could not bear to be commanded by her, since she thought she was also the rightful wife of Abraham. The relationship became so strained that Hagar finally left home. She said,

“Well, I can’t bear it any more, so I’ll leave the whole thing.”

When she left the home of Sarah and Abraham, that was an expression of pride. Moses never left his work, did he? Hard as it was, humbling as it was for him, he never said:

“I’ve had enough. I will leave you to yourself.”

He always remained there. There may be other reasons why she left, which are not revealed to us. But the inability to bear humiliation was a testimony of pride. When Hagar went away, the Angel of the Lord appeared to her.

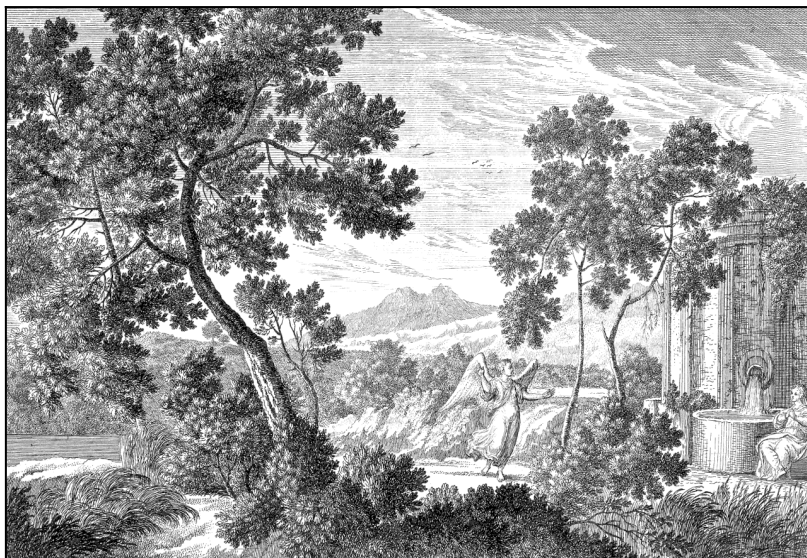
Genesis 16

⁹ So the Angel of the Lord said to her: Return to your mistress and submit yourself under her hand.

What a message for Hagar! Do you think, it was a welcome message? Certainly not. But she accepted it. She could have said to herself,

“Well, the Angel calls me the maid of Sarah, and he even demands of me to submit myself under her hand. So I just won’t listen to him. I am not interested in what he has to say.”

But glad to say, Hagar did not react this way. And for this reason, the Angel could promise her that He would bless her too. She obeyed the Angel and went back to Sarah, which is a testimony of meekness, and meekness is cooperation with the Angel of the Lord, which we find now in Hagar.



An Angel appears to Hagar after she fled from Sarai
(Historische Bilder Bibel, 1700)

Genesis 16

⁹ And the angel of the Lord said unto her, Return to your mistress, and submit yourself under her hands.

¹⁰ And the angel of the Lord said unto her, I will multiply your seed exceedingly, that it shall not be numbered for multitude.

¹¹ And the angel of the Lord said unto her, Behold, you are with child, and shall bear a son, and shall call his name Ish-mael; because the Lord has heard your affliction.

¹³ And she called the name of the Lord that spoke unto her, You God see me: for she said, Have I also here looked after Him that sees me?

Who is this person, the Angel of the Lord? “You are the God who sees.” To whom could that title apply? To Jesus.

2 Chronicles 16

⁹ For the eyes of the Lord run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to show himself strong in the behalf of them whose heart is perfect toward Him.

John 1

¹⁸ No man has seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, He has declared Him.

In almost every instance where the Angel of the Lord appears, the context will show that this person is no other person but Jesus. He alone bears the title of Jehovah, and the name of Jehovah.

Later on, when Hagar and Ishmael were sent away from the family of Abraham, the Angel appeared to her again, and again it was the Angel of the Lord who gave her comfort and strength.

Genesis 21

¹⁴ And Abraham rose up early in the morning, and took bread, and a bottle of water, and gave it unto Hagar, putting it on her shoulder, and the child, and sent her away: and she departed, and wandered in the wilderness of Beer-sheba.

¹⁵ And the water was spent in the bottle, and she cast the child under one of the shrubs.

¹⁶ And she went, and sat down over against him a good way off, as it were a bowshot: for she said, Let me not see the death of the child. And she sat over against him, and lifted up her voice, and wept.

¹⁷ And God heard the voice of the lad; and the angel of God called to Hagar out of heaven, and said unto her, What ails you, Hagar? fear not; for God has heard the voice of the lad where he is.

¹⁸ Arise, lift up the lad, and hold him in your hand; for I will make him a great nation.

¹⁹ And God opened her eyes, and she saw a well of water; and she went, and filled the bottle with water, and gave the lad drink.

²⁰ And God was with the lad; and he grew, and dwelt in the wilderness, and became an archer.

²¹ And he dwelt in the wilderness of Paran: and his mother took him a wife out of the land of Egypt.



An Angel appears to Hagar and Ishmael
(Biblische Geschichte mit Bildern, 1878)

Appearing to Abraham

The Angel of the Lord first appeared to Abraham in the following account:

Genesis 18

¹ Then the Lord appeared to him by the terebinth trees of Mamre as he was sitting in the tent door in the heat of the day.

² So he lifted his eyes and looked, and behold, three men were standing by him; and when he saw them, he ran from the tent-door to meet them and bowed himself to the ground,

³ And said, My Lord, if I have now found favor in your sight, do not pass on by your servant.

⁴ Please let a little water be brought and wash your feet, and

rest yourselves under the tree,

⁵ And I will bring a morsel of bread that you may refresh your hearts. After that you may pass by, inasmuch as you have come to your servant. And they said: Do as you have said.

Abraham did not know, when he saw these three men in the distance, that these were angels, and that One was the Lord. He just saw three wayfarers. And there were not many tents around, so he knew that they needed some refreshment after a long journey.

They were looking to his tent for a while, and seeming to come to his tent, when all of a sudden they turned back again and went away. And then Abraham could have said:

“Well, they don’t want to come to me. Okay, let them go.”

That is usually how men react, isn’t it?

“They don’t want me, so let them go their way.”

But not so Abraham. He had so much the spirit of service in his heart that he couldn’t bear to let them go, even if they would despise him. He was not concerned whether they appreciated him or not; he was just concerned if they had refreshment.

So he rushed after them and bowed before them and called them, “Lord,” and all these kinds of things, which showed great respect. It was not a worship; it was just showing respect for these people. This was very much in fulfillment of the word that we should esteem each other higher than ourselves:

Philippians 2

³ ...in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than themselves.

This is what Abraham did. This humility enabled him to actually talk with angels. Had there been pride in Abraham,

would he ever have been able to talk with these angels? Certainly not. He would have let them pass by.



Abraham greets the three Angels
(Imagines Veteris ac Novi Testamenti - British Museum)

These three wayfarers were coming along his way; and he pleaded with them to tarry awhile to refresh themselves in his home, which they finally accepted. And as he began to talk with these people, he realized that these three men were indeed angels, and more than this: One of these three was the Angel of the Lord, which was Jesus. Then two of the angels went away again in the direction of Sodom, while one Angel, who was Jesus, stood behind to talk with Abraham about His plans.

Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 139:

Two of the heavenly messengers departed, leaving Abraham alone with Him whom he now knew to be the Son of

God. And the man of faith pleaded for the men of Sodom. Once he had saved them by his sword, now he endeavored to save them by prayer. Lot and his household were still dwellers there; and the unselfish love that prompted Abraham to their rescue from the Elamites, now sought to save them, if it were God's will, from the storm of divine judgment.



Abraham pleads for the people of Sodom
(Bible Readings written in Simple Language, 1897)

Abraham had the same character as Moses—a very meek character, unselfish service—that was his character. When Abraham was pleading with the Lord for Sodom and Gomorrah, regarding the number of souls that would be necessary in order to save that city, he was not bargaining. Both Jesus and Abraham were like-minded. It was a cooperation in which each, Jesus and Abraham, played a part.

Jesus came first to Abraham before He sent the angels to

Sodom and Gomorrah. This was an invitation to cooperate with them, so that, if possible, the city could be saved; and if it could not, then at least some souls could be. Eventually, Lot and his two daughters were saved through this intelligent co-operation between a man and angels.

This is our work also on this earth: to be a savor of life to our fellow-men and actually to prevent catastrophes through our prayers. This will happen through our intelligent cooperation with Jesus and the mightiest of the Lord's host.

Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 139:

Psalm 25

¹⁴ The secret of the Lord is with them that fear Him.

Abraham had honored God, and the Lord honored him, taking him into His counsels and revealing to him His purposes.

Genesis 18

¹⁷ Shall I hide from Abraham that thing which I do?

—said the Lord.

²⁰ The cry of Sodom and Gomorrah is great, because their sin is very grievous.

²¹ I will go down now and see whether they have done altogether according to the cry of it, which is come unto me; and if not, I will know.

God knew well the measure of Sodom's guilt; but He expressed himself after the manner of men, that the justice of His dealing might be understood. Before bringing judgment upon the transgressors, He would go himself to institute an examination of their course. If they had not passed the limits of divine mercy, He would still grant them space for repentance.

Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 138:

Abraham had seen in his guests only three tired wayfarers, little thinking that among them was One whom he might worship without sin. But the true character of the heavenly messengers was now revealed. Though they were on their way as ministers of wrath, yet to Abraham, the man of faith,

they spoke first of blessings. Though God is strict to mark iniquity and to punish transgression, He takes no delight in vengeance. The work of destruction is a strange work to Him who is infinite in love.

We will see later that there is a difference between the way good angels destroy and the way evil angels destroy. But even though they do not do it in the same way, it's still a strange work for them. We will study this in detail later. For the moment, let us concentrate on what Abraham did.

To Abraham it was revealed that Sodom and Gomorrah had to be destroyed. How did Abraham react? Did he demand on the basis of his own justice some deliverance for the people? Did he say,

“No, God, You see I’ve taken so much trouble to rescue them from their enemies; this can’t be in vain. You must honor my efforts, and save the city too. I have done it once, now it’s your turn.”

He could have said that, if he had been a proud person! But we read something very different of Abraham:

Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 139:

With deep reverence and humility, he urged his plea:

Genesis 18

²⁷ I have taken upon me to speak unto the Lord, which am but dust and ashes.

There was no self-confidence, no boasting of his own righteousness. He did not claim favor on the ground of his obedience or of the sacrifices he had made in doing God’s will. himself a sinner, he pleaded in the sinners’ behalf. Such a spirit all who approach God should possess. Yet Abraham manifested the confidence of a child pleading with a loved Father. He came close to the heavenly Messenger, and fervently urged his petition.

Though Lot had become a dweller in Sodom, he did not partake in the iniquity of its inhabitants. Abraham thought that in that populous city there must be other worshipers of

the true God. And in view of this he pleaded:

Genesis 18

²⁵ That be far from You, to do after this manner, to slay the righteous with the wicked:...that be far from You. Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?

Abraham asked, not once merely, but many times. Waxing bolder as his requests were granted, he continued until he gained the assurance that if even ten righteous persons could be found in it, the city would be spared.

Abraham cooperated with the Angel of the Lord. The same spirit was found in Jesus (the Angel of the Lord) and in Abraham. Why then did Abraham need to talk like this? It was an exercise of love, an exercise of mediatorial work. That is the work the Lord invites us to do also. He asks us to pray for our family-members, the parents for their children; and even sometimes He gives the task to people to pray for a whole community, in order to save that community. And when we have the task, we have the privilege to cooperate with the angels who can save that community. We can't save, but the mighty angels can.

However, when God gives us this task, it is essential that we fulfill our role in cooperation with the angels, otherwise the whole thing will not work.

An example is the preaching of the message. When the message is preached, there needs to be cooperation between mankind and angels. If the human instruments do not do their part, the angels will not take over and do the preaching. But they could do the preaching, couldn't they? They would be much more able than us. But they just have to wait patiently until we are ready for cooperation.

And so likewise, through the cooperation between Abraham, Jesus, and the other two angels, Lot and his two daughters were saved from Sodom and Gomorrah. It was the meekness of Abraham that enabled him to cooperate with Jesus.

Humbly and meekly he approached Jesus, in saying,

Genesis 18

²⁷ I have taken upon myself, who am but dust and ashes, to speak to the Lord.

He clearly saw that he was nothing and that God was everything. Had he come in the spirit of pride and proclaimed,

“Here I am. You must also listen to what I have to say!”

—then the Lord would never have been able to cooperate with Abraham. Cooperation is possible only between meek human beings and meek powerful angels, but not between proud human beings and meek powerful angels. That is what we learn from this story of the angels and Abraham.

There were other instances where the Angel of the Lord appeared to Abraham; for example, when he was about to sacrifice Isaac:

Genesis 22

¹¹ But the Angel of the Lord called to him from heaven and said, Abraham, Abraham! And he said, Here I am. And He said, Do not lay your hand on the lad, or do anything to him; for now I know that you fear God, since you have not withheld your son, your only son, from me.

¹⁵ Then the Angel of the Lord called to Abraham a second time out of heaven, and said, By myself I have sworn, says the Lord, because you have done this thing, and have not withheld your son, your only son...

Who would you suppose this Angel of the Lord is? “By myself I have sworn.” Who would swear by himself except God? That again shows how Jesus filled this special name and position: “the Angel of the Lord.”

In the life of Abraham, we should look at the instance where Abraham sent his servant Eliezer to Mesopotamia to find a wife for his son. That in itself is remarkable: that the father sent his servant to another country to find a wife for the

son. It required humility on the part of the son, the father, and the servant too. Abraham told to his servant the following:

Genesis 24

⁷ The Lord God of heaven, who took me from my father's house and from the land of my kindred, and who spoke to me and swore to me saying, To your descendants I give this land; He will send His Angel before you, and you shall take a wife for my son from there.

Abraham told his servant,

“The Angel of the Lord will go before you.”

Who is the Angel of the Lord? Jesus. Jesus will go before you, and because He goes before you, He will lead you to the right woman who shall be the wife of my son. And this is repeated also again:

Genesis 24

⁴⁰ But he said to me, The Lord, before whom I walk, will send His Angel with you, and prosper your way; and you shall take a wife for my son from my kindred and from my father's house.

That is a wonderful story, because it shows that God will make the arrangements that lead to the right marriage partner. That is a promise today for each one, that the Lord will give him a partner. The Angel of the Lord will go before, and then it will be the right partner. But if the Angel of the Lord does not go before, then it will be the wrong partner. Then we will make our own choice, which can only lead to sadness and tragedy.

But if the Angel of the Lord goes before, you can be sure that the partnership will be a success. It is very necessary that human beings cooperate with the Angel, so that the Angel can lead. The Angel of the Lord must go before us; and this requires humility on our part.

Appearing to Jacob

Let us turn to the next incident, and this we find in the life of Jacob. Jacob, after betraying his father and his brother, fled from home. He was very lonely and depressed under a burden of guilt.

Genesis 28

¹⁰ Now Jacob went out from Beersheba, and went toward Haran.

¹¹ So he came to a certain place and stayed there all night, because the sun had set. And he took one of the stones of that place and put it at his head, and he lay down in that place to sleep.

¹² Then he dreamed, and behold, a ladder was set up on the earth, and its top reached to heaven; and there the angels of God were ascending and descending on it.

¹³ And behold, the Lord stood above it and said: I am the Lord God of Abraham your father, and the God of Isaac; the land on which you lie, I will give to you and your descendants.

This dream was given to Jacob for his own encouragement, and for our sakes as well. The Lord invites us, through this dream, to look into heaven.

The same vision that Jacob had in Bethel, was given later to the disciples—James, Peter and John—when they went on the Mount of Transfiguration; and also to John on the isle of Patmos. These are the three incidences:

1. Jacob's dream,
2. The Mount of Transfiguration, and
3. The isle of Patmos,

—where God has given mankind a real view into the heavenly order, a very deep view.

In what way did this view encourage Jacob himself? He was feeling that, because of his sin, he had forfeited God's bless-

ings and God's protection. He was there, all alone, surrounded by wild beasts and robbers; and he feared that his life might be taken at any time.



Jacob's Dream of a Ladder
(Night Scenes in the Bible, 1869)

When we knowingly transgress God's commands, can we

then feel safe in dangerous places? Certainly not. We may know this feeling: when we have a guilty conscience, and then we come into a dangerous situation. Don't we feel terribly uncertain in such a situation?

In that situation, the Lord showed Jacob that he was not alone. He showed him that there's a very close connection between heaven and earth; and that heaven is nearer to earth than Jacob thought: that Jesus was actually with him.

First of all, Jacob saw a ladder. On this ladder angels were descending and ascending; and Somebody stood at the top of the ladder. Who was this? It was Jesus, the Angel of the Lord. Likewise Jesus is represented in this dream as the ladder on whom the other angels went up and down.

There is another reference to this dream in *Genesis* 31. Jacob speaks to his two wives how their father had deceived him. And then he says,

Genesis 31

⁹ So God has taken away the livestock of your father and given them to me.

¹⁰ And it happened, at the time when the flocks conceived, that I lifted my eyes and saw in a dream, and behold, the rams which leaped upon the flocks were streaked, speckled, and gray-spotted.

¹¹ Then the Angel of God spoke to me in a dream, saying: Jacob. And I said: Here I am.

¹² And He said: Lift your eyes now and see, all the rams which leap on the flocks are streaked, speckled, and gray-spotted; for I have seen all that Laban is doing to you.

That is what the Angel of the Lord told him in the dream. And then the Angel says:

¹³ I am the God of Bethel, where you anointed the pillar, and where you made a vow to me. Now arise, get out of this land, and return to the land of your kindred.

Who was this Angel? It was Jesus, the God of Bethel; and

this is the God then who appeared to him in Bethel. So at the top of the ladder he saw God, and this God whom he saw was the Angel of the Lord who talked to him later in a dream when he was at Laban's place.

We should also consider the time when Jesus spoke to Nathanael, and referred to the very dream that Jacob had. Nathanael was under the fig-tree and he was praying for the recognition of the Messiah, and then his friend, Philip, came to him and said,

“Well, we have found Him.”

Nathanael doubted, but Philip told to him to come and see. And he came and saw. And then Jesus told him that He saw him under the fig-tree; and that revelation convinced him to believe. And then Jesus said to him,

The Desire of Ages, p. 142:

John 1

⁵¹ Verily, Verily, I say unto you, hereafter you shall see heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of man.

Here Christ virtually says: “On the bank of the Jordan the heavens were opened, and the Spirit descended like a dove upon me. That scene was but a token that I am the Son of God. If you believe on me as such, your faith shall be quickened. You shall see that the heavens are opened, and are never to be closed. I have opened them to you.”

The angels of God are ascending, bearing the prayers of the needy and distressed to the Father above, and descending, bringing blessing and hope, courage, help, and life, to the children of men.

That is exactly what Jacob saw. He saw the angels of God ascending and descending. He was distressed and needy, and he saw how his prayers were brought to the Father above. He saw how, from the Father, came a stream of hope, courage, help and life.

The angels of God are ever passing from earth to heaven, and from heaven to earth. The miracles of Christ for the afflicted and suffering were wrought by the power of God through the ministration of the angels.

Through the angels of God, who are ever passing between heaven and earth, we have a constant contact with the Source of the universe, with the throne of God. They are always connected to this Source. Our guardian angels are in constant communication, they are traveling constantly up and down. They do not take light-years to go to heaven and come down again. In one moment they are at the throne of God, and in another moment they are back here again. And so we can be absolutely sure that, through them, there is a living connection between us and heaven.

The miracles of Christ were worked by the power of God, the power that came directly from the throne of God; and this power was carried by the angels, constantly. And it is through Christ, by the ministration of His heavenly messengers, that every blessing comes from God to us.

That vision is what Jacob needed so much, and what we need so much. When we are distressed, needy, discouraged, then we need to know how near heaven is to earth. We need to realize how close our heavenly Father is to each one of us. And this is revealed to us by the dream of Jacob. God invites us to study this dream.

Why was God able to give Jacob such a clear view, why was it that the Angel of the Lord was able to meet Jacob there in Bethel? Because Jacob was repentant and meek. He was not going away boasting that he had done a clever deed in deceiving his brother and his father, and thereby had got the birth-right. He was not happy about this. Rather he felt that he had earned nothing, and he felt very, very sorry about having done that. And this was the spirit that helped him to receive such a clear view of the Angel of the Lord.

If we want to meet our guardian angel, if we want to see him, or meet Jesus, then we, likewise, need the same meekness that was manifested in Jacob, especially there in Bethel.

There was another encounter between Jacob and the Angel of the Lord, which is also a very important and interesting lesson of cooperation between angels and men. After Jacob had fled from Laban, and he was coming back home, Esau was coming against him with four hundred soldiers. That was a real threat to Jacob and his whole family, and he felt terribly afraid.

He understood very well that it was his own guilt that had brought on that persecution. At the same time, he was forgiven, and he desired none of the wealth of his brother. He tried to assure him about this, but nothing worked; and so, he was very desperate. He divided his family into two parties, and then he went into a solitary place to pray.

Genesis 32

²² And he arose that night and took his two wives, his two maidservants and his eleven sons, and crossed over the ford of Jabbok.

²³ He took them and sent them over the brook, and sent over what he had.

²⁴ Then Jacob was left alone; and a Man wrestled with him until the breaking of day.

All of a sudden, while Jacob was praying, a hand was laid on his shoulder. To whom did this hand belong? To Jesus: the Captain of the Lord's host, the Angel of the Lord. But what did Jacob think? He thought it was an enemy. He immediately turned around and began to struggle with that Person whom he thought to be an enemy.

Here was the Angel of the Lord. For what purpose had He come? For the sole purpose of delivering Jacob, of comforting him, of giving him the same assurance that he had received in Bethel: to show him how near heaven and earth are. And how

did Jacob react? He struggled against that. That is not cooperation, is it? You see how it is very easy that instead of cooperating with the Angel of the Lord, we might fight against Him.

It is understandable, under the circumstances under which Jacob was. He was not a specially proud person; but there was still some humility lacking in his life, which was expressed in his terrible fear and his immediate reaction when a hand was laid on his shoulder, and when he was fighting against the Angel of the Lord.

Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 197:

The error that had led to Jacob's sin in obtaining the birthright by fraud, was now clearly set before him.

Even though Jacob had been forgiven his sin in Bethel, and he, as a forgiven person, was living in the land of Laban and then coming back, still he did not see the depth of that sin; there was still some pride in his life which was not uprooted yet. It was only in that night that the error of that sin was revealed to him; and because of the error of that sin, he was not able to cooperate with the Angel of the Lord.

Today the Angel of the Lord is also working for God's people, as He tried to work for Jacob back there. How do we cooperate with Him? We want to cooperate with Him, don't we? I think there's nobody here who, instead, wants to fight against Him. But it is very easy to fight against Him, very easy. If there's still some seed of pride in us, it will not be possible for us to cooperate with our angel at such a level as to finish the work; and when we are under great pressure, instead of receiving the assurance of comfort of His presence, we will tend to think that it is our enemy.

How often did the Israelites suppose, when they were led through the wilderness, that the cloud was their enemy rather than their friend? When the cloud led them into the mountain-range instead of leading them into Kadesh-barnea and

the land, they thought that the cloud was deceiving them. When the cloud led them to the Red Sea, and there were mountains around and the Egyptians behind, they thought that the cloud was the harbinger of destruction. And so people think again and again that the very agency that God is using for our comfort and for our encouragement, is our enemy, and they fight against it.

There came the point when the Angel of the Lord touched the hip of Jacob; and immediately Jacob noticed that this was not an ordinary enemy, but the Angel of the Lord. And then he fell upon His breast; he was totally broken. He began to plead with the Angel that the last traces of pride in him might be uprooted out of him. And it is in this connection that we read:

Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 197:

The error that had led to Jacob's sin in obtaining the birthright by fraud was now clearly set before him.

In no better way could you show to a person that he is fighting against the Angel of the Lord, than if he is found physically fighting against Him. If he fights against Him in another way, by not obeying Him, he may not see it as clearly. But if there is a physical fight, that is a clear revelation of a lack of cooperation.

We do not want to put Jacob into the category of great sinners, of those who are totally wicked. Rather we should see in Jacob ourselves, and see that even people who are forgiven, who are righteous, can still struggle against the Angel, instead of cooperating with Him. We will see later other examples, how men have fought against the Angel instead of cooperating with Him. And whenever they did, they marred the work of God.

How did Jacob realize, from his dislocated hip, that he was fighting against the Angel of the Lord? How did he see that,

all of a sudden? He saw it in the same way as the Jewish nobleman saw it. Let's turn for a moment to the story of the Jewish nobleman. The Jewish nobleman came to Jesus, and when he saw only a plainly-dressed man, he doubted that this man could heal his son; but still he sought an interview with Jesus. He thought,

“Well, maybe He can heal my son, and if He can, then I shall surely believe in Him.”

Then Jesus, reading his thoughts, said to him,

John 4

⁴⁸ Except you see signs and wonders, you will not believe.

And then the Jewish nobleman, when he heard those words, suddenly realized something.

The Desire of Ages, p. 198:

Like a flash of light the Saviour's words to the nobleman laid bare his heart. He saw that his motives in seeking Jesus were selfish. His vacillating faith appeared to him in its true character. In deep distress he realized that his doubts might cost the life of his son. He knew that he was in the presence of One who could read the thoughts, and to whom all things were possible.

How did the Jewish nobleman know it, all of a sudden? Because Jesus said to him: “Except you see signs and wonders...” And with these words Jesus showed that He could read the heart of this man like an open book.

What did Jesus show to Jacob when He pointed to his hip? He revealed to him what would happen in his mad struggle. Jesus did not dislocate his hip: Jesus is not a destroyer; but He revealed to Jacob just where he would hurt himself in his struggle, that he was actually fighting himself. Jesus did not need to fight; He is the superior Angel who does not need to fight against us. He just stood still, probably, and all the fighting was done by Jacob, who, in the end, dislocated his hip in

his mad strife. And because Jesus was pointing to it, He gave Jacob the revelation that He knew everything. And so Jacob saw by this revelation that he was fighting against a superior Being.

Jacob saw a supernatural being in the Angel, and it did not take very long before he realized who He was, and then he pleaded with Him for a blessing that only He could give.

Genesis 32

²⁵ Now when He saw that He did not prevail against him, He touched the socket of his hip; and the socket of Jacob's hip was out of joint as he wrestled with Him.

²⁶ And He said, Let me go, for the day breaks. But he said: I will not let you go unless You bless me!

²⁷ So He said to him: What is your name? And he said: Jacob.

²⁸ And He said, Your name shall no longer be called Jacob, but Israel; for you have *struggled with God* and with men and have prevailed.

²⁹ Then Jacob asked Him, saying, Tell me your name, I pray. And He said, Why is it that you ask about my name? And He blessed him there.

³⁰ And Jacob called the name of the place Peniel: for I have seen God face to face, and my life is preserved.

³¹ Just as he crossed over Penuel the sun rose on him, and he limped on his hip.

How do we know that this Man, against whom Jacob fought, was the Angel of the Lord?

Hosea 12

² The Lord also brings a charge against Judah, and will punish Jacob according to his ways; according to his deeds He will recompense him.

³ He took his brother by the heel in the womb, and in his strength he struggled with God.

⁴ Yes, he *struggled with the Angel* and prevailed; he wept, and sought favor from Him.

So it was the Angel against whom Jacob struggled in that

night, and through whom he got such a great blessing. Jacob humbly threw himself on the breast of this Angel to be blessed by Him. And He was blessed. Even though he had a dislocated hip, he became very strong in faith, strong in meekness, and this was evident when he met his brother Esau. He had no fear anymore.



Jacob clings to the Angel for a Blessing
(Pleasant Pages and Bible Pictures, 1869)

And it's amazing how God also had worked with his brother: the two could hug each other as brothers, and then they departed. Esau went his way and Jacob his way. But they never were against each other anymore. That problem was over; the Lord had fought for Jacob.

Remember, we need a very high level of meekness to permit the Lord to fight for us. This is revealed in the story of Jacob, and it is an encouragement too, because even though we might fight against the Lord, He will keep on staying by our side until we recognize Him and are freed from all traces of pride.

It shows the meekness of Jesus. Jesus does not need to stay when we want to fight with Him, does He? He immediately could say,

“Well, he wants to fight against me. I came to bless him; but he wants to fight against me; okay, so I can't bless him. Then I must leave him alone.”

But this is not the character of our Angel of the Lord. He stood by Jacob's side and He waited until Jacob was ready to recognize Him. There is an event in the life of Jacob, which shows very clearly that he was acquainted with this Angel in his life. That event is where Jacob blessed his sons, and to Joseph he said,

Genesis 48

¹⁵ God, before whom my father Abraham and Isaac walked, the God who has fed me all my lifelong to this day, the Angel who has redeemed me from all evil, bless the lads.

¹⁶ Let my name be named upon them and the name of my fathers Abraham, and Isaac, and let them grow into a multitude in the midst of the earth.

Who should bless the two sons of Joseph? *The Angel* who redeemed Jacob. When did the Angel redeem Jacob? Two times:

1. In Bethel, when he had the dream of the ladder; and
2. When he was coming again back home to the place of his father, at the river Jabbok where he wrestled with the Angel.

Moses

Let's come to the next revelation of the Angel of the Lord and what He is doing in cooperation with His people. We first turn to the encounter of the Angel of the Lord with Moses.

Exodus 3

¹ Now Moses kept the flock of Jethro, his father-in-law, the priest of Midian, and he led the flock to the back of the desert, and came to Horeb, the mountain of God.

² And the Angel of the Lord appeared to him in a flame of fire from the midst of a bush. So he looked, and behold the bush burnt with fire, but the bush was not consumed.

³ Then Moses said, I will now turn aside and see this great sight why the bush does not burn.

⁴ So the Lord saw that he turned aside to look, and God called to him from the midst of the bush and said, Moses, Moses. And he said, Here I am.

In verse 2 it says that “the Angel of the Lord” appeared to him; and in verse 4 it says, “the Lord” saw him and spoke to him. Who was this Angel of the Lord? Obviously, Jesus. He is the Lord and He is to be worshipped. For this reason it was necessary that Moses should put off his shoes from his feet and worship Him.

⁵ And He said, Do not draw near: put off your shoes from off your feet, for the place whereon you stand is holy ground.

After Jesus appeared to Moses in this incident, He appeared to him several times more. The most well-known time was when he was on Mount Sinai. There Jesus appeared to him as the Angel who gave him the law. Then later Jesus was at his grave to call him forth from his grave.



Moses before the Burning Bush
(Mellan, 1663 - Met Museum)

We will now look at those other incidences where the Angel of the Lord appeared in the time of Moses.

Exodus 14

¹⁹ And the Angel of God who went before the camp of Israel, moved and went behind them; and the pillar of cloud went before them and stood behind them.

Here it refers to the “Angel of God” and the “pillar of cloud.” Ellen White says that this means that the Angel of God was in the pillar of cloud.

Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 311:

During all the wanderings of Israel, Christ, in the pillar of cloud and of fire, was their Leader. While there were types pointing to a Saviour to come, there was also a present Saviour, who gave commands to Moses for the people, and who was set forth before them as the only channel of blessing.



The Pillar of Cloud that led Israel
(Children's Bible Cards, 1896-1913)

Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 366:

Christ was not only the leader of the Hebrews in the wilderness—the Angel in whom was the name of Jehovah, and who, veiled in the cloudy pillar, went before the host—but it was He who gave the law to Israel.

Exodus 23

²⁰ Behold, I send an Angel before you to keep you in the way and to bring you into the place which I have prepared.

²¹ Beware of Him and obey His voice. Do not provoke Him, for He will not pardon your transgressions; for my name is in Him.

²² But if you indeed will obey His voice and do all that I speak, then I will be an enemy to your enemies, an adversary to your adversaries;

²³ For my Angel will go before you and bring you in to the Amorites and the Hittites and the Perizzites, and the Canaanites, and the Jebusites. I will cut them off.

The word “adversary” is a Hebrew expression. What is the Hebrew word for “adversary”? “Satan.”

Exodus 23

²² I will be an enemy to your enemies and I will be a *satan* to your *satans*.

That is how it reads in Hebrew. The word “adversary” is the meaning of “satan.” I mention this because in another scripture, where the Angel of the Lord appeared to Balaam, it says,

Numbers 22

²² The *adversary* appeared to Balaam.

Or, “satan appeared to him.” We should not understand by this that it was Satan personally, but that this was Jesus who appeared to him as his adversary, as the Angel of the Lord had said,

Exodus 23

²² I will be an enemy to your enemies, an adversary to your adversaries.

Jesus stands in relation to the enemies of God’s people as an enemy; but this does not mean that He is their destroyer; rather it means that they cannot overstep this barrier, because the Angel of the Lord stands before His people, He protects them.

If Jesus is an enemy to their enemies, He is actually a blessing to them, because that is the only way in which He can re-

late to them and still be a blessing to them. If they would only realize that they make God to be their enemy, they could be helped; but if they feel themselves justified in their course, then they cannot be helped.

We will explore this shortly, when we consider the story of Balaam. But for the moment, let's see that the Angel of the Lord in the cloud went before the people, that He protected them all the time. There are many statements in the Bible concerning this Angel of the Lord, and the one we will read now is about the Angel of the Lord who went before Israel in the cloud.

Exodus 32

³⁴ Now therefore, go, lead the people to the place of which I have spoken to you: behold, my Angel shall go before you: nevertheless in the day I visit for punishment, I will visit punishment upon them for their sin.

³⁵ So the Lord plagued the people because of what they did with the calf which Aaron made.

This was spoken about the worship of the golden calf. What God said to Moses is very interesting:

Exodus 32

³⁴ Behold, my Angel shall go before you.

This is exactly what the Angel of the Lord did, not only for Moses, but for the whole people.

Balaam

Let us turn to the story of Balaam for a moment, because in this story we find again this Angel of the Lord. Balaam was once a prophet of God and he had apostatized. But he still had some regard for God, at least.

King Balak sent messengers to him, desiring his services to curse Israel, and offering a large payment. When these messengers came with the request to Balaam, he was flattered by the prospect of big money and position. So he said,

Numbers 22

⁸ Lodge here this night, and I will bring you word again, as the Lord shall speak unto me: and the princes of Moab abode with Balaam.

So he went before God and asked Him. There was no reason to ask God, because it was clear,—he could not curse Israel. Even Balaam would have understood this, although he was not a part of the Israelites. He still knew about them, and there was no justified reason to ask God, but he did so. And God gave him an answer and said,

⁹ What men are these with you?

¹⁰ And Balaam said unto God, Balak the son of Zippor, king of Moab, has sent unto me, saying,

¹¹ Behold, there is a people come out of Egypt, which covers the face of the earth: come now, curse me them; peradventure I shall be able to overcome them, and drive them out.

¹² And God said unto Balaam, You shall not go with them; you shall not curse the people: for they are blessed.

Reluctantly Balaam went to them and said,

¹³ Get into your land: for the Lord refuses to give me leave to go with you.

Balak then sent more honorable messengers, with a greater offer, and asked for the same thing again:

¹⁵ And Balak sent yet again princes, more, and more honorable than they.

¹⁶ And they came to Balaam, and said to him, Thus says Balak the son of Zippor, Let nothing, I pray you, hinder you from coming unto me:

¹⁷ For I will promote you unto very great honor, and I will do whatsoever you say unto me: come therefore, I pray you, curse me this people.

But Balaam replied,

Numbers 22

¹⁸ If Balak would give me his house full of silver and gold, I cannot go beyond the word of the Lord my God, to do less or more.

¹⁹ Now therefore, I pray you, tarry also here this night, that I may know what the Lord will say unto me more.

This time God told him,

²⁰ If the men come to call you, rise up, and go with them; but yet the word which I shall say unto you, that shall you do.

²¹ And Balaam rose up in the morning, and saddled his ass, and went with the princes of Moab.

He was only to go with them if they waited for him. But they didn't wait. So Balaam then, thinking that his reward was running away, pursued after them. On the way, the Angel of the Lord met him. He did not see Him at first, but only his ass saw Him, and the ass was terribly afraid of that Angel.

In what relation did the Angel of the Lord stand towards Balaam: as a friend or as an enemy? As an enemy. In what relation did Jesus stand to Jacob when He laid His hand on his shoulder? As an enemy. Not that Christ came as an enemy; Christ came as a friend to Jacob, but Jacob thought that it was an enemy. Likewise, why did Jesus come to Balaam? To save him from his mad course. But for Balaam it was an enemy: it was somebody who stood in his way, whom he must get out of the way.

Here there is a difference between Balaam and Jacob. While Jacob had a great measure of humility, Balaam did not. Therefore Jacob's struggle against the Angel was different from Balaam's struggle against the Angel. Balaam struggled against his better knowledge; Jacob did not struggle against better knowledge, but his sin was unconscious, it was revealed to him through this encounter. And even though Balaam's sin also was revealed to Balaam, he did not repent of it.



An Angel meets Balaam in the way
(Stokes' Wonder Book of the Bible, 1918)

Later he perished with the Moabites on the battlefield; that was the end of this man, who stood as an adversary of God's people. And therefore what was the Angel to him? An adversary, exactly as He said,

Exodus 23

²² I will be an enemy to your enemies, an adversary to your adversaries.

Numbers 22

²² Then God's anger was aroused because he went, and the Angel of the Lord took His stand in the way as an adversary against him. And he was riding on his donkey, and his two servants were with him.

Here was a lack of cooperation with the Angel of the Lord. Balaam had the chance to cooperate with that Angel, but he did not take the chance; rather he struggled against Him. And Jacob, even though he struggled against Him at first, realized his sin, and humbled himself before the Angel, which Balaam did not do.

The Book of Judges

This Angel of the Lord, who led Israel in the wilderness, did He continue to lead the people after the wilderness experience? Was there a cloud still before the people of Israel after they entered Canaan? There was not.

Is there a cloud today? We don't see one, at least. Imagine there would be a cloud over this church; that would be quite impressive, wouldn't it? But even though the cloud was not visible, the same Angel went before them in the same way as in the wilderness. This point is made clear when we look to the book of *Judges* during which period the people were already in the land of Canaan.

Judges 2

¹ Then the Angel of the Lord came up from Gilgal to Bochim and said, I led you up from Egypt and brought you to the land of which I swore to your fathers; and I said, I will never break my covenant with you.

Who came to the people? The Angel of the Lord.

Judges 2

² And you shall make no covenant with the inhabitants of this land...

⁴ So it was, when the Angel of the Lord spoke these words to all the children of Israel, that the people lifted up their voice and wept.

We are not informed exactly how the Angel of the Lord did this, but it was the Angel of the Lord. Most probably He spoke through one who was responsible for communicating the message at that time. But it was the Angel of the Lord who led the people in Canaan just as He led them in the wilderness.

The story of the wilderness, the story of the cloud that went before Israel, is a testimony to us that the cloud is still here, although not visible. The Angel who was in the cloud is still here; He is still leading God's people today as verily as He did when they were in the wilderness.

When we receive a message then, who is responsible for it? The Angel of the Lord. It is He that leads in a certain direction. It is not a man like Moses, but is the Angel of the Lord, who leads us. We should remember this when we consider our situation today.

Let us turn to another appearance of the Angel of the Lord.

Joshua 5

¹³ And it came to pass that Joshua was by Jericho, that he lifted his eyes and looked; and behold, a Man stood opposite him with His sword drawn in His hand. And Joshua went to Him and said to Him, Are you for us or for our adversaries?

¹⁴ So He said, No, but as Commander of the army of the Lord I have now come. And Joshua fell on his face to the earth and worshiped, and said to Him, What does my Lord say to His servant?

¹⁵ Then the Commander of the Lord's army said to Joshua, Take your sandal off your foot, for the place where you stand it holy. And Joshua did so.



An Angel appears to Joshua as Captain of the Lord's Host
(Bible Studies, 1898)

What happened here? Joshua was by the Jericho; he lifted his eyes and saw a Man standing opposite him with a sword; and this Man introduced himself as “Commander of the army of the Lord.” In what capacity had Joshua gone apart to pray? As the responsible leader of Israel, he sought instruction concerning the conquering of the land; the conquering of Jericho, in particular.

Joshua came as a soldier. He met another soldier. And the other Soldier whom he met introduced himself as the Captain, as the Commander of this army for which Joshua was responsible. The real responsibility of the army rested, not upon Joshua, but on this other Soldier. But this “Captain of the Lord’s host” is not only the Captain of those few Israelites; He has other soldiers as well. They are the other angels. These are the mightiest angels of the universe, and all are on hand to minister to men. These are definitely in the majority: it’s a powerful army that nobody can successfully fight against.

The Israelites were only a fraction, a little fraction of the greater army of the universe. And this “Captain of the Lord’s host” was the Captain of the whole army; of the Israelites as well as of the others. Today, we would call this role: “the General.”

The General of the Lord’s army personally came down to give instructions to Joshua. Isn’t this amazing? Where do you find the General when the battle is going on? Do you find him at the battlefield? You usually find him safe in a bunker somewhere.

For example, when the war was going on between the United States with her allies and Iraq, where would you find the General? On the battlefield? Certainly not. Where would you find Saddam Hussein? Certainly not at the battlefield. If he went there, it would be only for a short time before the battle broke out; but you could be sure that he would have been in a safe bunker somewhere; likewise the other General.

But our General, will always be found at the battlefield, and always at that spot where the battle is raging the hottest. He is so reliable that you can know that where the Angel of the Lord appears, or where the Captain of the Lord’s host appears, that is the battlefield; that is where the battle is, at the moment, raging the hottest; that is the most important spot.

We consider the big army that is under this General, and then we see that the army on this earth is only a tiny fraction of that big army. There are thousands and thousands, and ten thousands of ten thousands of angels, plus the inhabitants of the other worlds; the believers on this earth are a very small fragment, compared with that mighty army. And we might think that the General is too occupied to visit this little army down here. Doesn’t He have more important things to do in the universe? Certainly; the universe is more important than just this earth.

We tend to be very self-centered, and to think in a very nar-

row, earth-centered way. Some people think on very nationalistic terms. When I used to travel through Romania, people often asked me the question,

“Does the message come from Romania?”

And when I say,

“It comes from Australia,”

—they say,

“Well, then I have no interest in it.”

If it does not come from Romania, then it must be wrong; only when it comes from Romania, it can be right! Well, they were educated like this from the Communist regime. Their leader always said,

“Romania alone is the world, and the rest is only a province! It’s not important, nothing important comes from the rest of the world!”

That is then how people tended to think. And we tend to think the same way also. We tend to think that this earth is everything that is in the universe; and the rest, that is just space, you know!—space-lights and so forth, which are floating around there—they are not very important!

No, no. We must realize that we, on the earth, are a little spaceship, and that the real center of the universe is somewhere else. And the more important place of the universe is where the throne is. And the most glorious places are not here, but they are somewhere else—other worlds, for sure, are more glorious. And where the angels meet, that must be a glorious place.

What is our world? A poor, little dark spot. And yet the General comes here, just here. And why? Not because we are so important, but because this is the front-line of the great

controversy. That's the only reason. Satan is here, and God's people are here, and so we find here, on the one side the powers of darkness, on the other side the powers of light clashing against each other. And where the people of God are, there Satan's hatred is focused; and there God's protection is found. Therefore that is the front-line of the battle, and there you can be sure you will find the General of the army, always.

When the Angel of the Lord appeared to Hagar, He was there because it was the front-line of the battle: Abraham's household. He appeared to Abraham because that was the front-line of the great controversy at that time. He came to Moses in the wilderness of Midian because that was the front-line of the battle between good and evil. Wherever the Angel of the Lord appears, that is where the hottest part of the battle is going on at the moment.

So where would the Angel of the Lord be now? Where would the General of the army of the universe be at this moment? On the battlefield, in the front-line. And where is this at the moment? It must be here.

You can be very certain that the message that the Lord is giving us this year is very essential for the finishing of the work. You can be, at the same time, certain that Satan and his angels are here to draw away our interest, our attention, our love from that truth, so that we cannot take it in.

At the same time, the General will be here to counterwork these forces, and to teach the lesson that is so important. The influence of the angels is present here, but we have a weak concept of it, a very poor concept. There are very strong influences here, and it is important for each one of us to realize that these influences are here and to be aware of the presence of the General of the Lord's host. And this will mightily encourage and strengthen us, not to let slip by these precious moments that we have during the meeting time.

Let us turn back to the people of Israel and see why the An-

gel of the Lord's host—or the Commander of the Lord's host, the Captain,—why He appeared to Joshua just at that point of time. It was very essential that Joshua should receive the message that he had to communicate to the people. And that message should make it obvious who the Leader of his people were. It should strengthen the trust of Israel in God; it should defeat the plans of the enemy. And because that was so essential, the General would not send anybody else, but He himself came to communicate this important message to Joshua, the human messenger. And then Joshua passed it on to the people. The Angel of the Lord appeared where the battlefront was to be found.

Gideon

Let's look at Gideon. The Midianites oppressed God's people and the Angel of the Lord came to Gideon.

Judges 6

¹¹ Now the Angel of the Lord came and sat under the terebinth tree which was in Ophrah, which belongs to Joash, the Abiezrite, while his son Gideon threshed wheat in the winepress in order to hide it from the Midianites.

¹² And the Angel of the Lord appeared to him and said to him: The Lord is with you, you mighty man of valor!

Why was the Angel of the Lord able to appear to Gideon? Why was He able to appear to Joshua? Because these men had humility. He was able to cooperate with them. If Joshua would not have had humility, how would he have reacted on the instructions of the Captain? Instead, he would have said,

“Captain, I can never pass on these commands to the soldiers. They would think that I am mad. You must give me other commands.”

When there is a meeting of Generals, and the Chief General says,

“We will go this way,”

–sometimes a Subordinate General will voice objections, and he will say,

“If you do this, then that will happen.”

But there must never be such a thing towards the General of the universe. We should never think ourselves wiser than the General of the universe. If He gives instructions, and even if they sound very strange, we had better carry them out, because they are the wisest instructions that could be found anywhere.



The Angel of the Lord appears to Gideon.

(Heemskerck, 1561 - Lacma.org)

The Angel of the Lord cooperated with Gideon because he was a man who could be cooperated with, a man who was ready to obey what the Angel said, even if his life seemed to be endangered through this kind of obedience. And so Gideon went forward, and he was the man who finally, with just three hundred soldiers, overcame the Moabites; but not even with the 300 soldiers, they actually did nothing; the Moabites

did it all themselves. It is a wonderful story of true humility.

A proud General would never have accepted such a plan. A proud General would have said,

“Well, the Israelites must get the glory. And I, as the General, must get the glory. So we must gather together every single person, and then go to battle with mighty power.”

Then he would have said,

“And with this mighty army we must then fight.”

But he had to send most of them home. At the end only 300 were left, and even these 300 were not to fight, but simply to blow the trumpets. That puts human pride into the dust. It shows that man is nothing, and that God is everything. The more God does, the more obvious it becomes that God is doing everything, and the more that human pride is put into dust.



Gideon's men tested at the River.

(Prentbijbel, 1646 - Rijksstudio)

When we follow the Sabbath Rest procedures in giving the gospel to other people, then we will notice that we are not doing much. God is preparing the heart, God is preparing the way: we are just there at the right time, at the right place, and we do nothing else but relate our experiences or just present the message. There's no convincing, no arguing, and all these kind of things; all that is not necessary.

This can give us the feeling sometimes as though we do not do much. But that's how it must be: we must realize that God is the Commander and that we are just instruments in His hand. This is something that Gideon's army was taught. It's a wonderful example of cooperation between the Angel of the Lord and weak human beings.

Samson

Another story where the Angel of the Lord appeared is regarding the birth of Samson.

Judges 13

¹ Again the children of Israel did evil in the sight of the Lord and the Lord delivered them into the hands of the Philistines for forty years.

² Now there was a certain man from Sorah, of the family of the Danites, whose name was Manoah; and his wife was barren and had no children.

³ And the Angel of the Lord appeared to the woman and said to her: Indeed now you are barren and have borne no children; but you shall conceive and bear a son.

⁴ Now therefore, please be careful not to drink wine or similar drink; and do not eat any unclean thing:

⁵ For behold, you shall conceive and bear a son and no razor shall come upon his head, for the child shall be a Nazarite to God from the womb and he shall begin to deliver Israel out of the hand of the Philistines.

⁶ So the woman came and told her husband, saying: A Man of God came to me and His countenance was like the countenance of the Angel of the Lord.

She then related to her husband everything that she saw, and her husband also desired to see the Angel. A second time the Angel came to the woman. The husband was humble enough to believe the woman's testimony each time. So the Angel of the Lord finally appeared to him also to give him the same message.

Judges 13

⁹ And God hearkened to the voice of Manoah; and the Angel of God came again unto the woman as she sat in the field: but Manoah her husband was not with her.

¹⁰ And the woman made haste, and ran, and showed her husband, and said unto him, Behold, the Man has appeared unto me, that came unto me the other day.

¹¹ And Manoah arose, and went after his wife, and came to the Man, and said unto Him, Are You the Man that spoke unto the woman? And He said, I am.

¹² And Manoah said, Now let your words come to pass. How shall we order the child, and how shall we do unto him?

¹³ And the Angel of the Lord said unto Manoah, Of all that I said unto the woman let her beware.

¹⁴ She may not eat of any thing that comes of the vine, neither let her drink wine or strong drink, nor eat any unclean thing: all that I commanded her let her observe.

¹⁵ And Manoah said unto the Angel of the Lord, I pray You, let us detain You, until we shall have made ready a kid for You.

¹⁶ And the Angel of the Lord said unto Manoah, Though you detain me, I will not eat of your bread: and if You will offer a burnt offering, You must offer it unto the Lord. For Manoah knew not that He was an Angel of the Lord.

¹⁷ And Manoah said unto the Angel of the Lord, What is your name, that when your sayings come to pass we may do You honor?

¹⁸ And the Angel of the Lord said unto him, Why do you ask thus after my name, seeing it is secret?

¹⁹ So Manoah took a kid with a meat offering, and offered it upon a rock unto the Lord: and the Angel did wondrously; and Manoah and his wife looked on.

²⁰ For it came to pass, when the flame went up toward heaven from off the altar, that the Angel of the Lord ascended in the flame of the altar. And Manoah and his wife looked on it, and fell on their faces to the ground.



The Angel of the Lord rises in Manhoah's Sacrifice.
(Thesaurus Sacrarum Historiarum, 1585 – The British Museum)

²¹ But the angel of the Lord did no more appear to Manoah and to his wife. Then Manoah knew that he was an Angel of the Lord.

²² And Manoah said unto his wife, We shall surely die, because we have seen God.

²³ But his wife said unto him, If the Lord were pleased to kill us, He would not have received a burnt offering and a meat offering at our hands, neither would He have showed us all these things, nor would as at this time have told us such things as these.

²⁴ And the woman bore a son, and called his name Samson: and the child grew, and the Lord blessed him.

This Angel of the Lord was the General of the Lord's army. Here He was at the battlefront again. It was the battlefront because God's people had been led into apostasy through Sa-

tan's temptations, and were being oppressed by Satan's enmity in the form of the other nations. It was very essential that the Israelites should have a deliverer at that point of time, and so the General was there at that spot to prepare for that work.

He prepared for it by coming to that woman who should conceive the son, who would be the deliverer—Samson. Again here we have cooperation between the Angel and the parents, because they did what the Angel said. Sad to say, Samson later defected from his pure life; but this was in no way the fault of the parents, nor was it the fault of the Angel, the General. It was because God gives everyone the freedom of choice. Starting well is not a guarantee that things will remain that way.

There are several other incidences in the Bible where the Angel of the Lord appeared, which you can look into. The Angel of the Lord must have been a very well-known Person in the Bible, because He is mentioned again and again. At one time, even David was compared with the Angel of the Lord.¹⁸

¹⁸ 1 Samuel 29:9; 2 Samuel 14:17-20; 19:27.

6. The Destroying Angel

WE WILL now consider the Destroying Angel. He appeared after David had numbered the people. He also appeared when the Assyrians were destroyed, and he was also the Angel who destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah. We will see what kind of work he does, and how man cooperates with him.

Numbering Israel

Let's first look at *2 Samuel* 24. We will start at verse 1 to get the context:

2 Samuel 24

¹ Again the anger of the Lord was aroused against Israel and He moved David against them, and said, Go, number Israel and Judah.

² So the king said to Joab, the commander of the army who was with him, Now go throughout all the tribes of Israel, from Dan to Beersheba, and count the people, that I may know the number of the people.

David should have known that he was never to number Israel. It says that:

¹ The Lord's anger was aroused and *He moved David* against them, saying: Go and number Israel.

We understand in what way the Lord moved him—He did not hinder it. It was actually Satan who moved him. This point is made clear when we read the parallel text:

1 Chronicles 21

¹ Now Satan stood up against Israel and moved David to number Israel.

David numbered Israel, and the result was a tremendous plague, or judgment.

2 Samuel 24

¹⁰ And David's heart condemned him after he numbered the people. So David said to the Lord, I have sinned greatly in what I have done. But now I pray, O Lord, take away the iniquity of your servant; for I have done very foolishly.

¹¹ Now when David arose in the morning, the word of the Lord came to the prophet Gad, David's seer, saying,

¹² Go and tell David, thus says the Lord: I offer you three things. Choose one of them for yourself that I may do it to you.

¹³ So Gad came to David and told him; and he said to him, Shall seven years of famine come to you in your land, or shall you flee three months before your enemies while they pursue you, or shall there be three days' plague in your land? Now consider and see what answer I should take back to Him who sent me.

¹⁴ And David said to Gad, I am in great distress. Please let us fall into the hand of the Lord, for His mercies are great. But do not let me fall into the hand of men.

¹⁵ So the Lord sent a plague upon Israel from the morning till the appointed time, from Dan to Beersheba—seventy thousand men of the people died.

¹⁶ And when the Angel stretched out his hand over Jerusalem to destroy it, the Lord relented from the destruction and said to the Angel who was destroying the people, It is enough. Now restrain your hand. And the Angel of the Lord was by the threshing floor of Araunah, the Jebusite.

¹⁷ And David spoke to the Lord when he saw the Angel who was striking the people, and said, Surely I have sinned and I have done wickedly; but these sheep, what have they done? Let your hand, I pray, be against me and against my father's house.

David received the punishment of his sin, and the people with him. The people were in a state of apostasy as well, otherwise they would not have received this punishment. We understand that God does not destroy. But here we find the Angel of the Lord goes to destroy and comes to the threshing floor of Araunah the Jebusite.



David implores for mercy from the Destroying Angel.
(*Historiae Sacrae*, 1700)

And the same we read also in *1 Chronicles 21*, which is the parallel text:

1 Chronicles 21

¹¹ Gad came to David, and said, Choose for yourself:

¹² Either three years of famine, or three months to be defeated by your foes with the sword of your enemies overtaking you, or else for three days the sword of the Lord—the plague in the land with the Angel of the Lord destroying throughout all the territory of Israel. Now consider what answer I should take back to Him who sent me.

¹⁵ God sent an Angel to Jerusalem to destroy it. As he was destroying, the Lord looked and relented of the disaster and said to the Angel who was destroying, It is enough; now restrain your hand. And the Angel of the Lord stood by the threshing floor of Ornan, the Jebusite.

Another example where you find the Angel of the Lord destroying is, when the Assyrians were destroyed.

2 Kings 19

³⁵ And it came to pass on a certain night that the Angel of the Lord went out and killed in the camp of the Assyrians one hundred and eighty-five thousand. And when people arose early in the morning, there were the corpses—all dead.

Again we have here the Angel of the Lord who went out and killed. That seems strange. We have seen so far how the Angel of the Lord came to Abraham in an effort to save. Yet here he destroys. Furthermore, in *Patriarchs and Prophets* we read that this work is a strange work for God:

Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 139:

Though they were on their way as ministers of wrath, yet to Abraham, the man of faith, they spoke first of blessings. Though God is strict to mark iniquity and to punish transgression, He takes no delight in vengeance. The work of destruction is a “strange work” to Him who is infinite in love.

In other words, it is a work that He finds hard to do.

Sodom and Gomorrah

To understand what the angels are actually doing; we need to look more closely at the events which were taking place in Sodom and Gomorrah. In Sodom and Gomorrah, there was great wickedness abounding; but this city was also in great danger. There were threats from all sides, as we have read in the book, *Behold Your God*.¹⁹ The special dangers that were hovering over these cities were the volcanic activities of the mountains round about, just like other cities in the world which have been greatly endangered in past history because of volcanic activity.

We know that the Lord is able to restrain even a volcanic mountain. However, He can do so only if He is invited to do so by His people. Therefore, such a situation, such a threat as

¹⁹ See the book, *Behold Your God*, chapter 29 “Sodom and Gomorrah,” by F. T. Wright.

a volcanic eruption, makes it necessary that in the city there should be people of God who pray to God for protection for that city.

Let's suppose that there are a few good people, and all the other people in the city are wicked: they don't want to know anything from God; they hate Him and they want to get rid of Him as quickly as possible. Can God work for these wicked people? Definitely not. But He can still work for them through those faithful ones who are in the city. God is blessing where He can bless. If the way is open for Him through a faithful worker, He can bless even the impenitent, to a certain degree.

And in fact, the angels are protecting the impenitent. This is what we read in:

Acts of the Apostles, p. 152:

To the worker for God, the record of these angels' visits should bring strength and courage. Today, as verily as in the days of the apostles, heavenly messengers are passing through the length and breadth of the land, seeking to comfort the sorrowing, to *protect the impenitent*, to win the hearts of men to Christ.

What are the angels trying to do? They protect the impenitent. I was a little bit surprised when I read the statement, because I had always read that they protect the repentant. But here it says:

“They protect the impenitent.”

What God desires to do is to protect everybody, even the impenitent. He can do so only on invitation, as we know from the principle that God does not force His presence where it is not wanted. So, if these people do not want God, the only way He can still bless them is through the presence of righteous persons in that city who ask for God's protection; and so the angels protect against the dangers that are coming to the city.

The problem is this: that when these people, the wicked, begin to reject God, they also reject His people. You can't reject God, and at the same time, tolerate God's people, can you? If you reject God, you reject also His people. And so these wicked people begin first to tempt, then to tease and ridicule, then to threaten, and then to force, and then to destroy the people of God. They try every means at their command to make them like themselves—i.e. wicked persons. And if they don't succeed in this, they try to destroy them from the face of the earth. History shows that very clearly.

This is what was happening in Sodom and Gomorrah. Satan was very pleased to have Lot in the city. He knew that if he let some more time pass by, he would also get Lot. So Lot was in great danger. In the end, he would have only two choices: either to submit and become like the other people in Sodom and Gomorrah, or to remain righteous and be thoroughly persecuted. This situation became apparent when the two angels came into the city.

