



The Scrolls

Helping **CENTRAL BIBLE CHURCH** Families Belong, Become and Go Beyond V25 N49 December 10, 2023

FROM THE REALMS OF GLORY

“Heaven Help Me”

Hebrews 1:14; Psalm 91:9-12; Matthew 18:10-14

THIS WEEK'S CORE COMPETENCY

Humility

I choose to esteem others
above myself.

*“Do nothing out of selfish
ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility
value others above yourselves, not looking to your
own interests but each of you
to the interests of the others.”*

Philippians 2:3-4



What do
angels do?

The passages examined in this week's issue have one thing in common, the mention of angels. In Hebrews 1:14, Psalm 91:9-12, and Matthew 18:10-14 Scripture refers to their ministry to those who will one day inherit the fullness of their salvation in Jesus Christ. In answer to the question, “What are angels?” one theologian answers: “Angels are created, spiritual beings with moral judgment and high intelligence, but without physical bodies” (Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 397).

He then provides the following helpful description of angels:

“Angels have not always existed; they are part of the universe that God created. In a passage that refers to angels as the ‘host’ of heaven (or ‘armies of heaven’), Ezra says. ‘You are the LORD, you alone; you have made heaven, the heaven of heavens, *with all their host* . . . and the host of heaven worships you’ (Neh. 9:6; cf. Ps. 148:2, 5). Paul tells us that God crated all things ‘visible and invisible’ through Christ and for him, and then specifically includes the angelic world with the phrase ‘whether thrones or dominions or principalities or authorities’ (Col. 1:16).

“That angels exercise moral judgment is seen in the fact that some of them sinned and fell from their positions (2 Peter 2:4; Jude 6; see chapter 20). Their high intelligence is seen throughout Scripture as they speak to people (Matt. 28:5; Acts 12:6-11, et al.) and sing praise to God (Rev. 4:11; 5:11).

“Since angels are ‘spirits’ (Heb 1:14) or spiritual creatures, they do not ordinarily have physical bodies (Luke 24:39). Therefore they cannot usually be seen by us unless God gives us a special ability to see them (Num. 22:31; 2 Kings 6:17; Luke 2:13). In their ordinary activities of guarding and protecting us (Ps. 34:7; 91:11; Heb. 1:14), and joining with us in worship to God (Heb. 12:22), they are invisible. However, from time to time angels took on a bodily

form to appear to various people in Scripture (Matt. 28:5; Heb. 13:2)” (397).

From this author's observations we might extrapolate that since angels do not have physical bodies – they are immaterial and incorporeal – they neither procreate nor are they mortal like humans. What's more, given that an *innumerable* number of them (Heb 12:22) were created *simultaneously* (Col 1:16) prior to the creation of the earth as we know it, their number is static (see Charles C. Ryrie, *Basic Theology*, 144).

Generally speaking, “What do angels do?” for believers in particular. Another theologian answers, “Angels are termed ‘ministering spirits’ in Hebrews 1:14. The Greek term for ministering (*leitourgika*) does not convey the idea of slavery, but of official functioning. They have been duly commissioned and sent forth with the responsibility of aiding believers” (Paul Enns, *The Moody Handbook of Theology*, 291). And the author gives the following examples of how angels have helped believers historically: 1) By providing physical protection (Ps 34:7; 91:11-13); 2) By providing physical sustenance (1Ki 19:5-7; cf. Mt 4:11); 3) By providing encouragement (Ac 27:23-25; cf. Mt 4:11); 4) By providing direction (Ac 8:26; 10:3, 22); 5) By assisting in answers to prayer (Ac 12:1-11; Da 9:20-27; cf. 10:10-12:13); and 6) By caring for the righteous at the time of death (Lk 16:22).

“When we are suddenly delivered from a danger or distress, we might suspect that angels have been sent by God to help us, and we should be thankful . . . When a car suddenly swerves from hitting us, when we suddenly find footing to keep from being swept along in a raging river, when we walk unscathed in a dangerous neighborhood, should we not suspect that God has sent his angels to protect us? (Ps 91:11-12). Should we not therefore thank God for sending angels to protect us at such times? It seems right that we should do so” (Grudem, 406).



