



Are There Guardian Angels?

DISCOVERING GOD'S WORD BIBLE STUDY SERIES

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Are there “guardian angels”? “Angel” is simply a term that means “messenger.” Angels are created spiritual beings that are messengers of God and serve His purposes. A “guardian angel” is commonly believed to be a special classification of angel who is responsible for providing protective watch care over a specific individual. The teaching of “guardian angels” is one that is widely accepted among religious people today. In fact, the Catholic Church even has a special feast day to honor “guardian angels” – and even encourages prayers offered to “guardian angels,” asking for protection for yourself or even praying to another’s “guardian angel” to ask for protection on his/her behalf (i.e. a mother praying to her daughter’s “guardian angel”). So, clearly, mankind often accepts this classification of angels, saying that each individual has a “guardian angel” – whose job it is to watch over a specific individual. But, what does the Bible say?

Considering Some Passages

Now, as we begin to consider this question, please recognize that the question is about whether or not there is a group of angels (called “guardian angels”) who are each assigned one specific man, woman, or child to watch over and protect. The question is *not* about whether God can work to protect individuals providentially by using angels (as He has done in the past). Rather, the question is about personal “guardian angels” – assigned by God to one specific individual.

Then, please recognize that the only way we can know the answer to this question is by observing what God says (in the Bible). Consider Deuteronomy 29:29 as we begin this study: “The secret things belong to the Lord our God, but those things which are revealed belong to us and to our children forever, that we may do all the words of this law.” Therefore, the things we are expected to know have been revealed to us by God; but, the things we are not expected to know have not been revealed to us by God. So, if there are “guardian angels” – and God wants us to know about their existence, we would be able to see their existence in the Bible.

Let's consider some passages in order to see whether or not God has revealed anything about "guardian angels" and their work in the pages of Scripture.

(1) Psalm 91:10-12: "No evil shall befall you, Nor shall any plague come near your dwelling; For He shall give His angels charge over you, To keep you in all your ways. In their hands they shall bear you up, Lest you dash your foot against a stone."

This passage contains the Scripture that Satan quoted to Jesus in order to tempt Him (see Matthew 4:5-6). Now, this passage is a great comfort to those who are faithful Christians – to recognize the watchful care of God. However, notice that the emphasis in this passage is on *God's* watchful care – not the watchful care of the angels. This passage also does *not* identify the concept of a personal "guardian angel." If this passage taught the modern-day concept of a "guardian angel," it would speak of one angel's watchful, protective care. Instead, the passage speaks of God's watchful and protective care – and mentions "angels" (plural) protecting, not a single angel.

Furthermore, we must remember that the Psalms are being written as poetry and often contain hyperbole (exaggerated language that describes something as better or worse than it actually is to convey a particular point). For instance, the Psalmist describes the severe wickedness of man by using hyperbole in Psalm 58:3, saying that the wicked had gone astray from birth – even speaking lies from birth! Certainly this is hyperbole, as an infant is not able to speak at all; let alone speak lies from birth! Similarly, just as Psalm 58 uses hyperbole to make a point about the wickedness of man, Psalm 91 uses hyperbole to express God's watchful care over His people!

(2) Hebrews 13:2: "Do not forget to entertain strangers, for by so doing some have unwittingly entertained angels."

While this passage does not speak directly to the question of "guardian angels," this is a significant passage to the discussion. Does this passage teach that angels are living and walking among us (some of whom may be "guardian angels" – to be in the right place at the right time to help us)?

Recognize that this passage comes in the portion of the book of Hebrews that is providing instructions as to how we are to live our lives as Christians, under God's new covenant. Specifically, this passage emphasizes the responsibility that Christians have to "entertain strangers" (or, practice hospitality toward them). In giving this responsibility to Christians, the author tells us not to forget that some have unknowingly entertained angels by doing so. This is a reference to the events of Genesis 18 with Abraham.

Now, as you consider this passage, please recognize that it does *not* say that we will also unknowingly entertain angels. Instead, it only tells us that some have done so in the past – encouraging us to practice hospitality toward strangers today. So, we simply cannot interpret this passage to mean that there are angels walking in human form among us today (not even "guardian angels"). To interpret this passage in this way is to over-extend the text.