These two angels were the destroying angels. But their purpose for coming was to save. They tried to save whoever they could, and they actually did save Lot, and his two daughters. They also tried to save his wife, which in the end was not possible because of her own decision.

But they wanted to save everyone, so they came to Lot first of all, who was the most righteous person in that city. And what did the other dwellers in Sodom do? They quickly turned against these strangers and tried to abuse them. This action revealed what they would do with every righteous person. It revealed what they eventually would have done with Lot. It's a miracle that they hadn't done this earlier.

So the angels had to specially protect Lot against these dwellers of Sodom. And then they quickly led Lot and the others of his family out, seeing that there was no chance for those people of Sodom anymore.



Angels lead Lot and his Daughters out of Sodom
(Thesaurus Sacrarum Historiarum, 1585)

When these wicked people begin to destroy God's people, and they are actually successful; or if they persecute them and God has to take them away, then the city is left without righteous persons, without those who would still plead for God's protection. It is filled only with people who do not want the presence of God and who reject Him, and then God has no possibility to continue protecting that city. So destruction is the inevitable result.

The angels, who try to protect the city, have to withdraw, and then the powers that lie nearest will destroy that city. And this is what happened in the case of Sodom and Gomorrah.

The Destruction of Jerusalem

The same thing happened also, in the destruction of Jerusalem. With Jerusalem the angels protected that city, even

the impenitent Jews who crucified Christ. They were protected from the Romans that were around the city and trying to destroy it, because there were Christians in that city.

The Jews became more and more cruel towards the Christians and they persecuted them; there was a big persecution. And when the Roman army withdrew for a time, the Christians knew that this was the sign:

Matthew 24

¹⁵ When you therefore shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, stand in the holy place, (whoso reads, let him understand:)

¹⁶ Then let them which be in Judea flee into the mountains:

¹⁷ Let him which is on the housetop not come down to take any thing out of his house:

¹⁸ Neither let him which is in the field return back to take his clothes.

The Great Controversy, p. 26:

When the idolatrous standards of the Romans should be set up in the holy ground, which extended some furlongs outside the city walls, then the followers of Christ were to find safety in flight. When the warning sign should be seen, those who would escape must make no delay. Throughout the land of Judea, as well as in Jerusalem itself, the signal for flight must be immediately obeyed. He who chanced to be upon the housetop must not go down into his house, even to save his most valued treasures. Those who were working in the fields or vineyards must not take time to return for the outer garment laid aside while they should be toiling in the heat of the day. They must not hesitate a moment, lest they be involved in the general destruction.

Recognizing this sign very clearly, they made their quick escape out of that city, and fled to Pella. When the Romans came back, there was no protection left for that city. So the angels, who delivered God's people out of Jerusalem actu-

ally destroyed that city. How did the angels destroy that city? By trying to save.

The Great Controversy, p. 614:

A single angel destroyed all the first-born of the Egyptians, and filled the land with mourning. When David offended against God by numbering the people, one angel caused that terrible destruction by which his sin was punished. The same destructive power exercised by holy angels when God commands, will be exercised by evil angels when He permits. There are forces now ready and only waiting the divine permission to spread desolation everywhere.

This tells us that good angels destroy, and the evil angels destroy. And it even says here that:

The *same destructive power* exercised by holy angels when God commands, will be exercised by evil angels when He permits.

People then ask,

“Doesn’t this say that the good angels destroy exactly as the evil angels destroy?”

The statement *does not* say that they exercise their powers *in the same way*. It just says that *the result* is the same. But *the way* in which they destroy is very, very different.

Let’s consider the way that evil angels destroy. Satan has studied the laboratory of nature; and he actively causes hurricanes, thunderstorms, earthquakes, and things like this in order to destroy as much as he can.

But how do the good angels destroy? The good angels destroy by going to save, which includes not just God’s people, but even the wicked. When the wicked become hardened in impenitence, by refusing this last saving ministry, the angels can do nothing more for them. So they remove the righteous, and leave the wicked to themselves, unsheltered and unprotected by divine power.

In the Time of Trouble

The same situation will exist in the time of trouble. The four winds of the earth, which are the seven last plagues, will be threatening to blow over the earth. And these four winds are held by the four angels. We know that at that time there will be a little number of faithful believers, but the greater number of the people will be wicked: those who reject God.

Also at that time there will begin a terrible persecution of God's people, and this persecution will threaten to exterminate the few righteous who are still on the earth. This action will seal the fate of the wicked because through persecution of God's people, they remove their last protection. It's as though you were hanging on a rope and you would cut it yourself, and then fall into the deep abyss.

As Abraham prayed for Sodom and Gomorrah, as Moses prayed for the people of God, so likewise, the Lord has given to us the task to be the salt of the earth; i.e. to be a protective agency in the world, so that the wicked are not destroyed. However, if the wicked don't like that and try to get rid of us, then they destroy their own protection. And the Angel who will then be going about to deliver us from the hands of the wicked, will be the destroying angel.

Let's read about this. The scene starts with the righteous who are praying in groups. The wicked rush on them in order to destroy them, when all of a sudden, an impenetrable darkness covers everything which hinders the wicked from destroying. Then a rainbow appears around the righteous who are kneeling there and praying.

The Great Controversy, p.665:

Ministers and people see that they have not sustained a right relation to God. They see it now that the rainbow is shining around the righteous persons of God. They see that they have rebelled against the Author of all the just and righteous law.

The setting aside of the divine precepts gave rise to thousands of springs of evil discord, hatred, iniquity—until the earth became one vast field of strife, one sink of corruption. This is the view that now appears to those who rejected truth and chose to cherish error.

No language can express the longing which the disobedient and disloyal feel for that what they have lost forever—eternal life. Men, whom the world has worshipped for their talents and eloquence, now see these things in their true light. They realize what they have forfeited by transgression, and they fall at the feet of those whose fidelity they had despised and derided, and confess that God has loved them.

Right after this follow terrible scenes. Let's look at a prophecy about the destroying angel:

Ezekiel 9

¹ Then He called out in my hearing with a loud voice, saying, Let those who have charge over the city draw near, each with a deadly weapon in his hand.

² And suddenly six men came from the direction of the upper gate which faces north, each with his battle-axe in his hand. One man among them was clothed with linen and had a writer's ink-horn at his side. They went in and stood before the bronze altar.

³ Now the glory of the God of Israel had gone up from the cherub where it had been, to the threshold of the temple, and He called to the man clothed with linen, who had the writer's ink-horn at his side.

⁴ And the Lord said to him, Go through the midst of the city, through the midst of Jerusalem, and put a mark on the forehead of the men who sigh and cry over the abominations that are done within it.

⁵ To the others he said in my hearing, Go after him through the city and kill. Do not let your eye spare, nor have any pity.

⁶ Utterly slay old and young, men, maidens and little children and women; but do not come near anyone on whom is the mark. And begin at my sanctuary. So they began with

the elders who were before the temple.

⁷ Then He said to them, Defile the temple and fill the courts with the slain, and go out. And they went out and killed in the city.

⁸ So that it was that while they were killing them, I was left alone. And I fell on my face and cried out, Yea, Lord God, will You destroy all the remnant of Israel in pouring out your fury on Jerusalem?

⁹ Then He said to me, The iniquity of the house of Israel and Judah is exceedingly great, and the land is full of bloodshed, and the city is full of perversity; for they say, The Lord has forsaken the land, and the Lord does not see.

This scripture is a prophecy of the last events when the Destroying Angel comes and destroys the wicked. So we have the “destroying angels” in Sodom and Gomorrah, we have the “destroying angels” in Jerusalem, and there will be “destroying angels” at the time of the end.

We saw the work of the Destroying Angel with the Assyrian army; we saw him when he came in David’s time after David had numbered the people. All this is the same description of the same task. It is the task of the good angels to do this. The result is destruction. But what are they doing?

The Great Controversy, p. 656:

The mark of deliverance has been set upon those who sigh and cry for all the abominations that be done. Now the “Angel of Death” goes forth, represented in Ezekiel’s vision by the men with the slaughtering weapons, to whom the command is given:

Ezekiel 9

⁶ Slay utterly, both old and young, both maids and little children and women, but come not near any man upon whom is the mark; and begin at my sanctuary,

—says the prophet. They began with the ancient men that were before the house. The work of destruction begins among those who professed to be spiritual guardians of the people.

What is God doing? He is going through the land in order to find whom He can save. If there is one righteous person in a city, he still would save that city. And if there would be one righteous person on this earth that could live on this earth, then the earth could be preserved.

Jeremiah 5

¹ Run to and fro through the streets of Jerusalem. See now and know now, and seek in her open places if you can find one, a man, if there is anyone who executes judgment, who seeks the truth, and I will pardon her.

God is looking for a reason to protect the city, and He says to His angels:

“Go and look if you find any man who executes judgment—and if you find one, then I will pardon her.”

And this was the task of the two angels who came to Sodom and Gomorrah. God was saying:

“Go and look if you find any righteous man there.”

When Abraham was pleading with Jesus, and was saying,

“Can’t you protect the city, if there are ten righteous persons in it?”²⁰

—the answer was that He would. From *Jeremiah* we learn that He would protect the city even if there was just one righteous person in that city, provided that the righteous person could live in the city.

But that is the problem. Righteous people cannot live under such circumstances—it’s just impossible—as much as it is impossible for God to force His presence upon those who do not want it. God’s character does not allow Him to do this. In the same way, it is not possible that righteous people can live in a wholly wicked city.

²⁰ *Genesis* 18:32.

When the nations come to their end, it is at a time where it is not possible that the righteous can live any longer on this earth. They are being persecuted so fiercely, that the wicked would blot them out of the earth, if they could.

God's work in protecting and delivering His people starts by putting a mark on their foreheads. That is the "sealing" work. What would be the result of the work of the angels who seal God's people? The destruction of the earth: they would bring the seven plagues to the earth, because in this work of saving God's people and taking them out of the sphere of the wicked, they would take away the protection from the wicked.

Can you understand why this work is a strange work, even though it is a saving work? Do you begin to understand it? It is a saving work, because God's people are saved; but yet it is difficult for even the angels to do that.

The Seven Angels

We should remember this, because we will come into a similar situation. We will have to cooperate also with the destroying angels. That point is made very clear in the message on the seven angels of *Revelation* 14.²¹ Since we have studied this message in the past, let's just make a brief review. In *Revelation* 14 there are seven angels:

- The first three are described in verses 6-12;
- The fourth angel is described in detail in *Revelation* 18, whose message includes a repetition of the truths contained in that of the first three angels of *Revelation* 14.
- The last three angels are described in *Revelation* 14, from verse 14 onwards.

Revelation 14

¹⁴ And I looked, and behold, a white cloud; and on the cloud sat one like the Son of Man, having on His head a golden

²¹ See the book, *The Seven Angels*, by F. T. Wright.

crown and in His hand a sharp sickle.

This scene takes place after the close of probation, when Jesus comes from heaven to this earth.

Revelation 14

¹⁵ And another angel came out of the temple, crying with a loud voice to Him who sat on the cloud, Thrust in your sickle and reap; for the time has come for You to reap, for the harvest of the earth is ripe.

¹⁶ So He who sat on the cloud, thrust in His sickle on the earth, and the earth was reaped.

Who is the angel who comes from the temple? It is the fifth angel. He represents God's people at that time—the 144,000. Not only does he represent this group, but he is also a real angel, just as all of the other angels are as well. They are the leaders, as much as the Angel of the Lord was the leader of God's people in the wilderness. We will see this more clearly later, but because we are studying the destroying angels, let us go on now to the sixth one.

¹⁷ Then another angel came out of the temple which is in heaven, he also having a sharp sickle.

This sixth angel has a sharp sickle in his hand for a purpose:

¹⁸ And another angel [the seventh], came out from the altar, who had power over the fire; and he cried with a loud cry to him who had the sharp sickle [the sixth], saying, Thrust in your sharp sickle and gather the clusters of the vine of the earth, for her grapes are fully ripe.

¹⁹ So the angel thrust his sickle into the earth and gathered the vine of the earth and threw it into the great winepress of the wrath of God.

²⁰ And the winepress was trampled outside the city; and blood came out of the winepress up to the horses' bridles, for one thousand six hundred furlongs.

The sixth angel gathers the vine of the earth, and throws it into the winepress of the wrath of God; and when the wine-

press is trampled outside the city, the blood comes out of the winepress up to the horses' bridles for 1600 furlongs. This indicates terrible destruction. Imagine a sea of blood all over the world so high that it goes to the horses' bridles, so that the riders on the horses can barely survive, as the horses wade through it.



Christ returns on a Cloud to harvest the Righteous; the Vine of the Earth is cast into the Winepress of the wrath of God.

(Schäufelein - Met Museum)

When you ride a horse through the water, and the water goes over the nose, then the horse drowns, and you drown with it in the river. If it just goes up to the bridles, it indicates a very narrow escape. The scene is described as follows, and takes place just after the people who were trying to slaughter the saints see that they have been deluded:

The Great Controversy, p. 655:

They now accuse one another of having led them to destruction; but all unite in heaping their bitterest condemnation upon the ministers: unfaithful pastors have prophesied smooth things, they have led their hearers to make void the law of God and to persecute those who would keep it holy. In their despair, these teachers confess before the world their work of deception.

The multitude are filled with fury. “We are lost,” they cry, “and you are the cause of our ruin.” And they turn upon the false prophets. The very ones that admired them the most, will pronounce the most dreadful curses upon them. The very hands that once crowned them with laurels, will be raised for their destruction. The swords which were to slay God’s people, are now employed to destroy their enemies. Everywhere there is strife and bloodshed.

“Everywhere”—this is not a local event, but it occurs everywhere in the whole world. It is one of the worldwide plagues: strife and bloodshed. It must be very terrible. It’s unimaginable, when the Holy Spirit is withdrawn from this earth, how wicked men will act towards each other.

The Great Controversy, p. 608:

...as the restraining Spirit of God shall be withdrawn from men, and they shall be under the control of Satan, who hates the divine precepts, there will be strange developments. The heart can be very cruel when God’s fear and love are removed.

The people will see that the ministers have deluded them, and they will turn against them and destroy them; but the

ministers will not be without defense! They will try to defend themselves, and so there will be a terrible battle between them and the people, and then everybody will, in this mad strife, be killed, as it says here:

The Great Controversy, p. 657:

In the mad strife of their own fierce passions, and by the awful outpouring of God's unmingled wrath, fall the wicked inhabitants of the earth: priests, rulers and people, rich and poor, high and low.

Jeremiah 25

³³ And the slain of the Lord shall be at that day from one end of the earth even to the other end of the earth. They shall not be lamented, nor be gathered, nor buried.

That will be the scene. And the cause will be that the wicked people actually realize that they are lost forever; and at that moment they will see what they have never seen before, and in a clearness that is remarkable. They will see what they have lost and they are led to despair. This then leads them to turn against each other.

The role of the sixth angel in this is that he has the sickle in his hand and he gathers in the winepress. What will he do? First of all, the sixth angel is a real angel; and this must be the destroying angel: the angel with the same task that saved Lot and who saved the Christians out of Jerusalem.

This angel also is a symbol for God's people, and they will definitely not be a part in this bloodshed. They will not take part in destroying others. What they will simply do is to stand firm in revealing God's character, and hold fast to the promises of God. When they see that the result of their faithfulness causes such a terrible destruction, will it be easy then for them to remain faithful? No. It is a strange work for the sixth angel to do in the sense that it is difficult for him to see the wicked suffer.

Today, we might find it hard to imagine that this will be

difficult for us, but I will give an illustration. There was a sister who was married to a husband, who was very cruel to her. She was a believer, and he an unbeliever. He seemed to tolerate this for a while, but soon he became very intolerant. He liked to share with her his way of life of going into the pubs, and looking at TV programs till late at night, and all these kind of things; while she desired to come to the meetings, to come to the Sabbath-meetings, and so forth.

The tension grew greater and greater, until the husband finally decided that they must divorce. Then one day, after much talking of this divorce and much pressure, and at a time when this sister was almost at the end of her physical strength, he actually threw her out. He said,

“Now out you go; I don’t want to see you anymore.”

She accepted his word and went out. Finally he even called at the place where she went, and said:

“Don’t come back.”

After a week he regretted having thrown her out; nobody washed his clothes, nobody cooked for him, and so forth. And he felt very much at a loss about all this. So he phoned her and said:

“Can’t you come back?”

Then she would come to wash for him and even to cook for him at times; but she could not come and share life with him. And then he said,

“But I want to follow your religion; and then you can come back, okay?”

And he even began to read *The Great Controversy*. However, it was very obvious that he did not read it for the purpose of being saved, but for the purpose of getting her back. It was obvious to us, not to her. She actually thought that he was

mending.

However, she felt that the Lord had led her out of that situation, so the Lord must lead her back into the situation again. And she promised him that she would come back as soon as the Lord would open the way. But He did not.

Then the husband really turned against everything. And the desperate state into which he got was very terrible for all to behold. He was desperate, not only spiritually, but also physically, and he became a very sorry sight.

She was greatly tempted to go back to him in order to make him a more comfortable life. But if she had done so, she would not have saved him, but only destroyed herself. It was a great temptation for her, a very great temptation, to stay away from him.

Likewise, it must be a very great temptation for God's people at that time not to step in, in order to stop the bloodshed. They can't prevent the destruction anymore, but they have to behold it. Likewise, the destroying angel, when he does this work, he has to behold the wicked perishing, and that is very hard indeed.

With this we want to conclude these thoughts. There must be cooperation between us and the destroying angel. And it requires humility to cooperate with him.

7. The Angel of the Lord

LET us continue to consider the work of the angels. We have seen that we need to cooperate with the destroying angels, which is not an easy work, it requires real humility. This humility needs to be exercised every day, and it is sometimes a battle to exercise it; not sometimes, but always, because of perverse human nature.

This humility consists in always striving to be an influence for happiness, for life, and for courage. Let's read this again in a statement that we covered earlier:

Testimonies for the Church, vol. 3, p. 335:

My young sister, you are living an imaginary life. You can not detect or realize a blessing in anything. You imagine troubles and trials which do not exist; you exaggerate little annoyances into grievous trials. This is not the meekness which Christ blessed. It is an unsanctified, rebellious, unfilial discontent.

Meekness is a precious grace, willing to suffer silently, willing to endure trials. Meekness is patient and labors to be happy under all circumstances. Meekness is always thankful and makes its own songs of happiness, making melody in the heart to God. Meekness will suffer disappointment and wrong, and will not retaliate.

Meekness is not to be silent and sulky. A morose temper is the opposite of meekness; for this only wounds and gives pain to others, and takes no pleasure to itself.

When you are in a big city and there go in a tram or a bus to work in the morning, you will usually see very stern faces. Each one is very occupied with his sorrows and trials and difficulties, and not looking forward to going to his job. In such a situation to be happy or joyful is very hard. But here it says,

Meekness is patient and labors to be happy under all circumstances.

The Angel of the Lord is present to give us this happiness. However, there is a cooperation on our part as well. We must, in faith, rise over difficult situations, situations where it seems there is no reason to be happy. True meekness will do just that; it will forget itself, its own trials, and permit that the life is hid with Christ in God.

We will continue to study how the Angel of the Lord appears on this earth, and how men cooperate with this Angel, and I find this is a very wonderful study, very encouraging for us today. We undertake this study with reference to current events. Angels are present even during this meeting, and there are good angels and evil angels, both trying to draw us to their sides.

Elijah

Let us consider Elijah for a moment. After the great event on Mount Carmel, where he had a wonderful victory, Elijah was plunged into a very deep depression after receiving Jezebel's threat, that she would destroy him. There was no valid reason for him to be so depressed: through meekness he could have overcome this. But, at the same time, he had a human nature like ourselves.

James 5

¹⁷ Elijah was a man subject to like passions as we are.

How often have we in the past reacted just like Elijah when there was no reason for us to despair, when we only imagined difficulties. While in that condition, we tend to think that God and His angels are not present. But they are. Let's turn to *1 Kings*, chapter 19. That is the story where Elijah ran away from Jezebel, and he ran and ran and ran.

1 Kings 19

¹ And Ahab told Jezebel all that Elijah had done; also how he had executed all the prophets with a sword.

² Then Jezebel sent a messenger to Elijah, saying, So let the

gods do to me and more also, if I do not make your life as the life of one of them by tomorrow about this time.

³ And when he saw that, he arose and ran for his life, and went to Beersheba which belongs to Judah, and left his servant there.

⁴ But he himself went a day's journey into the wilderness and came and sat down under a broom tree. And he prayed that he might die, and said, It is enough; now, Lord, take my life, for I am no better than my fathers.

That sounds very humble, doesn't it?

"I am not better than my fathers."

But, in reality, that was an expression of despair: it is stubborn sadness. It is a depression which causes the person to stubbornly say to the Lord:

"Take away my life. There's no use anymore in living."

Under such a situation, the Lord did not forget His servant. This is an encouragement for each one of us.

1 Kings 19

⁵ Now as he lay and slept under the broom tree, suddenly an Angel touched him, and said to him, Arise and eat.

⁶ Then he looked, and there by his head was a cake baked on coals, and a jar of water. So he ate and drank and lay down again.

⁷ 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.

⁸ So he arose and ate and drank, and went in the strength of that food for forty days and forty nights as far as Horeb the Mountain of God.

⁹ There he went into a cave and spent a night in that place. And, behold, the word of the Lord came to him, and said to him, What are you doing here?

¹⁰ So he said, I have been very zealous for the Lord God.

The Angel of the Lord strengthened him in that situation,

and then He appeared to him again on Mount Horeb. It simply says here that “the Lord” spoke to him, but the question is, how did He do it? Further information is given in *Prophets and Kings*, in the chapter: “What Doest Thou Here”:

Prophets and Kings, p. 167:

Elijah’s retreat on Mount Horeb, though hidden from men, was known to God, and the weary and discouraged prophet was not left to struggle alone with the powers of darkness that were pressing upon him. At the entrance of the cave, wherein Elijah had taken refuge, God met with him through a mighty Angel, sent to enquire into his needs and to make plain the divine purpose for Israel.

Not until Elijah had learned to trust wholly in God could he complete his work for those who had been seduced into Baal-worship. The signal triumph on the heights of Carmel had opened the way for still greater victory; yet from the wonderful opportunities opening before him, Elijah had been turned away by the threat of Jezebel. The man of God must be made to understand the weakness of his present position as compared with the vantage ground the Lord would have him occupy.

God met His tried servant with the inquiry: “What doest thou here, Elijah?”

It then describes how God talked to him. But how did God talk to him? Through a mighty Angel. This mighty Angel, otherwise called the Angel of the Lord, who would this be? It would be the General, wouldn’t it? The General is always present at the battlefront, and Elijah was at the battlefront in his time.

Satan was trying to totally discourage and annihilate Elijah. He would have gladly destroyed Elijah, because Elijah was a real threat to his kingdom. And the General came to withstand the efforts of Satan, to withstand the terrible discouragement with which Satan had overshadowed His servant; and He was successful. The Lord revealed to Elijah that He is

in the still, small voice, and this gave encouragement and a great understanding to Elijah, which then enabled him to do a great work for the rest of his life, until he was translated.



An Angel appears to Elijah to strengthen him. (1 Kings 19:7)
(Potter - Rijksstudio)

We turn to another story where Elijah met the Angel of the Lord:

2 Kings 1

³ But the Angel of the Lord said to Elijah the Tishbite, Arise and go up to meet the messengers of the king of Samaria and say to them: Is it because there is no God in Israel, that you are going to inquire of Baal-zebub, the god of Ekron?

And then again in Verse 15:

¹⁵ And the Angel of the Lord said to Elijah, Go down with him; do not be afraid of him. So he arose and went down with him to the king.

These stories speak of the nearness of heaven to earth, how

the General personally comes to mankind. Wouldn't it be nice to meet Gabriel? At that point of time, it was not Gabriel, but it was Christ.

Daniel

Let us turn to the book of *Daniel* and see how there was a transition from one person to another, even though the task remained the same. There still was an Executive General for the needs of this world. Here we read about the Angel of the Lord, and this passage is concerning the fiery trial of the three friends of Daniel. The king had looked into the fire and had said,

Daniel 3

²⁴ Did we not cast three men bound into the midst of the fire?

When they answered him,

²⁴ ...True, O King,

—he then said,

²⁵ Look, I see four men loose, walking in the midst of the fire, and they are not hurt; and the form of the fourth is like the Son of God.

How could a heathen king say such a thing? That was a testimony of the active missionary work of Daniel and his friends. Certainly Daniel had talked to the king about the Son of God.

The people of God talk about the divine things very naturally. They don't force themselves on someone who does not want to listen, but to think about the Son of God and about eternal realities is very natural to them. And so, to this heathen king were revealed some of the most wonderful and deep truths.

In Daniel's time, we do not find much information among

the people of Israel concerning the Son of God. There was information in the word of God; but most of the Israelites probably did not understand much of it. But not so with Daniel, and the true students of the word of God. They understood, and they informed Nebuchadnezzar of this wonderful Being. And so, when he saw this Person, he recognized Him as the one that Daniel had described.



The Angel protects the three Hebrews in the Fiery Furnace.
(Biblische Geschichten für Unterklassen, 1893)

So, he called them out of the fire.

Daniel 3

²⁶ Then Nebuchadnezzar went near the mouth of the burning fiery furnace and spoke, saying, Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, servants of the Most High God, come out and come here. Then Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego came from the midst of the fire.

²⁷ And the princes, governors, and captains, and the king's counsellors, being gathered together, saw these men, upon whose bodies the fire had no power, nor was an hair of their head singed, neither were their coats changed, nor the smell of fire had passed on them.

²⁸ Nebuchadnezzar spoke, saying, Blessed be the God of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, who sent His Angel and delivered His servants who trusted in Him; and they have frustrated the king's word and yielded their bodies that they should not serve nor worship any god, except their own God.

First Nebuchadnezzar says that this fourth Person was...

²⁵ ...like the Son of God.

Now he says that this fourth Person is...

²⁸ ...His [God's] Angel.

This shows that Nebuchadnezzar had a remarkable understanding, which he received from Daniel. Daniel understood that the Angel of the Lord is the Son of God; and this he communicated to Nebuchadnezzar. And when Nebuchadnezzar saw this Person, he recognized Him to be the Son of God, and later he said that this is the Angel of God.

Then this Angel, who stood there with Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, must be Jesus, the Angel of the Lord who appeared to Joshua, to Moses, to Elijah and to Abraham, to Samson's parents, and to Gideon.

The next incident in the book of *Daniel* is found in chapter 6: the story of the lion's den. There we read about this angel from Verse 10 and on. We know the story very well, so let's just read from Verse 18 and on:

Daniel 6

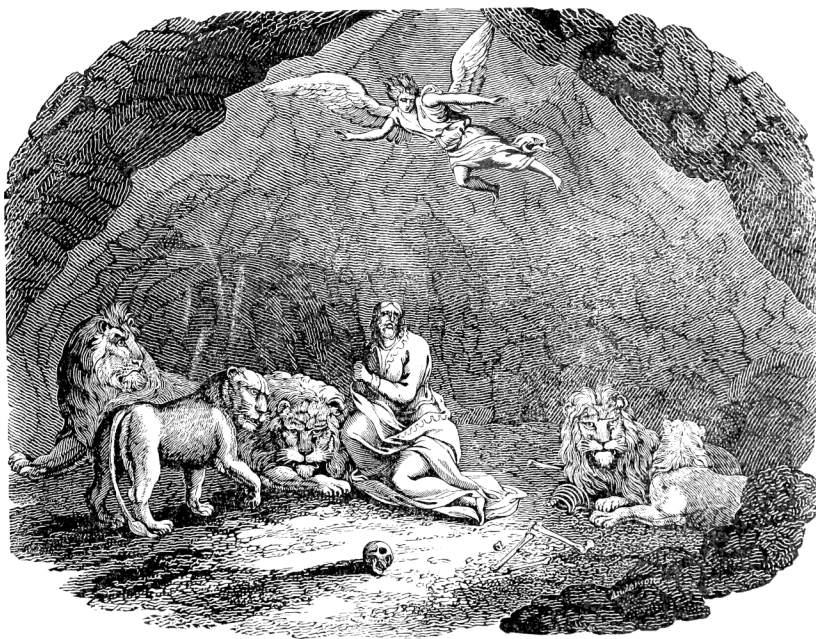
¹⁸ Now the king went to his palace, and spent the night fasting: and no musicians were brought before him: also his sleep went from him.

¹⁹ Then the king arose very early in the morning, and went in haste to the den of lions.

²⁰ And when he came to the den, he cried out with a lamenting voice to Daniel. The king spoke, saying to Daniel, Daniel, servant of the living God, has your God, whom you serve continually, been able to deliver you from the lions?

²¹ Then Daniel said to the king: O King, live forever.

²² My God sent His Angel to 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.



The Angel protects Daniel in the Lions' Den.
(Holy Bible, 1818)

Again here, we have the Angel of the Lord. Daniel was very well acquainted with that Angel. He had met Him, he had seen Him in visions, and He was his special Protector as well as the Protector of his three friends.

In *Daniel* chapter 8, Daniel received a vision; as well as the vision in chapter 7. But let's turn to the vision of chapter 8, because here we have a significant statement concerning the Angel of the Lord:

Daniel 8

¹⁵ Now it happened when I, Daniel, had seen the vision and was seeking the meaning, that suddenly there stood before me One having the appearance of a man;

¹⁶ And I heard a man's voice between the banks of the Ulai, who called and said, Gabriel, make this man understand the vision.

¹⁷ So he came near where I stood. And when he came, I was afraid and fell on my face. But he said to me, Understand, son of man, that the vision refers to the time of the end.

¹⁸ Now as he was speaking with me, I was in a deep sleep.

First of all, we should analyze what time it was that Daniel received this vision. This we read in the first verses of chapter 8:

Daniel 8

¹ In the third year of the reign of King Belshazzar a vision appeared to me, even to me, Daniel, after the one that appeared to me the first time.

When did this happen?

¹ In the third year of the reign of King Belshazzar...

¹⁶ I heard a man's voice between the banks of Ulai, which called, and said, Gabriel, make this man to understand the vision.

I think the words here, "man's voice" means just "a person's voice." Here it is described how Christ, the Angel of the Lord, hands over the work to Gabriel; and that is the first mention of Gabriel in the Bible. From that time onwards, it is Gabriel who explains the visions to the prophets, as we will see very soon.

So far, we have studied the events where the Angel of the Lord appeared to Adam, to Abraham, to Moses, David, Elijah and even to Daniel. We know that this Angel of the Lord, the General of the Lord's army, was the Archangel Michael, or Christ. And Ellen White confirms this: she writes that it was the Son of God who gave to our first parents the promise of redemption. It was He who revealed himself to the patriarchs, —the people of old.

Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 366:

All the communion between heaven and the fallen race has been through Christ. It was the Son of God that gave to our first parents the promise of redemption. It was He who revealed himself to the patriarchs. Adam, Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Moses understood the gospel. They looked for salvation through man's Substitute and Surety. These holy men of old held communion with the Saviour who was to come to our world in human flesh; and some of them talked with Christ and heavenly angels face to face.

But from the time of Daniel onwards we will find that there is another person under the title "the Angel of the Lord," and that is the angel Gabriel. He appeared to Daniel, to other prophets such as Zechariah, to Jesus, to the apostles, to John on Patmos, and to others like Ellen White. He was then the angel who gave interpretations of dreams, and who also was on the spot where the battle was raging the hottest, always. He was now the Executive General. Before it had been Christ; now it was Gabriel.



The Angel Gabriel begins his ministry by instructing Daniel.
(Holbein, Bible Cuts, 1526)

It was now Gabriel because he was anointed for that position from the very beginning of his entry into heaven. It only took time until he was ready for that position, as we have studied in the life of Moses: Moses had to be born, he had to be educated, he had to be a very meek person, meeker than all the persons on the face of the earth, and then he had to be educated in heaven as well for a thousand years. Only then he was ready to fill that position from which Satan fell. The position is that of the Executive General—the General or the Administrator—who is always present where the battle is raging the hottest.

Let us turn to the book of *Daniel* and see how Gabriel appears again and again. First of all, we have seen in chapter 8 that it was in the third year of the reign of King Belshazzar. Then we come to chapter 9, which was the first year of Darius. Darius reigned after Belshazzar, obviously, because Belshazzar was a Babylonian king, and after Babylon fell, Darius, the Median king, then ruled in Babylon. At that time, Daniel was praying, and then he records:

Daniel 9

²⁰ Now while I was speaking, praying and confessing my sin and the sin of my people Israel, and presenting my supplication before the Lord my God for the holy mountain of my God;

²¹ Yes, while I was speaking in prayer, the man Gabriel, whom I had seen in the vision at the beginning, being caused to fly swiftly, reached me about the time of the evening offering.

So Gabriel appeared to him. There's one aspect in Gospel Order that we have learned two years ago and this we should repeat quickly again, and it is this:

When God has given a work to a person, then God leaves this work to that person.

Romans 11

²⁹ For the gifts and calling of God are without repentance.

So, once Gabriel was given that work, he would be left in it. In fact, Lucifer would have always stayed in that position if he had not himself left it. We know this from *Patriarchs and Prophets*, the first chapter, where it says that Lucifer left his place as covering cherub.

Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 37:

Leaving his place in the immediate presence of the Father, Lucifer went forth to diffuse the spirit of discontent among the angels. He worked with mysterious secrecy and, for a time, concealed his real purpose under the appearance of reverence for God.

That was his work. He left his place, and so his place was left vacant. He finally had to leave heaven. He could not go back to that place anymore, he had gone too far to return.

Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 41:

So far as Satan himself was concerned, it was true that he had now gone too far to return.

So God needed somebody else for that place. For the time being, Christ was able to fill in for that work. But when the appointed person—Moses, under his new name Gabriel,—was ready for that position, he was placed in it; and from that time onwards, Moses was the Executive General, the person who gave interpretations to dreams.

We saw this in chapter 9, and now we come to chapter 10, and in this chapter we have a vision given of Christ. That does not contradict the fact that Gabriel was the one who gave the interpretation, because it was Gabriel who spoke with Daniel. Let's read about this from Verse 1 onwards, in chapter 10:

Daniel 10

¹ In the third year of Cyrus, the king of Persia...

Then this was during the time when Gabriel had commenced his work.

Daniel 10

¹ ...a message was revealed to Daniel, whose name was called Belteshazzar. The message was true, but the appointed time was long; and he understood the message, and had understanding of the vision.

² In those days I, Daniel, was mourning three full weeks.

³ I ate no pleasant food, no meat or wine came into my mouth, nor did I anoint myself at all, till the whole three weeks were fulfilled.

⁴ Now on the twenty-fourth day of the first month, as I was by the side of the great river, that is the Tigris,

⁵ I lifted my eyes and looked, and behold, a certain man clothed in linen, whose waist was girded with gold of Uphaz:

⁶ His body was like beryl, his face like the appearance of lightning, his eyes like torches of fire, his arms and feet like burnished bronze in color, and the sound of his words like the voice of a multitude.

⁷ And I, Daniel, alone saw the vision, but the men who were with me did not see the vision; but a great terror fell upon them, so that they fled to hide themselves.

That's amazing, isn't it? They were so terrorized that they fled away from the scene. Who was this person that he saw there? It was definitely Christ.

The Sanctified Life, p. 49-50:

Upon the occasion just described, the angel Gabriel imparted to Daniel all the instruction which he was then able to receive. A few years afterward, however, the prophet desired to learn more of subjects not yet fully explained, and again set himself to seek light and wisdom from God.

Daniel 10

² In those days I Daniel was mourning three full weeks.

³ I ate no pleasant bread, neither came flesh nor wine in my mouth, neither did I anoint myself at all...

⁵ Then I lifted up my eyes, and looked, and behold a certain man clothed in linen, whose loins were girded with fine gold

of Uphaz.

⁶ His body also was like the beryl, and his face as the appearance of lightning, and his eyes as lamps of fire, and his arms and his feet like in color to polished brass, and the voice of his words like the voice of a multitude.

This description is similar to that given by John when Christ was revealed to him upon the Isle of Patmos. No less a personage than the Son of God appeared to Daniel. Our Lord comes with another heavenly messenger to teach Daniel what would take place in the latter days.

So Christ appeared here to Daniel. And the same vision was given to John also, on the isle of Patmos. When Daniel was given a vision of Christ, that was very important for him. It was, in fact, the same encouragement that Jacob received when he was in Bethel. Like Jacob, Daniel also was very pressed down by circumstances and here the Lord, in giving him the vision of the glorified Jesus, showed him the close connection that exists between heaven and earth. Then we read:

Daniel 10

¹⁰ Then, suddenly, a hand touched me, which made me tremble on my knees and on the palms of my hands.

¹¹ And he said to me, O Daniel, man greatly beloved, understand the words that I speak to you, and stand upright; for I have now been sent to you. While he was speaking this word to me, I stood trembling.

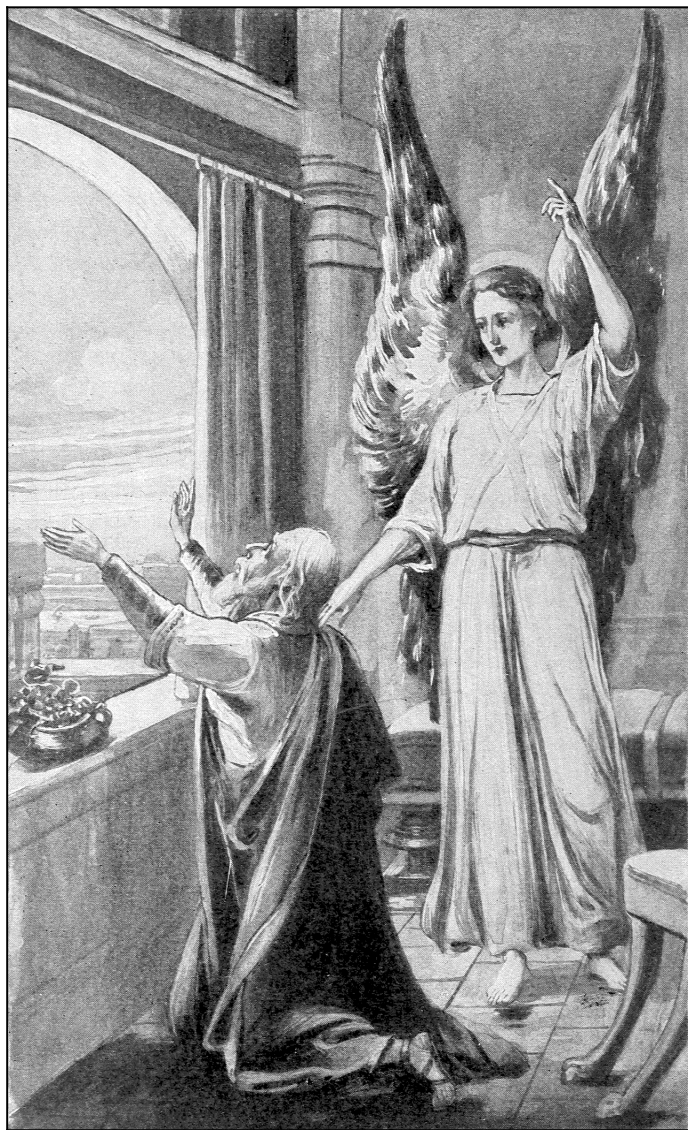
¹² Then he said to me, Do not fear, Daniel; for from the first day that you set your heart to understand and to humble yourself before your God, your words were heard; and I have come because of your words.

¹³ But the prince of the kingdom of Persia withstood me twenty-one days; and behold Michael, one of the chief princes, came to help me, for I had been left alone there with the kings of Persia.

The angel Gabriel explains to Daniel why, even though he prayed for twenty-one days,—or three full weeks,—he had re-

ceived no answer. He said,

“It is because I was with the prince of the kingdom of Persia, and he withstood me twenty-one days.”



The Angel Gabriel is sent to instruct Daniel
(Daniel and the Revelation, 1912)

The prince of the kingdom of Persia is Satan; it is not Cyrus, but it is Satan. Here Gabriel is referring to the angel-world, not of the world of physical kings; and he said that he fought against the prince of the kingdom of Persia for twenty-one days.

The SDA Bible Commentary, vol. 4, p. 1173:

By this we see that heavenly agencies have to contend with hindrances before the purpose of God is fulfilled in its time. The king of Persia was controlled by the highest of all evil angels. He refused, as did Pharaoh, to obey the word of the Lord. Gabriel declared, "He withstood me twenty-one days" by his representations against the Jews. But Michael came to his help, and then he remained with the kings of Persia, holding the powers in check, giving right counsel against evil counsel.

Good and evil angels are taking a part in the planning of God in His earthly kingdom. It is God's purpose to carry forward His work in correct lines, in ways that will advance His glory. But Satan is ever trying to counterwork God's purpose. Only by humbling themselves before God can God's servants advance His work. Never are they to depend on their own efforts or on outward display for success.

Is the strength of the prince of darkness so great that the mightiest of the Lord's host, the angel who takes the place of Satan, needs to battle twenty-one days with him until he gets the victory, and only then can he fulfill other tasks? Does there need to be such a delay?

The battle between the good and the evil angels is not a battle between equals. If it were so, then Christ could not have been resurrected on the third day, because Satan and his evil angels were there, and they were determined to keep Jesus imprisoned in the tomb. And when this mighty angel Gabriel came to call Jesus from the grave, Satan and his host fled, as fast as they could. They did not even try to fight.

The Desire of Ages, p. 779-780:

Matthew 28

² And, behold, there was a great earthquake: for the angel of the Lord descended from heaven.

Clothed with the panoply of God, this angel left the heavenly courts. The bright beams of God's glory went before him, and illuminated his pathway.

³ His countenance was like lightning, and his raiment white as snow:

⁴ And for fear of him the keepers did shake, and became as dead men.

Now, priests and rulers, where is the power of your guard? Brave soldiers that have never been afraid of human power are now as captives taken without sword or spear. The face they look upon is not the face of mortal warrior; it is the face of the mightiest of the Lord's host. This messenger is he who fills the position from which Satan fell. It is he who on the hills of Bethlehem proclaimed Christ's birth.

The earth trembles at his approach, the hosts of darkness flee, and as he rolls away the stone, heaven seems to come down to the earth. The soldiers see him removing the stone as he would a pebble, and hear him cry,

"Son of God, come forth; your Father calls You."

They see Jesus come forth from the grave, and hear Him proclaim over the rent sepulcher,

"I am the resurrection, and the life."

As He comes forth in majesty and glory, the angel host bow low in adoration before the Redeemer, and welcome Him with songs of praise.

So at that event, the "hosts of darkness" fled away. But here we find twenty-one days' fighting. Was Gabriel not so strong at that time as he was later? What is the reason for the twenty-one days of struggle?

We should always remember that there is something that the good angels do not use, and that is force. They do not force people. If the mightiest of the Lord's host comes down

to influence the king of Persia,—who was Cyrus at that time,—to let the people go, he would not force him. At the same time, because this king was not born-again, Satan was present, and he was pressing from the other side. Satan could use the weapons of flattery, and deceit. He would tell to the king,

“Well, if you let the people go, you will make your kingdom weak. You should show your strength by retaining these slaves in your kingdom.”

On the other hand, the angel Gabriel would remind him of the Scriptures that Daniel had shown him concerning King Cyrus. Those are to be found in *Isaiah* chapter 44 and 45, where Cyrus is called the “anointed.” That was written long before Cyrus ever came on to the scene.

So he was on the one hand influenced by Gabriel, the mightiest of the Lord’s host; and on the other hand, he was influenced by Satan, the prince of darkness, or the prince of the kingdom of Persia. Medo Persia was not God’s kingdom, it was Satan’s kingdom, and therefore, he is called the “prince of the kingdom of Persia.”

This kingdom was actually the representative kingdom of Satan, not the representative kingdom of God. And as such, it must have been very difficult for Gabriel to fight against that power. That was an intrusion into the enemy’s camp and we can imagine that it was not easy. Gabriel would show to the king that if he would be tolerant, he would win friends among the Jews; Satan would counter that and say,

“Well, tolerance is weakness.”

And so it would go, back and forth.

A Spiritual Battle

We should be aware, very much aware, that there’s a struggle going on between the powers of darkness and the powers

of light. Let us read a little bit about these struggles so that we get more insight into the unseen realities.

Prophets and Kings, p. 175:

To us, as to Peter, the word is spoken,

Luke 22

³¹ Satan has desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat:

³² But I have prayed for you, that your faith fail not.

Christ will never abandon those for whom He has died. We may leave Him and be overwhelmed with temptation; but Christ can never turn from one for whom He has paid the ransom of His own life.

Could our spiritual vision be quickened, we should see souls bowed under oppression and burdened with grief, pressed as a cart beneath sheaves, and ready to die in discouragement. We should see angels flying quickly to the aid of these tempted ones, forcing back the hosts of evil that encompass them, and placing their feet on the sure foundation.

The battles waging between the two armies are as real as those fought by the armies of this world. And on the issue of the spiritual conflict, eternal destinies depend.

The battles between the good and the evil angels are as real as the battles that we see on the battlefield. The battle between Iraq and the other forces was a very real battle. It was made very vivid by putting the cameras right in front of the canons and the rockets. So likewise, these spiritual battles are as real as the earthly battles, which does not mean that the angels fight with rockets and guns, it rather means that the controversy is a real controversy, which we will understand better as our spiritual vision is quickened.

This is the very thing the Lord is inviting us to through the study of the angels. He invites us:

“Come up, come up to me and see how the things really look like. Get your spiritual vision quickened; see how there is a real battle going on.”

If we would see this real battle, would we ever dare, for example, to place ourselves in a place where we would know that only the evil angels can be? Would we dare to do this? If we could see the evil angels, I am very sure, we would never dare to go where only they dwell. These would be places where sin abounds, places of spiritism, places where error is preached, and so on. If we could actually see these powers, we would be terribly frightened.

On the other hand, if we could see the good angels and know where they dwell, we would very much desire to be there. We would run to those places, and we would not want to miss being there.

Because we place ourselves so easily under the influence of the evil angels, this shows that we do not reckon with their reality; our spiritual vision just is not quickened. Remember, each person who wilfully rejects truth and chooses error and apostasy and sin, is a person around whom evil angels dwell. If we, without being sent, go into the presence of these people, we can be sure that we are under their influence. And that is a terrible thing, if you think of the mighty power of the evil angels. What are we against the evil angels? We are just nothing. We can't match them, not at all: neither in intellect, nor in physical power, nor in anything.

We are absolutely dependent on the outcome of the battles between the armies of light and the armies of darkness; but these battles would not need to take long if we would make the right decisions. If Cyrus had not hesitated as long as he did, if he would not have had his heart so much on the side of darkness—then you could be sure that the battle would not have taken so long as twenty-one days—it would have taken just as long as Cyrus would have clearly set his heart on the right side.

Prophets and Kings, p. 175:

The battles waging between the two armies are as real as

those fought by the armies of this world. And on the issue of this spiritual conflict, eternal destinies depend.

Our own destiny depends on the outcome of those battles. That makes us feel very helpless. Others have to fight the battles and our destiny depends on the outcome of those battles. But we can be assured that the good angels excel in strength; and that is an encouraging message.



8. Good and Evil Angels

LET us continue to look at this invisible struggle that is going on between the good angels and the evil angels. It is necessary that our spiritual vision is quickened to see this reality.

Testimonies for the Church, vol. 7, p. 213:

We do not understand as we should the great conflict going on between invisible agencies, the controversy between loyal and disloyal angels. Over every man good and evil angels strive. This is no make-believe conflict. It is not mimic battles in which we are engaged. We have to meet most powerful adversaries, and it rests with us to determine which shall win.

We are to find our strength where the early disciples found theirs:

Acts 1

¹⁴ These all continued with one accord in prayer and supplication.

Acts 2

² And suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind—and it filled all the house where they were sitting.

⁴ And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost.

Invisible Armies

Testimonies for the Church, vol. 7, p. 213:

We do not understand as we should the great conflict going on between invisible agencies.

Over every man good and evil angels strive. That gives us an incentive to study the work of the angels and the battle that is going on between the good and the evil angels. The next statement speaks especially about camp-meetings:

Testimonies for the Church, vol. 6, p. 41:

At these gatherings [like ours now], we must ever remem-

ber that two forces are at work. A battle, unseen by human eyes, is being waged. The army of the Lord is on the ground, seeking to save souls. Satan and his hosts are also at work, trying in every possible way to deceive and to destroy. The Lord bids us put on the whole armour of God,

Ephesians 6

¹¹ ...that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.

¹² For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world—against spiritual wickedness in high places.

Day by day the battle goes on. If our eyes could be opened to see the good and evil agencies at work, there would be no trifling, no vanity, no jesting, or joking. If all would put on the whole armour of God and fight manfully the battles of the Lord, victories would be gained that would cause the kingdom of darkness to tremble.

Not only during our studies do these battles go on, but also in the breaks. How we spend the time during the meetings is very important. It is a time similar to the Sabbath day, in which it is important that we, through prayer, prepare ourselves and put our hearts on the side of the good angels. Only in this way can the Lord bless us. I have actually found that those meetings are the most blessed where believers fill their time wisely between the breaks, permitting nothing to distract them from the all-important theme of the present truth.

Battle Over the Mind

Testimonies for the Church, vol. 1, p. 301:

Christ is the source of our strength. He is the Vine, we are the branches. We must receive nourishment from the living Vine. Deprived of the strength and nourishment of that Vine, we are as members of the body without a head and are in the very position which Satan wishes us to be in, that he may control us as pleases himself.

2 Thessalonians 2

¹⁰ [He works] with all the deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish; because they received not the love of truth that they might be saved.

¹¹ And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie.

Spiritualism is a lie. It is founded upon the great original lie,

Genesis 3

⁴ You shall *not* surely die.

Thousands cut off the Head, and the result is that the members act without Jesus for their head, and another guides the body. Satan controls them.

I was shown that Satan cannot control minds unless they are yielded to his control. Those who depart from the right are in serious danger now. They separate themselves from God and from the watchcare of His angels, and Satan, ever upon the watch to destroy souls, begins to present to them his deceptions. Such are in the utmost peril; and if they see and try to resist the powers of darkness and to free themselves from Satan's snare, it is not an easy matter. They have ventured on Satan's ground, and he claims them. He will not hesitate to engage all his energies and call to his aid all his evil host to wrest a single human being from the hand of Christ.

Those who have tempted the devil to tempt them will have to make desperate efforts to free themselves from his power. But when they begin to work for themselves, then angels of God whom they have grieved will come to their rescue. Satan and his angels are unwilling to lose their prey. They contend and battle with the holy angels, and the conflict is severe. But if those who have erred continue to plead, and in deep humility confess their wrongs, angels who excel in strength will prevail and wrench them from the power of the evil angels.

When we have ventured on Satan's ground in any way, then we have given Satan an advantage, we have tempted him to tempt us. And he will certainly make the best use out of

this opportunity. Our only chance is to pray, in order to influence the battle between the good and evil angels to the favor of the good angels. They excel in strength. They can wrest us from the evil one, but it may take time, because of the perversity of our minds.

Testimonies for the Church, vol. 1, p. 302:

As the curtain was lifted and I was shown the corruption of this age, my heart sickened, my spirit nearly fainted within me. I saw that the inhabitants of the earth were filling up the measure of the cup of their iniquity.

Testimonies for the Church, vol. 1, p. 345:

I was shown that God's true people are the salt of the earth and the light of the world. God requires of them continual advancement in the knowledge of the truth, and in the way of holiness. Then will they understand the coming in of Satan, and in the strength of Jesus will resist him. Satan will call to his aid legions of his angels to oppose the advance of even one soul, and, if possible, wrest it from the hand of Christ.

I saw evil angels contending for souls, and angels of God resisting them. The conflict was severe. Evil angels were corrupting the atmosphere with their poisonous influence, and crowding about these souls to stupefy their sensibilities. Holy angels were anxiously watching and waiting to drive back Satan's host.

But it is not the work of good angels to control the minds of men against their will. If they yield to the enemy, and make no effort to resist him, then the angels of God can do but little more than hold in check the host of Satan, that they shall not destroy, until further light be given to those in peril, to move them to arouse and look to heaven for help. Jesus will not commission holy angels to extricate those who make no effort to help themselves.

If Satan sees that he is in danger of losing one soul, he will exert himself to the utmost to keep that one. And when the individual is aroused to his danger, and, with distress and fervor, looks to Jesus for strength, Satan fears that he will

lose a captive, and he calls a reinforcement of his angels to hedge in the poor soul, and form a wall of darkness around him, that heaven's light may not reach him. But if the one in danger perseveres, and in his helplessness casts himself upon the merits of the blood of Christ, our Saviour listens to the earnest prayer of faith, and sends a reinforcement of those angels that excel in strength to deliver him.

Even the angels need reinforcements at times. You might think that one good angel is enough to drive away the evil hosts. It would be, if it were just a matter of physical strength. But because it also is a matter of the man's mind, that is not quite so simple. Therefore the good angels need reinforcements. They need time, they need to struggle. It is a hard struggle, on which our destinies depend.

That is made very obvious in *Daniel 10* where the angel Gabriel needed reinforcements. He just couldn't make it alone; so who came to the help of Gabriel to win over the battle? It was Michael, whom we know to be Jesus. It was Jesus only who could help him, so severe was that battle.

The same battle is waging over every soul: over you and me likewise. We determine what the outcome of that battle will be. And on the outcome of that battle will depend our eternal destiny.

Testimonies for the Church, vol. 1, p. 346:

Satan cannot endure to have his powerful rival appealed to, for he fears and trembles before His strength and majesty. At the sound of fervent prayer, Satan's whole host trembles. He continues to call legions of evil angels to accomplish his object. And when angels, all-powerful, clothed with the armory of heaven, come to the help of the fainting, pursued soul, Satan and his host fall back, well knowing that their battle is lost. The willing subjects of Satan are faithful, active, and united in one object. And although they hate and war with one another, yet they improve every opportunity to advance their common interest.

It is often the case that people do not agree in many things, but in one thing they agree, and that is in their enmity against truth: in that they always agree.

The Ministry of Holy Angels

Testimonies for the Church, vol. 1, p. 346:

But the great Commander in heaven and on earth has limited Satan's power.

My experience has been singular and for years I have suffered peculiar trials of mind.

Why did Ellen White suffer trials of mind? Because of the battles that were going on between the good and the evil. She was suffering because she saw the condition of God's people:

Testimonies for the Church, vol. 1, p. 346-347:

The condition of God's people, and my connection with the work of God, have often brought upon me a weight of sadness and discouragement which cannot be expressed. For years I have looked to the grave as a sweet resting place. In my last vision I inquired of my attending angel why I was left to suffer such perplexity of mind, and was so often thrown upon Satan's battleground. I entreated that if I must be so closely connected with the cause of truth, I might be delivered from these severe trials. There is power and strength with the angels of God, and I pleaded that I might be shielded.

Then our past life was presented before me, and I was shown that Satan had sought in various ways to destroy our usefulness; that many times he had laid his plans to remove us from the work of God; he had come in different ways, and through different agencies, to accomplish his purposes; but through the ministration of holy angels he had been defeated. I saw that in our journeying from place to place, he had frequently placed his evil angels in our path to cause accidents which would destroy our lives; but holy angels were sent upon the ground to deliver. Several accidents have placed my husband and myself in great peril, and our preser-

vation has been wonderful. I saw that we had been the special objects of Satan's attacks, because of our interest in and connection with the work of God. As I saw the great care which God has every moment for those who love and fear Him, I was inspired with confidence and trust in God, and felt reproved for my lack of faith.

Here we see something of the reality that is going on between the good and the evil angels, and as the result God's people suffer at times. When we are connected with the work of God, which we all should be, because we are very few and the stakes we are fighting for are very high, then our experience should be similar to that of Ellen White. If it is, that means that the armies of darkness are trying to draw us onto their battle-ground, because we are a threat to them.

And we need good angels: we must keep close to them. This we can do only by prayer. Only as by prayer we keep close to God's side, will the good angels shield us.

This would not be the case if we had nothing to do with the work of God in this time, if we were just insignificant atoms somewhere in the world! Then we could settle back, and live a rather peaceful life. But no, we are not insignificant. We are all special objects individually of the great controversy: each one us here, whether we know it or not, especially since we have been gathered here by God to hear the present truth.

There are many other statements like this. Maybe we should read one more as the last one:

The Desire of Ages, p. 258:

Every man is free to choose what power he will have to rule over him. None have fallen so low, none are so vile, but that they can find deliverance in Christ. The demoniac, in place of prayer, could utter only the words of Satan; yet the heart's unspoken appeal was heard. No cry from a soul in need, though it failed of utterance in words, will be unheeded.

Those who will consent to enter into covenant-relation

with the God of heaven, are not left to the power of Satan or to the infirmity of their own nature. They are invited by the Saviour,

Isaiah 27

⁵ Let him take hold of my strength, that he may make peace with me; and he shall make peace with me.

The spirits of darkness will battle for the soul once under their dominion, but angels of God will contend for that soul with prevailing power. The Lord says,

Isaiah 49

²⁴ Shall the prey be taken from the mighty, or the lawful captive delivered?

²⁵ Thus says the Lord, Even the captives of the mighty shall be taken away, and the prey of the terrible shall be delivered: for I will contend with him that contends with you, and I will save your children.

That is a special promise for the Child Salvation message.²² This battle is going on over every child and every adult. We all need to be very much aware of this. And let me repeat again: if we are aware of the reality of the evil angels and of the good angels, we will make sure that we don't go without God's protection onto the ground where evil angels are. At the same time, we will make sure that we make use of every means that God gives us, to avail ourselves of the protection of God and good angels. The first means of all is prayer, and another means is a deep study of the Present Truth.

Gabriel and Michael

That is the serious message taught in *Daniel* chapter 10, about the powers of good and evil angels. And we see better why Gabriel had to battle twenty-one days until the victory was gained. It was a very hard battle, and a very trying experience for Daniel too, who was so closely connected to the work of God.

²² See the book *Child Salvation*, by F. T. Wright.

Daniel 10

²¹ There is none that holds with me in these things, but Michael your prince.

Here we see how Gabriel, though being the mightiest of the Lord's host, still needs One mightier than himself,—which was Michael,—who helped him in that terrible struggle.

This was a struggle over the mind of Cyrus, the Persian king. And it's amazing how a heathen king, a king of the kingdom of the north, a king of the representative kingdom of Satan, can be brought to believe in the prophetic word and act on that word. It is amazing. It would be the same if today the President of America would read a prophecy about himself and would act accordingly. We can't imagine it, can we? Well, the powers of good are very strong. However, it also depends on the individual over whom they battle.

In chapter 12 we come again to Michael:

Daniel 12

¹ At that time Michael shall stand up, the great Prince who stands watch over the sons of your people. And there shall be a time of trouble such as never was since there was a nation, even to that time. And at that time your people shall be delivered, every one that shall be found written in the book.