EXAMINE GOD'S WORD

Read Hebrews 1:14

14 *Are not all angels ministering spirits sent to serve those who will inherit salvation?*

Read Psalm 91:9-12

9 *If you say, "The LORD is my refuge,"
and you make the Most High your dwelling,
10 no harm will overtake you,
no disaster will come near your tent.
11 For he will command his angels concerning you
to guard you in all your ways;
12 they will lift you up in their hands,
so that you will not strike your foot against a stone.*

Read Matthew 18:10-14

10 *"See that you do not despise one of these little ones. For I tell you that their angels in heaven always see the face of my Father in heaven.*

12 *"What do you think? If a man owns a hundred sheep, and one of them wanders away, will he not leave the ninety-nine on the hills and go to look for the one that wandered off? 13 And if he finds it, truly I tell you, he is happier about that one sheep than about the ninety-nine that did not wander off. 14 In the same way your Father in heaven is not willing that any of these little ones should perish.*

After reading the text, practice your Observation skills by noting the following:

In Hebrews 1:14

- Circle "ministering spirits" in v. 14.
- Circle "serve" in v. 14.
- Circle "salvation" in v. 14.

In Psalm 91:9-12

- Circle "you" and "your" (10x) in vv. 9-12.
- Box "For" indicating *reason* in v. 11.
- Underline "angels" and "guard" in v. 11.
- Highlight vv. 11-12 and write "cf. Mt 4:6."

In Matthew 18:10-14

- Circle "little ones" in vv. 10, 14.
- Underline "their angels" in v. 10.
- Circle "perish" in v. 14.

What one word would you use to describe the **TONE** of this passage? (i.e., stern, joyful, cautious, etc.)

What word or idea stands out to you in this passage?

What one thing do you not understand in this passage?

Try to summarize the **THEME** of this passage in one word. If you were going to describe these verses, you might say, "This text is about _____."



DIG DEEPER

Answer the questions to help you apply the passage and prepare for discussion

Hebrews 1:14

1. Read verses 5-13 and explain what verse 14 implies regarding the relative status of angels and the Son.
2. Angels are called “ministering spirits.” What do you infer from that?
3. What exactly do believers stand to inherit in the future?

Psalms 91:9-12

4. Put what verse 9 means in your own words.
5. Do you think verses 10-13 provide a *blanket* guarantee that no harm will *ever* befall one who takes refuge in the LORD? Explain.
6. “You” is *singular* in verses 10-13. Does that mean that every one of the Lord’s people has guardian angels assigned to him or her? Explain.

Matthew 18:10-14

7. It sounds like “little ones” have “angels.” To whom does “little ones” refer—*children*?
8. Do you think this passage warrants the conclusion that children have guardian angels assigned to them? Explain why you do or don’t.
9. So “little ones” have “angels.” What’s the point?
10. **Discussion:** Talk about what you’ve learned about angels from these passages and how what you’ve learned makes you feel.

Commentary On The Text

The three passages addressed in this issue of *The Scrolls*, one from the Old Testament and two from the New, have but one thing in common – angels. While not the primary point of any of them, they raise the interesting question as to whether people have guardian angels. In the *first*, Hebrews 1:14, the author claims that angels are servants of those who believe. He calls them “ministering spirits,” joining their function to their nature. They are *spirit* beings, rather than physical beings, that *serve*. As spirit beings, unlike human beings, they have no physical bodies, and unlike human beings they are immortal. Verse 14 concludes a section in which the author argues that the Son is superior to angels. The section opens with a *rhetorical* question, “For to which of the angels did God ever say, ‘You are my Son; today I have become your Father?’” (v. 5) and likewise closes with a *rhetorical* question, “Are not all angels ministering spirits sent to serve those who will inherit salvation?” to form an *inclusio*. Included in these ten verses are seven citations, five of which are taken from the book of Psalms (2:7; 104:4; 45:6-7; 102:25-27; 110:1); one of the other two is taken from 2 Samuel 7:14, and the other one is taken from Deuteronomy 32:43.

The author’s point is difficult to miss. One commentator offers this summary: “The preacher marshals these Old Testament quotations to provide a clear picture of the status of the angels relative to the Son. The Son sits at the preeminent position in the universe, with the angels in an inferior position as the servants who worship him. The Son has an eternal throne, from which the angels are sent out to minister. God has never spoken such proclamations as found in 1:5, 8-13 to the angels. Rather, his proclamations concerning them (1:6-7) show the angels’ inferiority. The Son alone is the favored object of divine decrees expressing royalty. By the end of this string of texts, no one in the author’s audience can doubt the superiority of the Son over the angels” (George H. Guthrie, *The NIV Application Commentary: Hebrews*, 71).

The author’s point is not that those who will inherit the fullness of their salvation in the future each have their own guardian angel. The fact that angels (pl.) serve those who believe (pl.) doesn’t warrant that specific conclusion.

