

Ministry To Angels

Ephesians 3:7-12

7 Of this gospel I was made a minister according to the gift of God's grace, which was given me by the working of his power. 8 To me, though I am the very least of all the saints, this grace was given, to preach to the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ, 9 and to bring to light for everyone what is the plan of the mystery hidden for ages in God who created all things, 10 so that through the church the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly places. 11 This was according to the eternal purpose that he has realized in Christ Jesus our Lord, 12 in whom we have boldness and access with confidence through our faith in him. (Ephesians 3:7-12)

The longer that I am a Christian and the more I study the depths of these scriptures, the more I find that there are things and realms and mysteries that I never before knew existed.

And yes, sometimes when I begin to speak of these newly discovered possibilities, I encounter blank stares and even some strong skepticism from my listeners.

But may I say again, one of the joys of our studying through the bible as we do each Sunday, that of taking each verse as it comes in its order, I am compelled to go ahead and examine each matter that God has placed in front of us.

And here today, we have encountered one of those somewhat "odd" statements about God and His kingdom that bears our further study.

Here, we read the simple words

8 To me, though I am the very least of all the saints, this grace was given, to preach to the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ, 9 and to bring to light for everyone what is the plan of the mystery hidden for ages in God who created all things, 10 so that through the church the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly places. (Ephesians 3:8-10)

May I ask . . . what could God possibly mean with these words here in verse 10?

Who are "rulers and authorities in the heavenly places" and what is the "manifold wisdom" that God is making known to them through things that are taking place in your and my life, and I do mean your and my life, not someone else's . . . yes them, but also your and my life personally?

It is as if the events of our daily life are on display and our responses to those events are being observed by others as we go about the matters of our day and working out this salvation that God has worked into our souls.

Is that what is taking place? Is that what God means with these few obscure words here in verse 10? Listen!

10 so that through the church the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly places. (Ephesians 3:10)

I confess to you that I am often fascinated by the things of God that He keeps cloaked within a special mystery. And this is one of those especially fascinating mysteries.

Here, it would seem that God has given you and me, the church, the body of believers on the earth, the special opportunity of ministering back to the Angels in heaven.

That is truly an “odd” thought and far beyond our comprehension. But again, God has placed these words right in front of our steps here in this Book of Ephesians and he has done so for a purpose. And we dare not just “skip” over them without taking time to see what God has for us within them.

As believers we know that there is an invisible realm all around us where the angels and demons live. And there is even a “great cloud of witnesses” residing there.

And we know that they do things, especially the angels and the demons. The scriptures are filled with mention of their involvements with us, demons tempting us and angels ministering to our needs.

Angels, the good ones, are mentioned over 300 times in these scriptures. And they all have purposes, and those purposes have much to do with people, you and me, the residents of this visible realm.

Listen to these words of Hebrews 1:13-14

13 And to which of the angels has he (God) ever said, “Sit at my right hand until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet”? 14 Are they not all ministering spirits sent out to serve for the sake of those who are to inherit salvation? (Hebrews 1:13-14)

This is a strange thought indeed, and not always well received by the human mind, even the mind of many who call themselves “born again” Christians. The thought that there are other beings all around us every day involved in all the things that we do is eerie and perhaps even ominous to some of our sensibilities.

However, to many, many other people, me included, there is a special comfort in knowing that we have angels round about us, ministering to our needs, especially in times of crisis.

Folks, over the years of my being a Christian, I have become more and more aware of the presence of “help” coming to me in ways that are not explainable to the human mind, words to say or write to someone at the appropriate time, physical assistance with struggle too difficult for my own abilities to handle at the moment, avoidance of accidents, especially in my car, help that is completely unexplainable from a human viewpoint.

Yes, I have thanked the Lord for my good fortune in those moments. But the more I read these scriptures, the more that I now know for sure that it really was God actually using these “rulers and authorities”, the “good angels” to carry out the actual help that I received.

Why God does it that way instead of Him simply doing it Himself, I don’t know. But just as here in our visible realm, where He has given you and me the responsibility of caring for and giving help to the people around us, and especially the giving of the gospel to every creature, there within the invisible realm, He has also entrusted many of His tasks to His angels.

And again, yes, God could simply “speak” care and help into the lives of those people. He could even “speak” the gospel into each mind. And in doing that, He could reach even the remotest person in the remotest jungle villages. But He has chosen to do it another way, through people, you and me.

And so it is with the angels. God has chosen to use His Holy angels to carry out His plans and His purposes.

So then we see, Gabriel carrying the message of the coming Savior to Mary and to Joseph. And we see the angels of the seven churches in the Book of Revelations being given the words of God to pass on to the members of those churches.

And in the Old Testament, we see angels ministering regularly to the people and especially to the Prophets. We see angels warning Abraham about the coming destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, and then those same angels saving Lot and his two daughters.