First in chapter 11, we read about...

Daniel 11

³¹ ...the abomination that makes desolate.

Then in chapter 12 it says:

“At that time Michael shall stand up. He shall deliver His people; and there shall be a time of great trouble.”

It is here prophesied that in the end Jesus will stand up to deliver His people. Jesus himself, when He was on earth, made a reference to this prophecy of *Daniel* 11 and 12 in *Matthew* 24. He spoke of “the abomination of desolation”

written in *Daniel* in that great chapter concerning the last times, *Matthew 24*. Let's open to it quickly, starting with verse 29:

Matthew 24

²⁹ Immediately after the tribulation of those days, the sun will be darkened and the moon will not give its light; the stars will fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken.

³⁰ Then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in heaven: and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn; and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory.

³¹ And He 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.

This scripture is an explanation of *Daniel*. Christ is saying,

"I am Michael, that will stand up in this time. The Son of Man then comes to deliver His people."

When Jesus expounded on the prophecies of *Daniel*, He identified himself with Michael; a very interesting proof of the fact that Christ is indeed Michael, the mighty Archangel.

The Role of Angels to the Prophets

But before we come to the New Testament, let's have a look at the Old Testament. In the Old Testament, we usually find a description of how God spoke to them. The prophets said:

"And the Lord spoke to me."

Then they repeated what the Lord spoke to them. They did not relate to us exactly *how* the Lord spoke to them, except for one prophet, Zechariah. Let's turn to him for a moment.

Zechariah 1

⁷ On the twenty-fourth day of the eleventh month, which is the month of Shebat, in the second year of Darius, the word

of the Lord came to Zechariah, the son of Berechiah, the son of Iddo the prophet.

⁸ I saw by night, and behold, a man riding on a red horse; and it stood among the myrtle trees in the hollow, and behind him were horses: red, sorrel, and white.

⁹ Then I said, My Lord, what are these? So *the angel who talked with me*, said to me, I will show you what they are.

¹⁰ And the man who stood among the myrtle trees answered, and said, These are the ones whom the Lord has sent to walk to and fro throughout the earth.

¹¹ So they answered the angel of the Lord, who stood among the myrtle trees, and said, We have walked to and fro throughout the earth, and behold, all the earth is resting quietly.

¹² Then the angel of the Lord answered and said, O Lord of hosts, how long will you not have mercy on Jerusalem...

Actually the prophet Zechariah is the only one who mentions the angels and their role in giving the prophecy. While the other prophets do not mention the work of the angels in particular or expressly, we can be sure nevertheless that angels are there, because that is the principle by which God works.

We should look for a moment to *Revelation*, chapter 1. And there we read from verse 1 onwards:

Revelation 1

¹ The revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave Him, to show His servants things which must shortly take place. And He sent and signified it by His angel to His servant John,

² Who bore witness...

What is the order of communication in *Revelation*? First, it is the revelation of God. He gives it to Jesus, and Jesus gives it to His angel. And who is “His angel” according to the function of interpretation of visions? Gabriel. That work was given to Gabriel in the book of *Daniel*, and here in *Revelation* it is confirmed, as we read:

The Desire of Ages, p. 99:

Of Gabriel the Saviour speaks in the *Revelation*, saying that, He sent and signified it by His angel unto His servant John.

Gabriel is the angel who does this work. So the Lord is not shifting the responsibility, one time giving the task to this angel and then to that angel and then to some other angel. He is always using the same angel, because that is Gospel Order. He's always using a certain channel in order to do a certain work. And if that person does not leave that place, then He continues to work through that person. And the one being used in this case is Gabriel.

So when we read in *Zechariah* of the angel who spoke to Zechariah, who would you suppose this angel to be? Gabriel: it must be him. However, we have a mention of the Angel of the Lord in the book of *Zechariah* who is not Gabriel, but it is Christ. This we find in chapter 3:

Zechariah 3

¹ Then he showed me Joshua, the high priest, standing before the Angel of the Lord, and Satan standing at his right hand to oppose him.

² And the Lord said to Satan, The Lord rebuke you, Satan! The Lord, who has chosen Jerusalem, rebuke you! Is this not a brand plucked from the fire?

³ Now Joshua was clothed with filthy garments, and was standing before the Angel.

⁴ Then He answered and spoke to those who stood before Him, saying, Take away the filthy garments from him. And to him He said, See, I have removed your iniquity from you, and I will clothe you with rich robes.

⁵ And I said, Let them put a clean turban on his head. So they put a clean turban on his head, and they put the clothes on him. And the Angel of the Lord stood by.

In this case, who is the Angel of the Lord? It is Christ. This is the vision of the high priest Joshua and the Angel. And

there are many, many statements in the Spirit of Prophecy about this. For example, in *Prophets and Kings* there's a whole chapter about it. So Christ is described as the Angel of the Lord here, and Joshua is the representative of the people.

However, although Zechariah sees Christ in vision, like Daniel and John the revelator, it is not Christ who talked with the prophet. According to the principles of the Gospel Order, it is Gabriel who speaks to the prophet.

Zechariah 4

¹ Now the angel who talked with me came back and wakened me, as a man who is wakened out of his sleep.

² And he said to me, What do you see? So I said, I am looking, and there is a lampstand...

Then Zechariah continues to describe how the angel talks with him, and again and again he says:

“An angel talked with me.”²³

The other prophets don't mention it, but it must also have happened in the same way. If God once uses a certain way to reveal things, He will always continue to do so. Once God speaks through an angel to the prophet to explain visions, He will always do the same.

Originally that task would have been given to Lucifer, if he had not fallen. Instead of the angel Gabriel, we would have had the angel Lucifer who would give all the interpretations, because that is the function, or the task, of that position. But since Lucifer fell, it is now the task of Gabriel. And before Gabriel was ready, it was Michael who did that work, as we have seen already. Up to the time of Daniel it was Michael, then the task was given to Gabriel.

That is the line of revelation according to Gospel Order. It is the revelation of God, which He gave to Christ, and Christ

²³ See *Zechariah* 1:9, 13, 19; 2:3; 4:1, 4, 5; 5:5, 10; 6:4.

gives it to His angel, the angel gives it to the prophet, and the prophet to the church. That is how God reveals messages, and how He reveals visions and interprets them.



An Angel shows Zechariah the Vision of the Lampstand.

(Holy Bible, 1881)

When it comes to personal guidance for our own lives, we know that the Lord communicates to each one of us individually. But again, it's done through the work of the angels, because every blessing comes through the angels. Personal in-

structions wouldn't come through the prophet, or through the messenger.

Maybe we should study some examples of how the revelation goes through the angels when it comes to our own personal plans. But one thing we understand, and that is, that when we need personal guidance, we receive the message directly from the angel, whoever our guardian angel may be. That is the way the Lord is working.

Let us summarize one more time. In the Old Testament, in the Prophets, we sometimes read,

“The Lord spoke to me.”

But we understand how the Lord spoke to the prophets. The Lord spoke through the angel to the prophets. And they wrote down for our sakes what is so important for our salvation.

Gabriel in the New Testament

Now we will look back to the New Testament, to the role of this angel of the Lord, whom we understand to be Gabriel. The first time he is mentioned is in the announcement of the birth of John the Baptist:

Luke 1

⁵ There was in the days of Herod, the king of Judea, a certain priest named Zacharias, of the division of Abijah. His wife was of the daughters of Aaron, and her name was Elizabeth.

⁶ And they were both righteous before God, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless.

⁷ But they had no child, because Elizabeth was barren, and they were both well advanced in years.

⁸ So it was, that while he was serving as priest before God in the order of his division,

⁹ According to the custom of the priesthood, his lot fell to burn incense when he went into the temple of the Lord.

¹⁰ And the whole multitude of the people was praying outside at the hour of incense.

¹¹ Then an angel of the Lord appeared to him, standing on the right side of the altar of incense,

¹² And when Zacharias saw him, he was troubled and fear fell on him.

Who was this angel of the Lord? Gabriel. We know this for sure, because he is mentioned as Gabriel:

Luke 1

¹⁹ And the angel answered, and said to him, *I am Gabriel* who stand in the presence of God and was sent to speak to you and bring you these glad tidings.

So it's the General, the Executive General, who is present to give the announcement of the birth of John the Baptist. When the Executive General is sent to announce the birth, then how important must that birth be? Very important. Here is the front-line of the battle, for sure, because our General will always be where the battle is waging the hottest.

It was very essential that the way for Jesus be prepared. And the preparation for Jesus was no easy work. It required all the strength of a human being, combined with the forces of heaven. It required that John had the greatest advantages in his early life, from birth. He must be filled with the Holy Spirit from his birth. For this reason the angel must come to the parents and instruct them exactly what to do, just as in the Old Testament, when the Angel of the Lord instructed the parents of Samson.

That this angel introduces himself as...

Luke 1

¹⁹ ...Gabriel who stand in the presence of God,

–is wonderful encouragement and strength. As we have seen already, the angels that serve us, and especially the General are not spending most of their time in heaven. They are very concerned with what happens on this earth.



The angel Gabriel appears to Zacharias.

(Es ist Ein Ros Entsprungen, 1900)

Sometimes we may have the concept that the angels spend all their time around the throne, and nowhere else. And at other times we may have the concept that the angels are only on the earth and nowhere else. Or we had the concept that

some are on this earth and some are in heaven. But it is revealed to us through these verses, and another verse that we shall read, that the angels are constantly moving from the throne to this earth, and from the earth to the throne. And they can travel so fast, that it is no problem for them to switch. In one moment they can go to the throne, and in another moment be here again.

When Gabriel was saying that he stands in the presence of God, he was actually saying,

“I come with the power of the presence of God, not only with His authority, but also with His light: with His life, with His light, and with His might. If you only trust in that power, you will bring forth a child that will prepare the way for Jesus.”

And the same thing the angel is saying to us also. He is saying,

“I come directly from the Power-Source: I come from the throne of God to this earth in order to give you that power.”

God is not further away from us, just because He works through the angels. Rather, He is nearer to us. He uses a means whereby He can come nearer to us. That does not give undue praise to the angels: they are just the ministers, or channels. But it gives praise to God who has found such wonderful means whereby He can give us light and life. Ellen White understood this very well, when she wrote:

The Desire of Ages, p. 99:

The words of the angel: “I am Gabriel, that stand in the presence of the God,” show that he holds a position of high honor in the heavenly courts. When he came with a message to Daniel, he said:

Daniel 10

²¹ There is none that holds with me in these things, but Michael [Christ] your Prince.

Of Gabriel the Saviour speaks in the *Revelation*, saying that:

Revelation 1

¹ He sent and signified it by His angel unto His servant John.

And to John the angel declared:

Revelation 22 [RV]

⁹ I am a fellow-servant with you, and with your brethren the prophets.

Wonderful thought—that the angel who stands next in honor to the Son of God, is the one chosen to open the purposes of God to sinful men.

This wonderful thought shows what a great interest heaven has in us, not because we are so good, or so important in ourselves, because we are not. But because God loves us so much and desires to save us from the powers of darkness, therefore He invests so much effort into us.

The next time the angel appeared was to Mary. It is also described:

Luke 1

²⁶ Now in the sixth month, the angel Gabriel was sent by God to a city of Galilee named Nazareth,

²⁷ To a virgin betrothed to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. The virgin's name was Mary.

²⁸ And having come in, the angel said to her: Rejoice, highly favored one, the Lord is with you; blessed are you among women!

²⁹ But when she saw him, she was troubled at his saying, and considered what manner of greeting this was.

³⁰ Then the angel said to her: Do not be afraid, Mary; for you have found favor with God.

³¹ And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bring forth a Son, and shall call His name Jesus.

³² He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Highest; and the Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David,

³³ And He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of His kingdom there will be no end.

³⁴ Then Mary said to the angel: How can this be, since I do not know a man?

³⁵ And the angel answered and said to her: The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Highest will overshadow you; therefore, also, that Holy One who is to be born will be called the Son of God.

³⁶ Now indeed, Elizabeth, your relative has also conceived a son in her old age; and this is now the sixth month for her who was called barren.

³⁷ For with God nothing will be impossible.

³⁸ And Mary said, Behold the maid-servant of the Lord! Let it be to me according to your word. And the angel departed from her.

What a wonderful response from Mary! She was not a perfect woman, but she said,

³⁸ Behold, the maid-servant of the Lord.

She did not say,

“Behold, the mother of Jesus. Behold, what an honor!”

No,

³⁸ Behold, the maid-servant of the Lord.

She actually recognized that this child was from the Lord and she was just a steward: and this is the secret for successful child salvation. If we understand that the child is from the Lord and we are just stewards under Him, that is what will give our work success.

9. Angels in the New Testament

WE HAVE seen where the angel of the Lord is first mentioned in the New Testament:

1. In the announcement of the birth of John the Baptist;
2. In the annunciation to Mary.

We can see why it was the General, and not somebody else, who came to Mary; such an important event as the birth of Christ was a crucial event in God's plan. For this reason, the General personally must instruct Mary about what she was to do.

Not only at that time did the angel of the Lord come to Mary to guide her, but throughout all her pregnancy he was with her, in order to protect her and also to give her instructions and guidance. That is the promise for all parents when they have children.

Satan would have hated the mother for bearing Jesus. And he would have gladly destroyed her, and with her, the child in her womb. However, he could not penetrate through the protection of the mighty power of...

Psalm 103

²⁰ ...His angels, that excel in strength.

It is very encouraging for parents. As Mary had the special protection of the angels, so parents today may have the same.

Conditions for Obtaining Angelic Aid

What is the condition for having the special companionship of angels in the education of our children? Obedience, and this meekness that we find in Moses: willingness to submit to the instruction that God sends through His angel.

There are other points, too, which are mentioned in the word of God, which allow the angels to cooperate with us.

Maybe we should read one of these statements because parents are specially eager to understand how they can cooperate with the angels. If that cooperation is established, the education will be successful. And how important it is to bring forth children of obedience!

Testimonies for the Church, vol. 1, p. 649:

Angels work harmoniously. Perfect order characterizes all their movements. The more closely we imitate the harmony and order of the angelic host, the more successful will be the efforts of these heavenly agents in our behalf. If we see no necessity for harmonious action, and are disorderly, undisciplined, and disorganized in our course of action, angels, who are thoroughly organized and move in perfect order, cannot work for us successfully. They turn away in grief, for they are not authorized to bless confusion, distraction, and disorganization.

In order to enable us to cooperate with the angels, we can ask for humility, and also conscientiously bring everything into order that is around us. This means not only orderly behavior, but also order in our business, our home and everything which is our responsibility: it must be clean and well kept.

All who desire the co-operation of the heavenly messengers must work in unison with them. Those who have the unction from on high will in all their efforts encourage order, discipline, and union of action, and then the angels of God can co-operate with them. But never, never will these heavenly messengers place their endorsement upon irregularity, disorganization, and disorder. All these evils are the result of Satan's efforts to weaken our forces, to destroy courage, and prevent successful action.

And by this, Satan attempts to hinder the coming of the Latter Rain; he tries to hinder the work of raising faithful and obedient children. That is one of his means, by which he successfully prevents the cooperation between us and the angels.

And how sad it is, if there's no cooperation! Then we miss a very decided strength, through which all blessings come.

This order is Gospel Order, which is spiritual, but also a literal order, which is expressed in the house in which we live, in the dress we wear, and all the details of life. If there is disorder in all these things, the angels cannot cooperate, and they are not authorized to sanction—to bless—confusion, distraction and disorganization.

Therefore, the instruction to the parents of Samson, in the Old Testament, and to Mary, in the New Testament, certainly contained elements of how to keep order. Mary would have been taught this during her life. Then, as Jesus became older, even He became an agent in her schooling. As He was unmarred by any blot of sin in His spiritual nature, He was able to establish such a close communion with God, that He actually could be a blessing to His parents.

Angels Help Joseph

Before Jesus was born, Joseph realized that Mary was pregnant, and he was shocked because she was not yet married to him. He felt that something must have gone very wrong! And so, he quietly wanted to withdraw from the whole scene, which was an act of courtesy, or humility, on his part. He could have openly put her to shame and punishment. He could have said,

“She is with child and I am not married to her, so she is an adulteress!”

He could have condemned her for that, but he did not have that kind of spirit. So instead he thought to quietly withdraw. Then the angel Gabriel came to Joseph:

Matthew 1

¹⁸ Now the birth of Jesus Christ was as follows: After His mother Mary was betrothed to Joseph, before they came together, she was found with child of the Holy Spirit.

¹⁹ Then Joseph her husband, being a just man, and not wanting to make her a public example, was minded to put her away secretly.

²⁰ But while he thought about these things, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying: Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take to you Mary your wife, for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit.



An Angel of the Lord appears to Joseph in a Dream.

(Book of Common Prayer, 1716)

Here again we see how the angel worked for Jesus. He told Joseph not to turn away from his wife, because Joseph was

also required for the education of Jesus. Here is an example showing how angels greatly desire to cooperate with the parents and their children.

Always remember that even though Jesus was the Son of God, God did not love Him more than He loves our children today. God's love is not partial. It is not on one person only, but it is unlimited. Therefore the same thing that God did for His Son, He will do for other children likewise.

James 3

¹⁷ But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be intreated, full of mercy and good fruits, *without partiality*, and without hypocrisy.

Parents have the promise of cooperation with the angels. As we begin to see their work and understand it better, we also begin to understand how to cooperate with them, which should transform us into very successful educators.

Angels at the Nativity

The next incident where the angel of the Lord appeared in connection with Jesus, was the announcement of His birth. That was a very glorious event.

Luke 2

⁸ Now there were in the same country shepherds living out in the fields, keeping watch over their flock by night.

⁹ And behold, an angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were greatly afraid.

¹⁰ Then the angel said to them, Do not be afraid, for behold, I bring good tidings of great joy which will be to all people.

¹¹ For there is born to you this day in the city of David a Saviour, who is Christ the Lord.

¹² And this will be the sign to you: You will find a babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger.

¹³ And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host, praising God, and saying,

¹⁴ Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will towards men!



Gabriel appears to the Shepherds, announcing the birth of Christ.
(Stories from Bible History, 1885)

Who is the angel of the Lord who appeared to the shepherds? Gabriel, for sure. He, the General of the Lord's host, is the mightiest of the angels.

The Desire of Ages, p. 780:

Now, priests and rulers, where is the power of your guard? Brave soldiers that have never been afraid of human power are now as captives taken without sword or spear. The face they look upon is not the face of mortal warrior; it is the face of *the mightiest of the Lord's host*. This messenger [i.e., he who rolled away the stone at Christ's resurrection], is he who fills the position from which Satan fell. *It is he who on the hills of Bethlehem proclaimed Christ's birth.*

Clearly then, this was indeed Gabriel. Why would the General come to simple men like shepherds? Because nobody else was prepared to receive that message. It is just marvellous

that the General should come to simple men like shepherds. They were simple men, like you and me. They were nothing better, nothing worse, nothing more special. They may have been even less than you and me, depending on what position and what work we are doing.

But these simple people had the privilege of beholding the mightiest of the Lord's host. That was because they were meditating about the coming of the Messiah. And they were not so locked in unbelief and indifference as the other people. The angel Gabriel, when he went through Judea in order to announce the birth of Jesus, looked all over the earth, but he could find none who were ready to receive his message. They all were rather uninterested and indifferent towards this event.

The Desire of Ages, p. 47:

Men know it not, but the tidings fill heaven with rejoicing. With a deeper and more tender interest the holy beings from the world of light are drawn to the earth. The whole world is brighter for His presence. Above the hills of Bethlehem are gathered an innumerable throng of angels. They wait the signal to declare the glad news to the world.

Had the leaders in Israel been true to their trust, they might have shared the joy of heralding the birth of Jesus. But now they are passed by. God declares,

Isaiah 44

³ I will pour water upon him that is thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground.

Psalms 112

⁴ Unto the upright, there arises light in the darkness.

To those who are seeking for light, and who accept it with gladness, the bright rays from the throne of God will shine.

To be ready to accept light with gladness, what characteristic is necessary in order to do that? Meekness, humility.

In the fields where the boy David had led his flock, shepherds were still keeping watch by night. Through the silent

hours they talked together of the promised Saviour, and prayed for the coming of the King to David's throne.

Luke 2

⁹ And, lo, the angel of the Lord came upon them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them: and they were sore afraid.

What evidence do we have that these shepherds had the necessary meekness through which they were able to receive the message? What evidence is there that these shepherds were humble? They were seeking for light, and they were praying for the coming of the Saviour. But they did not know that this should happen just now; they were quite surprised. What did the angel actually tell to them?

Luke 2

¹² You will find a babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger.

Is a king born in a manger usually? In a stall among cattle? You wouldn't plan the birth of a king in such a place, would you? When they heard this message and when they actually went and saw Jesus, they could have turned away again, and could have said,

"Well, that was a mistake. It was a bluff—the whole thing. So we'll go away."

But they believed the message and they acted according to the message. And they even worshipped Jesus, even in His lowly state, which shows that they had quite a remarkable meekness. None of the Jewish leaders would have been able to do that. They all would have expected the Messiah to be born somewhere in king's palaces, and *there* they would have worshipped Him, but not in a manger among cattle, in a stall.

The Desire of Ages, p. 47-48:

At these words, visions of glory filled the minds of the listening shepherds. The Deliverer has come to Israel! Power, exaltation, triumph are associated with His coming. But the

angel must prepare them to recognize their Saviour in poverty and humiliation.

Luke 2

¹² This shall be a sign unto you [he says]; You shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger.

The heavenly messenger had quieted their fears. He had told them how to find Jesus. With tender regard for their human weakness, he had given them time to become accustomed to the divine radiance. Then joy and glory could no longer be hidden. The whole plain was lighted up with the bright shining of the hosts of God. Earth was hushed, and heaven stooped to listen to the song:

Luke 2

¹⁴ Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men.

Oh, that today the human family could recognize that song! The declaration then made, the note then struck, will swell to the close of time, and resound to the ends of the earth. When the Sun of Righteousness shall arise, with healing in His wings, that song will be re-echoed by the voice of a great multitude, as the voice of many waters, saying:

Revelation 19

⁶ Alleluia: for the Lord God Omnipotent reigns.

Why are we told what the angels are singing, when they are singing before the throne, and when they come down to this earth? Because in their song is a mighty promise, a mighty encouragement. There would be no point in giving us a view of the throne of God and the angels and what they are actually singing, if this was not for our blessing. So even though it is their song, it is still a blessing for us. I have meditated quite some time about what it really means,

Luke 2

¹⁴ Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will towards men.

But I still find that I fail to understand the full meaning. Ellen White exclaims and says,

The Desire of Ages, p. 48:

If only the whole human family could recognize that song!

There's a depth in it, that would lift us up, encourage us, and give us much strength.

As the angels disappeared, the light faded away, and the shadows of night once more fell on the hills of Bethlehem. But the brightest picture that was ever beheld by human eyes, remained in the memory of the shepherds. And it came to pass as the angels were gone away from them into heaven, that the shepherds said to one another:

Luke 2

¹⁵ Let us now go even unto Bethlehem, and see this thing which is come to pass, which the Lord has made known unto us.

¹⁶ And they came with haste, and found Mary, and Joseph, and the Babe lying in the manger.

Departing with great joy, they made known the things they had seen and heard.

¹⁸ And all they that heard it wondered at those things which were told them by the shepherds.

¹⁹ But Mary kept all these things, and pondered them in her heart.

²⁰ And the shepherds returned glorifying and praising God.

They glorified and praised God after they saw Jesus in the manger amidst the cattle in the stall. That is quite remarkable, isn't it? That shows that they had deep spiritual insight, which even the leaders in Israel did not have.

The Desire of Ages, p. 48:

Heaven and earth are no wider apart today than when shepherds listened to the angels' song.

So through this story we are to learn how close together heaven and earth actually are. And the message is,

Heaven and earth are no wider apart today than back there. Humanity is still as much the object of heaven's solicitude as when common men of common occupations met an-

gels at noon-day, and talked with the heavenly messengers in the vineyards and the fields. To us, in the common walks of life, heaven may be very near. Angels from the courts above will attend the steps of those who come and go at God's command.

As Jesus said, even the little ones are guarded by angels, who all the time see the face of His Father:

Matthew 18

¹⁰ 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.

The angels are constantly moving between the throne, where they see the face of the Father, and these little ones. That shows a very great closeness between heaven and earth.

The Desire of Ages, p. 48:

Angels from the courts above will attend the steps of those who come and go at God's command. The story of Bethlehem is an exhaustless theme. In it is hidden...

Romans 11

³³ ...the depth of the riches, both of the wisdom and knowledge of God.

We marvel at the Saviour's sacrifice in exchanging the throne of heaven for the manger, and the companionship of adoring angels for the beasts of the stall. Human pride and self-sufficiency stand rebuked in His presence. Yet this was but the beginning of His wonderful condescension.

It would have been an almost infinite humiliation for the Son of God to take man's nature, even when Adam stood in his innocence in Eden. But Jesus accepted humanity when the race had been weakened by four thousand years of sin. Like every child of Adam, He accepted the results of the working of the great law of heredity. What these results were, is shown in the history of His earthly ancestors. He came with such a heredity to share our sorrows and temptations, and to give us the example of a sinless life.

It was the same lesson as was portrayed in the dream of Jacob when he saw the ladder, with the angels ascending and descending.²⁴ The ladder represented Jesus.²⁵ In the incarnation we see Jesus again; and because of Him, we see the mightiest of the Lord's host coming to make the announcement. And the angels were just eager—they almost burst in anticipation, and in waiting,—to announce the wonderful event of the birth of the Saviour.

The same eagerness, the same strong desire that was in the angels back there, is in them today for our sakes. They have the same interest, because Jesus has given His life for us and because He is the ladder. The angels are as much interested in the earth today as they were back then when Jesus was personally born here. That is the message of Bethlehem that we may remember and take courage from.

These angels, who proclaimed the birth of Jesus there on the hills of Bethlehem, were so glorious that their light was seen from a very, very great distance. I marvel that it was not seen by more of the people around Jerusalem. It was seen by the shepherds, for sure; but nothing is reported that any person in Jerusalem actually saw that light. But there were far, far in the distance some men who saw this light. How are they called in the Bible? The wise men. They saw this very light.

Matthew 2

¹ Now when Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judaea in the days of Herod the king, behold, there came wise men from the east to Jerusalem,

² Saying, Where is he that is born King of the Jews? for we have seen His star in the east, and are come to worship Him.

Not knowing that these were angels, they suspected it was a special star. And they investigated in their scriptures to find

²⁴ *Genesis* 28:12.

²⁵ *John* 1:51.

out what this meant. And so they also came to the scriptures of Balaam who was a person not of the Israelites, but he had written down a few things which are to be found in the Bible.

Numbers 24

¹⁵ And he took up his parable, and said, Balaam the son of Beor has said, and the man whose eyes are open has said:

¹⁶ He has said, which heard the words of God, and knew the knowledge of the most High, which saw the vision of the Almighty, falling into a trance, but having his eyes open:

¹⁷ I shall see Him, but not now: I shall behold Him, but not nigh: *there shall come a Star out of Jacob*, and a Sceptre shall rise out of Israel, and shall smite the corners of Moab, and destroy all the children of Sheth.

¹⁸ And Edom shall be a possession, Seir also shall be a possession for his enemies; and Israel shall do valiantly.

¹⁹ Out of Jacob shall come He that shall have dominion, and shall destroy him that remains of the city.

These writings were also spread among the heathen. And they were treasured by the heathen as wise scriptures. And so, these wise men, who were philosophers or seekers, they came across these scriptures, and read them, and they read something about the Star of Jacob, and the Sceptre that shall rise out of Israel. And that was the exact direction in which they saw this star in the sky. And for this reason, they said,

“This must be the star of the prophecy.”

So they went towards Judah. But when they arrived in Jerusalem, they did not know where exactly it had gone, so they asked the Jews for direction. They even asked Herod. Herod could not give the answer. He called the priests, and they mentioned something about Bethlehem:

Matthew 2

³ When Herod the king had heard these things, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him.

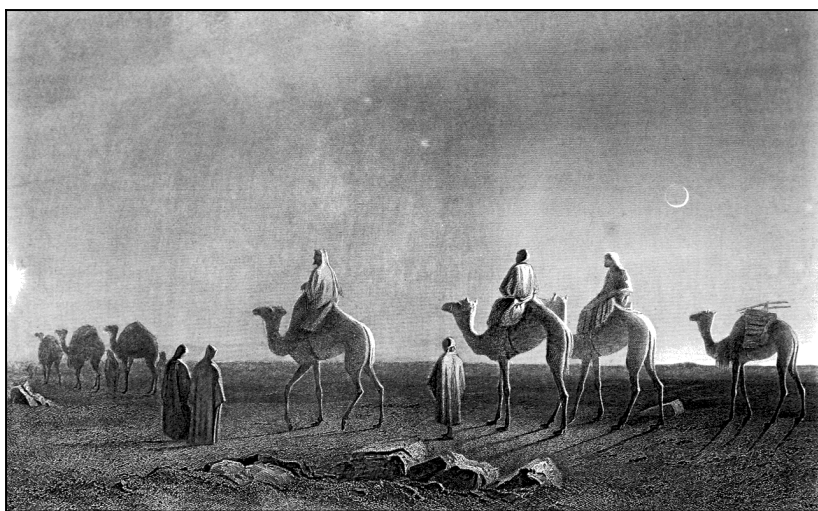
⁴ And when he had gathered all the chief priests and scribes

of the people together, he demanded of them where Christ should be born.

⁵ And they said unto him, In Bethlehem of Judaea: for thus it is written by the prophet,

⁶ And you Bethlehem, in the land of Juda, are not the least among the princes of Juda: for out of you shall come a Governor, that shall rule my people Israel.

Not believing themselves what they said, they yet gave the information to the wise men and the wise men believed it. This has happened many a time, even in an apostate church. A minister may be reading from the Bible, and an honest person in the congregation, who hears the word of truth that the minister is reading, is converted by it. When they are converted, and the minister realizes it, he takes all the credit to himself, whereas in fact he is an apostate. But it was the truth of the Word that did the work.



The Wise Men follow the light of the Angels,
which they thought was a Star.

(Life of Jesus Christ for the Young, v2, 1880)

I know of one incident when a Romanian brother had received the little booklet, *From Bondage to Freedom*, translated in his language. He received it from the Adventist Reformed

Church, and he fully believed that this church carried that message. So, accordingly, when he studied the book, he made his experience of the new birth, and desired baptism from them, and they baptized him. It was only later that he realized that they didn't carry this message at all, but that it came from somewhere else.

A similar situation took place here. The priests actually gave the message to the wise men, and the wise men, by acting on that message, found Jesus, while the priests themselves did not find Jesus.

That was the second event where the angels actually led somebody to Jesus in order to give them the wonderful news of the birth of the Saviour: to the shepherds and to the wise men. To the shepherds they came very directly announcing the birth, and to the wise men more indirectly. But the angels are very swift; if they can go to heaven, which is so very far away, in an instant, then they certainly also would be able to visit in no time the wise men and influence them, as Gabriel influenced Cyrus.²⁶ The wise men must have received quite some understanding also, through the direct work of the angels.

The Guardian Angel of Jesus

Let us turn to the next events when the angel of the Lord appeared. He was the special guardian angel of Jesus. And he was not only a guardian angel for Him as an adult,—when He was in His public work,—but he was His guardian angel also when He was a child, and even before He was born, when He was in His mother's womb. The angel did everything for Jesus that He should grow up to be a very strong man to save mankind.

²⁶ See *Daniel* 10:13.



Jesus as a Baby - the Angels protecting.
(The Life of Jesus Christ for the Young, vol. 1, 1880)

Matthew 2

⁷ Then Herod, when he had privily called the wise men, enquired of them diligently what time the star appeared.

⁸ And he sent them to Bethlehem, and said, Go and search diligently for the young child; and when you have found Him, bring me word again, that I may come and worship Him also.

⁹ When they had heard the king, they departed; and, lo, the star, which they saw in the east, went before them, till it came and stood over where the young child was.

¹⁰ When they saw the star, they rejoiced with exceeding great joy.

¹¹ And when they were come into the house, they saw the young child with Mary His mother, and fell down, and worshipped Him: and when they had opened their treasures, they presented unto Him gifts; gold, and frankincense, and myrrh.

¹² And being warned of God in a dream that they should not return to Herod, they departed into their own country an-

other way.

After the wise men left, they did not go to Herod again, because in a dream they were told not to. Probably in that dream also it was Gabriel who worked. God knew that Herod had no desire to worship Jesus, but rather looked at Him as a competitor for the throne, and would seek to kill Him. What did the angel of the Lord do in order to protect Jesus?

Matthew 2

¹³ And when they were departed, behold, the angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream, saying, Arise, and take the young child and His mother, and flee into Egypt, and be there until I bring you word: for Herod will seek the young child to destroy Him.

¹⁴ When he arose, he took the young child and His mother by night, and departed into Egypt:

¹⁵ And was there until the death of Herod: that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet, saying, Out of Egypt have I called my son.

And then Herod, realizing that the wise men did not come to him, wanted to make sure that this new-born King should not live. So he commanded that all the children should be killed.

¹⁶ Then Herod, when he saw that he was mocked of the wise men, was exceeding wroth, and sent forth, and slew all the children that were in Bethlehem, and in all the coasts thereof, from two years old and under, according to the time which he had diligently enquired of the wise men.

¹⁷ Then was fulfilled that which was spoken by Jeremiah the prophet, saying,

¹⁸ In Rama was there a voice heard, lamentation, and weeping, and great mourning, Rachel weeping for her children, and would not be comforted, because they are not.

What a cruel command just to save his own throne! But Joseph obeyed the angel's warning to flee, and by this saved himself and Jesus. The next event where this angel came, was

in Egypt, to tell Joseph to come back.



Warned and guided by an Angel,
Joseph and Mary flee to Egypt with Jesus.

(Bible Stories for Sunday School, 1922)

Matthew 2

¹⁹ But when Herod was dead, behold an angel of the Lord appeared in a dream to Joseph in Egypt,

²⁰ Saying, Arise, take the young child and His mother, and go to the land of Israel; for those who sought the young child's

life, are dead.

²¹ And he arose, and took the young child and His mother, and came to the land of Israel.

This is another incident where the angel of the Lord worked for Jesus. There is nothing reported in the Bible, how the angel of the Lord actually worked for Jesus as a child; at least I do not know of anything. But we can be sure that the angel Gabriel was step by step with Jesus all through His time as a baby, as a little child, as a youth, and then as an adult. All the time he would be there.

The Temptation

The next instance where the angel appeared to Jesus, is to be found after His baptism, when Jesus was led by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil.

Matthew 4

¹ Then was Jesus led up of the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil.

² And when He had fasted forty days and forty nights, He was afterward hungry.

³ And when the tempter came to Him, he said, If you be the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread.

⁴ But He answered and said, It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God.

⁵ Then the devil took Him up into the holy city, and set Him on a pinnacle of the temple,

⁶ And said unto Him, If you be the Son of God, cast yourself down: for it is written, He shall give His angels charge concerning you: and in their hands they shall bear you up, lest at any time you dash your foot against a stone.

⁷ Jesus said unto him, It is written again, You shall not tempt the Lord your God.

⁸ Again, the devil took Him up into an exceeding high mountain, and showed Him all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them;

⁹ And said unto Him, All these things will I give you, if you

will fall down and worship me.

¹⁰ Then said Jesus unto him, Get you hence, Satan: for it is written, You shall worship the Lord your God, and Him only shall you serve.

When the temptation ended, Jesus was so exhausted that He fell dying to the ground.



After the Temptation, the Angels minister to Jesus.

(Young Folks' Bible, 1889)

Matthew 4

¹¹ Then the devil left Him, and behold angels came and ministered to Him.

And among these angels, you can be sure that Gabriel was there, because he was the special guardian angel of Christ; and he must have been with Him all the time in the wilderness, but not visible. So when the angel is not visible, it does not mean that he is not there. We must get used to the fact that angels can become visible, then invisible, and visible and invisible again, but they are there all the time. And even if the angel goes to the throne and comes back, that is such a short time that we are practically never without a companion.

The Desire of Ages, p. 131:

After the foe had departed, Jesus fell exhausted to the earth with the pallor of death upon His face. The angels of heaven had watched the conflict, beholding their loved Commander as He passed through inexpressible sufferings to make a way of escape for us. He had endured the test greater than we shall ever be called to endure.

The angels now ministered to the Son of God as He lay like one dying. He was strengthened with food and comforted with the message of His Father's love and the assurance that all heaven triumphed in His victory.

"All heaven!"—and heaven is in the majority. "All heaven triumphed in His victory." If we only could hear the songs of the angels, we would hear them singing with great joy when a soul is turning away from sin and is reclaimed from Satan's kingdom. On the other hand, we would see great, great sadness in them, and even silence in heaven, when there is suffering on the part of God's children on this earth.

The Review and Herald, December 14, 1897:

God and the angels rejoice over every victory gained by the Christian; but when temptation overcomes the soul, there is sorrow in heaven.

The Review and Herald, January 31, 1899:

There is joy in the presence of the angels over one sinner who turns from sin to show repentance toward God and faith in Christ. All heaven is made glad, and seraphs and cherubs touch their golden harps, and sing praise to God and to the Lamb for their mercy and loving-kindness to the children of men.

The angels of heaven had watched the conflict all the time while Jesus was in the wilderness. They had stood ready to help Him at any moment, had Jesus desired so. But Jesus had to endure that hardship for our sakes. He must give a perfect example that He can keep the law under all circumstances. So the angels had to suffer it, and certainly they suffered when they saw Jesus suffering like that. They felt with and for Him, but they also understood that it was necessary to leave Him there.

But how glad they were when at last they could serve the Saviour, and come to Him! We can imagine the angel Gabriel taking the prostrate form of Jesus, putting the Saviour's head on his bosom, and pointing Him up towards heaven, and encouraging Him, and giving Him something to eat and drink, and Jesus rising to strength and courage again.

And when Jesus was strengthened, He warmed up to life again; and what did He do? He just went on in His service. No holiday after this hard struggle. He went on to vanquish the foe forever. In this march we can be sure that the angel still attended Him, but most of the time he would be invisible.

10. The Mount of Transfiguration

THE next event where we find angels mentioned, is on the Mount of Transfiguration, where we see them becoming visible to the sight of Christ. The same thing that was revealed to Jacob in his dream in Bethel, was revealed to the disciples on the Mount.

Two Exalted Angels

Let's turn again to the statement in the last chapter in *The Desire of Ages* that talks of these two angels. These two angels are identified as Moses and Elijah. Moses we know to be Gabriel, but we don't know Elijah's new name. These are the two angels who explain to the disciples that Jesus will come back again, just as they saw Him ascend into heaven.

The Desire of Ages, p. 832:

These angels were of the company that had been waiting in a shining cloud to escort Jesus to His heavenly home. The most exalted of the angel-throng, they were the two who had come to the tomb at Christ's resurrection, and they had been with Him throughout His life on earth.

Who are these two most exalted angels, who had come to the tomb? The one angel who came to the tomb was Gabriel, who rolled away the stone; that is clear. And the other angel? He was another of the most exalted of the angel throng. Then who could this be?

Who are the most exalted of the angel throng? The most exalted are the redeemed, and the redeemed who were in heaven at that time were Moses, Elijah, and Enoch. One of them was Gabriel, which we know to be the new name of Moses, and the other is identified as Elijah, although we don't know his new heavenly name.

On the Mount of Transfiguration the curtain between the visible and the invisible world was taken away. Actually these

two angels did not minister to Christ only on the Mount of Transfiguration, but they ministered to Him all the time. Only on the Mount of Transfiguration they became visible. The curtain was drawn away between the visible and the invisible world, and for this reason we understand that these are the two special angels who served Jesus.

On the Mount

Let's turn for a moment to the chapter, "He Was Transfigured." It begins on page 419. That's the 46th chapter in *The Desire of Ages*. There we read how Jesus went with the disciples on the mountain and what He prayed for. He prayed for His disciples, the three disciples especially.

The Desire of Ages, p. 420:

He [Jesus] must himself gain a fresh hold on Omnipotence; for only thus can He contemplate the future. And He pours out His heart longings for His disciples, that in the hour of the power of darkness their faith may not fail. The dew is heavy upon His bowed form, but He heeds it not. The shadows of night gather thickly about Him, but He regards not their gloom. The hours pass slowly by.

At first the disciples unite their prayers with His in sincere devotion; but after a time they are overcome with weariness; and, even while trying to retain their interest in the scene, they fall asleep. Jesus has told them of His sufferings; He has taken them with Him that they might unite with Him in prayer. Even now He is praying for them.

The Saviour has seen the gloom of His disciples, and has longed to lighten their grief by an assurance that their faith has not been in vain. Not all, even of the twelve, can receive the revelation He desires to give. Only the three who are to witness His anguish in Gethsemane, have been chosen to be with Him on the Mount.

Now the burden of His prayer is that they may be given a manifestation of the glory He had with the Father before the world was; that His kingdom may be revealed to human eyes, and that His disciples may be strengthened to behold

it. He pleads that they may witness a manifestation of His divinity that will comfort them in the hour of His supreme agony with the knowledge that He is of a surety the Son of God, and that His shameful death is a part of the plan of redemption. His prayer is heard.



(Painting of the Transfiguration - Carl Bloch)

The appearance of these two angels on the Mount of Transfiguration was an answer to the prayer of Jesus. He prayed that:

1. The glory which He had with the Father before the world was, might be revealed;
2. His kingdom might be revealed to human eyes;
3. These disciples may witness a manifestation of His divinity that will comfort them in the hour of His supreme agony with the knowledge that He was of a surety the Son of God, and that His shameful death was a part of the plan of redemption.

When Moses and Elijah actually appeared on the Mount of Transfiguration, that was exactly what was revealed to them. First of all, the glory that He had with the Father before He came to this earth. Jesus was transfigured. This means that for a short moment He received the same physical nature as He had before He came to Earth, with all its outward glory. His disciples were especially strengthened to behold it.

In that nature He appeared, shining, just as Elijah and Moses were in their new bodies. Before Christ had come to this earth, he was in the form of Michael, the archangel. And Moses is the archangel Gabriel. And the archangel Gabriel has the same physical nature as the archangel Michael. They both are archangels: very high and powerful beings. And Elijah is another of the most exalted of the angels. What glory was there revealed to human eyes!

The glory that was there on the Mount of Transfiguration, is indescribable by human pen. And the disciples needed to be specially strengthened in order to be able to behold it. Just as Moses had the great privilege on Mount Sinai to come directly into the presence of Jesus, so likewise, the three disciples had the mighty privilege to be on the Mount with God.

Purposes of the Revelation

And there they heard the conversation between Elijah, Moses, and Jesus. In this conversation, what did they talk about? What was the subject? Christ's crucifixion and His

sufferings. In their talks, they actually prepared the disciples also for the future events, so they would be able to accept Jesus in His sufferings.

When they saw such glorious beings, like Jesus transfigured, along with Elijah and Moses, and heard them talk about the sufferings of Christ, that gave much authority to these words. And that should have made them believe that Jesus would suffer and die. But they had too low a spiritual level at that point of time. Even though they were physically strengthened to endure the vision, spiritually they were so weak that they still could not believe the truth about Jesus' sufferings, and so they were later disappointed. The Mount of Transfiguration should have prevented that.

A question comes up. How did the three disciples recognize Moses and Elijah? Did they know what they looked like? Certainly not. Would we know what they looked like? We would not, because we did not live in their time. Likewise, the three disciples did not live in the time of Moses and Elijah. How would they know that this is Moses and this is Elijah? Is it because one had stone-tablets in his hands, and the other had a book in his hand, as portrayed in some paintings? Certainly not. Well, they conversed with each other. And when they conversed with each other, they very well might have mentioned their names.

For example, if I talk with you, I say: "Willie." And then I start to say something. I address you first by your name. And so, likewise, they must have addressed each other with their names. In this way the disciples recognized them.

If that is how they were recognized, why did they address each other as Moses and Elijah, and not with their new names? There is a very good reason: the disciples would not have known that Gabriel is Moses. They did not know how Moses looked like. But they realized that this is Moses and that is Elijah. They saw the glory that the redeemed human

beings will have in the future; and in that sense they had been granted an insight into the kingdom of God, as it has been granted to very few men.

There is another point. The resurrection was made so unreal at that time by the sophistries of the Sadducees, that it was something quite unreal to them, even though the Pharisees believed in it: but it was still considered a very theoretical subject. But here they saw the reality of resurrection: in the person of Moses; and the reality of translation: in the person of Elijah. Furthermore, they saw that the redeemed are the most exalted beings in heaven. They saw a tremendous glory, indescribable by human pen, and that showed them something of the future kingdom.

That was not only a revelation for them, but for us as well. The Lord wants us to look at it and see our future glory in that marvellous scene. The very reason for revealing them as Elijah and Moses, and not with their new names, is to make clear something of the order that exists in Heaven.

What we are learning today, is what the disciples were shown on the Mount of Transfiguration. They were shown it clearly on that Mount, only they did not understand it as fully as we may understand it today through revelation, and also because this event is reported to us. They were shown the kingdom in miniature.

The Desire of Ages, p. 422:

Elijah, who had been translated to heaven without seeing death, represented those who will be living upon the earth at Christ's second coming, and who will be...

1 Corinthians 15

⁵¹ ...changed,

⁵² In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump,

⁵³ ...[when] this mortal must put on immortality,

⁵⁴ [And] this corruptible must put on incorruption.

Jesus was clothed with the light of heaven as He will appear when He shall come,

Hebrews 9

²⁷ ...the second time without sin unto salvation.

For He will come...

Mark 8

³⁸ ...in the glory of His Father with the holy angels.

The Saviour's promise to His disciples was fulfilled. Upon the Mount the future kingdom of glory was represented in miniature,—Christ the King, Moses a representative of the risen saints, and Elijah of the translated ones. The disciples did not yet comprehend the scene; but they rejoiced that the patient Teacher, the meek and lowly One, who has wandered to and fro, a helpless Stranger, is honored by the favored ones of heaven. They believe Elijah has come to announce the Messiah's reign, and that the kingdom of Christ is about to be set up on the earth.

How sad that they misunderstood the whole thing! The reason for Moses and Elijah appearing like this was to reveal to them and to us, something of the heavenly order, as it will exist, when the plan of redemption is completed.

A New Name

This little story of the Mount of Transfiguration, leads us on to another question,

“Why do we receive a new name, or what is the meaning of receiving a new name in heaven? Why don't we retain our old names at all? Aren't they good enough?”

The Bible makes it clear that we will receive a new name when we get to heaven. For this reason, Enoch received the name Melchizedek, and Moses received the name Gabriel.

Revelation 2

¹⁷ He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches: to him who overcomes, I will give some of the hidden manna to eat. And I will give him a white stone, and on the stone a new name written, which no one knows except he who receives it.

The prophecy is very clear: we shall receive a new name which no one understands except he who receives it. This does not mean that the name is so mysterious that nobody can say it. If I would not know that the names of my friends, I would not be able to call them.

In the Bible, a “name” indicates the “character.” Therefore what we will receive is a name that exactly signifies the experience through which we have gone through on this earth, by which we have become overcomers. And this experience is only fully understood by those who go through it. Since each of us has an unique experience, each one gets a name which only he fully understands the meaning of.

But certainly we shall know how the name sounds. We know the name Gabriel, we know the name Melchizedek. But we do not know the new name of Elijah, and of many others who are in heaven at this point of time. But we shall know soon.

So, we have two names: the earthly name, and the name that we shall receive in heaven.

11. Angels and Gethsemane

LET us turn to a final event in the life of Christ, and see what role the angels played in it. And this shall take us some time, because it is a very important study.

We actually will see that the angel Gabriel performed a service that was so important to the Saviour, that without this service the Saviour could not have made the great sacrifice for us. That might seem a little bit strange to you, but it does not belittle the great sacrifice made by Christ; it does not make it smaller. The only thing that we need to understand is that Jesus, as a human being, needed the service of angels, and of special angels, even of the angel Gabriel; without those services it would not have been possible for the Saviour to “tread the winepress,”²⁷ as the Bible says.

Let us turn to a study of the events that were taking place in Gethsemane, and first of all, let’s have a little overview of these events.

1. First, Jesus had the Lord’s Supper with His disciples in the upper chamber in Jerusalem.
2. Then He went on to Gethsemane, and on the way to Gethsemane He gave the disciples instructions and encouragement and warnings. *John* 14 to 16.
3. He prayed His last prayer, which is reported in *John* 17 —His last prayer before Gethsemane, the mediatorial or the intercessory prayer.
4. Then He went into Gethsemane and there experienced much agony.
5. After that the mob came, took Him as a prisoner and dragged Him before the Sanhedrin, before Annas and then before Caiaphas.
6. After this He had to undergo some mock-trials: the first trial before Pilate, the second trial before Herod, then

²⁷ *Isaiah* 63:3.

again before Pilate.

7. Then He was taken from Pilate's judgment-hall to Calvary, where He was crucified, and then buried in the tomb.

All that happened from Thursday evening till Friday afternoon. These events we shall study in detail: and when we do so, we will especially look at the experiences that Jesus and the disciples made with the angels: what role the angels, and especially the angel Gabriel, played in the whole matter. And this will give us another insight into the work of the angels; it will also give us an insight into their organizational structure actually, which is most interesting.

The Upper Chamber

Here are the events once more, but in greater detail. First of all, Jesus was in the upper chamber with His disciples, where He took the last supper, washed the disciples' feet, and then He went out and gave them much instruction on the way to Gethsemane.

When He was in the upper chamber, the disciples fought for the highest place, and this grieved Jesus, because He desired that they should be prepared for the great sufferings that were to come upon Him. He knew that if they should fall, then it would be a great burden to himself and to them. He knew how important it was that they be prepared, and in fact, all during His public ministry, Jesus had tried to prepare His disciples for that crowning event.

But just a few moments before that event was to take place, they were striving against each other! Jesus performed a very important deed,—He washed the feet of the disciples,—which changed their hearts, but could not fully prepare them yet for the coming struggle. The disciples listened to Him, they accepted what He said, but they did not understand the seriousness of the warning that Jesus gave.

The First Prayer

The Desire of Ages, p. 686:

Near the entrance to the garden, Jesus left all but three of the disciples, bidding them pray for themselves and for Him. With Peter, James, and John, He entered its secluded recesses. These three disciples were Christ's closest companions. They had beheld His glory on the mount of transfiguration; they had seen Moses and Elijah talking with Him; they had heard the voice from heaven; now in His great struggle, Christ desired their presence near Him. Often they had passed the night with Him in this retreat. On these occasions, after a season of watching and prayer, they would sleep undisturbed at a little distance from their Master, until He awoke them in the morning to go forth anew to labor. But now He desired them to spend the night with Him in prayer. Yet He could not bear that even they should witness the agony He was to endure.

"Tarry here," He said, "and watch with me."

He went a little distance from them—not so far but that they could both see and hear Him—and fell prostrate upon the ground.

That is amazing, isn't it? "He fell prostrate to the ground." Jesus was not a weak person. But here He suffered under something the disciples could not fully understand. They were used to seeing Jesus weak, because after a day of hard labor He used to become very weak; but then the following morning He came forth with new strength again, for God had strengthened Him.

But on this occasion the situation was very different. All of a sudden He had become weak, and yet it had not been a special day of labor for Him. They had spent a wonderful season together in the upper chamber. And then, suddenly the face of Jesus changed, and He was pressed down. What had happened? It was the very point of time when our sins were laid on Him, and He really felt it. And the feelings were the feelings of separation from His Father, feelings of despair, of not

being able to look through the gates of the tomb.

The Desire of Ages, p. 686-687:

He felt that by sin He was being separated from His Father. The gulf was so broad, so black, so deep, that His spirit shuddered before it. This agony He must not exert His divine power to escape. As man He must suffer the consequences of man's sin. As man He must endure the wrath of God against transgression.

Christ was now standing in a different attitude from that in which He had ever stood before. His suffering can best be described in the words of the prophet,

Zechariah 13

⁷ Awake, O sword, against my shepherd, and against the man that is my fellow, says the Lord of hosts.

As the substitute and surety for sinful man, Christ was suffering under divine justice. He saw what justice meant. Hitherto He had been as an intercessor for others; now He longed to have an intercessor for himself.

As Christ felt His unity with the Father broken up, He feared that in His human nature He would be unable to endure the coming conflict with the powers of darkness. In the wilderness of temptation the destiny of the human race had been at stake. Christ was then conqueror. Now the tempter had come for the last fearful struggle. For this he had been preparing during the three years of Christ's ministry.

We must not think that Satan is not learning. He learns a lot. And his arts become more and more skilled; they are perverted arts. He is not growing in true wisdom; but what he is advanced in, is his ability to deceive and to fight against God's people. And so for three years Satan had intently prepared himself for this conflict. If God's people prepare themselves tenaciously like Satan for the conflict, they would certainly win the battle. He is an example of zeal for us in this respect.

The Desire of Ages, p. 687:

Everything was at stake with him [i.e. with Satan]. If he failed here, his hope of mastery was lost; the kingdoms of

the world would finally become Christ's; he himself would be overthrown and cast out. But if Christ could be overcome, the earth would become Satan's kingdom, and the human race would be forever in his power. With the issues of the conflict before Him, Christ's soul was filled with dread of separation from God. Satan told Him that if He became the surety for a sinful world, the separation would be eternal. He would be identified with Satan's kingdom, and would never more be one with God.

This was a very realistic thing that Satan suggested to Jesus. It was not something very far away, but was a present possibility, also testified to by everything that Christ felt and saw at that moment.

And what was to be gained by this sacrifice? How hopeless appeared the guilt and ingratitude of men!

This was similar to the experience of Moses: Moses was shown how the Israelites would make one difficulty after another if he would continue to lead them. Or as in the case of Isaiah: Isaiah was told to go and teach to these people, but was warned that they would be hard-hearted, and wouldn't hear or see. Still he was told to go and preach. In like manner, Christ was given a view of...

How hopeless appeared the guilt and ingratitude of men! In its hardest features Satan pressed the situation upon the Redeemer:

"The people who claim to be above all others in temporal and spiritual advantages have rejected You. They are seeking to destroy You, the foundation, the center and seal of the promises made to them as a peculiar people. One of Your own disciples, who has listened to Your instruction, and has been among the foremost in church activities, will betray You. One of Your most zealous followers will deny You. All will forsake You."

These were the kind of temptations that Satan was pressing on Him:

“There’s no point in your suffering, because you will be lost forever, and your disciples will also be lost, because they can’t watch and pray. They are far too weak, and they are always struggling about who is the greatest. They would all run away from you. One of them will betray you—he has already betrayed you! The other, he will deny you. So what are you doing the whole thing for? Better go back to your Father.”

When we look back to the struggle of Jesus, we tend to think:

“Well, Jesus was a prophet. Jesus knew everything. He knew that He must be resurrected. He had even told this to His disciples. Therefore He just had to hold through for three days, and then everything would be okay again.”

We imagine it is like going through a hard time when suffering because of a sickness, or disease, knowing that after three days it will be over. For example, influenza; a very serious symptom would be high fever. But usually in three days, or maximum ten days, if it is stronger, it will all be over.

But it was not so with Jesus. When He actually came to this point, and our sins were laid upon Him, the realization of that sin and the sense of separation from His Father was so real and so great, that He felt that this separation was to be forever.

The Desire of Ages, p. 687-688:

Christ’s whole being abhorred the thought. That those whom He had undertaken to save, those whom He loved so much, should unite in the plots of Satan, this pierced His soul. The conflict was terrible. Its measure was the guilt of His nation, of His accusers and betrayer, the guilt of a world lying in wickedness. The sins of men weighed heavily upon Christ, and the sense of God’s wrath against sin was crushing out His life.

Under those circumstances He cried out:

Matthew 26

³⁹ My Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me.

That was the climax of His prayer, and He was actually asking the Father,

“Can it be possible that there is another way? Then I would gladly accept this other way.”

While Jesus was praying, how strengthening it would have been for Him had He known that His disciples were praying for Him and for themselves, because then He would have realized that His sacrifice was not in vain, that it worked something, that at least the disciples were praying.

He was struggling in His first prayer. That took Him about an hour: a whole hour He was struggling like this after He had fallen prostrate to the ground. And then He rose up with pain, and came back to His disciples again, hoping to see them praying. That it took Him a whole hour is made clear when He told His disciples:

Matthew 26

⁴⁰ Could you not watch with me one hour?

The Desire of Ages, p. 687-688:

Behold Him contemplating the price to be paid for the human soul. In His agony He clings to the cold ground, as if to prevent himself from being drawn farther from God. The chilling dew of night falls upon His prostrate form, but He heeds it not. From His pale lips comes the bitter cry,

Matthew 26

³⁹ O My Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me.

Yet even now He adds,

³⁹ ...nevertheless not as I will, but as You will.

The human heart longs for sympathy in suffering. This longing Christ felt to the very depths of His being. In the supreme agony of His soul He came to His disciples with a yearning desire to hear some words of comfort from those whom He had so often blessed and comforted, and shielded

in sorrow and distress. The One who had always had words of sympathy for them was now suffering superhuman agony, and He longed to know that they were praying for Him and for themselves.

How dark seemed the malignity of sin! Terrible was the temptation to let the human race bear the consequences of its own guilt, while He stood innocent before God. If He could only know that His disciples understood and appreciated this, He would be strengthened.

Rising with painful effort, He staggered to the place where He had left His companions. But He “found them asleep.” Had He found them praying, He would have been relieved. Had they been seeking refuge in God, that satanic agencies might not prevail over them, He would have been comforted by their steadfast faith.

What Jesus was aware of in Gethsemane, is something that the Lord invites us to be aware of now, and that is the invisible struggle that is going on between the good and the evil angels. Jesus actually saw the evil angels, how they pressed more and more darkness around Him and around the disciples. It must have been despairing for Him to see that, because the same darkness that was overshadowing over Him, He saw also overcoming the disciples. And He saw that they both were lost, or so it seemed. There’s a statement that invites us to behold that invisible struggle:

The Great Controversy, p. 517:

The power and malice of Satan and his hosts might justly alarm us, were it not that we may find shelter and deliverance in the superior power of our Redeemer. We carefully secure our houses with bolts and locks to protect our property and our life from evil men. But we seldom think of evil angels, who are constantly seeking access to us, and against whose attacks we have, in our own strength, no means of defense.

Would you go to New York city, at night, in a place where there are all kinds of criminals around the corner? Would you

go there all by yourself, especially as a woman? And even as a man? Would you dare to do this? You wouldn't.

We have a sister who has training as an accountant. And in the course of her training, she had to go to Munich for a few months. And there she was living in the middle of the city somewhere, in a quarter where all kinds of criminals were. And she said,

"I would not go out in the night in the streets, for sure not."

