

DO WE HAVE GUARDIAN ANGELS?

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Many people today believe that each Christian has a personal guardian angel. This idea is based both in the words of Jesus, “**Take heed that ye despise not one of these little ones; for I say unto you, That in heaven their angels do always behold the face of my Father which is in heaven**” (Mt. 18:10) and in the Hebrews writer’s statement, “But to which of the angels said he at any time, Sit on my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool? Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation” (Heb. 1:13-14)?

These are not the only passages that speak of angels being involved, in some way, in God’s works, but is it reliable to take a few obscure passages and build a whole doctrine upon them? Many of the restoration movement’s fathers endorsed the guardian angel view. Brother B. W. Johnson said, “The doctrine of guardian angels is emphatically taught in the scriptures.” Also, Brother J. W. McGarvey wrote, “Their angels,” in Matt. 18:10, “refers to the angels especially charged with ministering to them individually.” A modern writer has asserted that “the New Testament teaching of angels, and particularly the providential care which they exercise over individuals, is too plain to be disputed by informed Bible students.”

Though these men were faithful brethren, their beliefs cannot be adequately defended, and this doctrine has many holes that cannot be filled. In order to come to a better understanding, we will focus on a few of these passages that are used as the foundation to this teaching.

First, we must note that neither this passages nor any other states that each Christian has a guardian angel that watches over him; neither is it affirmed here or elsewhere that an angel is actually present with each disciple. On the contrary, Christ said that “**their angels**” are “**in heaven**” where they “**always behold the face**” of the “**Father.**” Also, the Hebrews writer indicates that “their angels” belong to all that inherit salvation and not to any individual Christian alone.

Even when the disciples told Rhoda that she saw Peter’s angel instead of Peter, there is no indication of a guardian angel. In the context of Acts 12:15, the implication is that they thought that Peter had been killed by Herod while in prison instead of being protected by an angel. This doctrine has many difficulties that cannot be resolved in the scripture, and it cannot be reconciled with the clear and explicit teaching of man’s free agency and will.

Second, if each Christian has a guardian angel that exercises watchful care and divine protection, from what do they protect one? Is it illness, injury, or violent death? Many of the Lord’s finest soldiers languished on beds of affliction, their every wakeful moment in the agony of physical disease. Where is their guardian angel during these times of interminable pain, agony, and lonely, sleepless nights? Many times Christians have been motivated to travel in order to engage in the work of the church, and die violently in an automobile or a plane accident. One of our finest, brother Ira Y. Rice, died in an automobile accident. How can the guardian angel belief be harmonized with these tragedies involving faithful Christians?

Since Jesus placed the angels in the presence of God, that must be a figurative statement. The Oriental view, at that time, was that those deserving of high honor and great favor were most often permitted in the presence of the king. Also, the plural form of angels indicates that they serve in God’s plan for all

saints that have put Christ on in baptism (Gal. 3:26-27). Combining these two thoughts, it seems more possible that Jesus and the Hebrews writer was teaching that even the most obscure Christian on earth is highly regarded and honored before the throne of God.

Third, this notion is dangerously close to the false doctrine of the personal direction of the Holy Spirit. How would a guardian angel protect one from disaster? Perhaps he would plant a thought in the heart of the Christian or in some other way influence the individual to do or not do something they had intended to do. Also, how would one know if it were an angel of God that was influencing them to do something instead of a force of darkness and sin? Is there any possible suggestion an angel could give a believer for their benefit that is not already set forth in the Bible? Also, would the suggestion be irresistible or would it be based upon the free will of the individual? If based upon free will, would the person be blamed if he or she did not follow the influence or suggestion?

The doctrine of guardian angels cannot be supported by the Bible when other very clear passages are taken into consideration. It is a pleasant thought to think that God has provided some type of divine help for us in the form of one of His angels. However, there are many false doctrines in the world that offer comfort and ease the mind if accepted, such as the impossibility of falling from grace, but that doesn't make them agreeable with Biblical teachings.