(3) Hebrews 1:13-14: “But to which of the angels has He ever said: ‘Sit at My right hand, Till I make Your enemies Your footstool’? Are they not all ministering spirits sent forth to minister for those who will inherit salvation?”

In the context, the Hebrew writer is making a point in this passage about Christ being higher than the angels (read the entirety of chapter 1 to see this point). However, the language of verse 14 is particularly interesting and applicable to this study.

Clearly, the author states that angels have a role in serving those who will “inherit salvation” (i.e. those who will be saved eternally). However, the author does not provide any information as to how this service is performed – and he mentions *nothing* about each individual having one assigned “guardian angel” to protect him/her from harm. While we can speculate about the kind of service God has assigned angels to perform, this passage does *not* validate any claims for “guardian angels.”

(4) Matthew 18:10: “Take heed that you do not despise one of these little ones, for I say to you that in heaven their angels always see the face of My Father who is in heaven.”

This is probably the most widely used passage in support of “guardian angels.” Certainly Jesus does make reference to “their angels” in this text. However, you also must consider the larger point that Jesus is making in this passage. In context, Jesus is teaching individuals who desired to be counted as the “greatest in the kingdom of heaven” (verse 1) that children (and those who become like little children) are actually the greatest in the kingdom. Furthermore, Jesus tells them of the great care that God has for those who are children – and that they must not offend any little child.

But, does this passage teach that every individual child has a “guardian angel”? It does not! Notice that the passage does *not* say that each child has *one* angel assigned to guard him/her. Also notice that the angels appear to be in Heaven; not on the earth. Finally, please notice that this passage does *not* tell us anything about how God cares for these children nor about the role the angels have in this. So, even this passage does not teach the modern-day concept of “guardian angels.”

Some Conclusions

Now that we have evaluated some important passages about this question, let’s see what conclusions the Bible will help us reach. Remember that we must be diligent to rightly divide (accurately handle and interpret) God’s word (2 Timothy 2:15). Furthermore, all Scripture is perfect and must harmonize. So, whatever the Bible teaches about angels must harmonize with everything else the Scriptures teach.

First, the Scriptures say nothing about the modern-day concept of “guardian angels.” We can search through the entire Bible and never find a reference to the modern-day ideas about

“guardian angels.” Therefore, when the Bible is silent about this, we also must be silent in order to speak as the oracles of God (1 Peter 4:11).

Second, angels do exist and they are ministering spirits of God. We have seen that God uses angels to serve Him and His people (see Hebrews 1:13-14). We are just not told how He accomplishes such – and exactly how they interact with mankind today.

Third, God allows bad things to happen – even to good people. The modern-day “guardian angel” concept raises more questions than it answers about the bad things that happen in this world. Why are people only protected by their “guardian angels” some of the time? Why do the “guardian angels” let people die (even in tragic ways)? Why do “guardian angels” let little children die? Surely, whatever conclusions we reach about the work of angels today must harmonize with the fact that God allows bad things to happen – even to good people (i.e. the apostle Paul, see 2 Corinthians 11:22-33). He simply does not promise each one of us a “guardian angel” whose job it is to keep us from all physical harm!

Fourth, angels do not possess the qualities of Deity. The modern-day concept of “guardian angels” seem to give God-like characteristics to these angels. According to the ideas about “guardian angels,” angels have the ability to know what is going to happen before it happens, have the ability to see in every place, and have the ability to do whatever must be done in order to protect an individual. However, while angels do possess various abilities (as God has given to them), they do *not* possess these same characteristics as Deity (see Hebrews 1). Remember, they are servants of God – not God!

Fifth, angels must never be worshiped. I have already mentioned the fact that the Catholic church holds a feast for “guardian angels” and encourages prayer to them. However, we are never taught to do either of these in the Bible. Instead, our worship is directed to God and Him only (see Matthew 4:10 and Revelation 22:8-9).

Conclusion

The Bible simply never teaches the modern-day concept of “guardian angels.” Therefore, let us never be guilty of teaching what God has never taught! Instead, let us rest upon the promises He has given us in the Bible – and speak accordingly!

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