The cities are becoming more and more unsafe today. There are crimes everywhere, and you are very unsafe if you are alone without protection. So you wouldn't do this.

But at the same time we feel quite secure sometimes to go to places where there are so-called "cultured" men, but where we know, or should know, that evil angels are there, and that God cannot go with us.

For example: if you would go to a meeting where errors are being taught, but it is filled with educated people. We know they won't try to kill us; they won't stand up with a knife when we come in and kill us. But we should know that when evil angels are there, it is just as dangerous. Just as we lock our houses against criminals, so likewise we should lock our hearts against these evil angels, knowing that they are real.

The Great Controversy, p. 517:

...we seldom think of the evil angels who are constantly seeking access to us, and against whose attacks we have, in our own strength, no means of defense. If permitted, they can distract our minds, disorder and torment our body, destroy our possessions and our life. Their only delight is in misery and destruction. Fearful is the condition of those who resist the divine claims and yield to Satan's temptations, until God gives them up to the control of evil spirits. But those who follow Christ are ever safe under His watchcare. Angels that excel in strength are sent from heaven to protect them, and the wicked one cannot break through the guard which

God has stationed about His people.

However, in Gethsemane Jesus did not see the angels that excel in strength; He saw only the evil angels that surrounded Him. And to Him it seemed very real that only the evil angels were there. He felt the same, or worse, than we would feel if we were in the middle of New York city, at night, all alone, and in the worst part of town.

Now it wouldn't be so bad if we knew the Lord was with us, and that we had not gone to such a place of our own accord. In that case we would know that the angels that excel in strength are with us. But if we would go there on our own, because we ran away from God, then we would feel very insecure. That was similar to the situation in which Jesus was placed, but His case was much worse.

He felt himself all surrounded by darkness and enmity. He felt that the same darkness was gathering around His disciples. He saw that demons were trying to take possession of them also and the hands of the devil were just over them. And so He greatly desired for them to pray, because He knew that if they prayed, then the good angels would be there and protect them. That would have given them at least some rays of hope and courage. But He saw them asleep, sound asleep. And that was indeed a very serious situation.

The Desire of Ages, p. 688:

But they had not heeded the repeated warning, "Watch and pray." At first they had been much troubled to see their Master, usually so calm and dignified, wrestling with a sorrow that was beyond comprehension. They had prayed as they heard the strong cries of the sufferer. They did not intend to forsake their Lord, but they seemed paralyzed by a stupor which they might have shaken off if they had continued pleading with God. They did not realize the necessity of watchfulness and earnest prayer in order to withstand temptation.

I wonder if we realize the seriousness of the situation in which we are. We are standing shortly before the period of the Latter Rain, which means shortly before the events when the image of the beast is set up, when persecutions will come. Do we realize the earnestness of this time? We need to watch and pray as the disciples needed. We need it; but though we are told this again and again, how seriously do we take it? We must take it more seriously than the disciples; we have no other choice. If we fail, as they failed in Gethsemane, there will be no other chance for us anymore: that is the situation we are in.

The Desire of Ages, p. 688:

They did not realize the necessity of watchfulness and earnest prayer in order to withstand temptation. Just before He bent His foot-steps to the garden, Jesus had said to the disciples:

Mark 14

²⁷ All you shall be offended because of me this night.

They had given Him the strongest assurance that they would go with Him to prison and to death. And poor, self-sufficient Peter had added:

²⁹ Although all shall be offended, yet will not I.

We would say the same thing.

“Well, I may go into these criminal areas of town, but I will not be attacked. I can defend myself when these criminals come.”

But you will see how you can defend yourself in that kind of surrounding! You certainly cannot, as Peter was not able to do what only the angels, that excel in strength, can do. And he was not reckoning with the power of demons; he was not seeing their might. Therefore he saw no need of praying in order to be protected from them.

The Desire of Ages, p. 688-689:

But the disciples trusted to themselves. They did not look

to the mighty Helper as Christ had counseled them to do. Thus when the Saviour was most in need of their sympathy and prayers, they were found asleep. Even Peter was sleeping.

And John, the loving disciple, who had leaned upon the breast of Jesus, was asleep. Surely the love of John for his Master should have kept him awake. His earnest prayers should have mingled with those of his loved Saviour in the time of His supreme sorrow.

The Redeemer had spent entire nights praying for His disciples that their faith might not fail. Should Jesus now put to James and John the question He had once asked them:

Matthew 20

²² Are you able to drink of the cup that I shall drink of, and to be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with?

They would not have ventured to answer: "We are able."

The disciples awakened at the voice of Jesus, but they hardly knew Him, His face was so changed by anguish. Addressing Peter, Jesus said, "Simon, do you sleep? could you not watch one hour? Watch and pray, lest you enter into temptation. The spirit truly is ready, but the flesh is weak." The weakness of His disciples awakened the sympathy of Jesus. He feared that they would not be able to endure the test which would come upon them in His betrayal and death. He did not reprove them, but said, "Watch and pray, lest you enter into temptation." Even in His great agony, He was seeking to excuse their weakness. "The spirit truly is ready," He said, "but the flesh is weak."

Even though Jesus excused them and said that the flesh is weak, He again pleaded with them to watch and pray, and then went away to pray for a second time.

The Second Prayer

The Desire of Ages, p. 689:

Again the Son of God was seized with superhuman agony, and fainting and exhausted, He staggered back to the place of His former struggle. His suffering was even greater than

before. As the agony of soul came upon Him,

Luke 22

⁴⁴ ...His sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground.

The cypress and palm trees were the silent witnesses of His anguish. From their leafy branches dropped heavy dew upon His stricken form, as if nature wept over its Author wrestling alone with the powers of darkness.

His sweat was coming out, but it was not normal water, but blood was coming out of His pores. It must have been a state of real, severe agony, something that none of us have ever experienced.

And in that situation Jesus put His hand into the ground, into the cold ground, as though He wanted to hold himself; and there He was praying. Sometimes we feel very low and very weak, and we feel that we cannot even kneel to pray. We should not feel too guilty about this, because Jesus could not kneel at that time either. He just was there on the ground, and He was actually crying to God. Under those circumstances, He could not kneel properly, but He just cried His need to His Father.

A short time before Jesus had stood like a mighty cedar withstanding the storm of opposition that spent its fury upon Him. Stubborn wills and hearts filled with malice and subtlety had striven in vain to confuse and overpower Him. He stood forth in divine majesty as the Son of God. Now He was like a reed beaten and bent by the angry storm. He had approached the consummation of His work a Conqueror, having at each step gained the victory over the powers of darkness. As one already glorified He had claimed oneness with God. In unfaltering accents He had poured out His songs of praise. He had spoken to His disciples in words of courage and tenderness. Now had come the hour of the power of darkness. Now His voice was heard on the still evening air, not in tones of triumph, but full of human anguish. The words of the Saviour were borne to the ears of the

drowsy disciples,

Matthew 26

⁴² O my Father, if this cup may not pass away from me, except I drink it, your will be done.

The first impulse of the disciples was to go to Him; but He had bidden them tarry there, watching unto prayer.

Then He came back from the second prayer.

The Desire of Ages, p. 689:

When Jesus came to them, He found them still sleeping. Again He had felt a longing for companionship, for some words from His disciples which would bring relief, and break the spell of darkness that well-nigh overpowered Him. But their eyes were heavy; “neither knew they what to answer Him.” His presence aroused them. They saw His face marked with the bloody sweat of agony, and they were filled with fear. His anguish of mind they could not understand.

Isaiah 52

¹⁴ His visage was so marred, more than any man, and His form more than the sons of men.

Jesus was very familiar with sufferings and trials. He had constantly withstood the enmity of Pharisees, misunderstandings of friends, even of His disciples; so He was very alone in this world, in that nobody fully understood Him. True, Peter at one stage said,

Matthew 16

¹⁶ You are Christ, the Son of the Living God;

—but that was a special occasion. Peter said this in a high moment, when the Holy Spirit was able to speak this through him, but otherwise nobody, not even His disciples, fully understood Him. They expected Him to be the King on David’s earthly throne, rather than the suffering Saviour.

But here He was in a different situation than before. Before, He could withstand the storm even though He was weak at the end of the day and had to be filled again. But now He was

specially burdened with our sins, a situation which we shall never know because we shall never bear the sins of the world. At least, we shall never know the full extent of it that Jesus experienced. Those who reject God's mercy and in the end are finally lost, will know something of it; they will realize the enormity of what they have lost. This will be a similar experience as the one Jesus went through in the Garden of Gethsemane, except that He bore the sins of the whole world. And so His burden was immense.

As we mentioned already, He felt surrounded by evil angels, and He had a very keen sense of the reality of these evil angels. They were shutting out every ray of light, because our sin was laid upon Him. If Jesus would have seen His disciples pray for themselves and for Him, that would have encouraged Him very much. But they failed Him at that moment. So He saw how the powers of darkness would gain power over the disciples. If they triumphed over Him and His disciples, the Cause would be lost. So He was praying to God for special strength; He was praying actually that this cup would pass away, if possible.

The Third Prayer

A third time Jesus went to pray:

The Desire of Ages, p. 690:

Turning away, Jesus sought again His retreat, and fell prostrate, overcome by the horror of a great darkness. The humanity of the Son of God trembled in that trying hour. He prayed not now for His disciples that their faith might not fail, but for His own tempted, agonized soul. The awful moment had come—that moment which was to decide the destiny of the world. The fate of humanity trembled in the balance. Christ might even now refuse to drink the cup apportioned to guilty man. It was not yet too late. He might wipe the bloody sweat from His brow, and leave man to perish in his iniquity. He might say,

“Let the transgressor receive the penalty of his sin, and I

will go back to my Father.”

Will the Son of God drink the bitter cup of humiliation and agony? Will the innocent suffer the consequences of the curse of sin, to save the guilty?

That was the question of the moment.

The Desire of Ages, p. 690:

The words fall tremblingly from the pale lips of Jesus,

Matthew 26

⁴² O my Father, if this cup may not pass away from me, except I drink it, your will be done.

Jesus was at the end of His strength. Actually at the end of His prayer, He was falling to the ground and dying:

The Desire of Ages, p. 693:

Having made His decision, He fell dying to the ground from which He had partially risen. Where now were His disciples, to place their hands tenderly beneath the head of their fainting Master, and bathe that brow, marred indeed more than the sons of men? The Saviour trod the wine press alone, and of the people there was none with Him.

So He was absolutely alone in that work, there was none with Him. But how it indeed would have strengthened Him if His disciples had prayed with Him, which also would have strengthened them! In fact, it's a privilege for us to be an encouragement to our fellow-believers: we ourselves are strengthened by this. If we neglect this opportunity to strengthen each other, then we not only are responsible for their heavier lot, but we also miss an opportunity for a blessing.

The Desire of Ages, p. 693:

But God suffered with His Son. Angels beheld the Saviour's agony. They saw their Lord enclosed by legions of satanic forces, His nature weighed down with a shuddering, mysterious dread. There was silence in heaven. No harp was touched. Could mortals have viewed the amazement of the

angelic host as in silent grief they watched the Father separating His beams of light, love, and glory from His beloved Son, they would better understand how offensive in His sight is sin.

Now we find the description of a change:

The worlds unfallen and the heavenly angels had watched with intense interest as the conflict drew to its close. Satan and his confederacy of evil, the legions of apostasy, watched intently this great crisis in the work of redemption. The powers of good and evil waited to see what answer would come to Christ's thrice-repeated prayer.

So, even in the third prayer the climax of the whole scene changed, and the angels, the good and the evil angels, actually intently watched on what God would answer.

What did the good angels desire that God would answer in this situation? What answer were they eagerly waiting for? I'm talking especially of those angels who were created angels, who have never fallen. What would they expect? They would certainly hope that the cup would pass away. They would desire it to be removed. It was suffering for them to see the Saviour, their loved Commander, suffer. It was suffering for all the angels, in fact. And for this reason it would have been a relief for them had the Father answered:

"Okay, I'll let the cup pass by."

What would the evil angels wish that God would answer? Also that God would answer,

"Okay, let the cup pass by,"

—so that mankind should be lost. So in this case, for different reasons, both wished the same thing. So with intense interest they looked on to see what was going to happen.

The Desire of Ages, p. 693:

Angels had longed to bring relief to the divine Sufferer, but

this might not be. No way of escape was found for the Son of God.

So the created angels were standing there on the brink and were just ready to bring relief, but the Father said,

“No, you can’t go. It is impossible for you to bring relief to the Son of God. All I can send you to do is to take away the cup, but that must not be. He must drink the cup for the salvation of mankind.”

Strengthened by an Angel

The Desire of Ages, p. 693:

In this awful crisis, when everything was at stake, the mysterious cup trembled in the hand of the Sufferer, the heavens opened, a light shone forth amid the stormy darkness of the crisis-hour, and the mighty angel who stands in God’s presence, occupying the position from which Satan fell, came to the side of Christ.

Isn’t this a contradiction? Just in the sentence before, we read that the angels could not bring relief to the divine Sufferer, that this might not be. And now we read, the angel who stands in God’s presence came to the side of the Saviour. Has God changed His mind so quickly? The difference is that the angels who would have come before were just unable to do what this one angel could do. The other angels had never experienced the load of sin.

The Signs of the Times, Dec. 9, 1897:

In the supreme crisis, when heart and soul are breaking under the load of sin, Gabriel is sent to strengthen the divine Sufferer, and brace Him to tread his blood-stained path. And while the angel supports His fainting form, Christ takes the bitter cup, and consents to drink its contents. Before the suffering One comes up the wail of a lost and perishing world, and the words come from the blood-stained lips,

“Nevertheless, if man must perish unless I drink this bitter cup, your will, not mine, be done.”

The angels who desired to bring relief to the Saviour could not alleviate His sorrow. They had never felt the burden of sin. They never had experienced that. The Father could have sent them to take away the cup from Jesus. They would have been powerful enough to do that. But in order to help Christ drink the cup, only a being could be sent who himself had experienced the load of sin, and that was Gabriel, the mightiest of the Lord's host. He had to be mighty and he had to be a human: both things. He had to be a human in order to understand Christ's suffering, and he had to be mighty in order to enable Him to drink this cup.

This angel must, under no circumstances, take away the cup from Jesus. A created angel would have been very, very tempted to do just that. Even though they are very obedient, it would still have been very difficult for a created angel not to take away the cup from Jesus when he was at His side.

But Moses, understanding more clearly than the created angels who had lived with God for so many years, knew that this all must happen for the success of the plan of salvation. That is what Moses saw in vision before his death, and that is certainly what he learned in the thousand years and more thereafter. He learned again and again how important it was that Christ should suffer.

The Desire of Ages, p. 19-20:

Our little world is the lesson-book of the universe. God's wonderful purpose of grace, the mystery of redeeming love is the theme into which the angels desire to look. And it will be their study throughout endless ages. Both, the redeemed and the unfallen beings, will find in the Cross of Christ their science and their song.

What was the science and the song of Moses since the time he went into heaven? The Cross. He must have gone very often over that vision that God gave him just prior to his death, where He showed him in detail the sufferings of Christ in

Gethsemane and everything, exactly as it was to occur. He must have gone over this again and again, because that is the science of the redeemed and the unfallen beings. And so Moses was well-prepared for that moment at that point of time, to come down: not to take away the cup from Jesus, but to strengthen Him to drink it. Nobody could do this except the one who would be a very powerful being in character. That was the divine purpose of his existence. That was the most important role that Gabriel ever played.

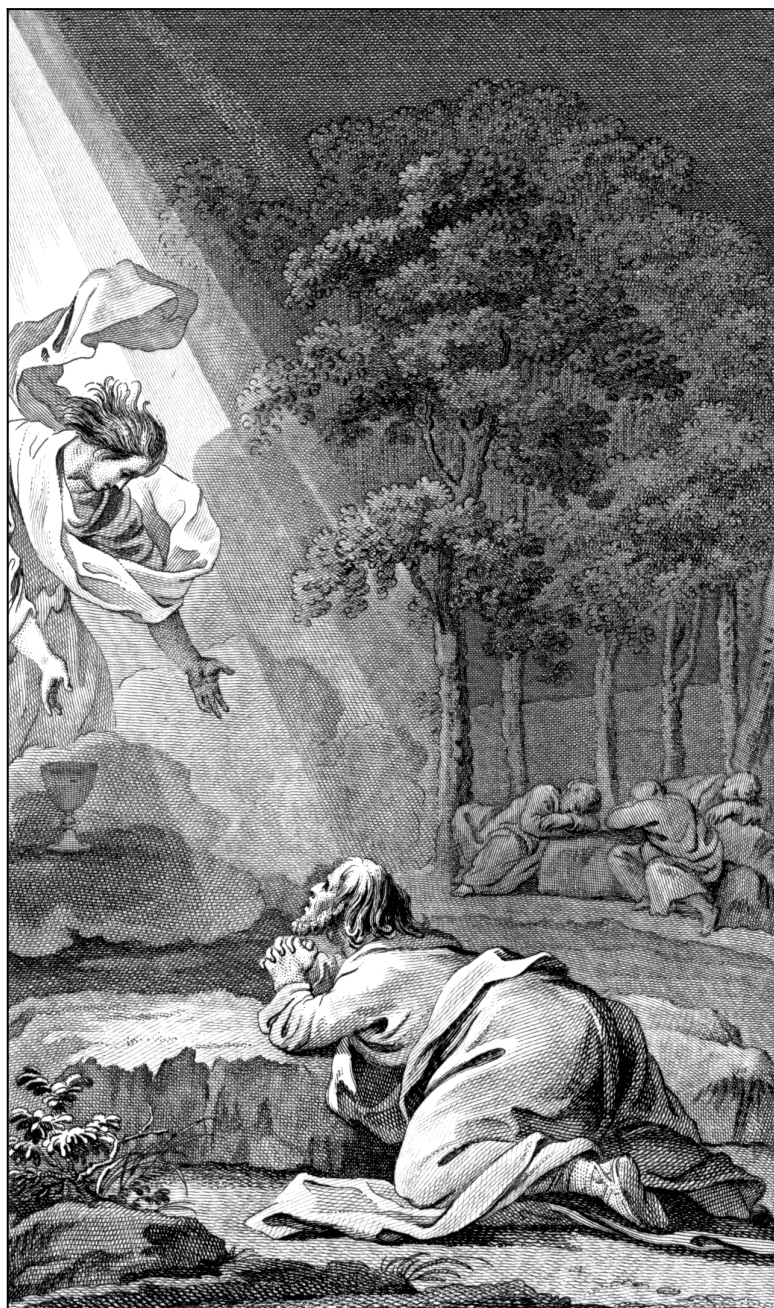
It was essential even for our salvation, that he would come to the side of Christ. What would have happened if Moses would not have been available at that point of time? Certainly Christ would have died, because it says:

The Desire of Ages, p. 693:

Having made the decision, He fell dying to the ground from which He had partially risen.

He fell dying to the ground; that was the situation in which Jesus was found. If Jesus had died there in Gethsemane, what would have happened with our salvation? We would have none, because in the very fact that He died in Gethsemane, the plan of salvation would have failed because this plan specified in detail that He should die in public, on the cross. It specified that on the cross He should reveal God's character of sacrifice and service, in contrast to the character of Satan. But this would not have happened, and therefore, the plan of salvation would have fallen short. Even though our sins lay on Him, He had to carry them for a little while longer.

So it was very important that a man, Gabriel, at that point of time should be available, and that he should be well-prepared and trained for that task. We have studied only a little part of his training for that task, namely, his training on this earth. But when he arrived in heaven, his training was continued vigorously for a thousand years (when he appeared to Daniel), and then for another five hundred years to Christ:



Gabriel strengthens Christ in Gethsemane

fifteen hundred years altogether. And only then he was ready to do that work.

The Desire of Ages, p. 693:

The angel came, not to take the cup from Christ's hand, but to strengthen Him to drink it. With the assurance of the Father's love, He came to give power to the divine-human suppliant. He pointed Him to the open heavens, telling Him of the souls that should be saved as the result of His sufferings. He assured Him that His Father is greater and more powerful than Satan, that His death would result in the utter discomfiture of Satan, and that the kingdom of this world would be given to the saints of the Most High. He told Him that He would see the travail of His soul and be satisfied, for He would see a multitude of the human race eternally saved.

Christ's agony did not cease, but His depression and discouragement left Him. The storm in no wise abated, but He who was its object, was strengthened to meet its fury. He came forth calm and serene. A heavenly peace rested upon His blood-stained face. He had borne that which no human being could ever bear, for He had tasted the sufferings of death for every man.

It is amazing, and not easy to understand. The agony of Christ did not cease, but His depression and discouragement left Him. He was strong again. The pallor of death went away and He could stand up, and He could actually tread the wine-press to the end in a very noble, kingly manner. Yet the agony did not cease. That means He received some extra strength from Gabriel. God has promised to each one of us:

1 Corinthians 10

¹³ There has no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that you are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that you may be able to bear it.

So, if the temptations become too strong, what will the Lord

do? He will give us extra strength to be able to bear these things. That is what we read in *Patriarchs and Prophets* about Moses, how he was struggling to get the victory over his old habits:

Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 248:

Time, change of surroundings, and communion with God could remove the false impressions that Moses had received in Egypt. It would require on the part of Moses himself a struggle as for life, to renounce error and accept truth. But God would be his Helper when the conflict should be too severe for human strength.

So, when the conflict should be too severe, God would be his Helper. When God promises this to other men, the same promise was valid for Christ too. That means that He also received this strength to be able to bear it.

The Desire of Ages, p. 694:

Christ's agony did not cease, but His depression and discouragement left Him. The storm in nowise had abated, but He who was its object, was strengthened to meet its fury. He came forth calm and serene. A heavenly peace rested upon His blood-stained face. He had borne that which no human being could ever bear.

Then it goes on to talk about the disciples:

The sleeping disciples had been suddenly awakened by the light surrounding the Saviour. They saw the angel bending over their prostrate Master. They saw him lift the Saviour's head upon his bosom and point toward heaven. They heard his voice, like sweetest music, speaking words of comfort and hope. The disciples recalled the scene upon the Mount of Transfiguration.

The same comfort that Jesus received in Gethsemane, He had also received on the Mount of Transfiguration. But on the Mount of Transfiguration Jesus had received the comfort also for the sake of His disciples. That is what He had prayed for,

you remember? That they might be strengthened to endure the trials. The angel came specially for Christ; but even here the disciples, if they would not have been so sleepy and had watched and prayed, could have been strengthened as well through this angel.

The Desire of Ages, p. 694:

They remembered the glory that in the Temple had encircled Jesus, and the voice of God that spoke from the cloud. Now the same glory was again revealed and they had no further fear for their Master. He was under the care of God. A mighty angel had been sent to protect Him. Again the disciples, in their weariness, yield to the strange stupor that overpowers them. Again Jesus finds them sleeping.

Now after His third prayer, He again finds them sleeping.

Looking sorrowfully upon them He says: "Sleep on now and take your rest. Behold, the hour is at hand, and the Son of man is betrayed into the hands of sinners."

That was the end of the opportunity for the disciples to be strengthened. Now they would certainly run away and not pass the test.

Even as He spoke these words, He heard the footsteps of the mob in search of Him and said: "Rise, let us be going. Behold, he is at hand that betrays me."

No traces of His recent agony were visible as Jesus stepped forward to meet His betrayer. Standing in advance of His disciples He said: "Whom do you seek?" They answered: "Jesus of Nazareth." Jesus replied: "I am He."

Can you see how Jesus stood in front of His disciples and said,

"Whom do you seek?"

—and they said,

"Jesus,"

—and He said,

“It’s me. Let these people go. I am He, that is enough.”

He wanted to protect His disciples. Would Jesus have been able to do this just a few moments before? before the angel Gabriel came to Him? Certainly not. The strength He received from Gabriel enabled Him to stand nobly before His betrayer, to be very calm in all the trials that He underwent before An-nas, Caiaphas, Pilate, Herod: all the mistreatment or abuse, that all He could bear very well.

When did the angel come to strengthen Him? After He made the decision or before He made the decision to drink the cup? Because He had to make a final decision,

“I will drink the cup.”

When did the angel come? Well, when we read *The Desire of Ages*, we get the very strong impression that the angel came after He had made the decision:

The Desire of Ages, p. 690-693:

Three times has He uttered that prayer. Three times has humanity shrunk from the last, crowning sacrifice. But now the history of the human race comes up before the world’s Redeemer. He sees that the transgressors of the law, if left to themselves, must perish. He sees the helplessness of man. He sees the power of sin. The woes and lamentations of a doomed world rise before Him. He beholds its impending fate, and His decision is made. He will save man at any cost to himself.

He made a decision with His will. At that moment He didn’t have the power to carry it through, but He made the decision anyway: that is important. Even if we do not feel and if we do not see the power to carry it through, a decision must be made. So that is what Jesus made, and...

The Desire of Ages, p. 693:

Having made the decision, He fell dying to the ground from which He had partially risen.

Then we find the description of the onlooking angels, and how Gabriel came to His side, to strengthen Him. There's another statement, however:

The SDA Bible Commentary, vol. 5, p. 1123:

In the supreme crisis when heart and soul are breaking under the load of sin, Gabriel is sent to strengthen the divine Sufferer and brace Him to tread His blood-stained path. And while the angel supports His fainting form, Christ takes the bitter cup and consents to drink its contents. Before the suffering One comes up the wail of the lost and perishing world, and the words come from the blood-stained lips: "Nevertheless, if man must perish unless I drink this bitter cup, your will, not mine, be done."

This statement seems to indicate that while the angel was holding Christ, He consented to drink His bitter cup. And the statement in *The Desire of Ages* seems to indicate that He made the decision first. We cannot fully reconcile this at the moment, but the point is this: Jesus made a decision by himself, in His own behalf, and in His weakness; and as the result He was mightily strengthened.

That is the principle with us too. First we make the decision by faith, even if we do not see or feel the power; and then the Lord will supply the strength, courage, and power. First we must make the decision by faith, and certainly Christ made it as well. Maybe He made it a second time when the angel Gabriel was with Him, and the vision of the people whom He came to save was shown, and at that time He then repeated His commitment to drink the cup. And after that, He was mightily strengthened as well.

The Arrest

The angel Gabriel appeared a second time, shortly after. The

mob came and tried to take Him, and when Jesus asked,

John 18

⁴ Whom do you seek?

⁵ They answered Him, Jesus of Nazareth. Jesus said unto them, I am he. And Judas also, which betrayed Him, stood with them.

⁶ As soon then as He had said unto them, I am he, they went backward, and fell to the ground.

The Desire of Ages, p. 694:

As these words were spoken, the angel, who had lately ministered to Jesus, moved between Him and the mob. A divine light illuminated the Saviour's face, and a dove-like form overshadowed Him. In the presence of this divine glory, the murderous throng could not stand for a moment. They staggered back. Priests, elders, soldiers, and even Judas, fell as dead men to the ground.

Why did the angel come the second time? Was this so important? Was it so necessary? After all, Jesus had to be taken as a prisoner, therefore the angel did not come to take away the cup. But it needed to be made very obvious how much power was on the side of Christ, and that the sacrifice He made was absolutely voluntary, that there was no obligation for Christ to drink the cup. It was an absolutely free-will decision on His side. He chose on His own to make that decision.

Hebrews 9

¹⁴ ...Christ...offered himself.

When the angel came and stood between Him and the mob and they all fell as dead men to the ground, Jesus and the disciples easily could have walked away. And when the mob would have come to themselves, they would have found nobody. That would have been nice, wouldn't it? for the angels at least. They would have liked it that way.

But that was not what the plan of salvation required, and so Jesus stood at His post. He stood there as a voluntary sacri-

fice. And then the servants of the priest, this mob, and Judas, came to themselves when the angel withdrew. Everybody was very reverent for a short moment, very reverent. They didn't dare to come to Jesus.

The Desire of Ages, p. 694-695:

The angel withdrew, and the light faded away. Jesus had opportunity to escape, but He remained, calm and self-possessed. As one glorified He stood in the midst of that hardened band, now prostrate and helpless at His feet. The disciples looked on, silent with wonder and awe.

But quickly the scene changed. The mob started up. The Roman soldiers, the priests and Judas, gathered about Christ. They seemed ashamed of their weakness, and fearful that He would yet escape. Again the question was asked by the Redeemer,

John 18

⁷ Whom do you seek?

They had had evidence that He who stood before them was the Son of God, but they would not be convinced. To the question, "Whom do you seek?" again they answered,

⁷ ...Jesus of Nazareth.

The Saviour then said,

⁸ I have told you that I am He: if therefore you seek me, let these go their way,

—pointing to the disciples. He knew how weak was their faith, and He sought to shield them from temptation and trial. For them He was ready to sacrifice himself.

Still nobody dared to touch Him. They were still too awed by the scene they had just witnessed, and they feared the power that was manifested. But Judas, the betrayer, went forth. He touched Jesus and gave Him the kiss as was agreed between him and the others. And when they all saw that Judas could touch Him and nothing happened to Judas, then they thought,

"Well, then maybe we can dare it also."

And they stepped forward, took Jesus, and bound His hands tightly. The disciples, when they looked on, just couldn't understand that. They said,

"Impossible, that such a thing should happen to our Saviour! That's just impossible. Just now we saw how powerful He is, and now He permits himself to be bound!"

They were very much upset about the whole thing, so much so that Peter took his sword and began to fight. He hit the ear of the servant of the High Priest. He had no chance to continue, because Jesus quickly stopped him and said,

Matthew 26 [John 18:11]

⁵² Peter, put your sword in his place: for all they that take the sword shall perish with the sword.

The way in which Peter reacted, shows the spirit of the king of the North. That is how he likes to solve the problems, with his sword. And this is how we are taught that all problems are to be finally solved. And so, Peter likewise thought in this way. He had not learned this from Jesus, but from the people around him. And now, what was in him came out. Jesus reacted the opposite way.

Luke 9

⁵⁶ The Son of man is not come to destroy men's lives, but to save them.

And so He healed the ear of the servant.

The Desire of Ages, p. 696:

The mob grew bold as they saw Judas touch the person of Him who had so recently been glorified before their eyes. They now laid hold of Jesus, and proceeded to bind those precious hands that had ever been employed in doing good.

The disciples had thought that their Master would not suffer himself to be taken. For the same power that had caused the mob to fall as dead men could keep them helpless, until Jesus and His companions should escape.

They were disappointed and indignant as they saw the cords brought forward to bind the hands of Him whom they loved. Peter in his anger rashly drew his sword and tried to defend his Master, but he only cut off an ear of the high priest's servant. When Jesus saw what was done, He released His hands, though held firmly by the Roman soldiers, and saying,

Luke 22

⁵¹ Suffer you thus far,

—He touched the wounded ear, and it was instantly made whole. He then said to Peter,

⁵² Put up again your sword into his place: for all they that take the sword shall perish with the sword.

⁵³ Think you that I cannot now pray to my Father, and He shall presently give me more than twelve legions of angels?

—a legion in place of each one of the disciples. Oh, why, the disciples thought, does He not save himself and us? Answering their unspoken thought, He added,

⁵⁴ But how then shall the scriptures be fulfilled, that thus it must be?

John 18

¹¹ The cup which my Father has given me, shall I not drink it?

In order to heal the ear of the servant, He had to release himself from the cords with which they had bound Him. That was easily done; He just disentangled himself, and the cords fell away. How did Jesus do it? Did He have an extra power? How did Jesus release His hands from the cords?

Every miracle that Christ worked, He worked through angels. So, was it a miracle that Jesus released His hands from the cords? Certainly. Then who was the agent by which Jesus released His cords? It was Gabriel, certainly. And who was the agent by which the ear was healed? Gabriel again. It was done through the angel.

It is wonderful, how Moses (Gabriel) could do this. He could do this only because he was of one mind with Christ, because

Moses understood the plan of salvation, for he had intently studied it. It was his science and his song for over at least fifteen hundred years or more; 1620 years, when his earthly life is added as well, because in his earthly life also he had studied the Cross. Only his later 1500 years were more effective since he was not hindered by the body of sin. So Moses was able to act a very wonderful part in cooperation with Jesus. Jesus healed through the angel.

And then they bound Him again, and the disciples ran away as Jesus had foretold. That was a very sad scene. Then Jesus was dragged to Annas, first of all, the High Priest of Honor. He was not the real High Priest, but the High Priest of Honor. He was regarded as the High Priest, but the real High Priest was Caiaphas to whom He was taken later. There He was treated very badly. And then He was sentenced to death by the priests and by the Sanhedrin. Then He was dragged to Pilate, then from Pilate to Herod, and from Herod back to Pilate again. And in all these events He was horribly treated.

When Jesus was before Pilate, again the angel played a very important role, because Jesus prayed; and in answer to His prayer, what did the angel do? He reached out in a special way to save Pilate through his wife. He came to Pilate's wife, gave her a dream in which she saw Jesus suffering, and a terrible guilt being incurred by those who were responsible for His death.

The Desire of Ages, p. 732:

Even now Pilate was not left to act blindly. A message from God warned him from the deed he was about to commit. In answer to Christ's prayer, the wife of Pilate had been visited by an angel from heaven, and in a dream she had beheld the Saviour and conversed with Him.

Pilate's wife was not a Jew, but as she looked upon Jesus in her dream, she had no doubt of His character or mission. She knew Him to be the Prince of God. She saw Him on trial in the judgment hall. She saw the hands tightly bound as the

hands of a criminal. She saw Herod and his soldiers doing their dreadful work. She heard the priests and rulers, filled with envy and malice, madly accusing. She heard the words,

John 19

⁷ We have a law, and by our law He ought to die.

She saw Pilate give Jesus to the scourging, after he had declared,

⁴ I find no fault in Him.

She heard the condemnation pronounced by Pilate, and saw him give Christ up to His murderers. She saw the cross uplifted on Calvary. She saw the earth wrapped in darkness, and heard the mysterious cry,

³⁰ It is finished.

Still another scene met her gaze. She saw Christ seated upon the great white cloud, while the earth reeled in space, and His murderers fled from the presence of His glory. With a cry of horror she awoke, and at once wrote to Pilate words of warning.

While Pilate was hesitating as to what he should do, a messenger pressed through the crowd, and handed him the letter from his wife, which read:

Matthew 27

¹⁹ Have nothing to do with that just Man: for I have suffered many things this day in a dream because of Him.

Pilate's face grew pale. He was confused by his own conflicting emotions.

Pilate almost would have listened to her, but his fear of people led him finally not to listen to that serious and solemn warning. And so he made this sad and wrong decision, which cost him his eternal life, in giving Jesus over to death.

Pilate was not as guilty as those Jews who gave Jesus over to Pilate: they will have an even more severe judgement; their conscience will even be more burdened at the time when they shall see Jesus again just before His second coming. This all shows something of the work of the angels.



Pilate's Wife receives a warning from the Angel of the Lord.
(The Bible and Its Story, 1909)

In the next study, we will look at how the angels reacted at the abuse of Jesus. Let's read a bit of this now:

Early Writings, p. 170:

The multitude were clamorous for the blood of Jesus. They cruelly scorned Him and put upon Him an old purple kingly robe, and bound His sacred head with the crown of thorns. They put a reed into His hand and bowed to Him and mockingly saluted Him:

Matthew 27

²⁹ Hail, King of the Jews.

They then took the reed from His hand and smote Him with it upon His head, causing the thorns to penetrate His temples, sending the blood trickling down His face and beard.

That is cruelty, isn't it? We must consider this in contrast with the power that Christ had at His command in the form of the holy angels. When Peter cut off the servant's ear with a sword at the arrest, what did Jesus tell Him?

“Don’t I have twelve legions of angels?”

“Couldn’t I ask my Father that He would send twelve legions of angels?”

Again in other words,

“What are you, Peter? What are you, to fight against these people? I have much, much greater powers on my side.”

Early Writings, p. 168:

Jesus bade him to put up the sword, saying,

Matthew 26

⁵³ Think you that I cannot now pray to my Father, and He shall presently give me more than twelve legions of angels?

I saw that as these words were spoken, the countenances of the angels were animated with hope. They wished then and there to surround their Commander and disperse that angry mob. But again sadness settled upon them, as Jesus added,

⁵⁴ But how then shall the Scriptures be fulfilled, that thus it must be?

So the angels sympathized with Christ. They found it very difficult to watch Him suffering. This is understandable: they are holy and they really love Jesus with all their heart. How the angels reacted when Jesus was abused, we can imagine. It was very difficult for them to keep back.

12. Angels and the Cross

LET us continue to look at the trials of Christ. In our last session we considered His great trial in Gethsemane, and we saw how important the role of Gabriel was to help Christ drink the cup to the dregs. It would have been also a very great help if the disciples had prayed for themselves. He had especially invited the disciples for that purpose, and it would have strengthened Jesus. We have read that in *The Desire of Ages* already.

But the disciples slept, and this made it harder for Christ, and so without Gabriel He could not have finished the great work; He could not have stood up against these tempters who came later and took Him, bound Him with cords, and dragged Him before Annas, Caiaphas, and so forth.

The Mockery of Christ

When He was there, specially in the court of Pilate, He was horribly abused. About this we will now read, and we want to study specially what role the angels played in the whole thing.

The Desire of Ages, p. 734:

Jesus was taken, faint with weariness and covered with wounds, and scourged in the sight of the multitude.

Mark 15

¹⁶ And the soldiers led Him away into the hall, called Praetorium; and they called together the whole band.

¹⁷ And they clothed Him with purple, and platted a crown of thorns, and put it about His head,

¹⁸ And began to salute Him, Hail, King of the Jews!

¹⁹ And they...did spit upon Him, and bowing their knees worshipped Him.

Occasionally some wicked hand snatched the reed that had been placed in His hand, and struck the crown upon His brow, forcing the thorns into His temples, and sending the blood trickling down His face and beard.

That really was abuse. There had been abuse of men in the past, but you must consider that the abuse of Christ was not only physical, but also spiritual. He truly was the King of the Jews, and yet they mocked Him. He truly was the One who had power to overcome all His enemies.

By this abuse, Satan was doing everything possible to draw forth from Christ some self-defence, or a word of impatience. Satan knew that this would have destroyed the plan of salvation, and therefore, he put forth all his cunning that he had gained during his years of apostasy. Especially during the public ministry of Christ he had worked hard to prepare himself for that moment. And through these men, he was working to bring about Jesus' fall.

When these soldiers cruelly scourged Jesus, and mockingly saluted Him,

“Hail, King of the Jews!”

—and bowed down before Him, how do you think that the angels would have felt? It must have been revolting to their sight. It is even revolting when we read the story, isn't it? We wish that this would not have been necessary for our sake, but it was. And the angels, even though it was hard for them to endure, they had to endure it.

Commanding Angels

Let's see how they reacted when Jesus was treated like this.

Early Writings, p. 170:

It was difficult for the angels to endure the sight. They would have delivered Jesus, but the commanding angels forbade them, saying that it was a great ransom which was to be paid for man, but that it would be complete and would cause the death of him who had the power of death.

Jesus knew that the angels were witnessing the scene of His humiliation. The weakest angel could have caused that mocking throng to fall powerless, and could have delivered

Jesus. He knew that, if He should desire it of His Father, angels would instantly release Him. But it was necessary that He should suffer the violence of wicked men in order to carry out the plan of salvation.

So the fact that Jesus could easily have escaped that situation, made it only the harder to bear. Jesus had full knowledge of who He was. When we look at the angels again, we see that they would have delivered Jesus, and actually they were ready to do it and wanted to do it, but the commanding angels forbade them.

So we have here commanding angels, and we have other angels who wanted to do a certain work; but the commanding angels forbade them. Who, would you suppose, are the commanding angels? According to what we have studied, the commanding angels must be the redeemed angels, for they shall occupy positions higher than the angels who have never fallen.

Christ's Object Lessons, p. 163:

To human beings striving for conformity to the divine image there is imparted an outlay of heaven's treasure, an excellency of power, that will place them higher than even the angels who have never fallen.

So the commanding angels would be the archangels: Gabriel, then Elijah, and Melchizedek. These were, for certain, the angels who commanded others.

When we look into this order of heaven, we see that the angels are not automatons. It sounds a little bit strange that the good angels—even the good angels—need to be restrained. It seems, doesn't it, that in heaven obedience is done only out of joy, out of happiness, out of free-will?

But here we read that even the good angels need to be held back. Not that they were considering a sinful course; they would have liked to deliver Jesus. It was, to their minds, a

righteous cause; but it would have destroyed the plan, and therefore would not have been right in the end.

Thoughts from the Mount of Blessing, p. 109:

The will of God is expressed in the precepts of His holy Law, and the principles of this Law are the principles of heaven. The angels of heaven attain unto no higher knowledge than to know the will of God, and to do His will is the highest service that can engage their powers.

But in heaven service is not rendered in the spirit of legality. When Satan rebelled against the Law of Jehovah, the thought that there was a Law came to the angels almost as an awakening to something unthought of. In their ministry the angels are not as servants, but as sons. There is perfect unity between them and their Creator. Obedience to them is no drudgery. Love for God makes their service a joy. So in every soul wherein Christ, the Hope of glory, dwells, the words are re-echoed,

Psalm 40

⁸ I delight to do your will, O my God; yea, your Law is within my heart.

Do the angels obey because they are constrained, or forced? No, they obey because they want to obey; they like to do it.

The Desire of Ages, p. 668:

All true obedience comes from the heart. It was heart-work with Christ. And, if we consent, He will so identify himself with our thoughts and aims, so blend our hearts and minds into conformity to His will, that when obeying Him, we shall be but carrying out our own impulses. The will, refined and sanctified, will find its highest delight in doing His service.

And we might only ask,

“Did the angels find their highest delight in standing back and not rescuing Jesus?”

That seems like a contradiction, doesn't it? The angels had to be held back, otherwise they would have done something

that would have been destructive for the plan of salvation. But here we read: The angels, and also the redeemed, when they come in harmony with God, they will find their highest delight in doing the will of God. There's another wonderful example of this kind of obedience:

Early Writings, p. 18-19:

As we were travelling along, we met a company who also were gazing at the glories of the place. I noticed red as the border on their garments; their crowns were brilliant, their robes were pure white. As we greeted them, I asked Jesus who they were. He said they were martyrs that had been slain for Him.²⁸ With them was an innumerable company. They also had a hem of red on their garments. Mount Zion was just before us, and on the mount was a glorious temple, and about it were seven other mountains, on which grew roses and lilies. And I saw the little ones climb, or if they chose, use their little wings, to fly to the top of the mountains and pluck the never-fading flowers. There were all kinds of trees around the Temple to beautify the place: the box, the pine, the fur, the oil, the myrtle, the pomegranate, and fig tree bowed down with the weight of its timely figs—these made the place all over glorious. And as we were about to enter the holy temple...

—they were very curious and very interested what was there;

...Jesus raised His lovely voice and said, “Only the 144,000 enter this place...”

So, here we have another example of how people, who are actually redeemed, who are in harmony with God, want to do something; and they have to be restrained.

“Stop!” Jesus said, “Only the 144,000 enter this place,”

—which shows very clearly that there have to be certain restraints even on the New Earth, even in the heavenly king-

²⁸ In this vision, Ellen White was on the New Earth.

dom. Another question is,

“How did Ellen White and her company react to this restraint?”

How would we normally react when we are restrained, e.g. when we are told,

“Well, you must not go in there!”

We would be disappointed, we would make a long face, and our reaction would be a long “aah!”, wouldn’t it? Maybe, we would even weep. But how did Ellen White and her company react?

Early Writings, p. 19:

...and we shouted, “Alleluia.”

So when Jesus said, “Only the 144000 enter this place,” they shouted, “Alleluia.” This shows perfect happiness and contentment with the commands of Jesus.

We come back now to the angels in the trial of Jesus, and the principle that the angels are no automatons: they have their own minds, they have their own judgement also; they think about things, and they see things and they judge things according to the enlightened understanding they have. And according to this they would conclude that it was time to deliver Jesus from that terribly cruel mob.

But then the commanding angels restrained them. And how would you suppose that the good angels would react on that restraint? What would be their reaction according to the things that we read of Ellen White and her company? They would be content to submit.

When we talk of commanding angels, and when we think of commanders, and so forth, we usually think of an earthly army. There are commanders, officers, generals, and there are ordinary soldiers. When the soldiers go into war, sometimes

the commander tells them, “Stop!” He speaks with great authority, and he sometimes has to even use threats of punishment in order to restrain them. The soldiers obey because they know that if they won’t obey, they will get a severe punishment. So they had better obey!

That is not the kind of obedience, and that is not the kind of commanding either, that is done in heaven. So what would be the commands, or how would the commands that the commanding angels gave them look like? The commanding angels in heaven do not arbitrarily rule over the others. Rather in heaven “to be high” means “to be meek and lowly.” In heaven the meek are the greatest. So therefore, the greatest one is the greatest servant. That was made very clear when Jesus came to this earth and washed the disciples’ feet.

He was the greatest, no question about that; but why was He the greatest? Because He washed the disciples’ feet. It was not so that He was the greatest, and after being the greatest He did some little work just to show His humility. No; it was because He washed the disciples’ feet that He was the greatest. That is something that we need to learn. That is the very word of:

Philippians 2

⁵ Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus:

⁶ Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God:

⁷ But made himself of no reputation, and took upon Him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men:

⁸ And being found in fashion as a man, He humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.

⁹ Wherefore God also has highly exalted Him, and given Him a name which is above every name:

¹⁰ That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth;

¹¹ And that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is

Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

Because He humbled himself He became great, as it says. Therefore He was exalted, so that every knee should bow before Him. So, why was He exalted? Because He served. Then, what would the commanding angels in heaven be? Likewise: they would be servants; and in this service it is their task to give careful lessons and explanations to the other angels, which they do.

There was not simply a command, “Stop!,” like in an army, but there was a whole explanation with this command. About this we read a little bit further:

Early Writings, p. 170:

They would have delivered Jesus, but the commanding angels forbade them, saying that it was a great ransom which was to be paid for man, but that it would be complete and cause the death of him who had the power of death. Jesus knew that angels were witnessing the scene of His humiliation. The weakest angel could have caused that mocking throng to fall powerless and could have delivered Jesus. He knew that if He should desire it of His Father, angels would instantly release Him. But it was necessary that He should suffer the violence of wicked men, in order to carry out the plan of salvation.

So the commanding angels gave a lesson to the other angels in the plan of salvation. They taught them, explained to them, how necessary all the suffering was, and that this very event would finally destroy the power of Satan. And the good angels accepted it, and happily obeyed. They were not happy to see Jesus suffer; we must not mix this up. But understanding better the plan of salvation, they would obey intelligently.

In the order of heaven there are commanding angels and others; and the commanding angels are servants. These commanding angels were redeemed from the earth, such as Moses and Elijah, and they had a very thorough training.

Moses, for example, learned on this earth meekness, he learned service, he learned something of the great love of God in his own work in caring for Israel. And when he saw God's great love in caring for Israel, when he was even prepared to give his life for them, then he reached a level of self-sacrifice that enabled him to see the sacrifice of Jesus better than he would ever have seen had he never taken the sacrifice upon himself. Had Moses never been called to be the leader of that people, to go through all these difficulties, he would never have seen the great love of Jesus as he did.

When we come to a place where the Lord calls us specially to a very difficult task, that is a privilege of schooling. It places us into positions of trust and of learning, which we could not have learned had we not come into these difficult situations. Therefore, we must view our difficult situations on this earth as training phases for becoming commanding angels in heaven. Then in heaven we can better explain the science of the Cross. That is the purpose of the difficulties here.

Moses, after having had this difficult experience of leading Israel, and then finally, just before his death, having the vision of the sufferings of Christ, could understand the purpose of it, better even than the angels who had never fallen, because he had gone through similar sufferings. Then, after his resurrection, and during his training in heaven for 1500 years, he received a much deeper training about the wonderful life of Christ; and now he was qualified to go to the other angels and hold them back so that they would not deliver Jesus in this decisive moment. Can you see this? It was necessary for the success of the plan of salvation that a qualified Gabriel did that work.

We see over and over again how Gabriel was a very necessary element for the success of the plan of salvation. At first in Gethsemane, but even at the trials of Christ, in order to give to the other angels a very important lesson. And so he

became the author of salvation even for them. The real Author is Jesus, but through Jesus in him, Moses also became the author.

The Abuse of Christ

Again they mocked Jesus, and again the angels became somewhat impatient, even after that explanation.

Early Writings, p. 170:

Jesus stood meek and humble before the infuriated multitude while they offered the vilest abuse. They spit in His face—that face from which they will one day desire to hide, which will give light to the city of God and shine brighter than the sun. Christ did not cast upon the offenders an angry look.

Not even an angry look did He cast upon His offenders. That is meekness in its purest revelation under such a situation. Even though He did not cast an angry look upon them,

They covered His head with an old garment, blindfolding Him, and then struck Him in the face and cried out, “Prophesy, who is it that smote You?”

That is really revolting; it is absolutely revolting to see our loved Saviour being treated like that. And how would the angels react? Again it says,

There was commotion among the angels.

What does commotion mean? Boiling, agitation. They were moved and they were now absolutely ready to step down and “stop this nonsense,” as we would say, to stop this terrible, cruel treatment.

There was commotion among the angels. They would have rescued Him instantly, but their commanding angels restrained them.

Again the commanding angels had to do the same work as before. Only the commanding angels could do that. Because of

their qualifications they had a deeper understanding of Christ's sacrifice, which the others did not have. Again, look at Moses. See how he was abused by his own people who should enter into the promised land. He was misunderstood, he was accused, and they would have even stoned Moses at times, even though he would have laid down his life for them.

Moses, understanding this through his own experience and through the clear vision he had received of these events, was able to understand the value of those experiences. For this reason he was able to restrain the other angels. And the restraint is not a forced restraint, but it is a restraint that is the result of the superior understanding that the commanding angels had of these scenes.

Let us turn to *The Desire of Ages* for a moment and see the true meaning of what was happening here.

The Desire of Ages, p. 734:

Wonder, O heavens! and be astonished, O earth! Behold the oppressor and the Oppressed.

That is what we are invited to behold.

A maddened throng enclosed the Saviour of the world. Mocking and jeering are mingled with the coarse oaths of blasphemy. His lowly birth and humble life are commented upon by the unfeeling mob. His claim to be the Son of God is ridiculed and the vulgar jest and insulting sneer are passed from lip to lip.

Satan led the cruel mob in its abuse of the Saviour. It was his purpose to provoke Him to retaliation, if possible; or to drive Him to perform a miracle to release himself, and thus break up the plan of salvation. One stain upon His human life, one failure of His humanity to endure the terrible test—and the Lamb of God would have been an imperfect offering, and the redemption of man a failure.

You remember how Satan was successful with Moses at the rock?

The Desire of Ages, p. 734-735:

But He who by a command could bring the heavenly host to His aid—He who could have driven that mob in terror from His sight by the flashing forth of His divine majesty—submitted with perfect calmness to the coarsest insult and outrage.

Christ's enemies had demanded a miracle as evidence of His divinity. They had evidence far greater than any they had sought. As their cruelty degraded His torturers below humanity into the likeness of Satan, so did His meekness and patience exalt Jesus above humanity and prove His kinship to God. His abasement was the pledge of His exaltation. The blood-drops of agony, that from His wounded temples flowed down His face and beard, were the pledge of His anointing with "the oil of gladness" as our great High Priest.

Satan's rage was great as he saw that all the abuse inflicted upon the Saviour had not forced the least murmur from His lips. Although He had taken upon Him the nature of man, He was sustained by a godlike fortitude, and departed in no particular from the will of His Father.

It was necessary that the contrast between the persecutors (or tormentors) of Jesus, and Jesus himself, become very obvious. It is important for us to see how necessary all this was. We shall come into like situations when the "image of the beast" is set up, and we shall be treated like criminals, our civil rights will have been stripped from us: that will be the time when our characters will be tested. By that time, we must have learned what the science of the Cross is. Like the commanding angels, we need to go through that experience in order to receive the position of commanding angels in heaven.

The Lord has called us to be commanding angels. In order to fulfill that office, we need to understand the science of the Cross in our own experience. This was the experience that was essential for Moses, and the same experience we must have. Let us contemplate often the sufferings of Christ, and

His sacrifice for us.

The role that the angels played in the sufferings of Jesus in Gethsemane and after, reveals unto us something of the order of heaven and our future destiny. Just as Moses was prepared for his important work as Gabriel, so must we be prepared for our future work.

The Crucifixion

Let us now have a quick look at the crucifixion of Christ. When Jesus was hanging on the cross, He seemed to be surrounded by evil angels. There was no light coming through; but we can be sure that the good angels were there, only that they were absolutely invisible.

The Desire of Ages, p. 753:

Upon Christ, as our substitute and surety, was laid the iniquity of us all. He was counted a transgressor, that He might redeem us from the condemnation of the Law. The guilt of every descendant of Adam was pressing upon His heart. The wrath of God against sin, the terrible manifestation of His displeasure because of iniquity, filled the soul of His Son with consternation.

All His life Christ had been publishing to a fallen world the good news of the Father's mercy and pardoning love. Salvation for the chief of sinners was His theme. But with the terrible weight of guilt He bears, He cannot see the Father's reconciling face. The withdrawal of the divine countenance from the Saviour in this hour of supreme anguish pierced His heart with a sorrow that can never be fully understood by man. So great was this agony, that His physical pain was hardly felt.

Satan with his fierce temptations wrung the heart of Jesus. The Saviour could not see through the portals of the tomb. Hope did not present to Him His coming forth from the grave a conqueror, or tell Him of the Father's acceptance of the sacrifice. He feared that sin was so offensive to God that their separation was to be eternal.

Here we see that Jesus was in a similar situation as in Gethsemane.

The Desire of Ages, p. 753:

Christ felt the anguish which the sinner will feel when mercy shall no longer plead for the guilty race. It was the sense of sin, bringing the Father's wrath upon Him as man's substitute, that made the cup He drank so bitter, and broke the heart of the Son of God.

With amazement angels witnessed the Saviour's despairing agony. The hosts of heaven veiled their faces from the fearful sight. Inanimate nature expressed sympathy with its insulted and dying Author.

Can you envision, or imagine, a little bit, how the angels felt at that moment? I've read that they weep. So what would they be doing at that moment? They would actually weep.

The Desire of Ages, p. 753-754:

The sun refused to look upon the awful scene. Its full, bright rays were illuminating the earth at midday, when suddenly it seemed to be blotted out. Complete darkness, like a funeral pall, enveloped the cross.

Matthew 27

⁴⁵ There was darkness over all the land unto the ninth hour.

There was no eclipse or other natural cause for this darkness, which was as deep as midnight without moon or stars. It was a miraculous testimony given by God that the faith of after generations might be confirmed.

In that thick darkness God's presence was hidden. He makes darkness His pavilion and conceals His glory from human eyes. God and His holy angels were beside the cross. The Father was with His Son. Yet His presence was not revealed. Had His glory flashed forth from the cloud, every human beholder would have been destroyed. And in that dreadful hour Christ was not to be comforted with the Father's presence.

Isaiah 63

³ He trod the winepress alone, and of the people there was

none with Him.

In the thick darkness, God veiled the last human agony of His Son. All who had seen Christ in His suffering, had been convicted of His divinity. That face, once beheld by humanity, was never forgotten. As the face of Cain expressed his guilt as a murderer, so the face of Christ revealed innocence, serenity, benevolence—the image of God. But His accusers would not give heed to the signet of heaven. Through long hours of agony Christ had been gazed upon by the jeering multitude. Now He was mercifully hidden by the mantle of God.

Although in that hour, God, and the holy angels, cared for His Son, they could not take away the cup from Him: He had to drink it for our sakes. The heavenly angels, those who serve us today, had the deepest, closest interest in everything that was happening around Jesus, and we understand why. Jesus was their Commander. He was even their Deliverer, because He delivered even the unfallen angels from false concepts.

He also delivered some of the angels from sin: those that were redeemed from the earth, such as Moses, Elijah, and Enoch. And they understood very well that Christ was suffering for their sakes. Moses could not have beheld the scene without being deeply moved. He must have wept together with the other angels as they all saw Jesus suffering on the cross. All of heaven sympathized with Christ.

The Tomb

So Jesus died, and He was carried into the tomb. There in the tomb He was carefully guarded by the soldiers. A hundred soldiers were there, trying to make sure that nobody would steal Him.

What do you think about these efforts of the soldiers? They were really ridiculous. If there were one hundred strong armed soldiers with modern weapons, to guard this room and

hold us here as hostages, then we would all have great respect for them, especially if they came with machine guns.

But, let's not view it like this for a moment. Let's get onto a step higher, let's view the whole thing from a heavenly viewpoint, from the angle that God views it. For Him, these hundred soldiers will not look like what they do to us. For Him it would be like one hundred ants standing in front of the door and telling us,

"Now we are holding you as hostages in this room!"

What would we say to the ants? We would smile, we would laugh about this, we would just step over them and ridicule them. And this is exactly how God views these hundred soldiers at Christ's tomb: they are absolutely nothing for Him. And so we read in *Psalms* 2 how God views the whole matter:

Psalms 2

¹ Why do the nations rage and the people plot a vain thing?

² The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the Lord, and against His anointed, saying,

³ Let us break their bands asunder, and cast away their cords from us.

⁴ He who sits in the heavens shall laugh: the Lord shall hold them in derision.

⁵ Then He shall speak to them in His wrath and distress them in His deep displeasure.

⁶ Yet I have set my king on my holy hill of Zion.

⁷ I will declare the decree: the Lord has said to me, You are my Son; today I have begotten You.

⁸ Ask of me, and I will give You the nations for your inheritance, and the ends of the earth for your possession.

⁹ You shall break them with a rod of iron. You shall dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel.

¹⁰ Now therefore, be wise, O kings; be instructed, you judges of the earth.

¹¹ Serve the Lord with fear, and rejoice with trembling.

¹² Kiss the Son lest He be angry and you perish in the way, when His wrath is kindled but a little. Blessed are those who put their trust in Him.

The Lord, through the study of the angels, invites us again and again to take another look at the events of this earth. We will see this more clearly as we come to the book of *Revelation*. He desires us to come away from our earthly viewpoint.

For us the hundred soldiers are so strong; but are they so for God? They are nothing. If only one angel comes, the hundred soldiers cannot endure the sight, unless they are specially strengthened by God. That shows us something of what the hundred soldiers are. How ridiculous for the priests to think that they could hold Christ in the tomb with these hundred soldiers!

The Desire of Ages, p. 778:

So weak men counselled and planned. Little did these murderers realize the uselessness of their efforts. But by their action God was glorified. The very efforts made to prevent Christ's resurrection are the most convincing arguments in its proof. The greater the number of soldiers placed around the tomb, the stronger would be the testimony that He had risen. Hundreds of years before the death of Christ, the Holy Spirit had declared through the psalmist,

Psalms 2

¹ Why do the heathen rage, and the people imagine a vain thing?

² The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the Lord, and against His anointed...