In recent days, I have had reason to study the Book of Zechariah. There I encountered several instances in which angels ministered to the leaders who were coming back from exile in Babylon. And there also, I encountered one of the reasons why the angels were

busy at work, ministering to God's people. Listen for a moment to these words of encounter in

Zechariah 3:1-2 (ESV)

1 Then he showed me Joshua the high priest standing before the angel of the LORD, and Satan standing at his right hand to accuse him. 2 And the LORD said to Satan, "The LORD rebuke you, O Satan! The LORD who has chosen Jerusalem rebuke you!" (Zechariah 3:1-2)

And in Zechariah 3:6-7 (ESV)

6 And the angel of the LORD solemnly assured Joshua, 7 "Thus says the LORD of hosts: If you will walk in my ways and keep my charge, then you shall rule my house and have charge of my courts, and I will give you the right of access among those who are standing here. (Zechariah 3:6-7)

Here, the angel of the LORD is clearly speaking the words of God as if God were speaking them Himself. But God is using His angels to speak and to do.

And again, in these words we see the particular reason for the angel intervening. Satan was standing before God and accusing this high priest, Joshua.

Folks, I am convinced that this sort of intervention is taking place every moment all throughout the invisible realms, satan or some other demon is accusing people, even you and me, and our angel is right by us defending us.

So then, simply put, there are two realms that are spoken about in these scriptures, the visible one that you and I can see, and the invisible realm all round about us where angels and demons and that great cloud of witnesses, saints of old, live within. Both are real, one as absolutely real as the other. And these scriptures tell us so.

Just because we can't see that other realm does not make it any less real.

Why God does it that way, we can't know for sure. We can just trust that it is part of His inexpressible wisdom.

May we turn back to this special verse 10 of Ephesians 3 for a few more moments? Listen!

10 so that through the church the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly places. (Ephesians 3:10)

I have been speaking much about the angels' interaction with us, them giving us aid, as in Hebrews 1.

Hebrews 1:14 (ESV)

14 Are they not all ministering spirits sent out to serve for the sake of those who are to inherit salvation? (Hebrews 1:14)

And this is their purpose! But apparently, from these words of Ephesians 3:10, we, you and I, have something to show back to them. There is a purpose that we, the church, the body of believers here on the earth, have to carry out in a ministry back to the angels. Those words again . . . Ephesians 3, verse 10,

10 so that through the church the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly places. (Ephesians 3:10)

We, the visible church, are part of God's plan to demonstrate His "manifold wisdom" to the angels.

Again, these particular rulers and authorities seem to be mostly those angels who are "good angels". But there are also myriads of "bad angels", fallen angels, demons that are also observing all that is taking place. How much actual wisdom those demons accept into their minds, I don't know. But they are witnessing our behavior and responses right along with the "good angels".

Why is God doing this special thing, that of making His "manifold wisdom" known to the angels, those rulers and authorities? It is because no matter how knowledgeable and how informed those rulers and authorities may be, they still do not know all the plans and purposes of God. God has wisdom beyond anything even the highest of angels could ever think or imagine.

In the Believer's Bible Commentary, William MacDonald contemplates these rulers and authorities and he explains that as they observe the church, "The angels are compelled to admire God's unsearchable judgments and marvel at His ways past finding out. They see how God has triumphed over sin to His own glory. They see how He has sent heaven's Best for earth's worst. They see how He has redeemed His enemies at enormous cost, conquered them by love, and prepared them as a Bride for His Son. They see how He has blessed them with all spiritual blessings in the heavenlies. And they see that through the work of the Lord Jesus on the cross, more glory has come to God and more blessing has come to believing Jews and Gentiles than if sin had never been allowed to enter. God has been vindicated; Christ has been exalted; Satan has been defeated; and the church has been enthroned in Christ to share His glory."

Folks, “Wisdom” is so very important to God. And He really wants men and angels to have wisdom; not the corrupt kind of wisdom that comes from man, but God’s own pure and holy wisdom.

He tells us in James 1,

5 If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, Who gives to all men generously and without reproach, and it will be given to him. (James 1:5)

Another commentator, Stephen Cole, has concluded that God is Holy and Just and He will minister His wisdom to all, both the good angels and the fallen angels, so that they all will be able to fully understand and be without excuse. He goes on to say that “The fallen angels thought that they had triumphed at the cross, but God displayed His wisdom by using that very means to gain ultimate and final victory (Colossians 2:15). As for the holy angels, through the cross they “see a great and wonderful manifestation of the glory of God”.

Johnathan Edwards points out that the happiness of angels, as well as of people, consists very much in seeing the glory of God. And, he says, “Perhaps all God’s attributes are more gloriously manifested in this work than in any other that ever the angels saw.”

John Piper says, “We don’t usually hit targets that we aren’t aiming at. And the target for the church is to demonstrate to the evil powers of the cosmos that God has been wise in sending his Son to die that we might have hope and be unified in one body, the church. Therefore, when we fail to live in hope and to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace, we send the wrong signal throughout the galaxies.

Again, the all-important encouragement that Paul is giving to us here is for us to elevate our understanding of the importance of the church within God’s eternal purposes. And He wants us and our fellow believers to understand what a great privilege it is that God has chosen us, the church, to minister back to the.

Folks, our daily lives really do count for so much, much more than we imagine. We are witnesses! No matter how we behave, we are witnesses. And here, God is elevating our witness to not only it being a witness to the people around us. We are also a constant witness to the angels who are watching us.

And God wants our witness to be one that demonstrates His manifold wisdom, His honor and His glory. Listen as I close . . .

Ephesians 3:10

10 so that through the church the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly places. (Ephesians 3:10)

Praise be to God!