In the *second*, Psalm 91:9-12 – classified by some as a wisdom psalm (vv. 1-13) and a divine oracle (vv. 14-16) (see Willem A. VanGemeren, “Psalms” in *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary*, rev. ed., vol 5, 696) – the psalmist invites his readers to trust in the LORD because, according to verses 9-13, “**no harm or disaster can befall** those who have made **the LORD** their **refuge** (*mahseh*, ‘shelter from danger’; cf. v. 2 and comments on 14:6) because He has commissioned **angels** to care for them. Angels protect from physical harm and give believers strength to overcome difficulties, pictured here as wild lions and danger-

ous snakes” (Allen P. Ross, “Psalms,” in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: Old Testament*, 860).

On the one hand, what appears to be a promise, “no harm will overtake you, no disaster will come near your tent” (v. 10) is comforting. But is it realistic? Perhaps it’s hyperbole. One commentator asks the hard question, “For the faithful who have experienced tragedy, these promises smack of being cruel. How should we respond to this psalm when calamity strikes us or those we love?” (Craig C. Broyles, *Psalms*, NIBC, 362). It isn’t enough to answer that the LORD may permit terrible things to happen to his own, but his children can take comfort in knowing that no power is out of his control. That answer flies in the face of the very words of the text – “no harm will overtake you, no disaster will come near your tent.” Perhaps the psalmist has in mind divine judgments reserved for the wicked (cf. v. 8). Or perhaps, a better answer lies in the fact that this is a *wisdom* psalm. Wisdom doesn’t make promises; wisdom identifies likely outcomes. While the LORD does *as a rule* protect those who take refuge in him, a sovereign God cannot be bound by the rule; he must certainly allow for exceptions. Again the idea here is that angels provide general protection when needed – not that guardian angels are assigned to protect specific individuals.

In the *third*, Matthew 18:10-14, “little ones” are said to have “their angels in heaven.” While “little ones” may refer to children (cf. v. 2), the term may also refer to “lowly disciples” (cf. v. 4) as it does in Mark 9:42, “If anyone causes one of these little ones – *those who believe in me* – to stumble, it would be better for them if a large millstone were hung around the neck, and they were thrown into the sea.” So it’s unlikely that the term refers *exclusively* to little children – certainly not *all* little children whether they believe or not. And it’s equally unlikely that “*their* angels in heaven” refers to “little ones” individually. One theologian explains: “Some people have gone beyond this idea of general protection and wondered if God gives a specific ‘guardian angel’ for each individual in the world, or at least for each Christian. Support for this idea has been found in Jesus’ words about little children, ‘in heaven *their* angels always behold the face of my Father who is in heaven’ (Matt. 18:10). However, our Lord may simply be saying that angels who are assigned the task of protecting little children have ready access to God’s presence. (To use an athletic analogy, the angels may be playing ‘zone’ rather than ‘man-on-man’ defense.) When the disciples in Acts 12:15 say that Peter’s ‘angel’ must be knocking at the door, this does not necessarily imply belief in an individual guardian angel. It could be that an angel was guarding or caring for Peter just at that time. There seems to be, therefore, no convincing support for the idea of individual ‘guardian angels’ in the text of Scripture” (Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 400).

Word Studies/Notes

Hebrews 1:14

v. 14 *ministering spirits* See v. 7 (cf. Ps 104:4). "God revealed a primary purpose and ministry of the angels ('ministering spirits') in this verse. It is to provide service for human beings so that they can achieve final deliverance over their spiritual enemies. This includes bringing people to conversion. However it also involves protecting and strengthening us who are believers so that we may one day obtain our full inheritance with Christ in glory. This ministry of service is obviously inferior to Jesus Christ's ministry of ruling" (Thomas L. Constable, "Notes on Hebrews," 2023 ed., 34, planobiblechapel.org/tcon/notes/pdf/Hebrews.pdf). "Angels clearly have their place in the economy of redemption, but it is not at the Father's right hand. They are ordained to ministry in the world of humanity (cf. Strathmann, *TDNT* 4:231)" (William L. Lane, *Word Biblical Commentary*, vol. 47A, *Hebrews 1-8*, 32).

v. 14 *serve* "We now consider the angels who are contrasted with the Son. He sits in royal state; they, however, are no more than servants. 'All' applies without distinction. Not only are they servants, but they are servants of saved men. 'Spirits' preserves their place of dignity, but their function is service (*eis diakonian*, 'to serve'). *Diakonia* is the usual NT term for the service Christians render God and man, but nowhere else is it used of the service angels render" (Leon Morris, "Hebrews," in *The Bible Expositor's Commentary*, vol. 12, 19-20).

v. 14 *salvation* "The salvation here spoken of lies in the future; it is yet to be inherited, even if its blessings can already be enjoyed in anticipation. That is to say, it is that eschatological salvation which, in Paul's words, is now 'nearer to us than when we first believed' (Rom. 13:11) or, in Peter's words, is 'ready to be revealed in the last time' (1 Pet. 1:5)" (F. F. Bruce, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, NICNT, 25).