⁴ He that sits in the heavens shall laugh: the Lord shall have them in derision.

Roman guards and Roman arms were powerless to confine the Lord of life within the tomb. The hour of His release was near.

It is wonderful to see how the very efforts of wicked men to destroy God's plans are used to glorify Him even more. Let's

remember this as we look to the events of this earth, and it shall give us great courage.

In our next study, we shall contemplate the resurrection of the Lord, and what role the angels played there. We have studied a bit already in our study of the angel Gabriel; but there were other angels involved as well.



The interest of the Angels in the Crucifixion of Christ.
(Edelink, 1707 - Rijksstudio)

13. Angels and the Resurrection

LET US look at the resurrection of the Lord and what role the angels played there. The first role of an angel in the resurrection, we have studied, was that of the angel Gabriel, who rolled away the stone. Let's read this again:

The Desire of Ages, p. 779:

The night of the first day of the week had worn slowly away. The darkest hour, just before day-break had come. Christ was still a prisoner in His narrow tomb. The great stone was in its place; the Roman seal was unbroken; the Roman guards were keeping their watch.

And there were unseen watchers. Hosts of evil angels were gathered about the place. Had it been possible, the prince of darkness, with his apostate army, would have kept forever sealed the tomb that held the Son of God. But a heavenly host surrounded the sepulcher. Angels that excel in strength were guarding the tomb, and waiting to welcome the Prince of life.

Psalms 103

²⁰ ...angels, that excel in strength.

They are stronger than the evil angels. While they were all watching and waiting,

Matthew 28

² Behold, there was a great earthquake: for the angel of the Lord descended from heaven.

The Desire of Ages, p. 779:

Clothed with the panoply of God, this angel left the heavenly courts. The bright beams of God's glory went before him, and illuminated his pathway.

From where did Gabriel come when he came to the tomb to roll away the stone? From heaven. But just prior to that, he was on earth, in Gethsemane, when he was at the side of Christ. Later, he was again in Gethsemane when the band

came to arrest Jesus. And then he probably was again present at the death of Christ when Christ hung on the cross, where angels surrounded the cross. And now he came from heaven. That means, in a short time he was in heaven and back again.

Matthew 28

³ His countenance was like lightning, and his raiment white as snow:

⁴ And for fear of him the keepers did shake, and became as dead men.



The Angel Gabriel calls Christ from the Tomb.

(Sanders, 1836 - British Museum)

An Overview of Events

In Gethsemane, the priests and rulers saw the glory and they could not bear it. They fell like dead men to the ground. Then, after the resurrection had taken place, the women came to the tomb. They came from different directions; and there was Mary on the one side, and the other two women coming from another direction. Maybe we should look at an overview of the events from the resurrection to the ascension.

We begin in Calvary, from where He was carried to the tomb; and then He was resurrected from the tomb. Then the Roman soldiers who saw the event went back to Jerusalem, and on their way to Jerusalem and in Jerusalem, already they met quite a number of people to whom they told of this wonderful event. Then they came to the attention of the Sanhedrin who quickly called them and bribed them so that they should tell a false story.

Mary was the first to reach the tomb. Mary went back to report to Peter and John that the tomb was empty. Mary then went back with Peter and John. Peter and John saw the empty tomb, but they did not see Jesus. They went back again to tell the other disciples, and Mary lingered there for a while. She saw the two angels, and then Jesus appeared to her before He ascended to His Father.

Meanwhile, two other women were going to the tomb and they met two angels. They received the report from the angels that Jesus had risen and that they should tell the other disciples. So they went back, and on their way back Jesus, who had returned from the Father, appeared to those women.

Within a very short time all this happened. So, how long did it take for Jesus to ascend to heaven and come down again? Just a moment, just a moment. It's amazing.

The next event where Jesus appeared was on the walk with the two disciples from Emmaus. After that, He appeared in the upper chamber in Jerusalem two times and then He appeared two times in Galilee: one time to six disciples, and another time to five hundred of the disciples. And then together with the twelve disciples, He walked again to the Mount of Olivet in Jerusalem, from where He finally ascended into heaven.

The Resurrection

So these are the events which we want to consider now.

And let us look in detail to the role of the two angels, Gabriel and Elijah, as Jesus was resurrected. So we open again to chapter 82, “Why Weepst Thou,” in *The Desire of Ages*:

The Desire of Ages, p. 788:

The women had not all come to the tomb from the same direction. Mary Magdalene was the first to the place, and upon seeing that the stone was removed, she hurried away to tell the disciples. Meanwhile, the other women came up. A light was shining about the tomb, but the body of Jesus was not there.

While the women were walking towards the tomb, it was still dark, early in the morning, and they saw a light in the distance; but they did not know what it was. What was the light that they saw? It was the light of the angel Gabriel and of the resurrected Jesus.

Then Mary found the place empty. She ran back and the other two women came later. They looked around, but they could not find the body of Jesus. As they lingered about the place, suddenly they saw that they were not alone. A young man in shining garments was sitting at the tomb.

Who was this young man that was at the tomb, whom they suddenly saw? It was Gabriel, the angel who had rolled away the stone.

The Desire of Ages, p. 788-789:

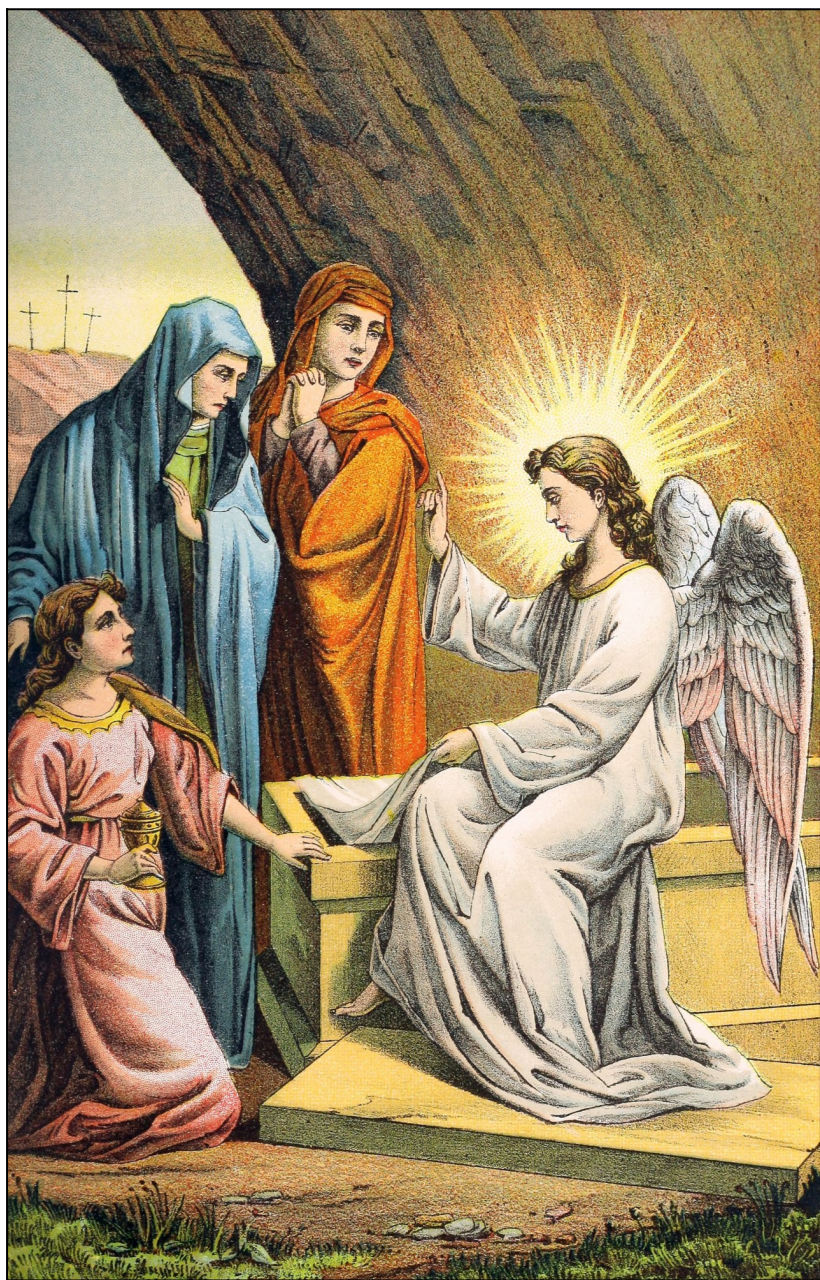
He had taken the guise of humanity that he might not alarm these friends of Jesus. Yet about Him the light of the heavenly glory was still shining, and the women were afraid. They turned to flee, but the angel’s words stayed their steps.

Matthew 28

⁵ Fear not: for I know that you seek Jesus, which was crucified.

⁶ He is not here: for He is risen, as He said. Come, see the place where the Lord lay.

⁷ And go quickly, and tell His disciples that He is risen from the dead.



An Angel addresses the Women at the Tomb
(Star of Bethlehem, 1890)

The Desire of Ages, p. 789:

Again they look into the tomb, and again they hear the wonderful news. Another angel in human form is there, and he says,

Luke 24

⁵ Why do you seek the living among the dead?

⁶ He is not here, but is risen: remember how He spoke to you when He was with you in Galilee,

⁷ Saying, The Son of man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men, and be crucified, and the third day rise again.

So, two angels are here at the tomb. The one who rolled away the stone, which we know was Gabriel; and the other angel who is not named here, but we will learn more about him in a minute. First of all, let's see how the women reacted to the message.

He is risen! He is risen! The women repeat the words again and again. No need now for the anointing spices. The Saviour is living, and not dead. They remember now that when speaking of His death He had said that He would rise again. What a day is this to the world! Quickly the women departed from the sepulcher...

Matthew 28

⁸ ...with fear and great joy; and did run to bring His disciples word.

Mary had not heard the good news. She went to Peter and John with the sorrowful message,

John 20

² They have taken away the Lord out of the sepulcher and we know not where they have laid Him.

The disciples hurried to the tomb and found it as Mary had said. They saw the shroud and the napkin, but they did not find their Lord. Yet even here was a testimony that He had risen. The graveclothes were not thrown heedlessly aside, but carefully folded, each in a place by itself. John...

⁸ ...saw, and believed.

John, who saw the grave-clothes, began to believe that Jesus

was resurrected. The grave-clothes were a clearer message to the disciples than even the words of the angels. The actions of fellow men almost always speak a clearer language than even the words of angels. If angels would preach the message to us, that would not be so effective as when mankind do it.

Jesus was a very orderly person. He was very neat in everything. He folded His grave-clothes, and that was His signature. Wherever He went, He saw to it that things were in order. Where He lived, that household was clean and neat, and everything would be in its place. When He would stay with someone for a visit, He saw to it that the room in which He stayed would be clean when He left. That was His signature.

There's another kind of signature with some other people, when they have been through a place. We know,

“Aha, they were here!”

Isn't it so? So we leave our signatures wherever we go. Jesus was perfect in His order, which is something we must be also to fully cooperate with the angels who are perfect in order, and in every other way. Do you remember that we read about this? Let's read a few more statements:

Manuscript Releases, vol. 16, p. 279:

The ministering angels are watching every line of work. They are beholding either your unity and order, or your disunion and disorder. They feel very sad when they have to carry to heaven, as they have had to do in the past, a report that there is dissension, that criticism is studied as a fine art, that you weigh your brethren and neighbors in your finite scales, and pass your opinion upon them, treating them as though they were not God's purchased possession.

The Signs of the Times, July 29, 1880:

Perfect order characterizes all the movements of the angels of God. We are in the world, as the children of Israel were in the wilderness, to be fitted for the heavenly Canaan and the

society of holy angels. We should carry out, as far as possible, in our families and in the Church the order and harmony of heaven. Angels of God often turn away in grief from those who excuse disorder and confusion as very trivial matters. They are not authorized to bless such. All who desire and expect the cooperation of heavenly messengers must work in unison with them.

Satan understands that success will only attend unity of action. He well knows that independence, self-exaltation and pride caused him to lose the Paradise, and he is constantly tempting others to rebel against order and discipline that they may share his fate.

These paragraphs show that the orderliness of Jesus was not a trivial matter. A small detail of order convinced John that Christ was resurrected, something that Mary found very hard to believe simply on the basis of the conversation with the angels.

The Desire of Ages, p. 789:

The graveclothes were not thrown heedlessly aside, but carefully folded, each in a place by itself. John “saw, and believed.”

The resurrection is such an important matter; it’s important for the whole universe. What are graveclothes compared with that? One could easily argue,

“Well, that’s not important now. We’ve got more important things to do. Just let us throw them aside!”

No, no; for Jesus this was important, as we read in the next paragraph:

It was Christ himself who had placed those graveclothes with such care. When the mighty angel came down to the tomb, he was joined by another, who with his company had been keeping guard over the Lord’s body. As the angel from heaven rolled away the stone, the other entered the tomb, and unbound the wrappings from the body of Jesus. But it

was the Saviour's hand that folded each, and laid it in its place. In His sight, who guides alike the star and the atom, there is nothing unimportant. Order and perfection are seen in all His work.

And if you want to cooperate with Him, you must strive for the same order and perfection.

Also, some information about the other angel is given here. This other angel kept guard with the company of angels in front of the tomb; and when Gabriel came down and rolled away the stone, this other angel went into the tomb, unbound the wrappings from Jesus, and then he let Jesus out of the tomb. This other angel was the one who appeared to the women. The first angel is Gabriel, and here we have this other angel. These two lingered about the tomb. Let's read a little bit on:

The Desire of Ages, p. 789-790:

Mary had followed John and Peter to the tomb; when they returned to Jerusalem, she remained. As she looked into the empty tomb, grief filled her heart. Looking in, she saw the two angels, one at the head and the other at the foot where Jesus had lain.

John 20

¹³ And they said unto her, Woman, why do you weep? She said unto them, Because they have taken away my Lord, and I know not where they have laid Him.

Then she turned away, even from the angels, thinking that she must find someone who could tell her what had been done with the body of Jesus.

How sad, isn't it? Here were angels, actually talking with a human being, and this human being turned away. That is a testimony of what sadness can do to a person. I compare it a little bit with tears. When you are crying, your vision is blurred; you don't see very clearly. And so likewise, when we are pressed down by sorrows, our vision is very uncertain; we may even fail to see the outstretched arm of God that is there

to draw us out of the pit.

So what is Jesus doing first in order to help us? He is wiping away the tears; that is His work. And then, provided we permit Him to wipe away our tears, we will see clearly His outstretched arm. In fact, what Jesus is doing at the moment, through the study about the angels, is giving us a clearer vision. He is, in a certain sense, wiping away our tears, so that we may see more clearly what the invisible world is doing.

So this woman, Mary, at that moment was not able to behold these two angels, she turned away from them. These two angels were: one who rolled away the stone,—Gabriel,—and the other who went into the tomb to help Jesus out of the graveclothes.

The Desire of Ages, p. 790:

Another voice addressed her,

John 20

¹⁵ Woman, why do you weep? Whom do you seek?

Through her tear-dimmed eyes Mary saw the form of a man, and thinking that it was the gardener, she said:

¹⁵ ...Sir, if you have borne Him hence, tell me where you have laid Him, and I will take Him away.

If this rich man's tomb was thought to be too honorable a burial place for Jesus, she herself would provide a place for Him. There was a grave that Christ's own voice had made vacant—the grave where Lazarus had lain. Might she not there find a burial-place for her Lord? She felt that to care for His precious crucified body would be a great consolation to her in her grief.

But now in His own familiar voice, Jesus said to her, "Mary."

Isn't it interesting that her tear-dimmed eyes only beheld a gardener, even though it was her Lord for whom she had so great sympathy.

But now in His own familiar voice Jesus said to her,

“Mary.” Now she knew that it was not a stranger who was addressing her, and turning she saw before her the living Christ. In her joy she forgot that He had been crucified.

Like a little child, eh? It’s amazing how little children can cry one moment, and the next moment they can completely forget why they were crying! And so Mary was like that now; she completely forgot that He was crucified.

The Desire of Ages, p. 790:

Springing toward Him, as if to embrace His feet, she said, “Rabboni.” But Christ raised His hand, saying, Detain me not;

John 20

¹⁷ ...for I am not yet ascended to my Father: but go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father, and your Father; and to my God, and your God.

And Mary went her way to the disciples with the joyful message.

So, three persons were lingering at the tomb, not all the time visible, but only at times. These were: Jesus, Gabriel and the other angel. Jesus lingered there for only a little while, and then quickly ascended to His Father to receive the confirmation that His sacrifice was accepted. That is when the burden of sin was lifted from Him. And He came down from heaven. All this happened so quickly that He could meet the other two women as they were on their way back to Jerusalem.

Jesus refused to receive the homage of His people until He had the assurance that His sacrifice was accepted by the Father. He ascended to the heavenly courts, and from God himself heard the assurance that His atonement for the sins of men had been ample and that through His blood all might gain eternal life. The Father ratified the covenant made with Christ, that He would receive repentant and obedient men, and would love them even as He loves His Son. Christ was to complete His work and fulfill His pledge to “make a man more precious than fine gold; even a man than the golden

wedge of Ophir.” *Isaiah* 13:12. All power in heaven and on earth was given to the Prince of life, and He returned to His followers in a world of sin, that He might impart to them of His power and glory.

While the Saviour was in God’s presence, receiving gifts for His church, the disciples thought upon His empty tomb, and mourned and wept. The day that was a day of rejoicing to all heaven was to the disciples a day of uncertainty, confusion, and perplexity.

Heaven and earth are so near; heaven was rejoicing, but the people of God on this earth were weeping. Isn’t this sad? It’s as though somebody is just beside you and he really understands the situation; he’s absolutely happy, and you can do nothing but cry and cry and cry. Again it reminds me of little children, who sometimes keep crying; you see that all the cause for crying is over, and you can rejoice that they have escaped, that everything is okay, and they still cry on, which is sometimes difficult for them to overcome. Isn’t this so, parents?

The Desire of Ages, p. 793:

“Go your way,” the angels had said to the women, “tell His disciples and Peter that He goes before you into Galilee: there shall you see Him as He said unto you.” These angels...

And Ellen White talks again of these two angels who appeared to the women, and to Mary, for a short time, but Mary couldn’t receive the message. The one angel was he who rolled away the stone; and the other angel was the one who helped Jesus from the graveclothes.

These angels had been with Christ as guardian angels throughout His life on earth.

These two angels had been the guardian angels throughout His life on earth: the one who rolled away the stone, and the other who helped Him from His graveclothes. So who were they? They were Gabriel and Elijah—or Moses and Elijah—

who appeared to Jesus on the Mount of Transfiguration where the curtain between the visible and the invisible had been drawn away; and there we see who the guardian angels of Christ were.

We understand meanwhile that Gabriel was the one who rolled away the stone, and we also understand meanwhile that Elijah was the other guardian angel. So these two angels who lingered about the tomb, after the resurrection of Christ, together with Christ, were Moses and Elijah, the most exalted angels of heaven.

But we read more of them. Not only were they His guardian angels throughout His life on earth, but:

They had witnessed His trial and crucifixion. They had heard His words to His disciples. This was shown by their message to the disciples, and should have convinced them of its truth. Such words could have come only from the messengers of their risen Lord.

So, what is the other title of these angels? One is “the guardian angels of Christ,” and the other title? “Messengers of their risen Lord.” This shows that the guardian angels have much more to do than just to guard our lives. They also are our messenger angels; i.e. they carry out our prayers. Remember how Christ prayed for Pilate and an angel answered that prayer and went to Pilate’s wife and gave her a dream? That must have been one of these two. Also when He worked His miracles, how did He work them? through angels; probably one of these two.

Furthermore, these angels work together with us when we are working for others. They speak through our voices; they create an atmosphere, or influence; and in times of special danger they keep us back from a wrong path. So their work comprises much more than to be a shield against the arrows of darkness.

The Influence of Angels

Let's look for a moment at one statement concerning the influence of these two angels. Mary washed the feet of Jesus and there was much envy and misconception on the part of the disciples. They didn't like it; they thought that it was a waste of means to put this terribly expensive oil on the feet of Jesus.

The Desire of Ages, p. 565:

The work of Mary was just the lesson the disciples needed to show them that the expression of their love for Him would be pleasing to Christ. He had been everything to them, and they did not realize that soon they would be deprived of His presence; that soon they could offer Him no token of their gratitude for His great love. The loneliness of Christ, separated from the heavenly courts, living the life of humanity, was never understood or appreciated by the disciples as it should have been. He was often grieved because His disciples did not give Him that which He should have received from them. He knew that if they were under the influence of the heavenly angels that accompanied Him,

—and those were Moses and Elijah,

...they too would think no offering of sufficient value to declare the heart's spiritual affection.

The angels that surround us exert a certain influence on those who are receptive for that influence. Jesus knew that if the disciples had been under the influence of the heavenly angels that accompanied Him, they would have better understood His mission. And so it is. If people are under the influence of the angels that accompany us, then they will be better able to understand the truth.

So these two angels that accompanied Jesus, were not only His guardians; they were also His messenger angels, His fellow-laborers, with whom He cooperated all the time.

The Desire of Ages, p. 793:

“Tell His disciples and Peter,” the angels said. Since the death of Christ, Peter had been bowed down with remorse. His shameful denial of the Lord, and the Saviour’s look of love and anguish, were ever before him. Of all the disciples he had suffered most bitterly. To him the assurance is given that his repentance is accepted and his sin forgiven. He is mentioned by name.

We won’t read the rest of the chapter. It just speaks about the great encouragement that Jesus tried to give His disciples. But they did not yet understand. Even though the women had seen the angels, and had received the message; even though Mary had seen Christ and the two other women after this; still the disciples—the men, or the male disciples—did not grasp the fact that Christ was resurrected. Even the thought of the resurrection was too strange for them.

One reason for this was that the resurrection was treated very theoretically. It was a point of argument all the time between the Pharisees and the Sadducees, but the practical aspect was not understood. It is somewhat similar to the theme of the coming of Christ. This event is so often talked of, so often thought of, but when it actually happens, we will be like people dreaming. Another similar theme might be “the Latter Rain.” So often it has been prayed for, so eagerly expected; but when it will come, we will be quite surprised!

The Walk to Emmaus

So let us turn to the story of the Emmaus disciples. We won’t read this chapter; we don’t have so much time. We will just summarize it.

Two disciples were walking home from Jerusalem to Emmaus. They were not of the twelve: one of their names is revealed as Cleopas. While they were walking, they were communing about the events that were taking place in Jerusalem; and this communication was full of depression. They were

saying,

“Well, we had hoped that this Man would have delivered Israel. How sad and how cruel His treatment!”

–and so forth and so forth. They were very, very low in spirit. And as they trudged along the way, suddenly there came another wayfarer, and He too began talking with them. And this wayfarer, spoke about the Old Testament scriptures, and lifted up their spirits. He was rather strange to them. Well, when they reached home and were about to break bread, they suddenly realized that it was Jesus. They looked intently at Him and wanted to worship Him: but He was suddenly gone.



The Emmaus disciples recognize Christ when He blesses the Bread.
(Tarchiani, 1625 - Lacma.org)

Had Jesus left them? Did He go far, far away to another world? Certainly not. He was still there, at the same place with them, but He became invisible at that point of time. And that is something in the life of Jesus, while He was still on this

earth, that is most interesting. He was all the time walking with His disciples, one time visible, then invisible; then again visible and invisible; but all the time He was beside them.

He became invisible, and so the two Emmaus disciples did not know that He was still there. They just saw and thought and felt that He was away now. So they said,

“We must rush back to tell the other disciples the good news!”

Tiredness was forgotten, and happiness filled them instead, and they began running on their way, not realizing that Somebody was running with them, but not with so much effort as they put forth. And this one was the invisible Jesus, all the time with them.

They knocked at the door in the upper chamber in Jerusalem and asked for entrance. The disciples had bolted the door very tightly, fearing the anger of the leaders of Jerusalem. They had a very low understanding of the invisible world, of demons and of angels, and so when they opened the door and the two disciples came in, the Third came in with them, which was Jesus, invisible, and they again locked it very tightly. Then the two disciples told the good news, but the other disciples just couldn't believe it. They thought,

“Well, you must have had a dream. Are you sure you didn't dream?”

Then suddenly Jesus was among them. Everybody wondered, “Where did He come from?” Actually He was there with them all the time, but He was not visible. This is a very great encouragement for us, because we should likewise see that Jesus is with us.

In nature, we also have things that are visible and invisible: first visible and then invisible, and visible and invisible again. Take a seed, for example, in which you have the full-grown

plant: it's there, but is invisible. Let's keep our eyes open and look at nature to see this truth, and it will encourage our faith to believe that even though things are invisible, they are as real as though we could see them with our eyes and as though we could touch them.

From the Upper Chamber to the Ascension

In the upper chamber, when Jesus talked with the disciples, one of the disciples, Thomas, was not present. So Jesus appeared again a second time later in the upper chamber. All of a sudden He was among them. They wondered again, "Where did He come from? He did not come from afar?" But He was with them all the time.

At that time Jesus showed to Thomas His hands where the nail-prints were, and His side where He still had the scar from the spear. These He will keep for all eternity. Even though He has a different body still these marks will remain forever as a memory of His great sacrifice for us.

Habakkuk 3

⁴ And His brightness was as the light; He had horns [margin: "bright beams out of His side"] coming out of His hand: and there was the hiding of His power.

The Great Controversy, p. 674:

One reminder alone remains: Our Redeemer will ever bear the marks of His crucifixion. Upon His wounded head, upon His side, His hands and feet, are the only traces of the cruel work that sin has wrought. Says the prophet, beholding Christ in His glory:

Habakkuk 3 [margin]

⁴ He had bright beams coming out of His side: and there was the hiding of His power.

That pierced side whence flowed the crimson stream that reconciled man to God—there is the Saviour's glory, there "the hiding of His power." "Mighty to save,"²⁹ through the

²⁹ *Isaiah* 63:1.

sacrifice of redemption, He was therefore strong to execute justice upon them that despised God's mercy. And the tokens of His humiliation are His highest honor; through the eternal ages the wounds of Calvary will show forth His praise and declare His power.

That is a wonderful statement, showing the secret of Christ's greatness, and also His great humility.

After He had appeared to the disciples in the upper chamber, He appeared to them first in Galilee where His six disciples had gone fishing. Even though they knew that Jesus was resurrected, still their spirits were not very high. They missed Jesus—understandably. They had been used to telling Him all their problems, all their sorrows, all their troubles; and now He was not there! But He was there; only they did not see Him. And so in their sad state of mind, they thought,

“Well, what shall we do? Let's go fishing.”

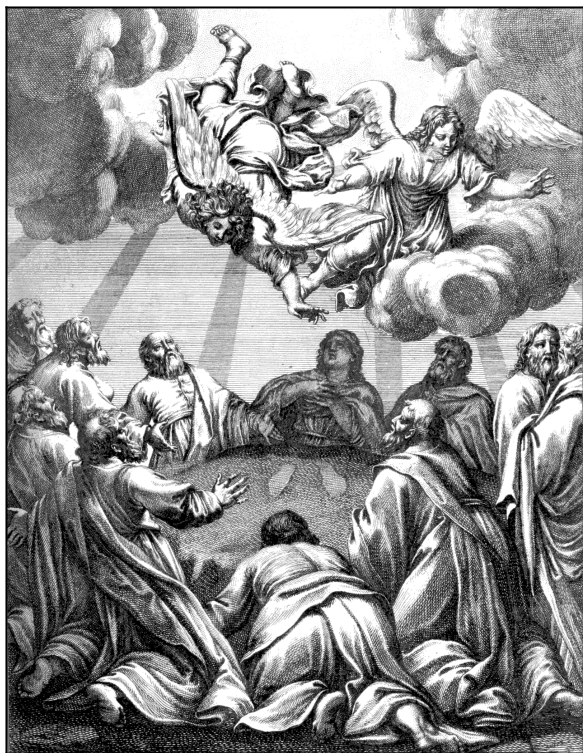
They fished, but they caught nothing. Then Jesus was there at the shore, and when they recognized Him, they were exuberant! They quickly made their way to the shore, and then they communed with Him.

Later, Jesus appeared to five hundred of the disciples on a mountain in Galilee, which is not specified by name; but He had foretold about this meeting. He had said to His disciples that they should meet there. And according to His word, they all gathered there; and suddenly Christ was among them. Again, it was not so suddenly; we should say suddenly He became visible. He was with His disciples all the time, as verily as angels are with us right now. That was the last time He appeared to many of the disciples.

Then the very last time that He appeared on this earth was in Jerusalem, when the eleven disciples were gathered together again. He gave them the last instructions and then He went with them onto the Mount of Olivet where He gave His

farewell words. Then a chariot came and took Christ to heaven, and He disappeared from their view.

That was a sad moment for the disciples; and so, two of the angels remained back from the other angels who were there to escort Jesus to heaven. These two angels were, as we now know, Moses and Elijah; or Gabriel, and whatever the new name of Elijah is. And they gave a very comforting message to the disciples, telling them that they would see Jesus again.



Two Angels remain to instruct the Disciples.

(Biblia, 1751)

Since that time it has been the dear hope of the Church of God to see the Saviour again. And this is our message today as well. The Saviour is not far away, but is very near to us through the working of the mightiest of the angelic host.

14. Angels and the Early Church

WE HAVE seen what role the angels—and especially what role the angel Gabriel and also Elijah—played in the life of Christ. From this we may draw much comfort and strength, because the same interest that heaven had on earth in the life of Christ, heaven has for us today. The interest of the angels in the events of this earth is not diminished in the least.

We must not get the idea that because Jesus, their loved Commander, was on this earth, that this was the only time when the angels were really interested. No, this is not so. The active role they played in the events of Jesus' life only reveals to us what they are doing all the time. We will see this as we look into what they did for the Church after Jesus left and went to heaven to plead for us before the Father. Let us turn to some incidents where we find the work of the angels.

Preaching after Pentecost

First of all, let's look at the work of the disciples. They were preaching Christ very bravely after Pentecost. Before that time they had locked the door very tightly to make sure that nobody would come in; and yet Christ came in with the other two disciples. But since then, they had forgotten all fear. They bravely preached in the synagogue and in Jerusalem. This excited the persecuting spirit of the Jews who had crucified Christ, and they actually put Peter and John into prison.

Acts 5

¹⁷ Then the high priest rose up and all those who were with him, (which is the sect of the Sadducees,) and they were filled with indignation,

¹⁸ And laid their hands on the apostles and put them in the common prison.

¹⁹ But at night an angel of the Lord opened the prison doors and brought them out, and said,

²⁰ Go, stand in the temple, and speak to the people all the words of this life.

²¹ And when they heard that, they entered the temple early in the morning and taught. The high priest and those with him came and called the Council, together with all the elders of the children of Israel and sent to the prison to have them brought.

In the Old Testament, the title “angel of the Lord” usually referred to Christ. But in the New Testament, it refers especially to Gabriel and maybe at times to another commanding angel.³⁰ But Gabriel is the one who took the place of Lucifer; he is the Executive-General who is always found where the battle is the hottest. And the prison was the battle front at this time. And the angel delivered them and said,

Acts 5

²⁰ Go, stand and speak in the temple to the people all the words of this life.

They had just been put into jail for speaking, and now are given the task to do it again. It would be very understandable if Peter and John had protested, and said:

“Well, don’t you know that we got into prison because of that? We will just be thrown into prison again!”

But they humbly accepted the task, which shows their meekness and their ability to cooperate with the angel of the Lord. That is what gave strength to the Early Church.

Peter in Prison

It did not take very long until the disciples were again put into prison: this time it was Peter. Herod put Peter into prison and he wanted to make sure that this time Peter would not escape. He remembered how Peter and John escaped the last time, so he thought,

³⁰ *Matthew* 1:20, 24; 2:13, 19; 28:2; *Luke* 1:11; *Acts* 5:19; 8:26; 12:7, 23.

“Well, this time we’ll make sure.”

So he put him into the innermost part of the prison. There were three doors between Peter and the outside world; and at each door there was a double guard, who were responsible, at the cost of their lives, to keep the prisoner in. And in the cell of Peter there were two soldiers on each side, and they were bound to him with chains, so that if Peter should move, then the soldiers would immediately realize this. So Herod thought,

“Now I’ve made sure he will not escape!”

But how does God view such efforts of men?

Psalm 2

⁴ He that sits in the heavens shall laugh: the Lord shall have them in derision.

From God’s viewpoint, these efforts of men to restrict His working are ridiculous. The one hundred soldiers in the front of the tomb of Jesus were absolutely powerless. It was as though some ants would try to do something to us! We just would not notice them; we would ignore them.

Acts 12

⁵ Peter was therefore kept in prison, but constant prayer was offered to God for him by the Church.

⁶ And when Herod was about to bring him out that night, Peter was sleeping bound with two chains between two soldiers, and the guards before the door were keeping the prison.

⁷ Now behold, the angel of the Lord stood by him and a light shone in the prison.

While Peter was in the prison, each party was playing a part: himself, the Church, and the angel. Each one had to do their part, and none could do the part of the other. The Church could not go into the prison and deliver Peter. But they did what they could do, which was to pray for Peter. In answer to that prayer an angel was sent to the prison house.

Here again we have an example of what prayer can do. Not that God is not willing to do things otherwise, but for reasons that we do not understand fully, the Lord is able to work better when people on this earth plead for their fellowmen. There are doors opened for God's working.

I compare this to a room, and the door to the room has a latch with which to open it. There are many children in this room, and they can't reach the latch. On the outside of the door there is no bolt or latch, its just a plain door. It can only be opened from the inside. So Jesus stands at the outside and knocks. In the room where all these children are, there's one who is taller. He can just reach the latch, so he opens it and then Jesus comes in.

This is an object lesson of how people can work for others by opening the door for Jesus. And prayer is simply an invitation for heavenly agencies to work. Therefore, the Lord has given us the privilege to do an essential part of praying for others. And an example of this is the story we are now reading, where the Church was praying for Peter.

The Acts of the Apostles, p. 146:

Peter was confined in a rock-hewn cell, the doors of which were strongly bolted and barred; and the soldiers on guard were made answerable for the safekeeping of the prisoner. But the bolts and bars and the Roman guard, which effectually cut off all possibilities of human aid, were but to make more complete the triumph of God in the deliverance of Peter. Herod was lifting his hand against the Omnipotent and he was to be utterly defeated. By the putting forth of His might, God was about to save the precious life that the Jews were plotting to destroy.

It is the last night before the proposed execution. A mighty angel is sent from heaven to rescue Peter. Strong gates that shut in the saint of God open without the aid of human hand. The angel of the Most High passes through, and the gates close noiselessly behind him. He enters the cell, and

there lies Peter, sleeping the peaceful sleep of perfect trust.

It was not a good thing for Peter, when he slept in the Garden of Gethsemane. But his sleep in this instance indicated trust. He was to be executed the next day. That is what Herod, the mighty monarch, firmly determined. He would not change his purpose. And Peter, knowing that he would be beheaded the next day, was sleeping peacefully.

Could you sleep on your last night? Would you do this? How would you feel? I suppose I would not sleep the last night before my execution. I rather would stay awake and make use of the last minutes of my life somehow! But Peter was not worried about this in the least. He was sleeping the perfect sleep of trust. That is a very good testimony.

We shall study later about the martyrs, and it is amazing how little fear they had of fire, and of all the things they suffered. As the Bible says, by faith they...

Hebrews 11

³⁴ ...quenched the violence of fire.

The Acts of the Apostles, p. 146-147:

The light that surrounds the angel fills the cell, but does not rouse the apostle. Not until he feels the touch of the angel's hand and hears a voice saying,

Acts 12

⁷ Arise, up quickly,

—does he awaken sufficiently to see his cell illuminated by the light of heaven and an angel of great glory standing before him. Mechanically he obeys the words spoken to him; and as in rising he lifts his hands, he is dimly conscious that the chains have fallen from his wrists.

The angel says, "Rise quickly." Peter had to do his part. There had to be cooperation between the angel and Peter. Let's suppose that Peter would have said,

"Well, why shall I rise? You can carry me out!"

Would the angel then have carried him out? Certainly not. There must be cooperation between us and the angels, and this requires our obedience.



Peter is delivered from Prison by an Angel
(Delightful Stories, 1888)

The Acts of the Apostles, p. 147:

Again the voice of the heavenly messenger bids him,

Acts 12

⁸ Gird yourself, and bind on your sandals,

—and again Peter mechanically obeys, keeping his wondering gaze riveted upon his visitor and believing himself to be dreaming or in a vision. Once more the angel commands,

⁸ ...Cast your garment about you and follow me.

He moves towards the door, followed by the usually talkative Peter, now dumb from amazement. They step over the guard and reach the heavily bolted door, which of its own accord swings open and closes again immediately, while the guards within and without are motionless at their post.

The second door, also guarded within and without, is reached. It opens as did the first, with no creaking of hinges or rattling of iron bolts. They pass through and it closes again as noiselessly. In the same way they pass through the third gateway and find themselves in the open street. No word is spoken; there is no sound of footsteps. The angel glides on in front, encircled by light of dazzling brightness, and Peter, bewildered, and still believing himself to be in a dream, follows his deliverer.

We see here something of the ability of angels. They do not need to even walk, they glide along.

Thus they pass on through one street, and then, the mission of the angel being accomplished, he suddenly disappears.

Where did the angel go? He stayed there, for certain; he just became invisible. But that angel would not leave his post. Maybe he would quickly go to heaven and come back; but this would take just a moment.

The Acts of the Apostles, p. 147-148:

The heavenly light faded away, and Peter felt himself to be in profound darkness; but as his eyes became accustomed to the darkness, it gradually seemed to lessen, and he found

himself alone in the silent street, with the cool night air blowing upon his brow. He now realized that he was free and in a familiar part of the city; he recognized the place as the one that he had often frequented and had expected to pass on the morrow for the last time.

He tried to recall the events of the past few moments. He remembered falling asleep, bound between two soldiers, with his sandals and outer garments removed. He examined his person and found himself fully dressed and girded. His wrists, swollen from wearing the cruel irons, were free from the manacles. He realized that his freedom was no delusion, no dream or vision, but a blessed reality. On the morrow he was to have been led forth to die; but lo, an angel had delivered him from prison and from death.

Acts 12

¹¹ And when Peter was come to himself, he said: Now I know of a surety, that the Lord has sent His angel.

That was a very exciting event for Peter, a very real story which shows what the angels still want to do for us today. I'm quite sure that these events will be repeated when we shall be thrown into prison. However, we need to learn to cooperate with our angel in order to be able to have his services.

The Acts of the Apostles, p. 152:

The experience of Philip, directed by an angel from heaven to go to the place where he met one seeking for truth, of Cornelius, visited by an angel with a message from God, of Peter in prison and condemned to death, led forth by an angel to safety—all show the closeness of the connection between heaven and the earth.

So these events are given for us so that we see how close heaven and earth are.

Angel Workers

The Acts of the Apostles, p. 152-153:

To the worker for God the record of these angel visits should bring strength and courage. Today, as verily as in the

days of the apostles, heavenly messengers are passing through the length and breadth of the land, seeking to comfort the sorrowing, to protect the impenitent, to win the hearts of men to Christ. We cannot see them personally; nevertheless they are with us guiding, directing, protecting.

Heaven is brought near to the earth by that mystic ladder, the base of which is firmly planted on the earth while the topmost round reaches the throne of the Infinite. Angels are constantly ascending and descending this ladder of shining brightness, bearing the prayers of the needy and distressed to the Father above, and bringing blessing and hope, courage and health to the children of men.

These angels of light create a heavenly atmosphere about the soul, lifting us toward the unseen and the eternal. We cannot behold their forms with our natural sight. Only by spiritual vision can we discern heavenly things. The spiritual ear alone can hear the harmony of heavenly voices.

Psalm 34

⁷ The angel of the Lord encamps round about them that fear Him and delivers them.

God commissions His angels to save His chosen ones from calamity; to guard them from...

Psalm 91

⁶ ...the pestilence that walks in darkness, [and] the destruction that wastes at noonday.

Again and again have angels talked with men, as a man speaks with a friend,³¹ and led them to places of security.

So it is quite possible that we have already met an angel, but we did not notice it.

The Acts of the Apostles, p. 153-154:

Again and again have the encouraging words of angels renewed the drooping spirits of the faithful, and carrying their minds above the things of earth, caused them to behold by faith the white robes, the crowns, the palm branches of victory, which overcomers will receive when they surround the

³¹ *Exodus* 33:11.

great white throne.

It is the work of the angels to come close to the tried, the suffering, the tempted. They labor untiringly in behalf of those for whom Christ died. When sinners are led to give themselves to the Saviour, angels bear the tidings heavenward and there's great rejoicing among the heavenly host.

Luke 15

⁷ Joy shall be in heaven over one sinner that repents, more than over ninety and nine just persons which need no repentance.

A report is borne to heaven of every successful effort on our part to dispel the darkness and to spread abroad the knowledge of Christ. As the deed is recounted before the Father, joy thrills through all the heavenly host.

The principalities and powers of heaven are watching the warfare, which under apparently discouraging circumstances, God's servants are carrying on. New conquests are being achieved, new honors won, as the Christians, rallying round the banner of their Redeemer, go forth to fight the good fight of faith. All the heavenly angels are at the service of the humble, believing people of God; and as the Lord's army of workers here below sing their songs of praise, the choir above join with them in ascribing praise to God and to His Son.

That is a little overview of what the angels are doing.

We need to understand better than we do, the mission of the angels. It would be well to remember that every true child of God has the cooperation of heavenly beings. Invisible armies of light and power attend the meek and lowly ones who believe and claim the promises of God. Cherubim and seraphim, and angels that excel in strength, stand at God's right hand,

Hebrews 1

¹⁴ ...all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation.

The story of Peter's deliverance from prison shows us what the Lord wants to do for His Church. He is always ready to do

it, and He is actually doing it. How often have we been on the road and have been spared from an accident? Because the angels were there to protect us. How often have we traveled by air, by sea or land, and angels were there to guard our vessel. We are to be encouraged that even if we come into difficult places, like a prison, the angels are able to deliver us from it.

When Paul and Silas were thrown into prison at Philippi, they were first beaten up. So they had very sore backs, swollen skin and scars, and then they were put in this painful position with their backs on the cold floor and their feet up in the stocks: very, very uncomfortable. And normally, prisoners under such conditions would begin to lament, to mourn, to cry, to groan; they would groan very heavily. But not so Paul and Silas.

What did they do? They sang songs. How could they? They were certainly conscious of the invisible world attending them; otherwise they would not have been able to do this. They were conscious of the angel that was there, and that lightened their minds, and they could look beyond the dire circumstances.

Paul was very conscious of the angel who followed him. He frequently mentions that angel, and especially when he was on the ship that was wrecked when he was on his journey to Rome. What did he tell to the passengers in the ship? He said,

Acts 27

²² And now I exhort you to be of good cheer: for there shall be no loss of any man's life among you, but of the ship.

²³ For there stood by me this night the angel of God, whose I am, and whom I serve,

²⁴ Saying, Fear not, Paul; you must be brought before Caesar: and, lo, God has given you all them that sail with you.

²⁵ Wherefore, sirs, be of good cheer: for I believe God, that it shall be even as it was told me.

²⁶ Howbeit we must be cast upon a certain island.

So he gave them some comfort. Paul was very acquainted with his angel, and he knew that he was with him. We should have the same understanding now.



Paul encourages the Sailors with the words from the Angel of God.
(Favorite Stories from the New Testament, 1905)

Philip and the Ethiopian

Let us consider the role that the Executive-General of the universe—his name is Gabriel—played, especially in missionary work. We want to see how humans cooperated with these angels and how that brought success. And contrariwise, when

they did not cooperate, they were totally unsuccessful and finally failed to do their work.

The first story is of the time after the disciples had preached in Samaria and a big harvest had come in from that region. So great was the demand of the work that they needed to call other helpers from Jerusalem.

Acts 8

²⁶ And the angel of the Lord spoke unto Philip, saying, Arise, and go towards the south along the road which goes down from Jerusalem to Gaza. This is desert.

²⁷ So he arose and went...

The angel of the Lord came to Philip, who was one of the workers in that place, and he told Philip something that he might not have understood. He told him,

“Now leave this busy place, and go to the wilderness.”

That reminds us of how the Holy Spirit led Jesus after He was baptized. Instead of directing Him to the people, He led Him into the wilderness where there was nobody.

Philip could have objected, and protested to the angel:

“Well, why shall I go now into the wilderness? I’m in demand here, I’m needed here; and there in the wilderness is nobody. So for what purpose shall I go there?”

But Philip obeyed unquestioningly, immediately, joyfully. And this showed his ability to cooperate with the angel of the Lord. Cooperation means full submission, which means obedience which is implicit, unconditional, and also joyful.

Philip came to Gaza, and he met an Ethiopian; and through this Ethiopian the gospel message was carried to Africa and there it was preserved for many ages. That is a wonderful example of Gospel Order: God through the angel told Philip, who spoke to the Ethiopian; then the Ethiopian spoke to his queen, and she spoke to others. So the message was soon

spread all over Ethiopia and a great region of Africa.



Philip is instructed by an Angel to go to the Ethiopian.

(Historia de el Nuevo Testamento, 1722)

God could have told Philip to go to Africa, to Ethiopia. The angel could have carried him there easily, as he carried him to Gaza. But he did not do this. It was Philip's work to give the message to the Ethiopian, and the Ethiopian's work to give it to his fellow-countrymen.

Likewise, today it is not the task of one worker to do everything, to go everywhere and to do everything; but the Lord has given the burden of passing on the message to each one of us. Each one of us shall pass the message to those who have not heard: to their own family, and then to others whom God brings us into contact. And once we bring them the message, there's no need for us to stay with them all the time. As one believer told me,

"The signpost does not go with the traveler, does it?"

Do you know what this means? When I travel and I see a

signpost, I follow the signpost and I travel on. But the signpost stays there. We are the signposts. We show the people the way of life. But when the people go this way, we don't need to constantly follow after them. We can be at a very different place while they are in another place. So, the signposts don't go with the travelers; they show the way, and that's their task. Let us remember this.

Once we have done our part of the work, the Holy Spirit must continue another work, and maybe, even other men must take the work further. This is how God has organized matters in His Church.

So when Philip brought the Ethiopian the gospel and baptized him, his work for him was finished; and then God continued working with the Ethiopian.

The Acts of the Apostles, p. 109:

This Ethiopian represented a large class who need to be taught by such missionaries as Philip—men who will hear the voice of God and go where He sends them. There are many who are reading the Scriptures, who cannot understand their true import. All over the world men and women are looking wistfully to heaven. Prayers and tears and inquiries go up from souls longing for light, for grace, for the Holy Spirit. Many are on the verge of the kingdom, waiting only to be gathered in.

The Ethiopian was a real seeker. He was in his chariot, reading the prophecy of *Isaiah*, chapter 53, and desiring to understand it. He was deeply impressed with the ceremonies in Jerusalem, believing that they must have a meaning, even though their meaning had mostly been fulfilled already in the life and death of Christ. Still he felt that he needed to understand. As he was reading, Philip came up to him. Philip asked him,

Acts 8

³⁰ Do you understand what you are reading?

He replied,

Acts 8

³¹ How can I, except some man should guide me?

He was open-minded and ready to be taught. Certainly the angel who had directed Philip had been working with this Ethiopian already.

Angels are much more able than we are. They can see what takes place in other parts of the world. So they can prepare a person to receive the gospel, of whom we know nothing about, and then prepare us to meet that person. Then they actually send us to that person. And then when the meeting-time point comes, this person will be just ready and hungry for the message. I've seen this happen again and again.

When the angel has done the preparatory work, the people are just ready. You don't need to make long discussions with them, hoping that maybe they will accept the gospel of truth. No, this has never been successful for me. Rather, what I've seen is that the people, to whom the Lord sends me, are hungry and eager to know the truth. And so it was here with the Ethiopian.

Acts of the Apostles, p. 109:

This Ethiopian represented a large class who need to be taught by such missionaries.

What does this mean, "a large class"? A hundred, or a thousand? There must be very many. We tend to think that when there are one or two hundred people in a camp-meeting, that it is a large group. But it is not really large compared with the number of people that are in the world.

If a politician has a meeting, he may meet a thousand, or even tens of thousands of listeners. A pop-star might have tens of thousands or hundreds of thousands listening to him. That is a large group, isn't it? And if we compare ourselves with the millions of the world, we're a very tiny group.

But this Ethiopian represented a large class. Have you ever met such a large class? I have not. I've found that the people in the world are quite satisfied with material goods. Is this the large class? But they must be there, because the Spirit of Prophecy states it:

Acts of the Apostles, p. 109:

This Ethiopian represented a large class who need to be taught by such missionaries as Philip.

That means that the angels, at this point of time, are very active already; because without their agencies there would be no such "large class." It is because they make people ready for the gospel, that this large class exists. But they also must find men who can teach the gospel to them; and that is the greater problem.

The Desire of Ages, p. 296:

As His representatives among men, Christ does not choose angels who have never fallen, but human beings, men of like passions with those they seek to save. Christ took upon Himself humanity, that He might reach humanity. Divinity needed humanity; for it required both the divine and the human to bring salvation to the world. Divinity needed humanity, that humanity might afford a channel of communication between God and man.

All heaven is just waiting for those missionaries who bring the word to others, and the angels cannot do it for them, because it is not their task. Gospel Order has made this point very clear.

The Desire of Ages, p. 297:

We are to be laborers together with the heavenly angels in presenting Jesus to the world. With almost impatient eagerness the angels wait for our cooperation; for man must be the channel to communicate with man. And when we give ourselves to Christ in wholehearted devotion, angels rejoice that they may speak through our voices to reveal God's love.

So, what are the angels doing? They see the large class that is represented by this Ethiopian; they see the thousands, and probably the millions, who are ready; but they cannot do anything unless God's people are ready.

The Desire of Ages, p. 297:

With almost impatient eagerness...

Can you see their impatience, their eagerness, who love us so much? They're waiting. Such people, like the Ethiopian, need missionaries like Philip, men who will hear the voice of God and go where He sends them.

Acts of the Apostles, p. 109:

There are many who are reading the Scriptures, who cannot understand their true import...

An angel guided Philip to the one who was seeking for light and who was ready to receive the gospel, and today, angels will guide the footsteps of those workers who will allow the Holy Spirit to sanctify their tongue and refine and ennoble their hearts. The angel sent to Philip could himself have done the work for the Ethiopian, but this is not God's way of working. It is His plan that men are to work for their fellow men.

Not even the redeemed angels can do what we today can do. Their task is the leadership in the work, in the missionary work; but their task is not making the actual contact and speaking to the people: only we can do that.

The Acts of the Apostles, p. 111:

Long has God waited for the spirit of service to take possession of the whole Church, so that everyone shall be working for Him according to his ability. When the members of the Church of God do their appointed work in the needy fields, at home and abroad, in the fulfillment of the gospel commission, the whole world would soon be warned and the Lord Jesus will return to this earth with power and great glory.

Matthew 24

¹⁴ This gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then the end shall come.

How do we normally understand this statement? In the past, I tended to skip over these statements, they were somewhat unpleasant to me, because I used to think,

“Well, here Ellen White seems to talk about this old kind of missionary work, you know, ‘the spirit of service taking possession of the whole Church!’ Oh yes, we all have to go from house to house with our books in our hands; and if we don’t do this, then the work can never be finished!”

Isn’t this the kind of understanding that was taught to us? But it has a different meaning.

The Acts of the Apostles, p. 111:

Long has God waited for the spirit of service to take possession of the whole Church.

Is the spirit of service knocking on doors? What is the spirit of service? It is self-sacrificing love. The spirit of service is what Jesus had when He came on this earth:

Philippians 2

⁶ Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God:

⁷ But made himself of no reputation, and took upon Him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men:

⁸ And being found in fashion as a man, He humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.

He was willing to lay down His life for His brethren, just as Moses was willing: and even His eternal life. So Jesus, having had this spirit of service, was a very successful cooperator with angels.

The Acts of the Apostles, p. 111:

Long has God waited for the spirit of service to take possession of the whole Church.

When this meekness, this humility, will be there in us, then the angels of God will be able to cooperate with us.

The Acts of the Apostles, p. 111:

When the members of the Church do their appointed work in the needy fields, at home and abroad, in fulfillment of the gospel commission, the whole world will soon be warned, and the Lord Jesus will return to this earth with power and great glory.

There's much in this paragraph which tells us why the Latter Rain has not come until this point of time; and the main point is that heaven is still waiting for the spirit of service to take possession of the whole church. That is the condition. And for this let us strive, so that our angel, the General, can go ahead and we follow him precisely.

The Conversion of Cornelius

Let us come to the next incident where the angel of the Lord went ahead of God's people in missionary work. And this is a most interesting incident which will lead us to a deeper study of cooperation between man and angel.

Acts 10

¹ There was a certain man in Caesarea called Cornelius, a centurion of what was called the Italian regiment,

² A devout man and one who feared God with all his household; who gave alms generously to the people and prayed to God always.

³ About the ninth hour of the day he saw clearly in a vision an angel of God coming in and saying to him, Cornelius.

⁴ And when he observed him, he was afraid and said, What is it, Lord? So he said to him, your prayers and your alms have come up for a memorial before God.

⁵ Now send men to Joppa and send for Simon whose sur-

name is Peter.

⁶ He is lodging with Simon, a tanner, whose house is by the sea. He will tell you what you must do.

⁷ And when the angel who spoke to him had departed, Cornelius called two of his household servants and a devout soldier from among those who waited on him continually.

⁸ So when he had explained all these things to him, he sent them to Joppa.

So here we have an example of how an angel actually prepared the way for God's workers. He went to the man, and actually appeared to him and pointed him to Peter. This angel could himself have given the message to Cornelius. That would have been impressive for Cornelius if he had received the message from the angel, wouldn't it? But, even if the angel Gabriel today would become visible and would appear to the people, they might seem to accept the message, because they were awed by the glory of the angel, but they would not truly accept it. The acceptance must be accepted as passed through men. That is the way that God has ordained it.

The same issue came up with Lucifer in heaven. When Lucifer said,

"I will obey God, but I will not submit to Christ,"³²

—he was actually saying,

"I will not submit to God."

Likewise, if people today reject the message because it comes from man like themselves, a mortal man that is even faulty, then they actually reject the angel who sent that person, and even worse, they reject Christ who sent the angel. It is the Lord's way to speak from man to man, so that people accept the truth for the truth's sake, and not because of the

³² *Spiritual Gifts*, vol. 3, p. 38: "He [Lucifer] declares he cannot submit to be under Christ's command, that God's commands alone will he obey." (also quoted in *The SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 7, p. 973).

vessel that carries it.

This is specifically applicable to the bringing of the message of truth, or the gospel, to other people. When it comes to personal information, the Lord will personally teach us His mysteries:

The Desire of Ages, p. 668:

As Christ lived the law in humanity, so we may do if we take hold of the Strong for strength. But we are not to place the responsibility of our duty upon others and wait for them to tell us what to do. We cannot depend for counsel on humanity. The Lord will teach us our duty just as willingly as He will teach somebody else. If we come to Him in faith, He will speak His mysteries to us personally.

“Personally” means not through others, but to us who are asking Him.

Our hearts will often burn within us as One draws nigh to commune with us as He did with Enoch. Those who decide to do nothing in any line that will displease God will know, after presenting their case before Him, just what course to pursue. And they will receive not only wisdom but strength—power for obedience, for service, will be imparted to them as Christ has promised.

Whatever was given to Christ, the “all things”³³ to supply the need of fallen man was given to Him as the Head and Representative of humanity.

1 John 3

²² And whatsoever we ask, we receive of Him, because we keep His commandments and do those things that are pleasing in His sight.

So, all who ask God will receive wisdom, and He will speak His mysteries to us personally. Our hearts will often burn within us as One draws nigh to commune with us as He did with Enoch. It’s a great privilege to come to God when we

³³ *Matthew 11:27; John 13:3.*

have questions concerning our personal life. And it is an opportunity to come closer to Him.

If we depend on other people to ask God what we should do, then we certainly will weaken ourselves. We will miss a precious opportunity to come close to that One that He may speak to us His mysteries personally. It is the privilege of each believer in Jesus Christ to have personal connection with God so that God can personally talk His mysteries to him.

When it comes to questions about the message, the Lord will give answers through the messenger. So in the example before us, the angel came personally to Cornelius to give him a personal message; but then sending him Peter to give him the message of present truth, which was testifying of the resurrection of Jesus, of the gospel of Jesus, and so forth. God presented the gospel through the apostles, who were the messengers at that time.

Acts 10

⁹ The next day as they went on their journey and drew near the city, Peter went up on the house-top to pray about the sixth hour.

¹⁰ Then he became very hungry and wanted to eat. But while they made ready, he fell into a trance

¹¹ And saw heaven opened, an object like a sheet bound at the four corners descending to him and laid down to the earth.

¹² In it were all kinds of four-footed animals of the earth, vile beasts, creeping things and birds of the air.

¹³ And a voice came to him, Rise Peter, kill and eat.

¹⁴ But Peter said, Not so, Lord; for I have never eaten anything common or unclean.

¹⁵ And a voice spoke to him again, a second time, What God has cleansed, you must not call common.

¹⁶ This was done three times, and the object was taken up into heaven again.

It was by means of the angel that Peter was given this

dream. Cornelius also received a personal visit from the angel of the Lord, who was most likely Gabriel even though he is not mentioned here by name. But we know that the Executive-General was always at the battlefront. And that was surely the battlefront, because that event—the conversion of Cornelius—was a major event in the development of the early Church.



An Angel appears to Cornelius
(*Historiae Celebriores*, 1708)

This event marked the introduction of a new doctrine which they had not understood before. It was new light. And the new light that God gave at that time was,

“The Gospel is for the Gentiles also.”

That was the new light. The Jews did not believe it. And the Christians who came from a Jewish background, did not see it as yet. So the angel opened the mind of the Church towards this new truth in a very practical way.

To Cornelius, the angel came with a personal message, but not with the “present truth.” That had to be presented through the Church. But Peter was not ready for this work of bringing the truth to Cornelius. He still held the erroneous idea that the Gospel was not given for the Gentiles. If Cornelius would be circumcised first and become a Jew, then Peter might consider going to him: then the way would be clear. But Cornelius was a heathen, and so Peter felt he couldn’t do that kind of work: he was still too full of prejudice.

Before this time, when the apostles went with Jesus to visit the Samaritans, that was already a step forward. But the Samaritans were a mixed people: they were part Israelite and part heathen. Cornelius was a complete heathen, and to such a person, Peter felt, you just didn’t go! And so Jesus needed to prepare Peter to go to him.

The Acts of the Apostles, p. 109:

This Ethiopian represented a large class who need to be taught by such missionaries as Philip—men who will hear God’s voice and go where He sends them.

There was such a large class and they needed to be taught by such missionaries as Philip. But at that point, was Peter such a missionary as Philip? He was not quite ready. He still wouldn’t have gone, and so the Lord in His mercy prepared the way. It was new light for Peter as well. He needed to be delivered from an error. It was actually new light for him and

this new light came through a dream which he did not understand at first.

Acts 10

¹⁷ Now while Peter wondered within himself of what this vision which he had seen meant, behold the men who had been sent from Cornelius had made enquiry for Simon's house and stood before the gate.

¹⁸ As they called, they asked whether Simon, whose surname was Peter, was lodging there.

¹⁹ While Peter thought about the vision, the Spirit said to him, Behold, three men are seeking you.

²⁰ Rise therefore, go down and go with them doubting nothing; for I have sent them.

²¹ Then Peter went down to the men that had been sent to him from Cornelius and said, Yes, I am he whom you seek. For what reason have you come?

²² And they said, Cornelius, the centurion, a just man who fears God and has good reputation among all the nation of the Jews, was divinely instructed by a holy angel to summon you to his house to hear words from you.

²³ Then he invited them and lodged them, and the next day Peter went away with them and some brethren from Joppa accompanied him.

Peter was not in a special hurry to go to Cornelius. It was a difficult task for him; he had difficulties at every step, and only with reluctance did he go there. So deep-rooted can error be. Once we are entrenched in error, it is very difficult to see the truth.

As an example, when it has been hammered into your conscience that in order to be a good Christian, you must knock on door after door as missionary work, and then you don't do it, how do you feel? We tend to feel guilty for not doing it.

Likewise, when for the first time I came to a meeting of this movement, I was used to quite a ceremonial way of worship in the church. But the worship was so simple and unpolished,

I was quite amazed, and it was difficult for me to acknowledge that this was a legitimate worship.

The Lord will deliver us from these things, but at first, it's difficult. We have great sympathy for Peter, haven't we? So, with reluctance he followed these two men to the house of Cornelius.

Acts 10

²⁴ On the following day they entered Caesarea. Now Cornelius was waiting for them and had called together his relatives and close friends.

²⁵ As Peter was coming in, Cornelius met him and fell down at his feet and worshiped him.

²⁶ But Peter lifted him up, saying, Stand up. I myself am also a man.

²⁷ And as he talked with him, he went in and found many who had come together.

²⁸ Then he said to them, You know how unlawful it is for Jewish men to keep company with or go to one of another nation. But God has shown me that I should not call any man common or unclean.

So Peter understood the dream.

Acts 11

⁹ What God has cleansed, you shall not call common or unclean.

Peter related this to the people there.

Acts 10

²⁹ Therefore I came without objection...

"But still with a heavy heart," he should have added!

²⁹ ...as soon as I was sent for.

Peter dared not disobey the voice of the Spirit which he recognized very clearly.

Acts 10

²⁹ ...I ask, then, for what reason have you sent for me?

What a question to ask! A very formal introduction, isn't it?

³⁰ Cornelius said, Four days ago I was fasting until this hour, and at the ninth hour I prayed in my house and behold a man stood before me in bright clothing

³¹ And said, Cornelius, your prayer has been heard and your alms have been remembered in the sight of God.

³² Send, therefore, to Joppa and call for Simon there, whose surname is Peter. He is lodging in the house of Simon, the Tanner, by the sea. When he comes he will speak to you.

³³ So I sent to you immediately and you have done well to come. Now, therefore, we are all present before God to hear all the things commanded you by God.

Isn't it wonderful? That is how it looks like when the angel has prepared the way. There will be no need of arguing:

“Now you must listen to this! And you must agree how logical it is. Isn't this much more logical than your error?”

Then the other keeps arguing-arguing-arguing and you come to nothing. That kind of work I find very frustrating.

But here Peter, who had not deserved it, because he had not done anything to prepare these people, had an audience who were absolutely ready and willing to listen to the gospel.

I found the same to be true in my experience. When the Lord has prepared the way, the people are so happy to listen to the message.

Let us analyze the situation again. The angel of the Lord came to Cornelius and gave him a personal message. The angel of the Lord also came to Peter and gave him a dream and then commanded him that he should go with these people. So we see that the angel of the Lord was doing a very personal work, which he always does. He does personal work. He does not do mass work, he does not speak to one person for an-

other person, but he speaks to each person individually. The angel could have easily told to Peter,

“Go to Cornelius and tell him that I have sent you.”

He could have also told to Cornelius,

“Send to Peter and tell him that I command him [Peter] to come.”

But no. The angel came to Cornelius and he came to Peter. So from this we understand that the angel is doing much personal work. He is preparing the people individually, personally, and he is preparing the missionary as well.

Acts 10

³⁴ Then Peter opened his mouth and said, In truth I perceive that God shows no partiality.

³⁵ But in every nation whoever fears Him and works righteousness is accepted by Him.

³⁶ The word which God sent to the children of Israel preaching peace through Jesus Christ—He is Lord of all—

³⁷ That word you know, which was proclaimed throughout all Judea and began from Galilee after the baptism which John preached:

³⁸ How God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power, who went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil; for God was with Him.

³⁹ And we are witnesses of all things...

So Peter tells him the whole story of the gospel: how Jesus was raised up and how He sent them to preach the remission of sins.

⁴⁴ While Peter was still speaking these words, the Holy Spirit fell upon all those who heard the word.

⁴⁵ And those of the circumcision who believed were astonished, as many as came with Peter, because the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out on the Gentiles also.

I find this a very interesting incident: the Holy Spirit came

while Peter was actually speaking; that is how the Holy Spirit also came at Pentecost. Peter was just speaking, giving the gospel, and then the Holy Spirit came down.³⁴ Likewise here, while Peter was speaking, the same thing was happening over again. It was the time of the Early Rain.

By the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, He was actually teaching a lesson:

“You do not need to be circumcised in order to become a Christian, in order to receive the Holy Spirit.”

When the Holy Spirit gives himself to those who were not circumcised, then thereby He set an example. If what the Jews believed was right, and even the early Christians believed the same,—that the Holy Spirit cannot help those persons who are not circumcised,—then the Holy Spirit should never have come over these people. But He did, and so new light was unfolding before their eyes.

When they received the Holy Spirit, Peter quickly recognized what was going on, and he said,

Acts 10

⁴⁷ Can anyone forbid water, that these should not be baptized who have received the Holy Spirit just as we have?

⁴⁸ And he commanded them to be baptized in the name of the Lord. Then they asked him to stay a few days.

Peter even stayed a few days with them, which for a Jew, was very out of the ordinary.

Acts 11

¹ The apostles and brethren who were in Judea heard that the Gentiles have also received the word of God.

² And when Peter came up to Jerusalem, those of the circumcision contended with him,

³ Saying, You went in to uncircumcised men and ate with them!

³⁴ Acts 2:14-41.

These people did not understand what was going on at that point of time, so they right away began to contend with him. Naturally, that was the doctrine they had always believed, and they felt that Peter was unorthodox in his actions. But they did not understand that new light was coming to the Church: so they contended with him.

Peter very calmly answered them and explained to them everything that had happened, and they immediately saw in the story that Peter told, that this was the work of God: there was no need to argue any further. Peter did not need to say,

“Well, but you must see this point!”

No, they immediately saw it. We can be very certain that angels were present the whole time, because we know and understand that angels are among the believers to influence them. So when Peter related to the other people what was happening, and they immediately saw it, this is evidence of the angels’ working, and that the hand of God was in the whole matter.

Today when we want to know if the Lord’s hand is in a thing, we should very much look to the harmony that was in the Church back there. This harmony was accomplished by the working of the angels of the Lord, and this kind of harmony is evidence that God is in the work.

Refusing to Cooperate with Angels

In the early Church, this was new light, but the prejudices were so deep-seated that this new light was forgotten very quickly. It just was forgotten. That can happen. It might well be that at a camp-meeting we study something, and a half year later a practical application of what we have learned comes. And instead of doing what we have learned, we go back to our old ways, and make a mistake. This happens because new light is not easily understood, even though we think we easily grasp it.

New light is not understood from one day to another. It needs to be thoroughly assimilated. We have to re-study it again and again. We have to pray and carefully think where the new light applies in our lives. As we see where the new light applies in our life, then we also begin to see where we have made mistakes. That leads us to repentance. It leads us to an advanced step, and when temptations come we can withstand them.

But if we just say “yes” to the truth as it is preached, without making the effort to meditate about it to understand where it applies in our lives, then we can be absolutely sure that shortly after we will make mistakes and we won’t realize it.

So it happened with the early Church, as again there was big trouble and big contention over the question of circumcision.

Acts 15

¹ And certain men came down from Judea and taught the brethren, Unless you are circumcised according to the custom of Moses, you cannot be saved.

² Therefore, when Paul and Barnabas had no small dissension and dispute with them, they determined that Paul and Barnabas and certain others of them should go up to Jerusalem to the apostles and elders about this question.

³ So being sent on their way by the Church, they passed through Phoenicia and Samaria...

⁶ So the apostles and elders came together to consider this matter.

⁷ And when there had been much disputing...

As in Antioch, so in Jerusalem, there was much disputing about something that the Lord had already revealed. To dispute about things that God has revealed is a very dangerous matter and must be avoided under all circumstances. We may come with the humble spirit and say,

“Well, I don’t understand it yet. I want to acknowledge that this is new light, but I don’t understand it.”

In that case, the Lord will help us. But to dispute about things which the Lord has made clear is not good. Were these things clear? They had been made clear, because when Peter came back from Cornelius and related to everybody what God had done, it was such a clear message that everybody could only say,

“That thing is from the Lord.”

It was obvious. When the Latter Rain comes, there will be the same obviousness in it. There will be no spurious thing around, but it will be a very obvious thing and everybody can harmonize with it.

Acts 15

⁷ And when there had been much dispute, then Peter rose up and said to them, Men and brethren, you know that a good while ago God chose among us, that by my mouth the Gentiles should hear the word of God, the word of the gospel, and believe.

Then he related again everything that happened with Cornelius. It was so clear and so convincing that there was harmony again in this assembly. Absolute harmony! Everybody praised God, and the question of circumcision was off the table again. It was clear. The new light seemed to be accepted once and for all.

But was it? Not really. There were some who kept quiet at that meeting, but who were not quite one hundred percent happy about the outcome. They wished to see more of the Law, of the Jewish ceremonies emphasized. And they felt that this was a bit too modern, too unorthodox, the whole thing. They did not realize that God was in this change. They were very slow in learning.

And so these people gained influence in the Church again,

and the question of whether the uncircumcised could be saved or not rose up again. And it rose up in various parts of the world-field, for example: in Galatia, where Paul had great difficulties with these kinds of teachers, and also in other parts. And these persons who clung to old errors especially opposed Paul. They objected against Paul and his work, because Paul was especially chosen for those Gentiles who were not circumcised, to preach to them the gospel and to bring them salvation.

Let's look at the whole matter from the point of view of the angels. The angels had specially led Cornelius and had led Peter. That was so obvious that nobody disputed it. The angels, no doubt, had been present at the assembly where Peter spoke and related this experience again, and had gained a good influence. So the angels were leading the Church of God from the beginning, especially the angel of the Lord—Gabriel—who is the General. He is leading God's church today as much as the angel of the Lord was leading God's church in the wilderness. It's the same pattern over again.

When Gabriel was leading God's church back there, and the Church cooperated with Gabriel, then they were successful and the gospel spread rapidly. In fact, after this council that is described in *Acts* chapter 15, which is called the Council in Jerusalem, the work of God spread very quickly into all the parts of the world, and the work of Paul was made much easier than before.

But as we said, the people who clung to the old ideas got the upper hand again, and they finally obtained the leadership in Jerusalem. That was the situation just a few years later. Here again were some people who were strongly opposed to the message that "salvation is also for the uncircumcised." They believed that such things as circumcision and other ceremonies must be carried out first. When they came into power, it was an unhappy hour for the Church of God, because it

meant that people had taken the leadership in the Church who were not able to cooperate with the angel of the Lord.

And what only can this cause? Chaos and failure. If we do not cooperate with the angel of the Lord, it can only result in failure. And how this actually looked like, we see then in the final events recorded wherein Paul became a prisoner.

Let's open for a moment the letter to the *Galatians*. The Galatians were one of these who suffered under the false teachers, who wanted to put the Church back on a course of conflict with the angel of the Lord.

Galatians 2

¹ Then after fourteen years I went up again to Jerusalem with Barnabas and also took Titus with me.

² And I went up by revelation and communicated to them that gospel which I preach among the Gentiles, but primarily to those who were of reputation, lest by any means I might run or had run in vain.

³ Yet not even Titus who was with me, being a Greek, was compelled to be circumcised.

¹¹ But when Peter had come to Antioch, I withstood him to his face because he was to be blamed;

¹² For before certain men came from James, he would eat with the Gentiles. But when they came, he withdrew and separated himself, fearing those who were of the circumcision.

¹³ And the rest of the Jews also played the hypocrite with him so that even Barnabas was carried away with the hypocrisy.

¹⁴ But when I saw that they were not straight forward about the truth of the gospel, I said to Peter before them all, 'If you being a Jew live in the manner of Gentiles and not of the Jews, why do you compel Gentiles to live as Jews?

¹⁵ We, who are Jews by nature and not sinners of the Gentiles,

¹⁶ Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law...

Here Paul describes how he rebuked Peter. How did Peter take the rebuke? Was he upset, angry? He was meek, wasn't he? And as a meek person, how would he react? He realized that he had made a mistake and he confessed it. This is a real testimony of true meekness.

When the Church was meek, then they cooperated with the angel of the Lord. And as long as they did this, the work of the gospel was very successful. But when they began to become proud and did not cooperate with the angel, the work of the gospel did not prosper.

To be meek means to be able also to admit errors, which Peter was able to do; therefore his work was blessed by the Lord. But let's look now to the people who were leaders in Jerusalem.

Acts 21

¹⁷ When we were come to Jerusalem, the brethren received us gladly,

¹⁸ And the day following Paul went in with us unto James, and all the elders were present.

The Acts of the Apostles, p. 400:

In the earlier years of the gospel work among the Gentiles, some of the leading brethren at Jerusalem, clinging to former prejudices and habits of thought, had not cooperated heartily with Paul and his associates. In their anxiety to preserve a few meaningless forms and ceremonies, they had lost sight of the blessings that would come to them and to the cause they loved through an effort to unite in one all parts of the Lord's work.

Although desirous of safeguarding the best interests of the Christian church, they had failed to keep step with the advancing providences of God, and in their human wisdom had attempted to throw about workers many unnecessary restrictions. Thus there arose a group of men who were unacquainted personally with the changing circumstances and peculiar needs met by laborers in distant fields, yet who in-

sisted that they had the authority to direct their brethren in these fields to follow certain specified methods of labor. They felt that the work of preaching the gospel should be carried on in harmony with their opinions.

There were some people who were becoming proud. What did they do? They denied the fact that God wants to teach us His mysteries personally. They said,

“No, the Lord will not teach His mysteries personally, He will speak to you through me.”

God speaks through a messenger so far as the message is concerned. But the Lord speaks to each one of us personally so far as personal leadership is concerned. That is His way of working. These men did not go this way. They said:

“No, you must do what we tell you.”

And this was lifting themselves up. It was a sign of serious pride. That meant no cooperation with the angel. And that could only mean chaos, and loss and apostasy.

The Acts of the Apostles, p. 401-402:

Afterwards when it became apparent that the converts among the Gentiles were increasing rapidly, there were a few of the leading brethren at Jerusalem who began to cherish anew their former prejudices against the methods of Paul and his associates.

These prejudices strengthened with the passing of the years until some of the leaders determined that the work of preaching the gospel must henceforth be conducted according to their own ideas. If Paul would conform his methods to certain policies which they advocated, they would acknowledge and sustain his work; otherwise they could no longer look upon it with favor or grant it their support.

These men had lost sight of the fact that God is the Teacher of His people, that every worker in His cause is to obtain individual experience in following the divine Leader, not looking to men for direct guidance; that His workers are

to be molded and fashioned, not after man's ideas, but after the similitude of the divine.

God teaches us His mysteries personally, as the angel personally went to Cornelius and to Peter. Paul was then relating the wonderful things that God had done through him. The summary of the whole story is this:

When there is a lack of cooperation between the Church and the angel, the Church will have no success in her missionary work. There may be an outward success, but it will only bring in many unconverted souls. There will not be real success, in which the members are led to those hungry souls that are seeking for truth, like the Ethiopian.

Paul, one of the strongest preachers, was working among the uncircumcised. On the other hand, there were leaders in Jerusalem who were not prepared to cooperate with the angel as Paul and the other disciples did. These leaders had the idea that the work must go henceforth in accordance with their own ideas, which they believed they had from God. But these ideas were not from God, as they were not in harmony with what God had already done.

Furthermore, it is a principle that:

The Acts of the Apostles, p. 401:

...every worker in God's cause is to obtain an individual experience in following the divine Leader, not looking to men for direct guidance; that His workers are to be molded and fashioned, not after man's ideas, but after the similitude of the divine...[and]...that God is the Teacher of His people.

Paul came to these leaders in an effort to help them to see their error, and to remove the stumbling-block which hindered the progress of the gospel work. As long as these leaders did not cooperate with the angel of the Lord, the work could not go forward. And Paul, understanding this, desired to bring these brethren into harmony. At the same time, he

approached them with very great respect.

The Acts of the Apostles, p. 402:

After the presentation of the gift, Paul declared particularly what things God had wrought among the Gentiles by his ministry.

So he simply told them what God had done. What was the result of this story that he told?

This recital of facts brought to the hearts of all, even of those who had been doubting the conviction, that the blessing of heaven had accompanied his labors. When they heard it, they glorified the Lord. They felt that the methods of labor pursued by the apostle bore the signet of heaven. The liberal contributions lying before them added weight to the testimony of the apostle concerning the faithfulness of the new churches established among the Gentiles.

The men who were numbered among those who were in charge of the work in Jerusalem, had urged that arbitrary measures of control be adopted, saw Paul's ministry in a new light, and were convinced that their own course had been wrong and that they had been held in bondage by Jewish customs and traditions, and that the work of the gospel had been greatly hindered by their failure to recognize that the wall of partition between Jews and Gentiles had been broken down by the death of Christ.

So the brethren saw this point very clearly, and they praised God for it too. It seemed to be the same victory as experienced before at the Jerusalem Council when Peter recited the history about the wonderful work among the Gentiles and everybody praised God for it.³⁵ It was again a golden opportunity.

When the Lord has given light, He expects us to act upon it. There was a failure to act upon it, at least with some, which led to the disputation in the first Jerusalem Council. However,

³⁵ See Acts 15, and *The Acts of the Apostles*, ch. 19 "Jew and Gentile."

the Lord again gave them that light, and now another reversion was inexcusable. It revealed that some among them had no mind to work together with the angel. It was a very decisive moment in the history of God's church, to either go forward in harmony with the angel of the Lord, or to work against him, to have him even as their enemy.

The Acts of the Apostles, p. 403:

This was the golden opportunity for all the leading brethren to confess frankly that God had wrought through Paul and that at times they had erred in permitting the reports of his enemies to arouse their jealousy and prejudice.

But instead of uniting in an effort to do justice to one who had been injured, they gave him counsel which showed that they still cherished a feeling that Paul should be held largely responsible for the existing prejudice. They did not stand nobly in his defence endeavouring to show the disaffected ones where they were wrong, but sought to effect a compromise by counselling him to pursue a course which, in their opinion, would remove all cause misapprehension.

Here was a solemn obligation resting on these leaders to acknowledge that God had spoken through Paul.

In our day, many people acknowledge that God speaks through this, that and the other, even through false messengers! But He doesn't, and that is not what is meant here. It is possible for even false messengers to utter some words of truth which can be a blessing for maybe a soul or two in the congregation; but this does not make them the voice of God: in no way. Rather, these truths, which they mix with error, mislead people, as we read very clearly:

Early Writings, p. 124:

The different parties of professed Advent believers have each a little truth, but God has given all these truths to His children who are being prepared for the day of God.

Each of them has a little truth, but it is mixed with error. It

is as though good food would be mixed with moldy food. And what do you do when you have a good melon and it is moldy in some part? You throw it out. Likewise with mangoes and other fruits. The mold destroys the whole part, even the good part. Although you don't see the mold going through the whole melon or mango, yet it is bad and is not good for the body. So you throw it out.

The same principle applies with a mixture of truth and error. Even the truth is destroyed by the error that these false messengers preach. Therefore they are not the voice of God.

Acknowledging that God spoke through Paul does not mean simply acknowledging that Paul had some truths; it means acknowledging that the work he did was from God, and what he preached was the truth: it was all the truth. By "all the truth" I don't mean he had all the truth for all time, but that the truth that he taught did not have error mixed with it.

Every messenger, if he is chosen by God, has preached the truth. A true messenger is a channel on which we can rely. These leaders in Jerusalem acknowledged that God had talked through Paul at times; that some things were true: there was truth in this, there was truth in that, and so forth. And they might even go so far as to say,

"Well, Paul is the messenger of God."

But they would not submit to all the teaching that came through that channel. They would still reserve their right to criticize this or that part of Paul's ministry. So, while they said, on the one hand:

"Okay, Paul is the messenger of God,"

—and while they said,

"God has talked and worked through Paul,"

–and they even praised God for what He did through Paul, yet on the other hand they did not fully submit. So they endeavored to make a compromise by saying,

“Brother, you are right in many respects. We recognize that God has spoken through you. We can see this, and we praise God for it, but you should see that you are wrong in this, that, and the other.”

And this is exactly the spirit of pride which leads to a lack of cooperation between the Church and the angel, and which eventually leads to certain apostasy.

What is meekness? Full submission. That means submission to the truth without condition. And that was the golden opportunity for the leaders in Jerusalem: full submission without any reserve on their part. That meant to acknowledge that they had been in error, to acknowledge that they had missed the opportunity to see the truth that was coming through this messenger.

But they would not submit to that. So they made the “nice” compromise and put it in a “very nice package,” as they said:

Acts 21

²⁰ You see, Brother how many thousands of Jews there are which believe, and they are all zealous for the Law;

²¹ And they are informed of you that you teach all the Jews which are among the Gentiles to forsake Moses, saying that they ought not to circumcise their children, neither to walk after the customs.

²² What is it therefore? the multitude must needs come together, for they will hear that you are come.

²³ Do, therefore, this what we say to you. We have four men which have a vow on them;

²⁴ Them take, and purify yourself with them and be at charges with them, that they may shave their heads and all may know that those things whereof they were informed concerning you are nothing; but that you yourself walk orderly and keep the Law.

²⁵ As touching the Gentiles which believe, we have written and concluded that they observe no such thing, save only that they keep themselves from things offered to idols, and from blood, and from strangled, and from fornication.

The Acts of the Apostles, p. 404:

The brethren hoped that Paul, by following the course suggested, might give a decisive contradiction to the false reports concerning him. They assured him that the decision of the former council concerning the Gentile converts and the ceremonial law still held good. But the advice now given was not consistent with that decision.

Here is a strange thing. People admit that they fully believe what God has revealed, and at the same time they act contrary to what God has revealed. They confess that they fully believe to follow what God has revealed through His messenger, and at the same time they act contrary to what God has revealed through that messenger. So it was back here with the leaders of Jerusalem, and so it has been at all times. That is a very subtle deception indeed.

These elders in Jerusalem were not uncultured persons. They were very nice, courteous and friendly, and they were trying to do their best too. It says here that they wanted to put away this prejudice that existed against Paul. What they actually meant was:

“Brother, we believe that what you say is the truth. We believe that what was said in the Jerusalem Council is right. But we must alter a little bit what you say, to make it really the truth.”

This attitude shows a failure to submit to the truth, and therefore it shows a failure of meekness. And this failure of meekness made them incapable of cooperating with the angel. Whoever acts like this, will not cooperate with the angel of the Lord, and therefore will not be able to do the right kind of missionary work.

The Acts of the Apostles, p. 404:

But the advice now given was not consistent with that decision of the Jerusalem Council. The Spirit of God did not prompt this instruction.

They believed that the Spirit of God spoke through them, but it was not so.

The Spirit of God did not prompt this instruction; it was the fruit of cowardice. The leaders of the Church in Jerusalem knew that by non-conformity to the ceremonial law, Christians would bring upon themselves the hatred of the Jews and expose themselves to persecution. The Sanhedrin was doing its utmost to hinder the progress of the gospel. Men were chosen by this body to follow up the apostles, especially Paul, and in every possible way to oppose their work. Should the believers in Christ be condemned before the Sanhedrin as breakers of the law, they would suffer swift and severe punishment as apostates from the Jewish faith.

Many of the Jews who had accepted the gospel still cherished a regard for the ceremonial law and were only too willing to make unwise concessions, hoping thus to gain the confidence of their countrymen, to remove their prejudice, and to win them to faith in Christ as the world's Redeemer.

Can you see how people today act in the same way?

- Cowardice is one reason;
- Seeking popularity is another reason which is very similar to that;
- Pride, or the desire for position, is another reason; and
- Fear of change is another reason.

All these reasons together comprise a lack of true meekness. True meekness will lead us to follow only the truth and nothing else, and leave the consequences with God.

God's Revelation, Not Ours

This is made very clear in the book of *Revelation*, in the 1st chapter:

Revelation 1

¹ The revelation of Jesus Christ which God gave Him to show His servants things which must shortly take place. And He sent and signified it by His angel to His servant John.

We have studied this text often, but there are ever more depths to be seen in it. “The revelation of Jesus Christ,” that is what the book is about. But this revelation of Jesus Christ does not come from Jesus Christ. From whom does it come? From God. He gives it to Jesus Christ, and Jesus Christ gives it to the angel, and the angel gives it to the prophet, and so on.

That may sound like a strange statement. How can a revelation of somebody be given by somebody else? Doesn't it sound strange that Jesus does not give His own revelation himself? If He gave His own revelation, then that would not be the revelation from the Father. There's a difference between the revelation from the Father and the revelation that comes from the person, or that would come from Christ. Let's look at the difference.

If I give my own revelation to people, then I'm always concerned how do people look at me.

“Do the people see how good I am? Do they see my friendliness and my loveliness and my goodness?”

If you are concerned about these things, then you are giving your own revelation. However, when we are not concerned with this question at all, if we are only concerned with one question,

“What is the will of my Father in heaven?”

—then it doesn't matter how we look like to the other people; we only want to do God's will. Then we can be sure that

God gives our revelation, because then we are just obeying Him, and He determines how we shall be revealed. Let's look at it practically.

In the first part of Jesus' public ministry, John the Baptist was put in prison. That was a very sad thing for the disciples, and everybody expected that Jesus, who could work such mighty miracles, would soon go to the prison of Herod and would deliver His best friend and forerunner. They all expected it. Didn't the angel later deliver Peter and John, and so forth, from prison? Well, He could have done the same at this time. Jesus could have asked the angel, or He could have done it himself. And everybody expected Jesus to do it. He had the power to do it, He had the character to do it, so do it!

But Jesus didn't go. He stayed away from John and left him there all alone to perish in the dungeon. John was beheaded, as you know. And everybody thought:

"Well, Jesus is acting a little bit strange."

If Jesus had been concerned about His reputation, if He had given a revelation of himself or from himself, then He would surely have quickly run to the dungeon and would have delivered John in order to show the people how loving He was, wouldn't He? But that was not the question that concerned Jesus. He asked only one question:

"What is the will of my Father?"

And being only concerned with this, He stayed away.

Another example is the case of Lazarus. Here His best friend, Lazarus, was suffering. It seems like the best friends of Jesus always had to suffer, and Jesus let them suffer. But here was Lazarus, and he was suffering. His sisters sent a message saying,

John 11

³ He whom You love is sick.

Jesus received the message, but did nothing about it. His disciples wondered. They thought about poor Lazarus, how he must have suffered in his sickness and disease. And Jesus, who had healed so many people, seemed not to be concerned about His best friend. He stayed away. They just couldn't understand it. And so they thought that Jesus was not very loving.

If Jesus was concerned about His reputation, what would He have done when He received that message? He would have rushed to Lazarus to show everybody how loving He was, and He would have healed Him. But then He would have given His own revelation. It would not have been the revelation that the Father gave Him.

But Christ was so selfless that He even did not give His own revelation, but received it from His Father. Jesus did not think for one moment,

“What do the people think of me? Do they think I’m a good person?”

No, no. His concern was,

“Am I doing the will of my Father?”

And the Father’s concern was to give the right picture of His Son. So it is the revelation of Jesus Christ which God gave unto Him. And this shows the great selflessness of Jesus which enabled Him to cooperate perfectly with the angels, Gabriel and Elijah, as nobody else did.

And this was exactly the characteristic that these leaders in Jerusalem did not have. They were concerned with the question,

“What do the people think about us if Paul does such things?”

So they were giving the revelation of themselves from

themselves. And this is what they invited Paul to do, exactly this. They said,

“Look, if you do what we tell you, the people will get a very different impression of you. And that will make you a nice and acceptable person for them and they will then listen to the gospel.”

But that would be the revelation of Paul from Paul, if he did so. Sad to say, Paul did it. Let’s read a little bit how Paul argued with himself:

The Acts of the Apostles, p. 405:

Paul realized that so long as many of the leading members of the Church at Jerusalem should continue to cherish prejudice against him, they would work constantly to counteract his influence. He felt that if by any reasonable concession he could win them to the truth he would remove a great obstacle to the success of the gospel in other places.

In what lines Paul was thinking? He was thinking in positive terms, but he was beginning to be concerned about the question:

“What do the people think? How can I remove the hindrances?”

Whose concern was it to look after Paul in the right way and to remove the hindrances? God’s concern. And what would be the only concern of Paul? To do the will of God.

It is understandable that Paul started to think about removing the hindrances, because he really loved his brethren. He did it for the motive of love. But, nevertheless, he was deceived.

This is a very serious warning to you and me. If that mighty apostle could begin to give the revelation of himself by himself, instead of receiving his own revelation from the Father, then how easy is it for us to do the same thing.

The Desire of Ages, p. 121:

Luke 4

⁴ Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word of God.

Often the follower of Christ is brought where he cannot serve God and carry forward his worldly enterprises. Perhaps it appears that obedience to some plain requirement of God will cut off his means of support. Satan would make him believe that he must sacrifice his conscientious convictions. But the only thing in our world upon which we can rely is the word of God.

Matthew 6

³³ Seek first the kingdom of God, and His righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.

Even in this life it is not for our good to depart from the will of our Father in heaven. When we learn the power of His word, we shall not follow the suggestions of Satan in order to obtain food or to save our lives. Our only questions will be, What is God's command? and what His promise? Knowing these, we shall obey the one, and trust the other.

So we must get into the habit of asking only two questions:

“What is God's will? What are His promises?”

And nothing else. That is what we constantly must work towards. And the way the people look at us, that is absolutely not our concern. It is the concern of our heavenly Father only. He will certainly make us prominent before the people in His own good time and way.

The Acts of the Apostles, p. 405:

But he was not authorized of God to concede as much as they asked.

When we think of Paul's great desire to be in harmony with his brethren, his tenderness towards the weak, his reverence for the apostles who had been with Christ, and for James, the brother of the Lord, and his purpose to become all things to all men as far as he could without sacrificing prin-

ciple—when we think of all this, it is less surprising that he was constrained to deviate from the firm decided course that he had hitherto followed.

But, instead of accomplishing the desired object, his efforts for conciliation only precipitated the crisis, hastened his predicted sufferings and resulted in separating him from his brethren, depriving the Church of one of its strongest pillars, and bringing sorrow to Christian hearts in every land.

This history also causes us sorrow. And it is written as a warning for us. Let us never look at the question,

“How do people regard us?”

But only at this one question:

“What is God’s will?”

Paul was less guilty than the leaders in Jerusalem. He did it more out of love to these brethren. But the Jewish leaders were very concerned about what the people thought of them and Paul, and were thereby working on the principle of giving the revelation of themselves from themselves. Let’s turn to the last pages of this chapter to see the real character of these people.

The Acts of the Apostles, p. 417:

Christ told the Jews at Nazareth a fearful truth when He declared that with backsliding Israel there was no safety for the faithful messenger of God. They would not know his worth or appreciate his labors. While the Jewish leaders professed to have great zeal for the honor of God and the good of Israel, they were enemies of both. By precept and example they were leading the people further and further from obedience to God—leading them where He could not be their defense in the day of trouble.

The Saviour’s words of reproof to the men of Nazareth applied, in the case of Paul, not only to the unbelieving Jews, but to his own brethren in the faith. Had the leaders in the Church fully surrendered their feeling of bitterness toward

the apostle, and accepted him as one specially called of God to bear the gospel to the Gentiles, the Lord would have spared him to them.

There was no full surrender, no full meekness. And this lack of meekness meant lack of cooperation with the angel of God.

The Acts of the Apostles, p. 417-418:

God had not ordained that Paul's labors should so soon end, but He did not work a miracle to counteract the train of circumstances to which the course of the leaders in the Church at Jerusalem had given rise.

The same spirit is still leading to the same result. A neglect to appreciate and improve the provisions of divine grace, has deprived the Church of many a blessing. How often would the Lord have prolonged the work of some faithful minister, had his labors been appreciated! But if the Church permits the enemy of souls to pervert the understanding, so that they misrepresent and misinterpret the words and acts of the servant of Christ, if they allow themselves to stand in the way and hinder his usefulness, the Lord sometimes removes from them the blessing which He gave.

Satan is constantly working through his agents to dishearten and destroy those whom God has chosen to accomplish a great and good work. They may be ready to sacrifice even life itself for the advancement of the cause of Christ, yet the great deceiver will suggest to their brethren doubts concerning them which, if entertained, would undermine confidence in their integrity of character, and thus cripple their usefulness.

Too often he succeeds in bringing upon them, through their own brethren, such sorrow of heart that God graciously interposes to give His persecuted servants rest. After the hands are folded upon the pulseless breast, when the voice of warning and encouragement is silent, then the obdurate may be aroused to see and prize the blessings they have cast from them. Their death may accomplish that which their life has failed to do.

There was lack of meekness in these people which was expressed in their failure to surrender fully to the revelations given through Paul. This lack of surrender was caused by their efforts to give a revelation of themselves from themselves. And this meant that they were concerned with their reputation in the world, especially among the Jews.

That pride led to a break between them and the angel. The angel could not lead them any longer, and this then certainly hastened the apostasy of that Church that had begun so nobly.

It began, as described in *Revelation*, as a rider on a white horse that went out for victory, but it ended up as a black horse. The Church got more and more involved into this kind of apostasy, and soon it became this terrible persecuting church which we know to be the Roman Catholic Church of the Middle Ages, which exists till today. Sad, isn't it?

So that shows how essential it is that we always cooperate with our guardian angel, with the angel who leads this movement. This means that we need a constant watchfulness for that meekness which is to be found in the life of Christ, who was so humble that He even did not give His own revelation, but received it from His Father. And it is the privilege for each one of us to be like Him.

Paul's Conversion

We've talked about Paul and his imprisonment. Let us see how he came to his conversion. In the first verses of *Acts* chapter 9, we are informed how he went with letters from the Sanhedrin to Damascus in order to pursue the Christians there. As he journeyed to Damascus, suddenly a light shone around from heaven, and he fell to the ground and heard a voice saying to him:

Acts 9

⁴ Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?

⁵ And he said, Who are you, Lord? And the Lord said, I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting. It is hard for you to kick against the pricks.

⁶ So he, trembling and astonished, said, Lord, what do you want me to do? And the Lord said to him, Arise, and go into the city and you will be told what you must do.



Jesus appears to Saul
(Carolsfeld, Bibel in Bildern, 1860)

Jesus could have given him the message himself, but this is not how He works. He works through His Church. The order of revelation, we have seen according to Gospel Order, is:

- God speaks through Christ,
- Christ speaks through the angel, and
- The angel then speaks either to the individual, if he needs personal guidance, or through the messenger if it concerns present truth and the Church.

Since this is the order of revelation, where is the angel in this appearance to Saul? We don't find him. Christ himself appeared to Paul: the only time when Christ himself appeared after the ascension.

Paul was chosen by God to be the apostle to replace fallen Judas. Therefore, since Jesus personally appeared to all the disciples, that may be a good reason why He also personally appeared to Paul. Otherwise, we find that Jesus always spoke through an angel.

But before we confirm this, let's first look to verse 10 in the same chapter. Paul came to Damascus, into the city and was three days without sight in which he neither ate nor drank, and then it says,

Acts 9

¹⁰ Now there was a certain disciple at Damascus named Ananias, and to him the Lord said in a vision, Ananias. And he said, Here I am, Lord.

¹¹ So the Lord said to him, Arise, and go to the street called Strait, and enquire at the house of Judas for one called Saul of Tarsus; for behold, he is praying

¹² And in a vision he has seen a man named Ananias, coming in and putting his hand on him that he might receive his sight.

¹³ Then Ananias answered, Lord, I have heard from many about this man—how much harm he has done to your saints in Jerusalem,

¹⁴ And here he has authority from the Chief Priest to bind all who call on your name.

¹⁵ But the Lord said to him, Go, for he is a chosen vessel of mine, to bear my name before the Gentiles, kings, and the children of Israel;

¹⁶ For I will show him how many things he must suffer for my name's sake.

¹⁷ And Ananias went his way...

Who was speaking to Ananias? My Bible shows in red let-

ters everything that Jesus is supposed to have said. When the Lord here spoke to Ananias, it is printed in red. So who did the publishers of this Bible think was speaking to Ananias? Jesus. And it seems to be so, because it says, “The Lord.” And furthermore, He says that Paul should be His vessel to proclaim His name before the people; not the angel’s name, certainly not, but the name of Jesus.

However, we are blessed to have the Spirit of Prophecy comments on this event.

Testimonies to the Church, vol. 3, p. 430-431:

After Saul was directed to go to Damascus, he was led by the men who accompanied him to help him bring the disciples bound to Jerusalem to be tried and put to death. Saul tarried with Judas at Damascus, devoting the time to fasting and prayer. Here the faith of Saul was tested. Three days he was in darkness of mind in regard to what was required of him, and three days he was without sight. He had been directed to go to Damascus, for it should there be told him what he should do.

He is in uncertainty, and he cries earnestly to God. *An angel is sent* to Ananias, directing him to go to a certain house where Saul is praying to be instructed and what he is to do next. Saul’s pride is gone. A little before he was self-confident, thinking he was engaged in a good work for which he should receive a reward. But now all is changed. Said the Lord *through the angel* to Ananias,

Acts 9

¹¹ ...behold, he prays.

The angel informed the servant of God that he had revealed to Saul in vision a man named Ananias coming in and putting his hand on him so that he might receive his sight. Ananias can scarcely credit the words of the angel and repeats what he has heard of Saul’s bitter persecution.

So, who was actually talking to Ananias? Gabriel, the angel of the Lord, the Leader, the Executive-General, the Administrator of the universe. He came here at this important point of

time and to this important place, because that was the front-line of the battle between good and evil. And he prepared Ananias to meet Saul.

That was not an easy task for the angel. Saul had such a bad reputation for persecuting that he had to labor with Ananias to overcome his prejudices, in which he finally succeeded. Here again, we find an example of how an angel prepares the way for a missionary contact. That is what angels always do. They prepare the way for missionary contacts so that these contacts are successful.

So let us, when we are doing missionary work, rely on the mighty work of the angels who are so powerful and who excel in strength, instead of relying on our tactics and our wisdom and our works. This is the strong message that we receive through studying the work of the angels.

15. Angels in Revelation 1 to 3

WHEN we studied the book of *Revelation* in the past, we never looked especially at the angels and their role. But since the light has come on this subject, *Revelation* is again very interesting, because most of the mention of angels is found in *Revelation*. In fact, if you look at a Concordance under the word “angel” or “angels,” you will find that most references are from the book of *Revelation*.

So we shall study what role they play there. This will give us a deeper understanding of many parts of the book of *Revelation*, and especially of the close connection that exists between heaven and earth. It is a very encouraging and enlightening study.

We know that the book of *Revelation* is especially for the last days. Some parts of that book have prophecy that is already fulfilled; but those parts are the smaller parts. The greater parts are still ahead of us, and we are in the middle of the fulfillment of some. So it is very interesting for us to see what role the angels play in our time.

Before we now look at *Revelation* itself, we should have a little look at *Testimonies to Ministers*, in the chapter “The Study of Daniel and Revelation.” And Ellen White makes some remarks which are of special interest:

Testimonies to Ministers, p. 114:

When the books of *Daniel* and *Revelation* are better understood, believers will have an entirely different religious experience. They will be given such glimpses of the open gates of heaven that heart and mind will be impressed with the character that all must develop in order to realize the blessedness which is to be the reward of the pure in heart.

So all who begin to understand the book of *Revelation*, and specially what role the angels play there, will have a different view of things.

Testimonies to Ministers, p. 114:

The Lord will bless all who will seek humbly and meekly to understand that which is revealed in the *Revelation*.

Again, we are informed that humility and meekness are the conditions for understanding this.

The book contains so much that is large with immortality and full of glory, that all who read and search it earnestly, receive the blessing to...

Revelation 1

³ ...those that hear the words of this prophecy and keep the things which are written therein.

One thing will certainly be understood from the study of *Revelation*...

What is the one thing that certainly will be understood?

...that the connection between God and His people is close and decided.

So if there's nothing else to be understood, that is the one thing, that is the major theme,

...that the connection between God and His people is close and decided. A wonderful connection is seen between the universe of heaven and this world.

God's Order Revealed

Let us look at the book of *Revelation* now:

Revelation 1

¹ This is the revelation of Jesus Christ.

Some titles in the Bible say,

“The Revelation of John.”

But this is not the right title. The right title is:

¹ The revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave Him to show His servants things which must shortly take place. And He sent and signified it by His angel to His servant John.

Yesterday we studied what this means: this is the revelation that Jesus Christ receives from His Father; it is a testimony of His great humility, of His great submission. He even does not give His own revelation, but receives it from His Father, and then He passes it on. That is the order described in *Revelation* 1:1. God gives the revelation to Christ, then this revelation is given on to the angel, and the angel gives this revelation to John, and John to the seven churches.

This order is an order that God has established; and since He has established that order, He will always use it. That is something we learned of God and we learned from the study of Gospel Order: once God establishes an order, He will always use this order. It is like the law. Once God establishes a law, He will always keep it. It will be a very settled and fixed law.

Psalms 119

⁸⁹ For ever, O Lord, your word is settled in heaven.

This does not mean that this order cannot be extended. As we have learned, in the Latter Rain and especially in the new earth, the order will be extended, yet it will remain the same order.

Let us look very carefully, how this is fulfilled in the book of *Revelation*. After the introductory verses, John writes of himself:

Revelation 1

⁴ John, to the seven churches which are in Asia, grace to you and peace from Him who is, and who was, and who is to come; from the seven spirits who are before His throne;

⁵ And from Jesus Christ, the faithful witness, the first-born from the dead and the ruler over the kings of the earth. To Him who loved us and washed us from our sins in His own blood.

We know why Christ is the ruler of the kings of the earth: because of His tremendous meekness. And this meekness He

has not left behind on this earth, but He took it with Him onto His throne. That means, we have a very meek Ruler, who will, for sure, serve us; and Moses and his great interest in the people of God, is just a reflection of the great interest that this Ruler has for us. So it goes on to say:

Revelation 1

⁶ And He has made us kings and priests to God and Father. To Him be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.

⁷ Behold, He is coming with clouds and every eye will see Him, and they also who pierced Him, and all the tribes of the earth will mourn because of Him. Even so, amen.

⁸ I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end, says the Lord, who is, and who was and who is to come—the Almighty.



Christ as the Alpha and Omega, among the Seven Candlesticks.

(Beautiful Pearls, 1897)

There are some translations of the Bible which put this verse in another place. In the German and in some other English translations, I think, the numbering of these verses are different. I'm using the *New King James Bible* now. Let's read on:

⁹ I, John, both your brother and companion in tribulation and in the kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ, was in the isle that is called Patmos for the word of God and for the testimony of Jesus Christ.

¹⁰ I was in the spirit on the Lord's day, [which is the Sabbath-day,] and heard behind me a loud voice as of a trumpet,

¹¹ Saying: I am the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last; and what you see, write in a book and send it to the seven churches which are in Asia—to Ephesus, to Smyrna, to Pergamos, to Thyatira, to Sardis, to Philadelphia, and to Laodicea.

¹² Then I turned to see the voice that spoke with me. And having turned, I saw seven golden lampstands;

¹³ And in the midst of the lampstands one like the Son of man, clothed with a garment down to the feet and girded about the chest with a golden band.

John describes his vision, and he describes how he received this vision. He says,

Revelation 1

¹⁰ I heard a voice as of a trumpet.

Whose voice would this be, the voice like a trumpet? Christ's voice? But how could this be? The angel was talking with him, wasn't he?

¹ The revelation of Jesus Christ which God gave to Him, and He sent and signified it by His angel to His servant John.

So, whose would be the voice as of a trumpet? The angel's. But how can the angel say, "I am the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last"? Who would say this from himself? Christ would say this. And furthermore, when John heard this voice, he turned around to see from where the voice came, and what did he see?

¹³ ...one like the Son of man, clothed with a garment down to the feet, and girded about the chest with a golden band.

So whom did John see? Jesus.

¹⁴ His head and hairs were white like wool, as white as snow; and His eyes like a flame of fire.

¹⁵ His feet were like fine brass, as it were refined in a furnace; and His voice as the sound of many waters.

¹⁶ He had in His right hand seven stars, and out of His mouth went a sharp two-edged sword. And His countenance was like the sun shining in its strength.

¹⁷ And when I saw Him I fell at His feet as dead. But He laid His right hand on me, saying to me: Be not afraid. I am the first and the last.

Who would say this? Christ.

¹⁸ I am He who lives and was dead; and behold, I am alive for evermore.

Gabriel, the angel whom we know to be this angel of *Revelation*, also was dead and lives. But his resurrection was only possible because of Christ. He would never claim that he was the source. Therefore, we conclude that only Divinity could say this. Christ therefore is the One who was dead and is alive for evermore.

Revelation 1

¹⁸ ...and I have the keys of hades and of death.

¹⁹ Write the things which you have seen, and the things which are, and the things which will take place after this—

²⁰ The mystery of the seven stars which you saw in my right hand, and the seven golden lampstand. The seven stars are the angels of the seven churches, and the seven lampstands which you saw are the seven churches.

Revelation 2

¹ To the angel of the church at Ephesus, write...

Next comes the description of the seven churches. And all this is spoken by the same voice, the voice like a trumpet, the voice that spoke to John when he looked around and saw Jesus; and then Jesus laid His hand on him, as it looks like here, and He said to him:

Revelation 1

¹⁷ Be not afraid. I am the first and the last.

So it seems that Jesus actually talks to him, and He continues to talk in *Revelation* 2 and 3. In fact, my Bible puts these words in red letters, meaning that these are the direct words of Jesus. Then we come to *Revelation* 4: that is printed in black letters. But I think it's not correct to print that in black letters. Let's read chapter 4, verse 1:

Revelation 4

¹ After these things I looked, and behold, a door standing open in heaven, and the first voice which I heard was like a trumpet speaking with me, saying: Come up here, and I will show you things which must take place after this.

So, whose voice was this? That same voice. The same voice that is described in *Revelation* 1, that sounded like a trumpet. And this voice continues to explain to him what he sees. So *Revelation* 4 and 5 should also be printed in red letters, in fact.

There is an exception. In *Revelation* chapter 5, one of the twenty-four elders comes up to John.

Revelation 5

⁵ But one of the elders said to me, Do not weep. Behold the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has prevailed to open the scroll and loose its seven seals.

⁶ And I looked, and behold, in the midst of the throne the four living creatures, and in the midst of elders stood a Lamb...

So here one of the twenty-four elders speaks for a change. In chapter 6, the revelation given to John from the angel continues until chapter 7, where again one of the twenty-four elders speaks to him.

Revelation 7

¹³ Then one of the elders answered, saying to me: Who are these arrayed in white robes? and where did they come from?

¹⁴ And I said to him [i.e., to one of those twenty-four elders]: Sir, you know. So he said to me: These are the ones who came out of great tribulation.

Thus the elder continues to explain to him. Then in chapter 8 there are the seven seals, which reaches to chapter 10. In chapter 10, we read:

Revelation 10

⁸ Then the voice which I heard from heaven spoke to me...

Now, what voice must this be? The same voice, because he doesn't say "a voice," he says: "The same voice which I heard from heaven," or "which I have heard before." No other person is introduced in all these chapters. It's always the same voice that talks to him,³⁶ until we come to chapter 17 of *Revelation*, where it says:

Revelation 17

¹ Then one of the seven angels with the seven bowls [or, "who had the seven bowls"] came and talked with me, saying to me: Come, I will show you the judgement of the harlot who sits on many waters.

Then that angel continues to explain many, many things in *Revelation* 17 and 18. So we have one of the seven-plague angels talking with John. And then he continues with him till chapter 19 where he showed him New Jerusalem. Then in chapter 21 the angel with the seven bowls came again to him:

Revelation 21

⁹ Then one of the seven angels with the seven bowls filled with the seven last plagues came to me and talked with me, saying: Come, I will show you the bride, the Lamb's wife.

And he continues to talk till the end. We will come back to chapter 22 in a minute. Let's summarize. So far, how many persons spoke to John? What impression do you get?

³⁶ **Revelation 14** ¹³ And I heard a voice from heaven saying unto me...

1. There's first the voice which spoke like a trumpet;
2. Then we have one of the twenty-four elders;
3. Then we have again one of the twenty-four elders:
maybe it's the same, maybe it's another;
4. Then we have one of the seven-plague angels;
5. Then again one of the seven-plague angels, which
again could be another, but let's suppose it's the same;

Then we have at least three, and maybe five. Can this be? Is this the order? Did you find the angel Gabriel mentioned any time here? No.

When God explains something in His word, He does not repeat this over again in another part. He just expects us to remember that, and apply it. We have learned this in the study of God's character. Once God explained to us how He destroys, as shown in the life of Christ, then He expects us to apply that to other scriptures where mention is made of God's destroying. So that is what we must do as Bible students.

There are some, however, who expect God to repeat the same thing over and over and over again. If He doesn't do it, they say,

"Well, then it must be different."

A very typical thing is the coming of Christ. The first and second coming of Christ are clearly explained. If the Scripture does not specifically say whether it's referring to the first or the second coming, then people think that they can interpret it however they want. No. God expects us to understand from one part of the Scripture how the other part of the Scripture is meant, without Him having to repeat the whole thing again.

So, likewise, once God has explained to us the order by which He gives the revelation, He always continues with that order. And the order is: God through Christ, through the angel Gabriel, and then to the prophet John, and then to the

seven churches. In fact, Ellen White even says that one of the seven-plague angels is Gabriel.

The Desire of Ages, p. 98-99:

To the question of Zacharias, the angel said, “I am Gabriel, that stand in the presence of God; and am sent to speak unto you, and to show you these glad tidings.” Five hundred years before, Gabriel had made known to Daniel the prophetic period which was to extend to the coming of Christ. The knowledge that the end of this period was near, had moved Zacharias to pray for the Messiah’s advent. Now the very messenger, through whom the prophecy was given, had come to announce its fulfilment.

The words of the angel, “I am Gabriel, that stand in the presence of God,” show that he holds a position of high honor in the heavenly courts. When he came with a message to Daniel, he said,

Daniel 10

²¹ There is none that holds with me in these things, but Michael [Christ] your Prince.

Of Gabriel the Saviour speaks in the *Revelation*, saying that:

Revelation 1

¹ He sent and signified it by His angel unto His servant John.

And to John the angel declared,

Revelation 22 [RV]

⁹ I am a fellow servant with you and with your brethren, the prophets.

Who is this angel who said this to John? It is one of the seven angels who have the seven bowls filled with the seven last plagues. He came to John to show him the bride, the Lamb’s wife. When this was shown, John fell at his feet, and this angel said to him,

“Don’t do it, because I am your fellow servant with the prophets.”

Ellen White says that this is Gabriel. So who must one of the seven-plague angels be? He must be Gabriel, very certainly.

The Desire of Ages, p. 99:

Wonderful thought—that the angel who stands next in honor to the Son of God, is the one chosen to open the purposes of God to sinful men.

Once we understand the principle that God speaks through His angel to John, then what do we conclude that one of the seven-plague angels is, even if we did not have the statement from *The Desire of Ages*? We would conclude that it was Gabriel, because once God establishes the order, He continually uses it.

Whose voice must it be, then, that sounded like a trumpet? Gabriel. It must be. What would we then conclude that one of the twenty-four elders is, who speaks and explains to John the things? Again: Gabriel. He appears in different ways.

You may find this very difficult to accept at the moment, since that voice told him so clearly, “I am the first and the last,” and so forth. But let’s have a look at the last chapter of *Revelation* now, and that could be very confusing if the principle is not understood.

Revelation 21

⁹ Then one of the seven angels, who had the seven bowls filled with the seven last plagues, came to me and talked with me, saying, Come, I will show you the bride, the Lamb’s wife.

Good. We clearly see now that this is Gabriel who talked with him.

¹⁰ And he [that is, Gabriel] carried me away in the spirit to the great and high mountain, and showed me the great city, the holy Jerusalem descending out of heaven from God, having the glory of God...

He describes a lot of things about New Jerusalem, about the glory.

Revelation 22

¹ And he showed me a pure river of the water of life.

Who is “he” that showed him the river of the water of life? Gabriel, certainly; there’s no other person introduced; there is no question about this. Then he describes the wonderful scene, and then we come to:

⁶ Then he [Gabriel] said to me, These words are faithful and true: and the Lord God of the holy prophets sent His angel to show His servants the things which must shortly take place.

Again there is a very clear confirmation of the order by which God gave this revelation, as He gives all revelations. When the angel talks of “His angel,”—that is, of God’s angel—of whom does he speak? Of himself.

Revelation 22

⁷ Behold I am coming quickly. Blessed is he who keeps the words of the prophecy of this book.

Who would say this? Who would say, “I am coming quickly”? Jesus, certainly. But didn’t we see that it was Gabriel who was speaking with him? Certainly; Gabriel was talking with him. But here again my Bible shows this text in red letters, because we recognize that these must be the words of Jesus.

⁸ Now I, John, saw and heard these things; and when I heard and saw, I fell down to worship before the feet of the angel who showed me these things.

Again John confirms that it was the angel who showed him these things.

⁹ Then he said to me, See that you do not do that, for I am your fellow servant, and of your brethren, the prophets, and

of those who keep the words of this book. Worship God.

We recognize that this a wonderful confirmation that the angel is indeed Moses, because he says,

“I am your fellow servant of the prophets,”

—and Moses was a prophet. He had seen very clearly the sufferings of Christ, and in that vision had been prepared to be a servant to the other angels; i.e. a commanding angel to the other angels. Then it continues:

¹⁰ And he said to me...

“He.” Who is “he”? It is the one whom John wanted to worship and who said not to worship him because he is a fellow servant, and of John’s brethren, the prophets.

Revelation 22

¹⁰ He said to me: Do not seal the words of the prophecy of this book, for the time is at hand.

¹¹ He who is unjust, let him be unjust still: he who is filthy, let him be filthy still: he who is righteous, let him be righteous still: he who is holy, let him be holy still.

¹² And behold, I come quickly, and my reward is with me to give to everyone according to his work.

Again, who would speak this? Wouldn’t Jesus say, “I am coming quickly”? Again my Bible has these words in red-letter printing.

¹³ I am the Alpha and the Omega.

Would the angel say of himself, “I am the Alpha and the Omega”? Certainly not.

¹³ I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end, the first and the last.

¹⁴ Blessed are those who do His commandments that they may have the right to the tree of life and enter through the gates into the city.

¹⁵ But outside are dogs, and sorcerers, and sexually immoral,

and murderers and idolaters, and whoever loves and practises a lie.

¹⁶ I, Jesus, have sent my angel to testify to you these things in the churches. I am the Root, the Offspring of David, the bright and the morning Star.

Here we have it. Who says this, obviously? “I, Jesus,” He says. But did we have a change of persons who were speaking to John? Did the angel say,

“Well, now I’ll be quiet for a moment; now I’ll let Jesus talk,”

—and then Jesus continued? No. It’s one continuous stream of speaking.

Revelation 22

¹⁷ And the spirit and the bride say: Come. And let him who hears, say: Come; and let him who thirsts come and let him take the water of life freely.

¹⁸ For I testify to everyone who hears the words of this prophecy and of this book: if anyone adds to these things, God will add to him the plagues that are written in this book.

¹⁹ And if anyone takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part from the Book of Life, from the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book.

²⁰ He who testifies to these things, says: Surely I am coming quickly. Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus.

²¹ The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen.

That is the end of this wonderful book. *Revelation 22* could be very confusing, couldn’t it? But there is one little key that unlocks the whole mystery, and it is that Jesus speaks through His angel. When we understand that Jesus speaks through the angel, we may recognize the words of Jesus; but the actual person talking with John would be the angel. But so selflessly does he pass on the message that he uses the exact words that Jesus uses. So the angel says to John,

¹⁶ I, Jesus, have sent my angel.

That is something that we learned in Gospel Order, that the messenger is nothing but a channel. Today we have a messenger, but God does not dictate to him, word by word, the message. He has no “verbal inspiration.” But it is rather the principles of truth which are revealed to the messenger, and the exact wording is chosen by the messenger.

But at times, in the Bible, we know that the prophets received the exact wording. For example: the Ten Commandments. By whom were the words of the Ten Commandments framed? By Moses? No, by God. And there are other examples where God directly framed the words, which means that God spoke these words to these persons. They were nothing but channels.

It’s a very humble position if you just repeat the things that you are told. It’s something like the work of a translator. A translator has the duty to repeat faithfully what the speaker says; he cannot add his own thoughts. He does not receive only thoughts, but he receives words; and these words he must faithfully transmit to the audience. There’s no room for creating one’s own words or putting in one’s own thoughts. And this humble position in heaven, Gabriel is pleased to accept. He is pleased to be just a channel.

Can you remember how in the Old Testament the prophets sometimes said, “Thus says the Lord,” and then they said, “I say to you”? They didn’t mean, “I, the prophet,” but they meant, “I, God.” That is, they just repeated what God gave them. And the same thing is shown here.

The angel Gabriel receives the words of Christ, and he very faithfully passes on these words. So we know that what the angel Gabriel shows to John, when he shows him the judgment of the harlot, when he shows him the bride, etc., that is exactly what he receives from Jesus. There is nothing added, nothing taken away. It is a very faithful transmission of the

message. We can rely on it as coming from the original Source.

As Jesus was faithful to receive His revelation from God and from no one else, so the angel is very faithful to receive his message from Jesus only and no one else, not even from himself. That is faithful communication. That is Gospel Order.

And understanding these things, we will have no difficulty to read *Revelation 22*. As I said already, my Bible has red-letter printing of what Jesus is supposed to have said, and some of the verses, like verse 7, 12, 13 and 16 in *Revelation 22* are printed in red letters. But that is wrong. Everything should be printed in red letters, because it is all the word of Jesus, through His angel.

In fact, the whole *Revelation* should be printed in red letters, because it is the revelation of Jesus Christ; and even the whole Bible as well: that is very true. It is the revelation of Jesus Christ, and therefore, the whole book should be printed in red letters. That some is printed in black only seems to indicate that this is not so important. I don't know what thoughts the publishers had, when they did this. But the thought that comes into my mind is:

“Well, what Jesus said is more authentic. That is really the stuff that you can rely upon. What is written in black letters is, well, more like the apocrypha. It's what the prophet says.”

No, no, not at all! We can rely on the fact that everything in *Revelation* is said by Jesus, through His angel. Therefore there should be no confusion.

So when we read *Revelation 1* again, we would understand very clearly that the voice that talked with John would be Gabriel. The source of the message would be Jesus, but Jesus would talk through Gabriel to John. And when John, the reve-lator, turned around and saw Jesus, there's no question that he saw Jesus; still, it is not Jesus directly who gave him the

explanation of *Revelation*: it was given through the angel. And when Jesus told John,

Revelation 1

¹⁷ I am the first and the last,

–He told him this through the angel: the angel did the talking. That is something that we have previously studied in Gospel Order.

You remember, how God summoned together the host of heaven after Lucifer’s sin, to give the explanation of the position of His Son? When we first studied this, we wondered a little bit how God, the Father, could summon together all the heavenly host and could talk about the position of His Son, when He never talks to them directly, but only through His Son?

But we came to understand the principle that God always speaks through His Son. Therefore, when God summoned them together, He summoned them how? Through His Son. When He talked to them, He talked to them through His Son. Everything God did, He did through His Son in heaven.

So likewise, when Jesus talks to the prophet, He does everything through His angel. Understanding this we come to some very interesting conclusions:

- One of the seven-plague angels is Gabriel.
- One of the twenty-four elders is also Gabriel, because one of the twenty-four elders actually explains to John some parts of the visions. If it is Gabriel who does this, then one of the twenty-four elders must be Gabriel.

The Angels of the Churches

Let’s come to chapter 2 for a moment. There Jesus, through the angel Gabriel, tells John:

Revelation 2

¹ To the angel of the church of Ephesus write: These things

says He who holds the seven stars in His right hand, who walks in the midst of the seven gold lampstands.

And then follows the description of the first church. Then the message to second church is given:

Revelation 2

⁸ To the angel of the church of Smyrna...

To whom should John write? To the angel of the church of Smyrna. Who is the angel to whom he should write? We have learned that the word *angel* means *messenger*. That is the Greek word, *angelos*. And the English translation would simply be “messenger.” So to whom should John write? To the messenger of that church, or to the leader of that church, and the leader would then pass it on to his church.

The system is similar to the times of the Old Testament. When Moses received the message from God, he passed it on to the elders, and the elders to the heads of families, and the heads of families to the families.

“Angel” also symbolizes the whole church, since the messenger is just a representative of the church. But there’s also another meaning. An angel is an actual angel: not just an earthly messenger, but also a heavenly being. When it says,

¹ To the angel of the church in Ephesus, write...

—it means also an angel in heaven, because each church has an angel as a guide, as a guardian. There are not only individuals who have their guardian angels, but there are also churches who have their guardian or leading angels. That point has become very clear to us as we studied the people of Israel in the wilderness. Didn’t they have a guardian angel there? For certain. It was even Christ himself who was in the cloud and went before them.³⁷

And so likewise, the church in each historical period, has

³⁷ *Isaiah* 63:9; *1 Corinthians* 10:1-4.

her guardian angel. Today we have our guardian angel as well, who is present when we attend camp-meetings, who will especially work on our behalf: to make us ready to receive the message, to drive away the hosts of evil angels, to lead in the way we should go, and so forth. That is how God leads this church, and how He led all the other churches.

But you may say to me:

“Doesn’t it sound a little bit strange that John is commissioned to write to angels?”

Well, we should remember that the angels, even though they are the guardians of the church, are still learners. And that is one amazing thing: the angels desire to look into the truth that God reveals to His people today. The angels who have so much experience, the angels who have so much insight, they still are very interested and eager to learn more of the truth.³⁸

And when we study the message, they are not only the communicators of the message, they are learners as well. We should remember that the messenger, when he passes on his message, is a learner as much as everyone of us. He is not the Source. He is only the channel, and as such he learns the message while he presents it, as much as anybody else. And learning it, he is very greatly blessed by it.

Everybody, and you will find this in your experience too, who passes on the message to those who have not heard it, is greatly blessed by presenting it, because he himself learns much, as the light and life of truth flows through him.

³⁸ 1 Peter 1:12.



The Throne in Heaven surrounded by the Four Living Creatures,
and the Twenty-Four Elders.

(Biblia, 1751)

16. Angels in Revelation 4 and 5

WE BEGAN to consider the angel of the churches. This means the angel of the Church of God in any period of time. Not only does a church have a messenger on this earth, but it has a messenger in heaven also. Or I should rather say, he is on this earth as well as in heaven: there is a literal angel passing between heaven and earth at a tremendous speed. And these angels are leading God's church, and they are as much interested to look into the truth as are the redeemed.

You might think,

“For an angel, it would be very boring—such a camp-meeting. He already knows all the material that we are studying. Doesn't Gabriel know who he is? Doesn't he understand the wonderful things that we learn here about angels?”

Certainly he understands much of it; but at the same time he is greatly interested to learn even more. This theme can never become boring to him. And while we are studying, he communicates the message to us.

I can testify to that, because this theme is studied in so many camp-meetings. This is the seventh or eighth camp-meeting in which we are studying the theme of the angels. And I can testify for myself: it is not boring. I find it interesting each time we study it together. And I can imagine very well that the angels must be finding it highly interesting as well.

Each time I have presented this theme, I have learned a few new things. And so likewise, the angels learn a few new things each time. They have a much, much deeper insight than we have. They understand the theme that we are studying much deeper than we do, so they profit much more than we do from the study. The angel who is communicating this message to us, is at the same time learning from it, except

that he learns more than we do.

How different this is compared to us humans who sometimes have little taste for spiritual things. I don't speak of us in particular, because I know you came here because you like the message and you have testified that it is very lively and interesting. There are some who would have no taste for it. And if I contrast them with the angels who desire to look into these truths, the difference is striking. The angels are so much more powerful in intellect; they have much more insight. If they find it interesting, shouldn't it be so for people also? And if it isn't, then what blindness we must have, not to be able to see the rich treasure God is offering!

So the angels that are referred to in *Revelation 2* and *3* are literal angels. They are also messengers on this earth. Let's turn to chapter 4, the most interesting chapter together with chapter 5.

The word "angel," if you look through your Concordance, is hardly mentioned in these two chapters: only one time in connection with the throng of angels surrounding the throne of God. But we can be sure that in this chapter angels are mentioned. And we will see this now.

The Viewpoint of Heaven

Revelation 4

¹ After these things I looked, and behold, a door standing open in heaven. And the first voice which I heard was like a trumpet speaking with me, saying: Come up here, and I will show you things which must take place after this.

² Immediately I was in the Spirit, and behold, a throne set in heaven, and One sat on the throne.

So, where was John carried? To what place? To the very center of the universe: there, where we find the throne of God, and from where all power emanates that sustains all the worlds, the suns, and everything. And he was invited to come

up there by the angel. The angel told him,

Revelation 4

¹ Come up here, and I will show you the things which must take place after this.

There's a great significance in these few words. Our understanding is often very shallow, so we do not grasp the depths of meaning in the Scriptures. So often people say,

“Well, but I consider things as they really are. I am a very practical person.”

Certainly they are practical, realistic; but from what viewpoint are they realistic? From the viewpoint of Earth. There's another reality to be found when we come up to the place where John was invited to come to.

When we are down here in Palmwoods, we see as far as the next building. In this direction that I'm pointing, we see as far as the forest. We don't see very far. But let's suppose, I would invite you to come in an aeroplane, and we would fly above this place, then you would see much, much more.

Revelation 1

¹ Come up here, and I will show you the things...

Our understanding of reality will be much more broadened when we come up to that place. When Jacob was pressed down in the darkness among wild beasts, robbers, and so forth, he was looking at reality; and the reality looked so dark that he was depressed! Then the Lord in a dream said to him,

“Come up here, and I will show you the things from my viewpoint, from the viewpoint of the throne.”

And how different did Jacob feel after this look! He had a very different understanding of reality. So likewise with John. He was on this earth, and he was invited,

“Come up. Only from my viewpoint can you behold the

last events aright; otherwise you can't."

It would have been too difficult for John to actually bear all the news about the powers of darkness, from the image of the beast, from all the things which he saw. We know that Daniel found it difficult to bear the vision, even though he was a very faithful, devoted man. And John likewise couldn't have borne it.

But he was able to, when he viewed all these things from that place where the throne of God is. And from that place he saw also the end of these powers; and he saw the glorious kingdom restored to its original beauty. He saw also the redeemed there, and many other things.

When the three disciples came up on the Mount of Transfiguration, they saw things from a different angle.

The Desire of Ages, p. 208:

When Moses was about to build the sanctuary as a dwelling place for God, he was directed to make all things according to the pattern shown him on the mount. Moses was full of zeal to do God's work. The most talented, skillful men were at hand to carry out his suggestions; yet he was not to make a bell, pomegranate, a tassel, a fringe, a curtain, or any vessel of sanctuary except according to the pattern shown him.

Where was it shown to him? On the Mount. And that is symbolical for coming up: coming up and beholding the things from up there where the throne of God is.

The Desire of Ages, p. 208-209:

God called him into the mount and revealed to him the heavenly things. The Lord covered him with His own glory that he might see the pattern; and according to it, all the things were made.

Education, p. 258-259:

It was in the mount that Moses beheld the pattern of that

wonderful building which was to be the abiding place of His glory. It is in the mount with God—in the secret place of communion—that we are to contemplate His glorious ideal for humanity. Thus we shall be enabled to fashion our character building that to us may be fulfilled His promise,

2 Corinthians 6

¹⁶ I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people.

It was in the hours of the solitary prayer that Jesus, in His earthly life, received wisdom and power. Let the youth follow His example in finding at dawn and twilight a quiet season for communion with their Father in heaven. And throughout the day, let them lift up their hearts to God. At every step of our way He says,

Isaiah 41

¹³ I the Lord your God will hold your right hand,...Fear not, I will help you.

Could our children learn these lessons in the morning of their years, what freshness and power, what joy and sweetness, would be brought into their lives!

So, as John, the revelator, was invited to come up to behold the things of the future from that point, the Lord invites us in the same way. He says to you and me,

“Come up, and I will show you the things which must take place hereafter.”

There are many people who do not come up to behold the things from that place. And then what is the result of their investigation of the *Revelation*? They see in the book of *Revelation* only war and a strife of political powers. That’s all they see. That is because the viewpoint from which they study “the things which must take place after this” is from down here; and they don’t see much.

It’s like when you are in a valley, you just don’t see very far. But on the top of the mountain you have a vast panoramic view. So likewise, if we strive to grasp the meaning of *Revela-*

tion 4 and 5, which is the vision of the throne of God, we shall understand much better the prophetic events that are explained in the chapters after: the seven seals, the seven trumpets, the seven angels, and the seven plagues. All these things will become much clearer to us when we first understand *Revelation* 4 and 5. So we are invited,

“Come up here, and I will show you the things.”

Ministering Spirits

What do you suppose we will see and receive up there, that gives us the widened view of the events of the great controversy that are taking place on this earth? What is revealed to us in *Revelation* 4 and 5?

- The throne of God, and
- The angels surrounding the throne; and
- The work of the angels in heaven.

This work of the angels, what they are doing, shows us more of their great interest and of their power in the things of this earth; and now we begin to see more clearly what interest heaven has in this earth, and how close heaven is to each one of us, and also to the events that are taking place in the politics in Australia, in America, in Russia, and everywhere. Sometimes people wonder,

“Why is this happening now? And where is it going?”

By studying *Revelation* 4 and 5 we shall better understand these events, and we shall be much more restful and calm. Once we view any event from the angle of the throne of God, it will appear very different. We will then see that the news, as it is presented, is often very narrow and short-sighted. It is the result of people’s minds being occupied only with what takes place on this earth. From that narrow view they behold the events, and from that narrow view they give the news, which is very different from what it would be if we would

“Come up.”

Education, p. 255-256:

Faith is needed in the smaller no less than in the greater affairs of life. In all our daily interests and occupations the sustaining strength of God becomes real to us through an abiding trust.

Viewed from its human side, life is to all an untried path. It is a path in which, as regards our deeper experiences, we each walk alone. Into our inner life no other human being can fully enter. As the little child sets forth on that journey in which, sooner or later, he must choose his own course, himself deciding life's issues for eternity, how earnest should be the effort to direct his trust to the sure Guide and Helper!

As a shield from temptation and an inspiration to purity and truth, no other influence can equal the sense of God's presence.

Hebrews 4

¹³ All things are naked and open unto the eyes of Him with whom we have to do

Habakkuk 1

¹³ [He is] of purer eyes than to behold evil, and can not look on iniquity.

This thought was Joseph's shield amidst the corruptions of Egypt. To the allurements of temptation his answer was steadfast:

Genesis 39

⁹ How...can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?

Such a shield, faith, if cherished, will bring to every soul. Only the sense of God's presence can banish the fear, that for the timid child...

—and we could add, “adult,”

...would make life a burden. Let him fix his memory on the promise,

Psalms 34

⁷ The Angel of the Lord encamps round about them that fear Him and delivers them.

Let him read that wonderful story of Elisha in the mountain city, and, between him and the host of armed foemen, a mighty encircling band of heavenly angels. Let him read how to Peter, in prison and condemned to death, God's angel appeared; how, past the armed guards, the massive doors and the great iron gateway with their bolts and bars, the angel led God's servant forth in safety. Let him read of that scene on the sea when to the tempest-tossed soldiers and seamen, worn with labor and watching and long fasting, Paul the prisoner, on his way to trial and execution, spoke those grand words of courage and hope:

Acts 27

²² Be of good cheer, for there shall be no loss of any man's life among you.

²³ For there stood by me this night the Angel of God, whose I am and whom I serve,

²⁴ Saying, Fear not, Paul; you must be brought before Caesar: and lo, God has given you all them that sail with you.

In the faith of this promise, Paul assured his companions,

³⁴ There shall not a hair fall from the head of any of you.

So it came to pass. Because there was in that ship one man through whom God could work, the whole shipload of heathen soldiers and sailors was preserved.

⁴⁴ They escaped all safe to land.

These things were not written merely that we might read and wonder, but that the same faith which wrought in God's servants of old might work in us. In no less marked a manner than He wrought then will He work now wherever there are hearts of faith to be channels of His power.

So the Lord invites us,

"Come up to this place, come up to the throne. Behold the angels and, because you see them, overcome your fear that makes life a burden. Look at these things from my viewpoint and you shall be mightily encouraged."

How tremendously encouraged the prophet John was after this vision he received in *Revelation*! The island was not a

prison for him anymore; it was a place of glory. And he had no more fears.

I am reminded of the great messengers of the past, like Ellen White. When she came to the end of her life, what was her attitude? Was she filled with gloom and depression because of all the difficulties the Church would go through? No. It was a glorious happiness. She had seen the events from another angle. She had seen these things from the throne room, and that gave her a different viewpoint.

So let's turn to *Revelation 4*:

Revelation 4

¹ After these things I looked, and behold, a door standing open in heaven. And the first voice which I heard was like a trumpet speaking with me, saying, Come up here, and I will show you things which must take place after this.

² Immediately I was in the Spirit; and behold, a throne set in heaven, and One sat on the throne.

³ And He who sat there was like a jasper and a sardius stone in appearance; and there was a rainbow around the throne, in appearance like an emerald.

John beheld the throne of God and Jesus on the throne. He would not actually see the Father himself, because the Bible clearly says,

John 1

¹⁸ No man has seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, He has declared Him.

1 Timothy 6

¹⁶ ...dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto; whom no man has seen, nor can see.

Not even the prophets in vision could see the Father, except through the Son. But let's also remember that while John saw Jesus, not only here but also in *Revelation 1*, it was still through the angel that Jesus spoke with him, as much as God

spoke through Jesus to the angels. The vision that John saw in *Revelation* 1 was of Jesus: the person that laid His hand on him was Jesus: but all given through the angel. Whenever we find a voice talking to John, giving him an explanation of visions or giving him the revelations, then we know it is Jesus, but through the angel Gabriel.

Twenty Four Elders and Four Living Creatures

Revelation 4

⁴ Around the throne were twenty-four thrones, and on the thrones I saw twenty-four elders sitting, clothed in white robes; and they had crowns of gold on their heads.

We know that one of the elders gave explanations to John, and therefore, he must have been Gabriel, because it was Gabriel who gave the explanations to John.

⁵ And from the throne proceeded lightnings, thunderings, and voices. Seven lamps of fire were burning before the throne, which are the seven Spirits of God.

Here we see the Holy Spirit symbolized.

⁶ Before the throne there was a sea of glass, like crystal. And in the midst of the throne, and around the throne, were four living creatures full of eyes in front and in back.

⁷ The first living creature was like a lion, the second living creature like a calf, the third living creature had a face like a man, and the fourth living creature was like a flying eagle.

⁸ The four living creatures, each having six wings, were full of eyes around and within, and they do not rest day or night, saying: Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, who was, and is, and is to come!

Besides the twenty-four elders, we find the description of four living creatures. And where are they to be found?

⁶ ...in the midst of the throne, and around the throne.

Can you be closer to the throne than that? You just can't. That means, they are the highest and most powerful beings in

the universe of heaven, because the nearer to the throne you are, the higher your position is: that is the law of heaven.

Acts of the Apostles, p. 543:

Long afterward, when John had been brought into sympathy with Christ through the fellowship of His sufferings, the Lord Jesus revealed to him what is the condition of nearness to His kingdom.

Revelation 3

²¹ To him that overcomes, [Christ said,] will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in His throne.

The one who stands nearest to Christ will be he who has drunk most deeply of His spirit of self-sacrificing love,—love that—

1 Corinthians 13

⁴ ...vaunts not itself, is not puffed up,

⁵ ...seeks not her own, is not easily provoked, thinks no evil,

—love that moves the disciple, as it moved our Lord, to give all, to live and labor and sacrifice even unto death, for the saving of humanity.

These are the top commanding angels. And what do they do?

Revelation 4

⁸ ...they do not rest day nor night, saying: Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, who was, and is, and is to come.

⁹ Whenever the living creatures give glory and honor and thanks to Him who sits on the throne, who lives for ever and ever,

¹⁰ The twenty-four elders bow down before Him who sits on the throne and worship Him who lives forever and ever, and cast their crowns before the throne.

The four living creatures lead in worship, because they don't rest, and they cry constantly:

⁸ ...Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty.

Whenever they do that, the twenty-four elders all fall down

and worship. So these four living creatures are the leaders also in worship, which means that they have drunk more from God's self-sacrificing love, and therefore they are able to sing a special song: and in this song everybody will join, first the twenty-four elders. And they sing,

Revelation 4

¹¹ You are worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honor and power; for You created all things, and by your will they exist and were created.

Revelation 5

¹ And I saw in the right hand of Him who sat on the throne a scroll written inside and on the back, sealed with seven seals.

² Then I saw a strong angel proclaiming with a loud voice...

Here is the first mention of the word "angel" in *Revelation 4* and 5.

² Then I saw a strong angel proclaiming with a loud voice, Who is worthy to open the scroll and to loose its seals?

³ And no one in heaven or on earth or under the earth was able to open the scroll, or look into it.

⁴ So I wept much, because no one was found worthy to open and read the scroll, or to look into it.

⁵ But one of the elders said to me, Do not weep. Behold, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has prevailed to open the scroll and loose its seven seals.

⁶ And I looked, and behold, in the midst of the throne and of the four living creatures, and in the midst of the elders, stood a Lamb as though it had been slain, having seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God sent out into all the earth.

⁷ Then He came and took the scroll out of the right hand of Him who sat on the throne.

It's amazing how Jesus is described here. First, He is called:

⁵ ...the Lion of the tribe of Judah.

What are the characteristics of a lion? Strength, prevailing

power, boldness, courage. Then when John looked further, what did he see?

⁶ ...a Lamb, as though it had been slain.

What a contrast! But these two characteristics are combined in Jesus: the meekness of a slain lamb, and the power of a lion.

Revelation 5

⁸ Now when He had taken the scroll, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb, each having a harp, and golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints.

⁹ And they sang a new song...

The twenty-four elders and four living creatures have bowls of incense, and in those bowls are the prayers of the saints. Let's look back to the earthly sanctuary for a moment. Who, in the earthly sanctuary, would serve in the sanctuary carrying bowls of incense, which symbolized the prayers of Israel? The High Priest and his sons. So therefore, what category of beings must these four living creatures and twenty-four elders be, when they do that kind of work? They must fall in the category of the heavenly High Priest and His sons. And who are the sons of the High Priest in heaven? The redeemed angels. So we have here redeemed angels: redeemed from mankind.

⁹ And they sang a new song,

—which means it is the song of their experience.

⁹ ...saying: You are worthy to take the scroll, and to open its seals; for You were slain, and have redeemed us to God by your blood out of every tribe and tongue and people and nation,

¹⁰ And have made us kings and priests to our God; and we shall reign on the earth.

These two verses clearly indicate that these beings are redeemed human beings, because they say,

“You have redeemed us, and you have made us kings and priests, [according to the order of Melchizedek].”

In the Greek, the word “us” is left out altogether. But I think it is made clear from the context anyway that these are redeemed human beings.

Revelation 5

¹¹ Then I looked, and heard the voice of many angels around the throne, the living creatures and the elders; and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands,

¹² Saying with a loud voice: Worthy is the Lamb who was slain, to receive power and riches and wisdom, and strength and honor and glory and blessing!

¹³ And every creature which is in heaven and on the earth and under the earth and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, I heard saying: Blessing and honor and glory and power be to Him who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb forever and ever.

¹⁴ Then the four living creatures said, Amen. And the twenty-four elders fell down and worshipped Him who lives forever and ever.

The four living creatures and the twenty-four elders sing a new song, and then the choir of the many angels around the throne joins them in that wonderful song. And then everybody joins, and then the four living creatures say, “Amen,” and the twenty-four elders then bow down together. What a wonderful, majestic scene it is! That scene is given for our encouragement, for us to see the mighty power of God to solve the problems on this earth.

The Visions of Ezekiel

Let us turn to a parallel scripture to *Revelation* 4 and 5; and this we find in *Ezekiel*, chapter 1 and chapter 10. First of all, Ezekiel introduces his theme by saying that when he received the vision in the thirteenth year, in the fourteenth month, he was at the river Chebar. He was in Babylon, a prophet there

among the captives, and he saw a whirlwind coming out of the north, and a great cloud with raging fire engulfing itself, and brightness was all around it and radiating out of its midst like the color of amber, out of the midst of the fire.

Ezekiel saw the throne of God. He saw the same thing as John, the revelator. John, the revelator, was invited to “Come up here.” He was then carried to the throne. Likewise Ezekiel saw the throne of God.

Ezekiel 1

⁵ And from within came the likeness of four living creatures.

So the same term is used here: “four living creatures.”

⁵ ...And this was their appearance: They had the likeness of a man.

⁶ Each one had four faces, and each one had four wings.

⁷ Their legs were straight, and the soles of their feet were like the calves’ feet. They sparkled like the color of burnished bronze.

⁸ They had the hands of a man under the wings on their four sides, and each of the four had faces and wings.

⁹ Their wings touched one another. The creatures did not turn when they went, but each one went straight forward.

¹⁰ As for the likeness of their faces: each had the face of a man; each of the four had the face of lion on the right side, each of the four had the face of an ox on the left side, and each of the four had the face of an eagle.

¹¹ Thus were their faces. Their wings were stretched upward; two wings of each one touched one another and two covered their bodies.

¹² And each went straight forward. They went wherever the Spirit wanted to go, and they did not turn when they went.

So, do you see a likeness between those living creatures here and those in *Revelation*? We have the same angle again, the same viewpoint, which is the throne of God; and we have four living creatures which look alike in the one as in the other.



Ezekiel's first vision of the Throne of God.
(Captivating Bible Stories, 1913)

Ezekiel 1

¹³ As for the likeness of the living creatures, their appearance was like burning coals of fire and like the appearance of torches. Fire was going back and forth among the living creatures; the fire was bright, and out of the fire went lightning.

¹⁴ And the living creatures ran back and forth, in appearance like a flash of lightning.

¹⁵ As I looked at the living creatures, behold, a wheel was on the earth beside each living creature with its four faces.

¹⁶ The appearance of the wheels and their works was like the color of beryl, and all four had the same likeness. The appearance of their works was, as it were, a wheel in the middle of a wheel.

¹⁷ When they went, they went toward anyone of four directions; they did not turn aside when they went.

¹⁸ As for their rims, they were so high they were awesome; and their rims were full of eyes all around the four of them.

It goes on to describe the wheels, and then it says,

Ezekiel 1

²² The likeness of the firmament above the heads of the living creatures was like the color of an awesome crystal, stretched out over their heads.

²³ And under the firmament their wings spread out straight, one toward another. Each one had two which covered one side, and each one had two which covered the other side of the body.

Who are these four living creatures as they are described in *Ezekiel 1*? We have another description of them in *Ezekiel 10*:

Ezekiel 10

¹ And I looked, and there in the firmament that was above the head of the cherubim, there appeared something like a sapphire stone, having the appearance of the likeness of a throne.

Now that was the picture that we saw in *Ezekiel 1*: the throne which is described as a firmament, and under the throne the four living creatures with the wheels, carrying the whole throne as fast as the lightning of speed. In *Ezekiel 10* we have the same vision of the throne, and under the throne the four living creatures; but here they are called “cherubim.”

¹ And I looked, and there in the firmament that was above the head of the *cherubim*, there appeared something like a sapphire stone, having the appearance of the likeness of a throne.

² And he spoke to the man clothed with linen and said: Go in among the wheels, under the cherub; fill your hands with coals of fire from among the cherubim, and scatter them over the city. And he went in, as I watched.

These visions that Ezekiel had are very inspiring, and I am beginning to greatly appreciate them. They are intended to give us strength.

³ Now the cherubim were standing on the south side of the temple, when the man went in and the cloud filled the inner

court.

⁴ Then the glory of the Lord went up from the cherub and paused over the threshold of the temple; and the house was filled with the cloud, and the court was full of the brightness of the Lord's glory.

⁵ And the sound of the wings of the cherubim was heard even in the outer court, like the voice of almighty God when He speaks.

⁶ Now it happened, when he commanded the man clothed in linen, saying: Take fire from among the wheels, from among the cherubim, that he went in and stood beside the wheels.

⁷ And the cherub stretched out his hand from among the cherubim, to the fire that was among the cherubim, and took some of it, and put it into the hands of the man clothed with linen, who took it and went out.

⁸ The cherubim appeared to have the form of a man's hand under their wings.

⁹ And when I looked, there were four wheels by the cherubim, one wheel by one cherub and another wheel by each other cherub; the wheels appeared to have the color of a beryl stone.

¹⁰ As for their appearance, all four looked alike—as it were, a wheel in the middle of a wheel.

¹¹ When they went, they went toward any of their four directions; they did not turn aside when they went, but followed in the direction the head was facing. They did not turn aside when they went.

At first sight, the vision looks very confusing: a wheel within wheel: what does it mean? It seems confusing, but it's actually very orderly because everything moves exactly in one direction, and even with the speed of lightning.

When Ezekiel described the speed of these cherubim as the speed of lightning, does this mean that the angels are as fast as the lightning? They are much faster, as we have seen. But with what else could Ezekiel have compared? There was nothing with which to compare the speed of the cherubim—it was impossible; so he just said, they went as the lightning. And

that is how we would describe it, because we have nothing faster than light. We can't imagine that there's something faster than light; but there is something faster, and that is revealed in the word of heaven.

So, we have in *Ezekiel* 10 the same vision. We don't need to read the whole chapter. Maybe you would like to do this in your free time, and try to understand all the symbols. It would be good to write them all down, and then try to understand them. These symbols are all symbols from the throne of God.

First of all, it talks about four living creatures, then of four cherubim. So who are the four living creatures? They are four cherubim. Are cherubim redeemed? Yes, some of them, at least. Cherubim are angels that are in a specially high position. We know this from the Old Testament. What were the two angels which covered the Ark of the Covenant? They were cherubim. They were directly around the throne, like it is described in:

Revelation 4

⁶ In the midst, and around the throne were four living creatures.

And we know that they are four cherubim, and that these cherubim are four redeemed human beings. Their position is among the throne. We might now wonder who these four living creatures were, when they were on earth. Who could these four be who are the mightiest of the Lord's host?

They lead in worship; they are in the midst of the throne. Gabriel must be one of them. Furthermore, we know that Elijah is one of the mightiest of the Lord's host. Another one would be Enoch; and there are others as well of whom we shall learn in our next study.

But we know that there were other redeemed beings in heaven at that point of time. Who are they? They are John the Baptist and the others who were raised together with Christ.

Of this we read in *The Desire of Ages*, in the Bible, and in *Early Writings*; and we will go over this in the evening or tomorrow, depending on when we have the next study. And then we will see more clearly what these mighty beings are doing in heaven.



Ezekiel's visions of the Throne show how God,
through the work of redeemed Angels,
controls the complicated interplay of events on Earth.
(*Taferelen der Voornaamste*, 1728)

17. Angels and the Seals

IN *Revelation* 4, we saw how the twenty-four elders and the four living creatures were around the throne and in the midst of the throne, and worshiped and praised God. We also saw the seals in the right hand of Him who sat on the throne, and how nobody could open the seals, and finally Jesus, the Lamb that was slain, was able to open the sealed book. We have seen that in *Ezekiel*, chapter one and chapter ten, there are parallels to this.

Identifying the Elders and Living Creatures

We are mostly interested, for the moment, in finding out who these four living creatures and the twenty-four elders are; and principally we have already determined that they are the redeemed, by the study of the verses 8-13 of the *Revelation* 5, where these twenty-four elders and four living creatures are represented as holding the censors of the prayers of the saints; and they cry out,

Revelation 5

⁹ You are worthy to take the scroll and open its seals for You were slain, and have redeemed us to God by your blood out of every tribe and tongue and people and nation,

¹⁰ And have made us kings and priests to our God; and we shall reign on the earth.

In *Ezekiel* 10, they are identified as cherubim. So we know that these redeemed human beings are cherubim. That does not surprise us, because have studied in the meantime that when we come to heaven, we shall be like the angels. Therefore the redeemed in heaven are like the angels, and are mentioned as angels in the book of *Revelation*.

In *The Desire of Ages*, as well as in *Early Writings*, we read who these people are. Let's turn to these two books, first to *The Desire of Ages*, in chapter 81, "The Lord is Risen."

The Desire of Ages, p. 786:

As Christ arose, He brought from the grave a multitude of captives. The earthquake at His death had rent open their graves, and when He arose, they came forth with Him. They were those who had been co-laborers with God, and who, at the cost of their lives, had borne testimony to the truth. They were to be witnesses for Him, who had raised them from the dead.

During His ministry, Jesus had raised the dead to life. He had raised the son of the widow of Nain, and the ruler's daughter, and Lazarus. But these were not clothed with immortality. After they were raised, they were still subject to death.

But those who came forth from the grave at Christ's resurrection, were raised to everlasting life. They ascended with Him as trophies of His victory over death and the grave.

"These," said Christ, "are no longer the captives of Satan. I have redeemed them. I have brought them from the graves as the first-fruits of my power, to be with me where I am—nevermore to see death or experience sorrow."

These went into the city and appeared unto many declaring,

"Christ has risen from the dead, and we be risen with Him."

Thus was immortalized the sacred truth of the resurrection. The risen saints bore witness to the truth of the words,

Isaiah 26

¹⁹ Your dead men shall live. Together with my dead body, shall they arise.

Their resurrection was an illustration of the fulfillment of the prophecy,

¹⁹ Awake and sing, you that dwell in dust; for your dew is as the dew of herbs and the earth shall cast out the dead.

There was an earthquake when Christ died on the cross, and with this earthquake some graves were rent open; and then when Christ was resurrected, they were resurrected with Him. Another bit of information that we receive about who they are, is to be found in *Early Writings*, in the chapter, "The

Resurrection of Christ”:

Early Writings, p. 184:

When Jesus, as He hung upon the cross and cried out, “*It is finished,*” the rocks rent, and the earth shook, and some of the graves were opened. When He arose a victor over death and the grave, while the earth was reeling and the glory of heaven shone around the sacred spot, many of the righteous dead, obedient to His call, came forth as witnesses that He had risen. Those favored, risen saints came forth glorified. They were chosen and holy ones of every age, from creation even down to the days of Christ. Thus while the Jewish leaders were seeking to conceal the fact of Christ’s resurrection, God chose to bring up a company from their graves to testify that Jesus had risen, and to declare His glory.

So here we read that they were chosen saints who were resurrected from the time of creation until the days of Christ. By what criteria were they chosen?

The Desire of Ages, p. 786:

They were those who had been co-laborers with God...

All the saints have been co-laborers, in some way or another. But it specifies further:

...and who, at the cost of their lives, had borne testimony to the truth.

What do we call this class of people? Martyrs. They have given their life for the truth. Let’s name some. For example, Abel. Other examples? John the Baptist. Others? Jeremiah, certainly. Isaiah?

In our modern times, Huss was one. Jerome, and so forth. There were many more martyrs. Stephen, certainly. But they were martyrs after the resurrection of Christ, and so they were not included.

But there were martyrs from the days of creation till the days of Christ. Who would then be included, most probably?

Jeremiah, possibly. John the Baptist, and who else do you suppose? Wouldn't you think that Abel would be one of them? I thought so also. However, Ellen White states that Abel will be resurrected at the second coming of Christ.

The SDA Bible Commentary, vol. 5, p. 1110:

A few graves were opened at the resurrection of Christ; but at His second coming all the precious dead, from righteous Abel to the last saint that dies, shall awake to glorious, immortal life.

This surprised me a little bit. I expected that Abel would be one of those who were risen with Christ. Especially since the statement says that they were the chosen ones from the days of creation down to the days of Christ. So there must have been other martyrs in the patriarchal age after creation.

John the Baptist

And who was a martyr in the days of Christ? John the Baptist. He certainly was one of those who were resurrected at that time. Let's turn back to John the Baptist and see a little bit, what great privilege he had, to suffer with Christ. It is chapter 22, "Imprisonment and Death of John."

The Desire of Ages, p. 224:

The childhood, youth and manhood of John had been characterized by firmness and moral power. When his voice was heard in the wilderness saying,

Matthew 3

³ Prepare the way of the Lord, make His paths straight,

—Satan feared for the safety of his kingdom. The sinfulness of sin was revealed in such a manner that men trembled. Satan's power over many who had been under his control was broken. He had been unwearied in his efforts to draw away the Baptist from a life of unreserved surrender to God; but he had failed. And he had failed to overcome Jesus. In the temptation in the wilderness, Satan had been defeated, and his rage was great. Now he determined to bring sorrow upon

Christ by striking John. The One whom he could not entice to sin, he would cause to suffer.

Jesus did not interpose to deliver His servant. He knew that John would bear the test. Gladly would the Saviour have come to John, to brighten the dungeon gloom with His own presence. But He was not to place himself in the hands of His enemies and imperil His own mission. Gladly would He have delivered His faithful servant. But for the sake of thousands, who in after years must pass from prison to death, John was to drink the cup of martyrdom.

Why was it necessary for the future martyrs to have the example of John? True, his example inspires me to be faithful. But there are other examples too: Jeremiah, Abel, Stephen, and many others. Why would it be so necessary for John the Baptist to drink the cup of martyrdom for the sake of others? It is true that when a person seems to be left by God and remembers how faithful John the Baptist was in such a situation, he certainly gets courage and hope. But let's read a bit more:

The Desire of Ages, p. 224:

As the followers of Jesus should languish in lonely cells, or perish by the sword, the rack, the fagot, apparently forsaken by God and man, what a stay to their hearts would be the thought that John the Baptist, to whose faithfulness Christ himself had borne witness, had passed through a similar experience!

We understand that with Jesus, not all, but some of the martyrs were resurrected, from the days of creation to the days of Christ. So, John the Baptist would be one of those who was resurrected and is in heaven. He serves for us. And, is he able to serve? Certainly. His martyrdom made him even more able to serve.

We have studied about Moses, and how he became qualified to be the greatest in God's kingdom. How did he become qualified to serve us? By all the difficulties he went through.

As Moses learned to deal with the unruly, to seek for the lost, and to labor for those who did not deserve it,—and he finally led them to the land of Canaan,—he was prepared for the same kind of work in heaven.

Likewise, John the Baptist, having come under the power of death through his testimony of truth, knew how to strengthen those who are in a similar situation. So, as John the Baptist to-day is in heaven, and is an angel—in fact, he is a cherub—he is able to especially encourage and strengthen those who are in such a situation. It was very much for the benefit of after generations, that he should suffer that. All future martyrs, such as Stephen, John Huss, and so forth, were greatly blessed by having one in heaven who could understand them and minister on their behalf.

The Desire of Ages, p. 224-225:

Satan was permitted to cut short the earthly life of God's messenger; but that life which "is hid with Christ in God," the destroyer could not reach. *Colossians* 3:3. He exulted that he had brought sorrow upon Christ, but he failed of conquering John. Death itself only placed him forever beyond the power of temptation. In this warfare, Satan was revealing his own character. Before the witnessing universe he made manifest his enmity toward God and man.

Though no miraculous deliverance was granted John, he was not forsaken. He had always the companionship of heavenly angels, who opened to him the prophecies concerning Christ, and the precious promises of Scripture. These were his stay, as they were to be the stay of God's people through the coming ages.

Our situation may seem sometimes to be very hopeless, but we should only look to John the Baptist and compare our life with his. We have the privilege of looking into the beautiful nature, to see the green trees, to breathe the fresh air. He had to remain there all alone in the dungeon, seemingly forsaken by everybody; and yet he held fast his faith. This should be a

very strong encouragement; because what he could do, we can do likewise, through the same power that he had.

The Desire of Ages, p. 224-225:

To John the Baptist, as to those that came after him, was given the assurance,

Matthew 28 [RV]

²⁰ Lo, I am with you all the days, even unto the end.

God never leads His children otherwise than they would choose to be led, if they could see the end from the beginning, and discern the glory of the purpose which they are fulfilling as co-workers with Him. Not Enoch, who was translated to heaven, not Elijah, who ascended in a chariot of fire, was greater or more honored than John the Baptist, who perished alone in the dungeon.

Philippians 1

²⁹ Unto you it is given in behalf of Christ, not only to believe on Him, but also to suffer for His sake.

And of all the gifts that heaven can bestow upon men, fellowship with Christ in His sufferings is the most weighty trust and the highest honor.

And it is the highest education, too. It is the best preparation for the positions which we shall have in heaven, as commanding angels, as cherubim, who are in the midst and around the throne. That was the destiny for John the Baptist, and for this reason he was permitted to suffer with Christ. Like Moses, he understood what it means to give up self completely. Therefore, he was called the greatest by Jesus.

Luke 1

¹⁵ Verily I say unto you, Among them that are born of women there has not risen a greater than John the Baptist.

The question is asked,

The Desire of Ages, p. 219:

In the estimation of heaven, what is it that constitutes greatness? Not that which the world accounts as greatness; not wealth, or rank, or noble descent, or intellectual gifts, in

themselves considered. If intellectual greatness, apart from any higher consideration, is worthy of honor, then our homage is due to Satan, whose intellectual power no man has ever equalled. But when perverted to self-serving, the greater the gift, the greater curse it becomes.

It is moral worth that God values. Love and purity are the attributes He prizes most. John was great in the sight of the Lord, when, before the messengers from Sanhedrin, before the people, and before his own disciples, he refrained from seeking honor for himself, but pointed all to Jesus as the Promised One.

He was also great when he said,

John 3

³⁰ He [Christ] must increase and I must decrease.

He was great when he held fast his faith when he was perishing alone in the dungeon. Often we have seen people give up their faith in the message of present truth, just because someone else made a mistake. But how many more will give up the faith when they have to suffer because of the truth?

Here we see John the Baptist, who himself suffered for the message that he preached, and did not give up his faith. It made him very great in the sight of heaven. Because of this, he received the weightiest trust and the highest honor in the heavenly courts. For certain then, he is one of the greatest in heaven. As he was greatest on this earth, so he is also the greatest in heaven. It means the greatest servant; he is the most able to serve, having tasted the sufferings of Christ in himself.

At the time of Christ's resurrection, then, there were at least three redeemed, very exalted angels in heaven: Melchizedek, Gabriel and Elijah; or Moses, Enoch and Elijah. The fourth one of the highest of the angels, we can be sure, must have been John the Baptist, since Jesus called him the greatest ever borne of women.

Jesus also said,

Matthew 11

¹¹ ...notwithstanding he that is the least in the kingdom, is greater than he.

But what Jesus meant in this was that the least in the kingdom is more privileged than he. That does not mean that everyone is greater than John the Baptist; it just means that those who saw Christ's life, His sufferings and His resurrection in their earthly life were more privileged than John the Baptist in his earthly life. But then John was greatly privileged in his resurrection, for then he would be one of those mighty beings who are in the midst and around the throne.

There is one difficulty. John the revelator was given the vision of *Revelation* close to 100 AD. This was about seventy years after the resurrection of Christ. This falls short of the thousand years which Gabriel, for example, needed to be prepared for his post. As we studied, the same time period of a thousand years elapsed between Enoch's translation and his appearance as Melchizedek on earth. So, why then would we say that these four mighty beings, that are in the midst and around the throne, are Enoch, Moses, Elijah and John the Baptist?

We should keep in mind that *Revelation* 4 and 5 are not only given for the time of John the revelator; they are also given for the time after that. John was invited,

Revelation 4

¹ Come up here, and I will show you the things which shall take place after this.

And then he was given a quick insight into the events of the early Church, as covered in the first seal. But in the seals following are portrayed events that took place much later, and in these events each of the four beings played very decisive roles.

Today, all these four of the mightiest redeemed ones, which are Moses, Elijah, Enoch and John the Baptist, are playing major roles in the events on this earth.

The Four Cherubim

To make this a little bit more understandable, let us turn again to *Ezekiel*, chapter 10. In this chapter, we are shown “a wheel within a wheel” and the four cherubim guiding these wheels; and in the midst of them was a hand, as of a man’s hand, guiding the whole thing. About this we shall read now. Here Ellen White talks of political events which are taking place on this earth; and also about personal events. In our personal lives we make certain experiences of gladness and sorrow; likewise, families and nations make their experiences.

Prophets and Kings, p. 535:

Every nation that has come upon the stage of action has been permitted to occupy its place on the earth, that the fact might be determined whether it would fulfill the purposes of the Watcher and the Holy One. Prophecy has traced the rise and progress of the world’s great empires—Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece and Rome. With each of these, as with the nations of less power, history has repeated itself. Each has had its period of test; each has failed, its glory faded, its power departed.

While nations have rejected God’s principles, and in this rejection have wrought their own ruin, yet a divine overruling purpose has manifestly been at work throughout the ages. It was this that the prophet Ezekiel saw in the wonderful representation given him during his exile in the land of the Chaldeans, when before his astonished gaze were portrayed the symbols that revealed an overruling Power that has to do with the affairs of the earthly rulers.

Upon the banks of the river Chebar, Ezekiel beheld a whirlwind seeming to come from the north,

Ezekiel 1

⁴ ...a great cloud, and a fire infolding itself, and a brightness was about it, and out of the midst thereof as the color of the

amber.

Remember that vision of *Ezekiel* chapter 1 and 10? A number of wheels, intersecting one another, were moved by four living beasts. This speaks not only of nations, but also of families, of churches, of individuals.

Prophets and Kings, p. 535-536:

High above all these,

Ezekiel 1

²⁶ ...was the likeness of a throne as the appearance of the sapphire stone: and upon the likeness of the throne was the likeness of the appearance of a man above upon it.

Ezekiel 10

⁸ And there appeared in the cherubims the form of a man's hand under their wings.

These wheels were so complicated in arrangement that at first sight they appeared to be in confusion; yet they moved in perfect harmony. Heavenly beings, sustained and guided by the hand beneath the wings of the cherubim, were impelling those wheels; above them, upon the sapphire throne, was the Eternal One; and round about the throne was a rainbow, an emblem of divine mercy.

What do these wheels represent? The cherubim stand by the wheels and the whole thing is guided by the hand that is beneath them both. The wheels are a symbol of nations, individuals, families, and churches, and what they are doing. And they do it together with the angels; the angels are there as well. All of them are guided especially by the hand, which is the power of God, and which gives power to the angels, to the cherubim, as well as to the individuals who are acting on this earth, or to nations, or to the churches.

Prophets and Kings, p. 536:

As the wheel-like complications were under the guidance of the hand beneath the wings of the cherubim, so the complicated play of human events is under divine control.

Amidst the strife and tumult of nations, He that sits above

the cherubim still guides the affairs of this earth.

The history of nations speaks to us today. To every nation and to every individual God has assigned a place in His great plan. Today men and nations are being tested by the plummet in the hand of Him who makes no mistake. All are by their own choice deciding their destiny, and God is overruling all for the accomplishment of His purposes.

The prophecies which the great I AM has given in His word, uniting link after link in the chain of events, from eternity in the past to eternity in the future, tell us where we are today in the procession of the ages, and what may be expected in the time to come. All that prophecy has foretold as coming to pass, until the present time, has been traced on the pages of history, and we may be assured that all which is yet to come will be fulfilled in its order.

Let's look at the whole picture as the Church, for a moment. We are a Church, and here are the cherubim guiding us, and the hand that gives power. How fast was the whole throne moving? Very fast, like lightning. What does this indicate? That the work of God is going forward speedily, provided that the Hand guides it. We must rely on that Hand that is guiding the whole thing.

Sometimes the events look very complicated, but they move in harmony. So, what shall the Church of God do? They shall work in unison and harmony with each other, in one direction. That also is possible through the Hand that is guiding all. Likewise the nations. They are not always doing God's will, but God is overruling everything to fulfill His purposes, and prophecy has exactly traced what will happen.

Prophets and Kings, p. 536-537:

Today the signs of the times declare that we are standing on the threshold of great and solemn events. Everything in our world is in agitation. Before our eyes is fulfilling the Saviour's prophecy of the events to precede His coming.

Matthew 24

⁶ You shall hear of wars and rumours of wars...

⁷ Nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom: and there shall be famines, and pestilences, and earthquakes, in diverse places.

The present is a time of overwhelming interest to all living. Rulers and statesmen, men who occupy positions of trust and authority, thinking men and women of all classes, have their attention fixed upon the events taking place about us. They are watching the relations that exist among the nations. They observe the intensity that is taking possession of every earthly element, and they recognize that something great and decisive is about to take place—the world is on the verge of a stupendous crisis.

I suggest you personally read this chapter. It gives us a deep insight into what Ezekiel saw and described in *Ezekiel* chapter 1 and 10.

Role of the Living Creatures in the Seals

Let us turn back to *Revelation*, and let us look for a moment to *Revelation* 5 and following. The person on the throne, who is God, had in His hand a book of seven seals which is opened by Christ; and as a result, we find the descriptions given from chapter 6 to chapter 8.

History is unfolding through the fact that Christ was slain. It's the slain Lamb, remember, who was able to open the seals. And then we find the events described here. It is not only that Christ is able to open the seals that these events are taking place, but other persons are involved as well.

Revelation 6

¹ Now I saw when the Lamb opened one of the seals; and I heard one of the four living creatures saying with a voice like thunder, Come and see.

Not only is Christ playing an important role in the unfolding of these events, but here one of the creatures is also active.

³ When He opened the second seal, I heard the second living

creature saying, Come and see.

The same thing is repeated with the third and fourth seal. Then in the fifth seal the martyrs play a special role, and in the sixth seal, nature is testifying in catastrophies. We will understand more clearly, as we go on to chapter 8, that angels play a very great role.

For example, Moses is the General, or is the special leader, who is leading God's people. He, as the angel Gabriel, the mightiest of the Lord's host, will give understanding of new light to God's messengers or prophets. John the Baptist would be specially qualified to strengthen and lead those who give testimony with their lives, and also Elijah and Enoch play their important roles in the events that are taking place on this earth, events that are going on all around God's people.

God's people are the center of this earth, or the center of the greatest interest in this universe even. That seems to say a little bit much, because we certainly don't see ourselves as the center of this world! Not at all. In the minds of the people today, the center of this world are the presidents and business leaders. But the real battlefield between the good and evil is to be found in the Church of God. Here good and evil angels fight for souls, and here the destiny of souls is decided.

Let us turn back to *Revelation 5*, and let's take a closer look at that.

Revelation 5

⁴ I wept much because no one was found worthy to open and read the scroll or to look at it.

⁵ But one of the elders said to me, Do not weep; behold, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has prevailed to open the scroll and loose its seven seals.

Why did John weep so much? Because without the death of Christ, what would we know of future history? Without Him there would be no hope for the Church. But because He has

given His life and is the Lamb slain, He is worthy to open the seals, and therefore to give a future to the Church of God. And this future is described in the seven seals, beginning with the first seal, which gives promise of a glorious future for the Church of God. But then there are more difficult times ahead until we come to the sealing of the saints in their foreheads.³⁹

Let's look again at the content of the seven seals. What do we find described in the seven seals? Just political events? There's more to it.

Christ's Object Lessons, p. 294:

They [the Jews] hated His example of truthfulness and piety and the elevated spirituality revealed in all He did. His whole life was a reproof to their selfishness, and when the final test came, the test which meant obedience unto eternal life or disobedience unto eternal death, they rejected the Holy One of Israel. When they were asked to choose between Christ and Barabbas, they cried out,

Luke 23

¹⁸ Release unto us Barabbas!

And when Pilate asked,

Matthew 27

²² What shall I do then with Jesus?

—they cried fiercely,

²² Let Him be crucified.

John 19

¹⁵ Shall I crucify your King?

—Pilate asked, and from the priests and rulers came the answer,

¹⁵ ...We have no king but Caesar.

When Pilate washed his hands, saying,

Matthew 27

²⁴ I am innocent of the blood of this just person,

—the priests joined with the ignorant mob in declaring passionately,

³⁹ Revelation 7.

²⁵ His blood be on us, and on our children.

Thus the Jewish leaders made their choice. Their decision was registered in the book which John saw in the hand of Him that sat upon the throne, the book which no man could open. In all its vindictiveness this decision will appear before them in the day when this book is unsealed by the Lion of the tribe of Judah.

This statement gives quite a revelation of some of what is contained in that book. What do we find in that book? The decision of the Jews when they cried out, “Crucify Him! Crucify Him!” and “We have no King but Caesar.” That was reported in the book; and when the seal is opened, that will become obvious. It means that the results of this action will come in the fulfilment of events. We know that these people, who rejected Christ, will see Him when He comes, because it says very clearly,

Revelation 1

⁷ Behold, He is coming with the clouds, and every eye will see Him, and they also who pierced Him; and all the tribes of the earth shall mourn because of Him. Even so, Amen.

They will see Him in the time of the sixth seal. When the seal is opened by the Lion of the tribe of Judah, then they will see the vindictiveness of their decision, and it will appear before them vividly in that day. They will see that their decision caused their terrible fate. And so it must be. These events make very clear what the result of the rejection of Christ is.

All the other seals that were opened, are likewise wonderful events for God’s people, because they all must take place; and it is wonderful to see that everything is going exactly as God has planned it beforehand. He is surprised by nothing, not even by the rising of the papal beast in the Middle Ages. He will not be surprised when the “image of the beast” will be set up. All this has to take place, and will make more obvious the triumph of God’s cause.

A Close Connection

In *Revelation*, we see the close connection between heaven and earth. And this is something the Lord invites us to see. We shall look in our next study more closely at the seven seals, and we will see especially that God's people who are in heaven today play a major role in these events. They are guiding God's church, they are encouraging God's people, and they give them strength to withstand all storms.

Even *Revelation* 1 already contains this lesson, because Jesus walks in the midst of His Church on this earth, He walks in the midst of the seven candlesticks. So He is not far away. He is greatly interested in the events.

We have considered the work of the four living creatures, and have seen that they are leading in worship in heaven, and that they are in the midst and around the throne, which signifies their closeness. They are the cherubim, foreshadowed by the cherubim in the sanctuary, who were also in the midst and around the throne.

The cherubim are not there just to praise God, but they are constantly serving as well. And so they are revealed to be very much involved in the events of this earth. For example, as we have read in *Revelation* 6, they speak and then the events take place. We have also seen this clearly in the visions of *Ezekiel* 1 and 10 where these cherubim are seen guiding the wheels. There are so many wonderful statements concerning this, and some of them we should read.

Testimonies for the Church, vol. 5, p. 749-750:

It was under circumstances of difficulty and discouragement that Isaiah, while yet a young man, was called to the prophetic mission. Disaster was threatening his country. By their transgression of God's law the people of Judah had forfeited His protection, and the Assyrian forces were about to come against the kingdom of Judah.

But the danger from their enemies was not the greatest

trouble. It was the perversity of the people that brought upon the Lord's servant the deepest depression. By their apostasy and rebellion they were inviting the judgments of God.

The youthful prophet had been called to bear to them a message of warning, and he knew that he would meet with obstinate resistance. He trembled as he viewed himself and thought of the stubbornness and unbelief of the people for whom he was to labor. His task seemed to him almost hopeless. Should he in despair relinquish his mission and leave Israel undisturbed to their idolatry? Were the gods of Nineveh to rule the earth in defiance of the God of heaven?

Such thoughts as these were crowding upon his mind as he stood under the portico of the holy temple. Suddenly the gate and the inner veil of the temple seemed to be uplifted or withdrawn, and he was permitted to gaze within, upon the holy of holies, where even the prophet's feet might not enter. There rose up before him a vision of Jehovah sitting upon a throne high and lifted up, while His train filled the temple.

Another Viewpoint

Whenever the prophets were shown the temple, it was for the purpose of giving them another view. So it was with Jacob in Bethel, and with Isaiah here at the entrance of the temple, so it was with John on Patmos. God obviously knew that they needed another viewpoint when difficulties came.

Isaiah's vision, recorded in *Isaiah* 6, is then described, and how he saw the seraphim and the whole temple filled with the glory of the Lord.

Testimonies for the Church, vol. 5, p. 750:

These angel ministers lifted up their voices in solemn invocation,

Isaiah 6

³ Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of hosts: the whole earth is full of His glory,

—until post and pillar and cedar gate seemed to tremble at the sound, and the house was filled with their praise. Never before had Isaiah realized so fully the greatness of Jehovah, or His perfect holiness; and he felt that, in his human frailty and unworthiness, he must perish in that divine presence.

⁵ Woe is me, [he cried,] for I am undone; for I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people with unclean lips; for my eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts.

But a seraph came to him to strengthen him for his great mission—a living coal from the altar was laid upon his lips, with the words,

⁷ Lo, this has touched your lips, and your iniquity is taken away, and your sin purged.

And then the voice of God was heard, saying:

Isaiah 6

⁸ Whom shall I send? And who will go for us?

Isaiah with holy confidence responded,

⁸ ...Here I am, send me.

That marked a change in the mind of the prophet. Before this happened, he was contemplating and thinking,

“Well, should I leave the people alone in their idolatry? They will only resist me when I go, and preach to them.”

But once he caught a view of the throne of God, he was ready to respond to the call,

Isaiah 6

⁸ Here I am, send me.

Testimonies for the Church, vol. 5, p. 751:

What though earthly powers should be arrayed against Judah, what though Isaiah should meet with opposition and resistance in his mission? He had seen the King, the Lord of hosts.

He received a different perspective. It is like looking at the ants. When we look from our perspective at the ants, they are very small, tiny, powerless creatures compared to us. But if

we ourselves were the size of ants, then real ants would appear as very big monsters to us. You can view them through a microscope and see these big monsters. Imagine that you are as small as they are: that frightens you, doesn't it? But once we have the right perspective, we see them exactly as they are. This helps to understand *Psalm 2*, which says,

Psalm 2

⁴ He that sits in the heavens shall laugh: the Lord shall hold them in derision.

This is how Isaiah began to view things. Now that he had seen the Lord in His glory, why then should he fear what all the powers should do against Judah?

Testimonies for the Church, vol. 5, p. 751:

What though earthly powers should be arrayed against Judah, what though Isaiah should meet with opposition and resistance in his mission? He had seen the King, the Lord of hosts; he had heard the song of the seraphim,

Isaiah 6

³ The whole earth is full of His glory;

—and the prophet was nerved for the work before him. The memory of this vision was carried with him throughout his long and arduous mission.

The story of Isaiah goes on. In the next revelation, God showed him that even though he would go and preach, the people would not listen to him; he would tell them, and they would not hear; he would show them, and they would not see.

Isaiah 6

¹¹ Then said I, Lord, how long? And He answered, Until the cities be wasted without inhabitant, and the houses without man, and the land be utterly desolate,

¹² And the Lord have removed men far away, and there be a great forsaking in the midst of the land.

The Lord showed Isaiah that in his life he would see no significant fruit from his work; and yet Isaiah did not change his

mind. “Here I am, send me.” Having seen the glory of God, that spurred him on for the rest of his life, he ever remembered what he had seen.

That is the vision the Lord invites us to see when we study the book of *Revelation*. Once we see that, we shall not be the same people anymore; we shall not look again at the little ants as though they were monsters. Rather we will look at them from God’s view, from His throne.

Harmony Out of Confusion

Ellen White next goes on to speak about Ezekiel:

Testimonies for the Church, vol. 5, p. 751-752:

Ezekiel, the mourning exile prophet, in the land of the Chaldeans, was given a vision teaching the same lesson of faith in the mighty God of Israel. As he was upon the banks of the river Chebar, a whirlwind seemed to come from the north,

Ezekiel 1

⁴ ...a great cloud, and a fire infolding itself, and a brightness was about it, and out of the midst thereof as the color of amber.

A number of wheels of strange appearance, intersecting one another, were moved by four living creatures. High above all these was...

²⁶ ...the likeness of a throne, as the appearance of a sapphire stone: and upon the likeness of the throne was the likeness as the appearance of a man above upon it.

Then it describes the four living creatures:

Testimonies for the Church, vol. 5, p. 751-752:

Ezekiel 1

¹³ As for the likeness of the living creatures, their appearance was like burning coals of fire, and like the appearance of lamps: it went up and down among the living creatures; and the fire was bright, and out of the fire went forth lightning.

Ezekiel 10

⁸ And there appeared in the cherubims the form of a man's hand under their wings.

There were wheels within wheels in an arrangement so complicated that at first sight they appeared to Ezekiel to be all in confusion. But when they moved, it was with beautiful exactness and in perfect harmony. Heavenly beings were impelling these wheels, and, above all, upon the glorious sapphire throne, was the Eternal One; while round about the throne was the encircling rainbow, emblem of grace and love. Overpowered by the terrible glory of the scene, Ezekiel fell upon his face, when a voice bade him arise and hear the word of the Lord. Then there was given him a message of warning for Israel.

This vision was given to Ezekiel at a time when his mind was filled with gloomy forebodings. He saw the land of his fathers lying desolate. The city that was once full of people was no longer inhabited. The voice of mirth and the song of praise were no more heard within her walls. The prophet himself was a stranger in a strange land, where boundless ambition and savage cruelty reigned supreme. That which he saw and heard of human tyranny and wrong distressed his soul, and he mourned bitterly day and night. But the wonderful symbols presented before him beside the river Chebar revealed an overruling power mightier than that of earthly rulers. Above the proud and cruel monarchs of Assyria and Babylon the God of mercy and truth was enthroned.

The wheellike complications that appeared to the prophet to be involved in such confusion were under the guidance of an infinite hand. The Spirit of God, revealed to him as moving and directing these wheels, brought harmony out of confusion; so the whole world was under His control.

That last sentence is most encouraging. God is able to bring harmony out of confusion. That is amazing, isn't it? That is what His creative power does. And so that is what Ezekiel saw. He saw how God, directing the wheels, brings harmony out of confusion. So the whole world was under His control.

Testimonies for the Church, vol. 5, p. 752:

Myriads of glorified beings were ready at His word to overrule the power and policy of evil men, and bring good to His faithful ones.

In like manner, when God was about to open to the beloved John the history of the church for future ages, He gave him an assurance of the Saviour's interest and care for His people by revealing to him "One like unto the Son of man," walking among the candlesticks, which symbolized the seven churches.

We have studied the work of the angels in the life of Christ. And we didn't do this just for our curiosity but the Lord wanted to show us that the same interest that the angels had on earth when Jesus was here, they have for us today; the same interest precisely. For example, when the voice said,

Matthew 3

¹⁷ This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased,

—He didn't speak only to Jesus, He spoke to you and me. He has a great interest in us, and all of heaven has a great interest. And when the angels were strongly affected as Jesus was mistreated by the soldiers, they are likewise strongly affected when they see how we are abused, or persecuted, or neglected.

God rules over all, and brings order out of confusion. The very mistreatment of Jesus was used to conquer the devil. Likewise, we can be absolutely sure that heaven has not forgotten us. As much as heaven was interested in the Son, and the highest angels were ready to guard Him, the same is true today of His Church and of each individual in the Church; and also of those who are not yet of the Church, but who shall be guided into the truth yet.

Testimonies for the Church, vol. 5, p. 752-753:

While John was shown the last great struggles of the church with earthly powers, he was also permitted to behold

the final victory and deliverance of the faithful. He saw the church brought into deadly conflict with the beast and his image, and the worship of that beast enforced on pain of death. But looking beyond the smoke and din of the battle, he beheld a company upon Mount Zion with the Lamb, having, instead of the mark of the beast, the...

Revelation 14

¹ ...Father's name written in their foreheads.

And again he saw...

Revelation 15

² ...them that had gotten the victory over the beast, and over his image, and over his mark, and over the number of his name, stand on the sea of glass, having the harps of God,

—and singing the song of Moses and the Lamb. These lessons are for our benefit. We need to stay our faith upon God, for there is just before us a time that will try men's souls. Christ, upon the Mount of Olives, rehearsed the fearful judgments that were to precede His second coming:

Matthew 24

⁶ You shall hear of wars and rumors of wars...

⁷ Nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom: and there shall be famines, and pestilences, and earthquakes, in divers places.

⁸ All these are the beginning of sorrows.

While these prophecies received a partial fulfillment at the destruction of Jerusalem, they have a more direct application to the last days.

So we don't have a golden age before us, for sure not.

Testimonies for the Church, vol. 5, p. 753:

We are standing on the threshold of great and solemn events. Prophecy is fast fulfilling. The Lord is at the door. There is soon to open before us a period of overwhelming interest. To all living, the controversies of the past are to be revived. New controversies will arise. The scenes to be enacted in our world are not yet even dreamed of. Satan is at work through human agencies. Those who are making an effort to change the Constitution and secure law enforcing Sunday-

observance, little realize what will be the result. The crisis is just upon us.

But God's servants are not to trust to themselves in this great emergency. In the vision given to Isaiah, to Ezekiel, and to John, we see how closely heaven is connected with the events taking place upon the earth. And how great is the care of God for those who are loyal to Him. The world is not without a ruler. The program of coming events is in the hands of the Lord. The majesty of heaven has the destiny of nations as well as the concerns of His Church in His own charge.

That is what we are to understand in *Ezekiel* 1 and 10 in particular.

Testimonies for the Church, vol. 5, p. 753-754:

We permit ourselves to feel altogether too much care, trouble, and perplexity in the Lord's work. Finite men are not left to carry the burden of responsibility. We need to trust in God, believe in Him, and go forward. The tireless vigilance of the heavenly messengers, and their unceasing employment in their ministry in connection with the beings of earth, show us how God's hand is guiding the wheel within a wheel. The divine Instructor is saying to every actor in His work, as He said to Cyrus of old:

Isaiah 45

⁵ I girded you, though you have not known me.

In Ezekiel's vision God had His hand beneath the wings of the cherubim. This is to teach His servants that it is divine power that gives them success. He will work with them if they will put away iniquity and become pure in heart and life.

The bright light going among the living creatures with the swiftness of lightning represents the speed with which this work will finally go forward to completion. He who slumbers not, who is continually at work for the accomplishment of His designs, can carry forward His great work harmoniously. That which appears to finite minds entangled and complicated, the Lord's hand can keep in perfect order. He can de-

wise ways and means to thwart the purposes of wicked men, and He will bring to confusion the counsels of them that plot mischief against His people.

Brethren, it is no time now for mourning and despair, no time to yield to doubt and unbelief. Christ is not now a Saviour in Joseph's new tomb, closed with a great stone and sealed with the Roman seal; we have a risen Saviour. He is the King, the Lord of hosts; He sits between the cherubim; and amid the strife and tumult of nations He guards His people still. He who rules in the heavens is our Saviour. He measures every trial. He watches the furnace fire that must test every soul. When the strongholds of kings shall be overthrown, when the arrows of God's wrath shall strike through the hearts of His enemies, His people will be safe in His hands.

That is the mighty message that we receive through the book of *Revelation*. Before all the terrible events on this earth are shown, God invites John to come up to the throne room. Likewise, before He describes His Church and the difficulties the Church is going through, in *Revelation 2* and *3*, He shows how Jesus walks in the midst of the Churches. It is meant to give us another perspective, to show us that the Lord is well able to handle the most difficult situations, and that He is in charge.

The Seven Seals

Let us look at the Seven Seals now, and I believe a better understanding will come to us as we look from the right perspective.

The first seal is a wonderful description of the victorious Church.

Revelation 6

¹ Now I saw, when the Lamb opened one of the seals; and one of the four living creatures said with a voice like thunder, Come and see.

² And I looked, and behold, a white horse. He who sat on it

had a bow; and a crown was given to him, and he went out, conquering and to conquer.

That is a very fit description of the early Church as they actually were when they had the power of the Holy Spirit, and were pure in faith. Because of that they had the strength to conquer the attacks of the enemy, and even though they faced severe persecution, they only conquered. If we would study the experiences of the early Christians and the difficulties they went through, it might surprise us to see that they were actually conquerors. But that is what they were, not only in the sight of heaven, but also even their enemies had to acknowledge that they could not exterminate that “hateful” religion. They were spoken of everywhere in the world.

Then comes the second seal, and this is a more difficult period.

Revelation 6

³ When He opened the second seal, I heard the second living creature saying, Come and see.

⁴ And another horse, fiery red, went out. And it was granted to the one who sat on it to take peace from the earth and that people should kill one another; and there was given to him a great sword.

This period marked the beginning of apostasy, which meant a great lack of cooperation with the divine agencies; and this made the Church a destroying Church. They needed the power of the State to replace God’s power, and they received it.

The third and fourth seals are even worse. Let’s look at the third seal:

⁵ When He opened the third seal, I heard the third living creature say, Come and see. So I looked, and behold, a black horse, and he who sat on it had a pair of scales in his hand.

⁶ And I heard a voice in the midst of the four living creatures saying, A quart of wheat for a denarius, and three quarts of

barley for a denarius; and do not harm the oil and the wine.

In this case, the oil and the wine represents the true people of God, who were still sustained in these dark times. Then the fourth seal:

⁷ When He opened the fourth seal, I heard the voice of the fourth living creature saying, Come and see.

⁸ So I looked, and behold, a pale horse. And the name of him who sat on it was Death, and Hades followed with him. And power was given to them over a fourth of the earth, to kill with sword, with hunger, with death, and by the beasts of the earth.

Only a fourth part of the earth was afflicted, which shows that mercy was holding back the destruction. Usually it is after the prophets receive the vision of the throne, that they receive a vision of the difficulties that will come. The Lord has carefully planned the visions for the prophets, and likewise He intends us to view these things from the angle of God's throne. Otherwise we would be discouraged and just see no hope.

Then comes the fifth seal, and here we find the martyrs playing a very big role.

Revelation 6

⁹ When He opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of those who had been slain for the word of God and for the testimony which they held.

¹⁰ And they cried with a loud voice, saying, How long, O Lord, holy and true, until You judge and avenge our blood on those who dwell on the earth?

¹¹ Then a white robe was given to each of them; and it was said to them that they should rest a little while longer, until both the number of their fellow servants and their brethren, who would be killed as they were, was completed.

In the fifth seal the martyrs play a big role; and their real role will be realized when we understand *Revelation 14*,

specifically the seventh angel. Who would be especially qualified to bring forth the cry of the martyrs? Of the four cherubim, John the Baptist, for certain. He would be able to understand the experience through which these people go. Therefore, he could interpret their difficulties vividly and aright.

On this earth we often go through difficulties, and we don't fully understand them. Even though we are educated through the experiences, we just can't fully interpret them aright. So we find ourselves moaning and complaining. However, when we view the experience from the throne of God, we will find that the more clear our vision from the throne of God is, the less we will find ourselves complaining about these things; the more we shall be actually rejoicing for the great privilege of being co-laborers with Christ, even in sufferings. And we will be enabled to understand more deeply the sufferings of Christ.

That is what John the Baptist experienced, especially after he was resurrected and taken to heaven. Can you imagine how in the light of God's presence he saw his time in the dungeon with much more clearness than before? From heaven, he would clearly understand. Then he would thank and praise the Lord that He had permitted him to perish there in the dungeon.

Understanding this experience so clearly, is what makes him very qualified to give light to the people on this earth who are suffering in the same manner. In fact, he is only the channel in all this. God is the Source of his experience. But still, through his experience, he is a very qualified channel in that work.

Let's come to the sixth seal:

Revelation 6

¹² I looked when He opened the sixth seal, and behold, there was a great earthquake; and the sun became black as sackcloth of hair, and the moon became like blood.

¹³ And the stars of heaven fell to the earth, as a fig tree drops its late figs when it is shaken by a mighty wind.

These signs have been fulfilled already, as described in the book, *The Great Controversy*. But of the signs that are mentioned, a few have had no fulfilment yet, but soon will find their fulfilment:

¹⁴ Then the sky receded as a scroll when it is rolled up, and every mountain and island was moved out of its place.

That must be cataclysmic.

¹⁵ And the kings of the earth, the great men, the rich men, the commanders, the mighty men, every slave and every free man, hid themselves in the caves and in the rocks of the mountains,

¹⁶ And said to the mountains and rocks, Fall on us and hide us from the face of Him who sits on the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb!

¹⁷ For the great day of His wrath has come, and who is able to stand?

This is the voice of nature speaking to man, even when it is not under God's control for blessing anymore. But it is speaking, which shows how God is able to speak even in such a situation.

The Sealing Work

The great question is,

“Who can stand in that day? When the powers of nature are speaking like that—who can stand?”

And what is the answer?

Revelation 7

¹ After these things I saw four angels standing at the four corners of the earth, holding the four winds of the earth, that the wind should not blow on the earth, on the sea, or on any tree.

Why is nature in such a turmoil in the sixth seal? Because man has separated from God, and the angels do not hold the winds anymore. It is the loosening of the winds. And here, in *Revelation 7*, we are given a glimpse at how the angels are holding the winds.

Who are the angels that are holding the winds? We do not know them by name: that is not stated here. But we can know in what category they belong: they belong in the category of the redeemed angels. Someone has even suggested that these four angels would be the same as the four creatures,—the four cherubim,—but we need more confirmation of that before we can be sure.

But they must be the redeemed. This conclusion is drawn in the following way. One of the seven plague angels is Gabriel, a redeemed. Therefore, when God chooses the highest angel to do such a work, likewise the other angels, who have the bowls of plagues, must also be the redeemed. This means that they hold the bowls of plagues. We understand God's character, and know that He does not directly destroy the people; but He holds back the plagues until the time comes when the angels can't hold them anymore. Because they cannot force their presence where they are no longer wanted, they have to withdraw. That is when the plagues are poured out.

So the angels are doing this in regard to the seven plagues, and what do we have in the description in the sixth seal? A description of the last plagues. The events under the sixth seal are the same as the last plague. The four winds that blow over the earth are the last plagues. So the four angels holding the winds must be the same as the plague angels. Therefore they must be redeemed human beings. Those mighty, powerful beings that excel in strength, are the ones who are in charge of holding the winds back, so that the people shall not be destroyed.

What is the significance in the fact that God has given this work to the redeemed? The redeemed understand very well how long the winds need to be held; they love the people on this earth with a deeper love than the created angels could, because they have been a part of humanity, they have been redeemed out of them. God sees that they can do that important work very efficiently. So the four angels holding the winds are redeemed human beings, probably even the four cherubim.

Revelation 7

² Then I saw another angel ascending from the east, having the seal of the living God. And he cried with a loud voice to the four angels to whom it was granted to harm the earth and the sea,

³ Saying, Do not harm the earth, the sea, or the trees till we have sealed the servants of our God on their foreheads.

Who is the other angel ascending from the east with the seal of the living God? That angel is Christ. Let us turn to the statement that makes this very clear:

Manuscript Releases, vol. 15, p. 221:

John's attention was called to another scene:

Revelation 7

² And I saw another angel ascending from the east, having the seal of the living God.

Who is this? The Angel of the Covenant. He comes from the sunrising. He is the Dayspring from on high. He is the light of the world.

John 1

⁴ In Him was life, and the life was the light of men.

This is the One Isaiah describes:

Isaiah 9

⁶ Unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given: and the government shall be upon His shoulder; and His name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace.

He cried as One who had superiority over the hosts of an-

gels in heaven,

Revelation 7

² ...to whom it was given to hurt the earth and the sea,

³ Saying: Hurt not the earth, neither the sea, nor the trees, till we have sealed the servants of our God in their foreheads.

It is a very great relief and encouragement for each believer that this mightiest of all angels, Michael—or Christ—is charging the other mighty angels to hold the winds until the servants of God are sealed. That shows us that God has events fully under His control. Things seem to look very black at times; but this vision, of the angels holding the winds and Christ's instructions to them, show us that God is very much in control, and everything is held back, until God's people are sealed.

That does not mean that we are automatically sealed; it means that God will do everything in order to save His saints. Everybody who has a willing heart, certainly will be sealed. Then the answer can be given to the question that was asked:

“Who is able to stand?”

Who is able to stand? Those who are sealed. They are able to stand, because God holds back these winds until His people are sealed.

Note that the sealing work is given to Christ, who has superiority over the hosts of angels in heaven. What does He say?

Revelation 7

³ Hurt not the earth, neither the sea, till we have sealed the servants of our God in their foreheads.

God has a great interest in us. Moses' great interest for his people was a revelation of the care of God. And Christ's great interest in His disciples is a revelation of this also. We should study Christ's great interest for His disciples.

Look at the last scenes that happened when He came into

the Upper Chamber, and the sin the of the world was beginning to press on His mind. What was He still thinking of then? Still of His disciples. They were ever in His mind, even in the utmost extremity. Even when Christ was suffering in Gethsemane and our sins were laid upon Him, He did not forget His disciples. How understandable would it be if He had forgotten them!

How often we forget everybody when real burdens are laid upon us. We don't think of the sufferings of others; we think only of our own sufferings; and that is all the world to us; and they press us down. But when Christ had the most extreme pressure, He was still thinking of His disciples. That is revealed in the wonderful statement I like so much in the chapter, "A Servant of Servants."

The Desire of Ages, p. 643:

Christ knew that the time had come for Him to depart out of the world, and go to His Father. And having loved His own that were in the world, He loved them unto the end. He was now in the shadow of the cross, and the pain was torturing His heart. He knew that He would be deserted in the hour of His betrayal. He knew that by the most humiliating process to which criminals were subjected He would be put to death. He knew the ingratitude and cruelty of those He had come to save. He knew how great the sacrifice that He must make, and for how many it would be in vain.

Knowing all that was before Him, He might naturally have been overwhelmed with the thought of His own humiliation and suffering. But He looked upon the twelve, who had been with Him as His own, and who, after His shame and sorrow and painful usage were over, would be left to struggle in the world. His thoughts of what He himself must suffer were ever connected with His disciples. He did not think of himself. His care for them was uppermost in His mind.

That is our Saviour. And He has not changed since He returned to heaven; for sure not. He is the same today, as yes-

terday, and forever. And this Jesus is He who tells to the mighty angels that they should hold the winds. And they are able to hold them, because they are the most powerful angels in the whole of the universe, the most powerful beings apart from Christ; and they do this until we are sealed. Those are the 144000, who are then described in chapter 7. Then it says in Verse 9:

Revelation 7

⁹ After these things I looked, and behold, a great multitude which no one could number, of all nations, tribes, peoples, and tongues, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, with palm branches in their hands,

¹⁰ And crying out with a loud voice, saying, Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!

¹¹ All the angels stood around the throne and the elders and the four living creatures, and fell on their faces before the throne and worshipped God,

¹² Saying: Amen! Blessing and glory and wisdom, thanksgiving and honor and power and might, be to our God forever and ever. Amen.

They could not have worshipped Him like this if they would not see His superiority of power. They understand the events of this earth very well. They have been a part of this world; and yet they find no room, not the slightest, for accusation against God; but they can only praise Him, which means that they are absolutely thankful for everything God did.

When this praise fills their heart, it is natural that they inspire us with the same. They want to lead us also into the same kind of worship. So let us take the invitation to come up and behold the things from there.

The great multitude, who are they? The question is asked to John, the revelator, by one of the twenty-four elders:

Revelation 7

¹³ Then one of the elders answered, saying to me, Who are

these arrayed in white robes, and where did they come from?

¹⁴ And I said to him, Sir, you know. So he said to me, These are the ones who come out of the great tribulation, and washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.

In the next study we will continue to see the interest heaven has in the events of this earth, and how closely involved they are.

18. Angels in Revelation 7 to 22

ONE angel came to John and asked him if he knew who this great multitude were. John replied,

Revelation 7

¹⁴ Sir, you know.

And then the person explained to him that...

¹⁴ They came out of great tribulation, and washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.

¹⁵ Therefore they are before the throne of God, serving Him day and night in His temple. And He who sits on the throne will dwell among them.

¹⁶ They shall neither hunger anymore nor thirst anymore; and the sun shall not strike them, nor any heat.

This angel was one of the twenty-four elders, and therefore was very well able to explain to him these things, because he himself had come out of great tribulation, and had been redeemed from men. It was Gabriel who gave the explanation to John.

We have mentioned before that Gabriel was one of the four cherubim, one of these four leaders in heaven who are in the midst and round about the throne. Here we read that one of the twenty-four elders gave the explanation to John. There is no contradiction. The four living creatures are part of the twenty-four elders. Gabriel was one of the four cherubim, and also one of these twenty-four elders.

Silence in Heaven

Let us turn to the Seventh Seal, a very interesting seal even though it doesn't say much at first:

Revelation 8

¹ When He opened the seventh seal, there was silence in heaven for half an hour.

That's all we read about the seventh seal. But there is a lot of information in those few words. It shows us the close connection between heaven and earth, more than any other part of the Scripture. Let us contemplate a little about it.

What time is depicted by the seventh seal? It is when Christ leaves the sanctuary in heaven and is coming to this earth. And what time will this be for the people of God on this earth? It is the time after the sealing, which was described in *Revelation 7*. So it is that time when there is no intercessor in heaven, and the people on this earth are in the time of Jacob's Trouble. It is a very difficult time for God's people.

The Great Controversy, p. 622:

The time of trouble, such as never was, is soon to open upon us, and we shall need an experience which we do not now possess, and which many are too indolent to obtain. It is often the case that trouble is greater in anticipation than in reality; but this is not true of the crisis before us. The most vivid representation cannot reach the magnitude of the ordeal. In that time of trial every soul must stand for himself before God.

Ezekiel 14

²⁰ Though Noah, Daniel and Job were in the land, as I live, saith the Lord God, they shall deliver neither son nor daughter; they shall but deliver their own souls by their righteousness.

While our great High Priest is making atonement for us, we should seek to become perfect in Christ.

So this is a description of a very terrible scene for God's people.

The Great Controversy, p. 621:

The season of distress and anguish before us will require a faith that can endure weariness, delay, and hunger,—a faith that will not faint, though severely tried. The period of probation is granted to all to prepare for that time. Jacob prevailed because he was persevering and determined. His vic-

tory is an evidence of the power of importunate prayer. All who will lay hold of God's promises as he did, and be as earnest and persevering as he was, will succeed as he succeeded.

Those who are unwilling to deny self, to agonize before God, to pray long and earnestly for His blessing, will not obtain it. Wrestling with God—how few know what it is! How few have ever had their souls drawn out after God with intensity of desire until every power is on the stretch. When waves of despair, which no language can express, sweep over the suppliant, how few cling with unyielding faith to the promises of God.

That is a description of very great distress, of anguish, of weariness, of delay. It is description of the time when waves of despair go over the people of God even though they are sealed. It is a terrible time, and the Bible cannot overstate this fact. As Ellen White said, often things seem more difficult than they actually are, but not so with the Time of Trouble. And the question might well be asked:

Revelation 6

¹⁷ Who shall be able to stand?

We are told of this time beforehand so that we can be prepared. But in all this trouble we should not forget how close heaven is to the earth. Heaven is greatly interested in the events that are taking place on the earth at that time. For example, heaven was very interested in the struggles of Christ in Gethsemane.

The Desire of Ages, p. 693:

Having made the decision, He fell dying to the ground from which He had partially risen. Where now were His disciples to place their hands tenderly beneath the head of their fainting Master, and bathe that brow, marred indeed more than the sons of men? The Saviour trod the wine-press alone, and of the people there was none with Him.

It was very hard for Jesus to make the sacrifice for

mankind, since He saw that they were sleeping at the very time when they needed to pray. It was doubly hard for Him to tread the wine-press alone. But He had to do it. That is the parallel of our experience in the time of Jacob's Trouble. Then, likewise, it will seem that we have to do it all alone. Even if Noah, Daniel and Job were in the land, they would save but their own souls, it says. Then it goes on:

The Desire of Ages, p. 693:

But God suffered with His Son. Angels beheld the Saviour's agony. They saw their Lord enclosed by legions of satanic forces, His nature weighed down with a shuddering, mysterious dread. There was silence in heaven. No harp was touched.

Why was there silence in heaven? Why was no harp touched? Because of the intense interest that the angels had in the sufferings of Christ. They just couldn't pursue their daily task as normal. It was impossible for them. They looked on, they held their breath. Such was the intensity, the tension among the angels.

There was silence in heaven. No harp was touched. Could mortals have viewed the amazement of the angelic host as in silent grief they watched the Father separating His beams of light, love and glory from His beloved Son, they would better understand how offensive in His sight is sin.

So we are invited to behold the grief of the angelic host as they watched silently at the sufferings of Jesus.

The worlds unfallen and the heavenly angels had watched with intense interest as the conflict drew to its close. Angels had longed to bring relief to the divine Sufferer, but this might not be. No way of escape was found for the Son of God. In this awful crisis, when everything was at stake...

It then goes on to describe how Gabriel came. But, can you see how heaven was greatly interested in it, and how heaven expressed its interest? There was absolute silence.

Can you see the significance, then, of the silence of the Seventh Seal? What does it indicate to us? The intense interest of all heaven in the events on this earth. They are watching with a greater interest than can be described in human language. No harp will be touched, no song will be sung at that time; but the angels will hold their breath, and just pray that we pass the test of Jacob's Trouble—so hard it will be. They cannot enjoy their sinless state and their happiness and everything, when they see us suffer as we do. They just have to be silent at that point of time.

This shows that they have exactly the same interest in our sufferings, that they had in the sufferings of Christ. No harp will be touched, there will be silence in heaven; and we are invited to behold the angels, as in silent grief they watch the events of this earth.

We are invited to behold how they would like to deliver us immediately from that situation; but it is necessary, as it was necessary for Jesus, that we tread the winepress. As it was necessary for Him, so it will be necessary for us. And understanding this, we will be braced to tread the winepress of Jacob's Trouble and to finish the work, knowing that we are not alone, even if we see nobody. We know that the angels watch on, and there is, at that point of time, perfect silence in heaven.

In fact, if we understand the order of heaven and the interest of heaven, we will know when the angels are singing; we will know when the angels are weeping; we will know when the angels are silent. We just will know because we understand their character. We understand their interest, their love. When we are committing a sin, what will the angels do? They will weep, and we know it. When we overcome a sin, what will the angels do? They will sing, they will rejoice. They will touch their harps, and we will know it. And when we are suffering, what will the angels do? There would be silence in

heaven. And that is the special time when silence will be in all heaven for half an hour. So this seventh seal is very much confirmed in what we read in:

Testimonies to Ministers, p. 114:

One thing will certainly be understood by the study of *Revelation*—that the connection between God and His people is close and decided. A wonderful connection is seen between the universe of heaven and this world.

Even though our world is only a tiny speck in the universe, yet all heaven is greatly interested in it. It is the battlefront of the great controversy between good and evil, and that is the focus of interest for the whole universe.

The Seven Trumpets

Next we come to the seven trumpets, which are a continuation. The Seven Trumpets also must be understood through the viewpoint of *Revelation* 4 and 5; i.e. from the viewpoint of the throne of God. So we read,

Revelation 8

² Then I saw the seven angels who stand before God; and to them were given seven trumpets.

³ Then another angel, having a golden censer, came and stood at the altar. And he was given much incense that he should offer it with the prayers of all the saints upon the golden altar which was before the throne.

⁴ And the smoke of the incense with the prayers of the saints ascended before God from the angel's hand.

⁵ Then the angel took the censer, filled it with fire from the altar, and threw it to the earth; and there were noises, thunders, lightnings, and an earthquake.

⁶ So the seven angels, who had the seven trumpets, prepared themselves to sound.

Who would the seven trumpet angels be? When we consider again that one of the seven plague angels is a redeemed being, and therefore, the rest of the plague angels are re-

deemed beings, then we have the key to answer this question, because the seventh trumpet includes the seven plagues.

Revelation 11

¹⁵ Then the seventh angel sounded and there were loud voices in heaven, saying, The kingdoms of this world have become the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ, and He shall reign forever and ever.

¹⁶ And the twenty-four elders, who sat before God on their thrones, fell on their faces and worshipped God,

¹⁷ Saying, We give You thanks, O Lord God Almighty, the One who is, and who was, and who is to come, because You have taken your great power and reigned.

¹⁸ The nations were angry and your wrath has come; and the time of the dead that they should be judged, and that You should reward your servants, the prophets, and the saints, and those who fear your name, small and great; and should destroy those who destroy the earth.

¹⁹ Then the temple of God was opened in heaven, and the ark of His covenant was seen in His temple. And there were lightnings, noises, thunderings, an earthquake, and great hail.

In short, this is what is happening during the seven last plagues. So, when the seventh trumpet involves the ministration of redeemed human beings, then the other trumpets must also be the same. That means that here again we have redeemed human beings working in the seven trumpets.

In the book of *Revelation*, redeemed human beings are deeply involved with the work on this earth. When Moses and Enoch and Elijah went to heaven, they did not go there just to enjoy heaven and forget about this dark world anymore. No, no. They are very deeply involved in all the events that take place here. With great interest and with great power and might, they are working on this earth.

That is what we find in *Revelation*: the redeemed angels, again and again. We find them in *Revelation 7*, in *Revelation 4*

and 5, here in *Revelation* 8 with the seven trumpets. Actually also the seven angels in *Revelation* 14 must be redeemed angels, special leaders of God's church. Then likewise in *Revelation* 10; but we'll come to this later.

First the seven angels who stand before God were given trumpets. Trumpets, in the Bible, and the sound of trumpets, always indicate an announcement of judgment, an announcement of warning, and announcement of important events. For example, the Day of Atonement was announced by trumpets; when Israel was going to war, it was announced by trumpets; when an enemy would come and the guardians would stand at the wall, what would they do? They would blow the trumpets as a warning. So, that is the meaning, in the Bible, of the blowing of trumpets. So these seven angels, what do they do when they blow the trumpets? They sound a very solemn warning.

Of the judgments that we read in the seven trumpets, which are judgments on heathen Rome, on the Papal Rome, and finally on Babylon the Great, most of these judgments have taken place already in history. The Lord expects us to read a very serious warning for this the last time, because those earlier judgments were still mingled with mercy. The Holy Spirit was not fully withdrawn when Rome was destroyed, and when the Papacy was destroyed.

But finally, when Babylon the Great will be destroyed, then that will be a judgment that will be without the mingling of mercy. So the judgments of the past hold a serious warning for God's people, to prepare themselves for that final judgment.

The Angel with the Censer

But in *Revelation* 8 we read of another angel:

Revelation 8

³ Then another angel, having a golden censer, came and

stood at the altar; and he was given much incense that he should offer it with the prayers of all saints upon the golden altar which was before the throne.

So, what kind of angel, first of all, must this other angel be? Having a golden censer with the prayers of the saints? Who, in the earthly sanctuary, carried the golden censer, which symbolized the prayers of Israel? The High Priest and his sons. Therefore, in heaven, who will this be? Christ and His sons, the redeemed.

This other Angel, apart from the other redeemed angels, who blow the trumpets, is Christ—this mighty Angel who takes the prayers of the saints before His Father. He sweetens them with the perfume of His own righteousness, of His own sufferings for our sakes. And then it says,

Revelation 8

⁴ And the smoke of the incense, with the prayers of the saints, ascended before God from the Angel's hand.

That shows how mighty He is, to present our prayers to God. We should not be mistaken; we think sometimes that our prayers do not accomplish much, but they are very essential and important.

Selected Messages, vol. 1, p. 344:

The religious services, the prayers, the praise, the penitent confession of sin ascend from true believers as incense to the heavenly sanctuary, but passing through the corrupt channels of humanity, they are so defiled that unless purified by blood, they can never be of value with God. They ascend not in spotless purity, and unless the Intercessor, who is at God's right hand, presents and purifies all by His righteousness, it is not acceptable to God.

All incense from earthly tabernacles must be moist with the cleansing drops of the blood of Christ. He holds before the Father the censer of His own merits, in which there is no taint of earthly corruption. He gathers into this censer the prayers, the praise, and the confessions of His people, and

with these He puts His own spotless righteousness. Then, perfumed with the merits of Christ's propitiation, the incense comes up before God wholly and entirely acceptable. Then gracious answers are returned.

Oh, that all may see that everything in obedience, in penitence, in praise and thanksgiving, must be placed upon the glowing fire of the righteousness of Christ. The fragrance of this righteousness ascends like a cloud around the mercy seat.

When He presents our prayers to God, they are pleasant, they are powerful, they are very acceptable. That is what Jesus does with our prayers. So because we pray in the name of Jesus, our prayers become powerful; provided that we pray in the name of Jesus, which means, sincerely.

The Desire of Ages, p. 667-668:

"In my name," Christ bade His disciples pray. In Christ's name, His followers are to stand before God. Through the value of the sacrifice made for them, they are of value in the Lord's sight. Because of the imputed righteousness of Christ, they are accounted precious. For Christ's sake, the Lord pardons those who fear Him. He does not see in them the villainess of the sinner; He recognizes in them the likeness of His Son in whom they believe.

What a privilege!

The Lord is disappointed when His people place a low estimate upon themselves. He desires His chosen heritage to value themselves according to the price He has placed upon them. God wanted them, else He would not have sent His Son on such an expensive errand to redeem them. He has a use for them and He is well-pleased when they make the very highest demands upon Him, that they may glorify His name. They may expect large things, if they have faith in His promises.

So, our prayers are to be made powerful, provided we pray in the name of Christ; i.e. understanding that He purifies our

prayers. But it also means that we pray in Christ's character, in agreement with Him, in harmony with Him. If we would pray for something that is not in harmony with Him, we rebel against God rather than obeying Him. So it says in the next paragraph:

The Desire of Ages, p. 668:

But to pray in Christ's name means much. It means that we are to accept His character, manifest His spirit, and work His works.

There are people who seem to accept His character, i.e. the message on His character; but they seem not to accept His works, which means His special orders, His special directions.

The Saviour's promise is given on condition. "If you love me," He says, "keep my commandments." He saves men, not in sin, but from sin; and those who love Him, will show their love by obedience.

That is the test by which we may see if we pray in the name of Jesus. Let us make this point very clear, that God does not save men in sin, but from sin; and those who love Him, will show their love by obedience to every command of God.

When Jesus offers our prayers, then these prayers become very powerful; not only because He has given us the necessary obedience, but also because He mingles with our prayers His righteousness, which makes these prayers powerful before God. What is the result of these prayers?

Revelation 8

⁵ Then the angel took the censer, filled it with fire from the altar and threw it to the earth; and there were noises, thunderrings and lightnings and an earthquake.

When especially will this be fulfilled: these noises, thunderrings, lightnings and an earthquake? At what time? That will be the time, certainly, of the end, during the seven last plagues. It's the same time as the seventh seal, the seventh

trumpet, and the seven last plagues—all these happen at the same time. The culmination of events, the finishing of the great controversy, will come about through the cooperation of saints who pray, of angels who blow the trumpets, and of Jesus who presents our prayers before the Father, purified. All agencies have to work together harmoniously, each doing their part very faithfully; and then the work will be finished. This cooperation will usher in the time of the seven last plagues and the thunderings, lightnings and the earthquake.

And what would we hear in those thunderings? We'd hear the voice of God, saying, "It is done."

Prayers and Judgments

But before we come to this point, we want to see very clearly how close the cooperation is, between the angels who blow the trumpets, us who pray, and Jesus. It has to be a close cooperation. The great victories of God's church in the past were all a result of cooperation between the saints praying, Jesus making their prayers powerful, and the angels that sounded the trumpets. So it was in the time of the 1st trumpet, in the time of the 2nd trumpet, in the 3rd, 4th, and so on.

The first four trumpets are judgments on Pagan Rome. This power oppressed God's people. They were the king of the north as long as they ruled; and as such they were persecuting God's people: trying first to deceive them, and when that failed, then persecuting them. They oppressed them with all kinds of abuses; and God's people were then praying to God for deliverance; they were crying to Him day and night that He would avenge them, or justify them. The answer is given by the angel's blowing the trumpets. But this answer comes about because Christ makes our prayers powerful.

Likewise with the 5th and the 6th trumpets, which describe judgments on Papal Rome—again a very oppressive power, even more so than heathen Rome. In fact, history shows that

the power that destroyed most people was Rome—Catholic Rome. That is the power which destroyed most people ever destroyed on the face of the earth. Not even Communism has destroyed so many people as has the Papacy. That terrible, persecuting power was horrible for God’s people, and they were earnestly praying to God for deliverance; and the answer was surely coming. The angel was sounding his trumpet, and this trumpet sounded judgments on the persecutors, and deliverance for God’s people.



The Trumpets begin in answer to Prayer.
(Bibliche Figuren, 1560)

And the last judgment, the seven last plagues, and especially the seventh plague—that will be the final judgment on Babylon the Great. That will sound deliverance for God’s people, because in that thunder God’s voice will be heard saying, “It is done.”

The Great Controversy, p. 636-637:

It is at midnight that God manifests His power for the deliverance of His people. The sun appears, shining in its strength. Signs and wonders follow in quick succession. The

wicked look with terror and amazement upon the scene, while the righteous behold with solemn joy the tokens of their deliverance. Everything in nature seems turned out of its course. The streams cease to flow. Dark, heavy clouds come up and clash against each other. In the midst of the angry heavens is one clear space of indescribable glory, whence comes the voice of God like the sound of many waters, saying: "It is done." *Revelation 16:17*.

That voice shakes the heavens and the earth. There is a mighty earthquake.

Revelation 16

¹⁷ Then the seventh angel poured out his bowl into the air...

The angel does this to deliver God's people. Do you remember our study on God's destroying angels? God's angels destroy by trying to save. That is the time, specially during the seventh plague, when God's people will be delivered, that is the time when Michael will stand up. And that is also the time when God's enemies will feel the wrath of God, which means they will feel the separation from God that they, by their rejection of His messages, have asked for.

Revelation 16

¹⁷ Then the seventh angel poured out his bowl into the air, and a loud voice came out of the temple of heaven from the throne, saying, It is done.

¹⁸ And there were noises, and thunderings, and lightnings, and there was a great earthquake.

We see the same "voices, and thunderings, and lightnings, and an earthquake,"⁴⁰ as are mentioned when the trumpets were first introduced in *Revelation 8*.

¹⁸ ...Such a mighty and great earthquake as had not occurred since men were on the earth.

¹⁹ Now the great city was divided into three parts, and the cities of the nations fell. And great Babylon was remembered

⁴⁰ *Revelation 8:5*.

before God, to give her the cup of the wine of the fierceness of His wrath.

²⁰ Then every island fled away, and the mountains were not found,

²¹ And a great hail from heaven fell upon men, every hail-stone about the weight of a talent. And men blasphemed God because of the plague of the hail since that plague was exceedingly great.

But we are specially interested in what happens when the vial is poured out in the air. There was a loud voice from the temple which said, “It is done.” That is the finishing of the great controversy, when God’s voice tells His people the hour of their deliverance—the exact hour when Jesus will come.

Early Writings, p. 14:

Soon we heard the voice of God like many waters, which gave us the day and hour of Jesus’ coming. The living saints, 144,000 in number, knew and understood the voice, while the wicked thought it was thunder and an earthquake. When God spoke the time, He poured upon us the Holy Ghost, and our faces began to light up and shine with the glory of God, as Moses’ did when he came down from Mount Sinai.

What a shout of jubilee then will come from the distressed people of God, who have gone through Jacob’s Trouble and through all these persecutions up to this point of time! It will be a short time, but very fierce.

So, it is the prayers of the saints which bring about that event. Cooperation between heavenly agencies and human agencies on this earth will make history, more than any politician can make it. That is the driving influence behind the unfolding of history. And that is the view we get from the book of *Revelation*; that is the view from the throne of God.

The Angel Clothed With the Sun

Let us leave the seven trumpets for the moment, and come to *Revelation* 10. Here we read of another mighty angel:

Revelation 10

¹ And I saw another mighty angel coming down from heaven clothed with a cloud, and a rainbow was on his head. His face was like the sun, and his feet were like the pillars of fire.



The Angel with the Little Book
(Story of the Seer of Patmos, 1905)

He is represented as a mighty angel, which again shows us that He has power over everything on the earth and He has

control of all the events of this earth.

² And he had a little book open in his hand, and he set his right foot on the sea, and his left foot on the land.

This indicates that he has authority over the whole earth. Who is this Angel? It is Jesus.

The SDA Bible Commentary, vol. 7, p. 971:

The mighty angel who instructed John, was no less a personage than Jesus Christ. Setting His right foot on the sea, and His left foot on the land, shows the part that He is acting in the closing scenes of the great controversy with Satan. This position denotes His supreme power and authority over the whole earth.

The controversy has waxed stronger and more determined from age to age, and will continue to do so to the concluding scenes when the masterly working of the powers of darkness shall reach their height. Satan united with evil men will deceive the whole world and the churches which received not the love the truth.

But the mighty Angel demands attention. He cries with a loud voice. He is to show the power and authority of His voice to those who have united with Satan to oppose the truth.

In this vision, Jesus shows what role He will play in the last events. He will personally direct the battle. And those who are under Him, are the most exalted angels, the strongest angels. So we have very mighty powers fighting on our behalf.

A partial fulfilment of *Revelation* 10 was found already in the Great Advent Movement which swept over the world and preached the urgent need to prepare for the Second Coming of Christ. But the complete fulfilment will take place when this message will sound again into all the corners of this world in the power of the Latter Rain, also known as the Loud Cry. The voice of Jesus that is depicted here, will be heard through His saints everywhere in the world. Not only on land,

but also on sea, which indicates that His voice would be spread everywhere in the world: not only on the continent here, but overseas as well.

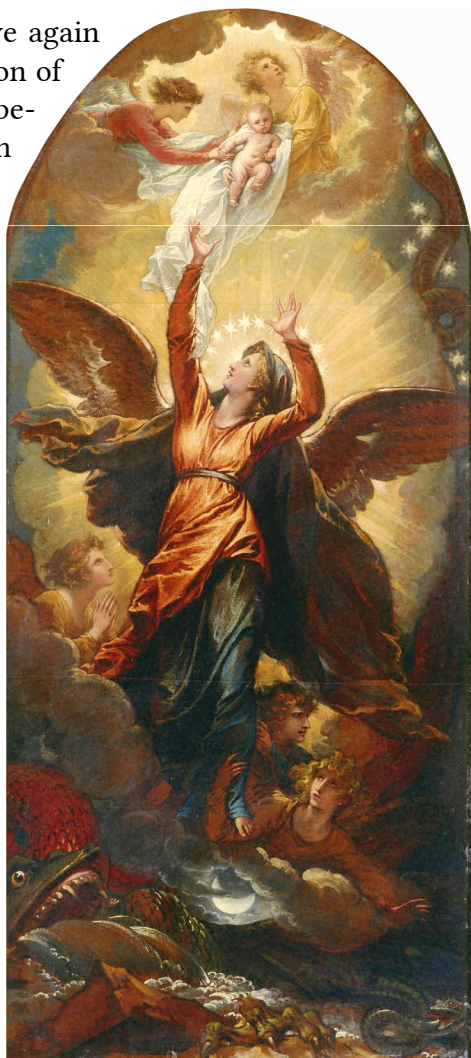
Revelation 11 shows how strong the word of God is, that it cannot be overcome.

Revelation 12

And in *Revelation* 12, we again have a very powerful vision of the close cooperation between heaven and earth in the events that unfold.⁴¹

There was war in heaven, and did it affect the earth? Very much so, because this war resulted in Satan being cast out. And he was cast to this earth. On the earth he uses all his power to deceive and to persecute God's church. The church is depicted in *Revelation* 12 as a woman. And the dragon tries to destroy her. But what will God do for the woman? He will deliver her. That is the message of *Revelation* 12, and also of the chapters that follow thereafter.

Revelation 12 is a testi-



⁴¹ Illustration: Benjamin West, 1797 – Wikimedia.

mony of the close connection that there is between heaven and earth. Everything that happens in heaven has consequence for this earth. Likewise, everything that happens on this earth has consequences in heaven. This is one great message from the book of *Revelation*.

When on earth the children of God are suffering, heaven will be affected; and when there are great changes in heaven, the earth will certainly be affected: that is logical and understandable, because once in the center of the universe something happens, the edges will be affected. In earthly countries, when there's a change in the government at the center, that could very well affect the provinces; especially if they are dramatic changes. And so, likewise, if there is a change in the center of the universe, it will affect the earth very much; and the other way round too.

Then we come to *Revelation* 13, the description of the horrible beast, and the warning against it and against the image of the beast.

Revelation 14

Then comes *Revelation* 14. In *Revelation* 14 there is again a wonderful testimony to the work of the angels, because angels are leading God's movements always, especially the last movement. In this chapter, we have the first angel, the second angel, the third, the fourth (in *Revelation* 18), fifth, sixth and the seventh angel.

Who would be specially qualified to be the seventh angel—of all the angels in heaven at the moment? John the Baptist. He has gone through martyrdom, and therefore, he would be specially qualified to strengthen those who are going through similar experiences at that point of time.

Gabriel also will play a very important role in these scenes, and no doubt; also Elijah and Enoch, they all are very much involved also, especially in the closing scenes, when God's

people are finishing the work. We have no time to study this in detail.

We have learned that the seven angels are seven movements, and that is true; we don't want to change that fact. But a symbol often depicts more than one thing. So, while an angel is a movement, it is also a literal angel that leads the movement, just as the Angel of the Lord led the Israelites in the Wilderness.

The angel of the Lord is still leading God's church today. He is leading in the giving of these messages to us today, in order to prepare us for the final events, events which are described in *Revelation* 14. He will give us special strength to cooperate with him, which will not be easy, since the experience of the sixth angel is one of "treading the winepress," something that Jesus went through in Gethsemane and on the cross.

We have touched a little bit upon the seven angels, the seven plague angels; and it would be worthwhile to consider why John fell down and tried to worship the angel Gabriel, but we leave that for your personal study.

19. Communion Service

BEFORE we partake of the bread and the grape-juice, our great interest is to understand the meaning of the foot-washing, that we be properly prepared for this service.

It is very important that we repeat these services to remind ourselves of the great sacrifice of Christ. At the same time, they must never become a custom so that we do not appreciate and value their meaning anymore. Each time we are present for the ceremonies, we need to remind ourselves very thoroughly of what they mean.

We have studied this week about the work of the angels, and saw that they cooperate with the meek and the lowly ones, who understand and hear the word of God and follow Him, those who are ready to submit. That is the very spirit of the foot-washing service.

In our minds, let's go to the upper chamber where Jesus washed the disciples' feet. Jesus was thinking of His disciples even in the hour of His coming agony. His own sufferings were ever bound up and connected with His disciples, and they were always uppermost in His mind.

The Desire of Ages, p. 643:

On this last evening with His disciples, Jesus had much to tell them. If they had been prepared to receive what He longed to impart, they would have been saved from heart-breaking anguish, from disappointment and unbelief. But Jesus saw that they could not bear what He had to say. As He looked into their faces, the words of warning and comfort were stayed upon His lips. Moments passed in silence. Jesus appeared to be waiting. The disciples were ill at ease. The sympathy and tenderness awakened by Christ's grief seemed to have passed away. His sorrowful words, pointing to His own suffering, had made little impression. The glances they cast upon each other told of jealousy and contention.

There was "a strife among them, which of them should be

accounted the greatest.” *Luke 22:24*. This contention, carried on in the presence of Christ, grieved and wounded Him. The disciples clung to their favorite idea that Christ would assert His power, and take His position on the throne of David. And in heart each still longed for the highest place in the kingdom. They had placed their own estimate upon themselves and upon one another, and, instead of regarding their brethren as more worthy, they had placed themselves first.

The request of James and John to sit on the right and left of Christ’s throne had excited the indignation of the others. That the two brothers should presume to ask for the highest position so stirred the ten that alienation threatened. They felt that they were misjudged, that their fidelity and talents were not appreciated. Judas was the most severe upon James and John.

The spirit and work of the angels is to seek to promote others. They serve us, to bring us into a position which is even closer to Christ than they themselves can know.⁴² On the other hand, the disciples felt that they could not do that kind of work. They felt rather that they should work so that they themselves are promoted.

That was the spirit at that moment, and as long as they had that spirit, they were totally unfit to continue the work that Jesus would hand over to them. They were totally unfit to pass the test that would soon come upon them, and they were unfit also to partake of the Lord’s Supper which Jesus wanted to institute. So Jesus was sorrowful, understandably, because He knew how essential it was for the disciples to possess true meekness in order to cooperate with the angels; but this was not possible as long as they had that spirit.

The Spirit of Judas

The Desire of Ages, p. 644:

When the disciples entered the upper room, their hearts were full of resentful feelings. Judas pressed next to Christ

⁴² *The Desire of Ages*, p. 21.

on the left side, and John was on the right. If there was a highest place, Judas was determined to have it. And that place was thought to be next to Christ. And Judas was a traitor.

How can a traitor press next to Christ? If he is a traitor, he doesn't believe in the cause, and then why should he press next to Christ? If he was pressing next to Christ, how could he then be a traitor of his own cause? It was his own cause, wasn't it?

We understand why Judas was pressing next to Christ. He fully believed that Christ was the King. By betraying Him, he did not want to destroy his own cause, but by a clever scheme he hoped to further it. When the mind is perverted, it goes in all kinds of strange ways. One of those ways is to profess a belief in the cause of Christ, and to support it, while denying it in the daily actions of life.

The church leaders in Jerusalem provide another example of this problem. They said,

“We fully believe in everything that the Holy Spirit has said in the council of Jerusalem.”

But what they actually did was contrary to that. It is a great danger. If people in this kind of situation would see their wrong course, then it could be changed. But because they believe that they are doing the right thing, they end up trying to introduce sin into the center of God's work. That is the spirit of the king of the north, and that was the spirit of Judas. Being a traitor, at the same time he tried to be at the center of that cause which he actually betrayed.

The Desire of Ages, p. 644:

Another cause of dissension had arisen. At a feast it was customary for a servant to wash the feet of the guests, and on this occasion preparation had been made for the service. The pitcher, the basin, and the towel were there, in readiness

for the feet washing; but no servant was present, and it was the disciples' part to perform it. But each of the disciples, yielding to wounded pride, determined not to act the part of a servant.

“No, I won't act the part of a servant” was their firm decision. Why? Because they didn't have the spirit of the angels. At that point of time, they were totally unready to cooperate with the angels.

The Desire of Ages, p. 644:

All manifested a stoical unconcern, seeming unconscious that there was anything for them to do. By their silence, they refused to humble themselves.

“To humble themselves” means to submit themselves.

How was Christ to bring these poor souls where Satan would not gain over them a decided victory? How could He show that a mere profession of discipleship did not make them disciples, or insure them a place in His kingdom? How could He show that it is loving service, true humility, which constitutes real greatness? How was He to kindle love in their hearts, and enable them to comprehend what He longed to tell them?

The disciples made no move toward serving one another. Jesus waited for a time to see what they would do. Then He, the divine Teacher, rose from the table. Laying aside the outer garment that would have impeded His movements, He took a towel, and girded himself. With surprised interest the disciples looked on, and in silence waited to see what was to follow.

John 13

⁵ After that He poured water into a basin, and began to wash the disciples' feet, and to wipe them with the towel wherewith He was girded.

This action opened the eyes of the disciples. Bitter shame and humiliation filled their hearts. They understood the unspoken rebuke, and saw themselves in altogether a new light.

Now that Jesus had gone ahead with foot-washing, they saw themselves in a different light. In this way Christ expressed His love for the disciples. In fact, all His life He had washed their feet (spiritually), and now He did so again. And this event was very significant, so significant that it was established as a ceremony among God's people. Thus Jesus gave them an example that they should never forget. He said,

"You call me Lord and Master. You are right when you call me this. But because I am the Lord and Master, I am doing this—washing your feet."⁴³

That showed very clearly, that in heaven the Lord and Master is the servant of all. Therefore, the highest angel is the servant of all. He is the one with the greatest capacity to serve.

Peter's Expression of Pride

The Desire of Ages, p. 645:

Judas, in choosing his position at table, had tried to place himself first, and Christ as a servant, served him first. John, toward whom Judas had felt so much bitterness, was left till the last.

Because he had pressed from the other side, thus making a circle; so Jesus came to John last.

But John did not take this as a rebuke or slight. As the disciples watched Christ's action, they were greatly moved.

When Peter's turn came, he exclaimed with astonishment,

John 13

⁶ Lord, do You wash my feet?

Christ's condescension broke his heart. He was filled with shame to think that one of the disciples was not performing this service.

He should have felt ashamed, shouldn't he?

⁴³ *John* 13:13-15.

John 13

⁷ What I do, [Christ said,] you know not now; but you shall know hereafter.

At that point of time, Peter did not understand the meaning of that act, or at least not fully. He understood something; the unspoken rebuke to them was very clear. They realized that one of them should have done the service; but Peter did not fully understand what Christ was doing.



Christ washing Peter's feet

(Bouzonnet Stella after J. Stella 1700 - Wellcome Collection)

The Desire of Ages, p. 645-646:

Peter could not bear to see his Lord, whom he believed to be the Son of God, acting the part of a servant. His whole soul rose up against this humiliation. He did not realize that for this Christ came into the world. With great emphasis he exclaimed,

John 13

⁸ You shall never wash my feet.

Was this humility? It looks like a very humble act, to say,

“You shall never wash my feet.”

But in fact it was an expression of pride. True humility does not neglect any provision that Christ makes for our salvation, but eagerly grasps it. True humility will not miss one lesson of truth, will not miss one camp-meeting, one study even; it will not miss one ray of light. It will be very eager to take in everything and take every service. True humility will not miss the service of the angels. It will not say,

“Well, I am not worthy of the service of the angels, therefore I shall not take it.”

True humility will not refrain from praying to Christ, or to God in Christ’s name, because we feel so unworthy. True humility will lay hold of the truth that regardless of our condition, we can come to God through Christ. The worse our condition, the greater our need to come to Christ. That’s true humility.

True humility means surrender—capitulation. If after a war, an army is defeated, they will sign a treaty and surrender unconditionally. After World War II, the German army fully surrendered, unconditionally. They said,

“Well, here we are at your mercy.”

Likewise, the Japanese army, after the war, stated:

“We are at your mercy.”

That is the attitude we need to take before Christ. We must make very sure that pride is not standing in the way between us and Christ.

It is true that we are sinners, but we can come to Him, and there we receive forgiveness and cleansing. And that enables us to come even closer to Him, to ask of Him more things,

more and more. He is not disappointed when we ask, but He wants us to ask; otherwise He would not have invited us to pray in the name of Christ, which is a very high privilege.

So, when Peter refused that service, because he felt that it was too great a humiliation for Christ, this was not humility, it was neglecting a privilege. When he asked Jesus not to wash his feet, it was because he felt that it was too great a humiliation for Christ. He did not realize that Christ had come into the world just for this kind of service. Peter was thinking,

“If Christ is doing this kind of work, He never can be the King; but I want Him to be the King. Therefore He should not wash feet. Please don’t do it.”

Likewise, we may feel in our self-righteousness that God is so stern that He will not accept the one who has sinned. But He will, provided we surrender. Let us surrender our sin, let us truly surrender our pride, let us surrender our self-will and our self-assurance. Let us surrender these things. Let us lay ourselves at the feet of Jesus and accept any service from Him.

Seeing Christ in the Brethren

When our brothers and sisters wash our feet, we are to see Jesus in them, washing our feet. True, our brother is not Jesus, but he acts in behalf of Jesus, and the spirit of Jesus works through him. And while he does this, Jesus washes away our sin. As we realize that Jesus is serving us, as we truly surrender our sin to Him, we shall be truly cleansed. That is the intent of this service.

Then we shall be ready also to concede to one another the highest place. Then we shall be ready to surrender to each other. We shall then have a much more happy relationship with one another. We will be able to talk about difficulties in a friendly manner, in a manner of surrender, common surrender to the truth that the Lord has revealed in His own way.

The foot-washing service also unites the Church. We are united to Christ, and we shall be united to each other as well. Peter's rejection of the foot-washing was no humility; it was, in fact, pride.

It might be that a brother, because he does not feel sure about his rebirth, does not take part in this service, but still he can receive a blessing as he stays in the service, as he humbly submits his heart, and then no doubt the Lord will give him a tremendous amount of faith that will make him ready even for his rebirth experience, which is so needful in these last times.

Peter's Teachable Spirit

Let us look to how Peter went on. First he rejected, and Christ very solemnly said to him,

John 13

⁸ If I wash you not, you have no part with me.

The Desire of Ages, p. 646:

The service which Peter refused, was the type of a higher cleansing. Christ had come to wash the heart from the stain of sin. In refusing to allow Christ to wash his feet, Peter was refusing the higher cleansing included in the lower. He was really rejecting his Lord. It is not humiliating to the Master to allow Him to work for our purification. The truest humility is to receive with thankful heart any provision made in our behalf, and with earnestness do service for Christ.

That is true humility. It will not give up when difficulties come. Sometimes we see a mountain of difficulties, and then we are tempted to say,

“Well, I can't do anything to change it.”

But we should not think like this. We should know and understand that God is all powerful, and earnestly we should press on in our service. And as we are consistent in that work,

the Lord will give the victory. He will richly bless us, and He will lead us also to be cleansed. He will also lead us to serve one another.

The Desire of Ages, p. 646:

At the words,

John 13

⁸ If I wash you not, you have no part with me,

—Peter surrendered his pride and self-will. He could not endure the thought of separation from Christ; that would have been death to him.

⁹ Not my feet only, [he said,] but also my hands and my head.

¹⁰ Jesus said to him, He that is washed needs not save to wash his feet, but is clean every whit.

It was wonderful how Peter was able to surrender his pride and self-will. He needed just one more lesson, which he readily accepted, and then his feet were washed. And with the washing of the feet his pride was washed away and he surrendered; and now he was ready for the Lord's Supper—a rich blessing.

And if Peter had not overcome that difficult crisis in his life, then I am quite sure that he would not have passed the other crisis which came after he denied his Lord, and he realized that he had denied his Lord. That was a terrible experience for him. At that point of time he could have thrown away his life forever; but he did not. He remembered the great humiliation and love of Christ, and sinful as he was, he cast himself at the feet of Jesus in that terrible moment, and bitterly cried and wept, and asked for forgiveness. And surely the loving Lord forgave him. He cleansed him again, and then Peter was ready to care for the sheep, because the Bible says,

“Whosoever is forgiven much, he also loves much.”⁴⁴

⁴⁴ *Luke 7:42-43.*

And the great depth out of which Peter was saved after he had denied his Lord, made him able to take special care of the sheep. Likewise, the wonderful fact that he was washed, finally prepared him for the crisis ahead.

We don't know what crisis may come into our life, but we know that this service received in the right spirit will prepare us for that crisis. It may be a similar crisis as that of Peter, maybe another crisis, but we must be prepared for it. And the Lord intends that the foot-washing service will prepare us for the difficult situation.

So let us ask the Lord to cleanse us from pride; to make us ready to cooperate with the meek angels, who desire to promote us. Let us search our own hearts as the ceremony is carried through, and we shall be greatly blessed, because the angels are there to guide our thoughts; and as they do this, we will remember many things which will soften and prepare our hearts. Now let us depart for the foot-washing.



Angels at the Commencement of Creation
(Proverbs 8:27, Job 38:4-7, Isaiah 40:12)
(Pranker c1761 - Wellcome Collection)