Psalms 91:9-12

vv. 9-12 *you, your* "The changes of person (obscured in some modern versions), from 'I' to 'you' and on to the divine 'I', mark the divisions of the psalm and are indicated in the three main headings suggested here . . . 'My refuge' (vv. 1-2), 'Your refuge' (vv. 3-13), and 'God's pledge' (vv. 14-16)" (Derek Kidner, *Psalms 73-150*, TOTC, 363-65). "The unusual grammatical problem involved [in Ps 91] is the peculiar change of pronouns, particularly the frequent use of those of the second person. To dispose of this problem at once, it is to be noted that the type of second person pronoun used is that which is sometimes called the 'ideal second person,' which is the equivalent of the second person used impersonally, almost like the German *man* or like the impersonal 'one.' Thus, though it would be poor English, one could translate v. 3: 'For He will deliver one from the snare of the hunters,' and v. 4: 'With His feathers He will cover one,' etc. One exception to this use of the second person seems to be v. 9b,

where, as we shall indicate, the one addressed appears to be the same person who in 9a made a strong confession of faith in the Lord. It is, of course, equally feasible from this point onward (i.e., from vv. 10-13) to think of this same person as still being addressed. On the other hand, this same section could be in the ideal second person as it was in the first section of the psalm" (H. C. Leupold, *Exposition of the Psalms*, 650).

v. 11 *angels, guard* Angels watch over God's people and serve as their protectors. "This does not say, as was sometimes thought in times past, that a special angel is assigned to each individual. It merely guarantees angelic protection as it may be needed" (Leupold, 654-55).

vv. 11-12 cf. *Mt 4:6* "Satan quoted verses 11 and 12 when he tempted Jesus in the wilderness (Matt. 4:6). He urged Him to interpret this promise literally. However, Jesus declined to tempt God by deliberately putting Himself in a dangerous situation to see if God would miraculously deliver Him" (Thomas L. Constable, "Notes on Psalms," 2023 ed., 343, planobiblechapel.org/tcon/notes/pdf/psalms.pdf). "It was characteristic of God, Father and Son, that angelic help was sent when it was most needed (Matt. 4:11; Luke 22:43), accepted as strength for service and sacrifice, and refused for self-advantage (Matt. 26:53f.)" (Kidner, 365).

Matthew 18:10-14

vv. 10, 14 *little ones* "Here again it is uncertain whether the *little ones* are children or lowly disciples (his 'common people'). Either makes good sense, and the following reference to *angels* does not clear it up. Perhaps we should understand Jesus to be speaking first of the children that started him on this section of teaching, but now to be using words that have relevance to all his lowly followers" (Leon Morris, *The Gospel According to Matthew*, 464). "The thought of disciples (not restricted to children, though of course including them) as 'little ones' (v. 6) continues. Verses 6-7 contemplated the possibility of a 'little one' being caused to stumble and so lost from the life of discipleship" (R. T. France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, NICNT, 685).

v. 10 *their angels* "Heb 1:14 talks of angels 'serving' God's people, but without specifying any individual connection. Subsequent Christ devotion has developed the idea of a personal 'guardian angel.' Probably influenced by this passage, and there are parallels in later Jewish writings (Str-B 1:781-83), but there is little evidence that the idea was already popularly accepted among Jews at the time of Jesus" (France, 686-87).

v. 14 *perish* "'Perish' in this context does not mean loss of salvation, but the ultimate result of failing to achieve God's goal for oneself as a disciple, namely, a wasted life" (Thomas L. Constable, "Notes on Matthew," 2023 ed., 464, planobiblechapel.org/tcon/notes/pdf/matthew.pdf).

4

APPLY THE TEXT

CENTRAL MESSAGE OF THE TEXT

While individuals do not have guardian angels, angels do serve as ministering spirits that serve the needs of all believers.

CENTRAL MESSAGE FOR YOUR LIFE

(Rewrite the Central Message above to personally apply to your own life)



3 LIVING QUESTIONS

The “Living Questions” are simple questions we may ask of any text in order to apply the Bible to our life. Answer the questions below as personally as you can.

1. What does this passage teach me about God?

2. What does this passage teach me about myself?

3. What does this passage lead me to do?



FAMILY TALK

Several years ago, I received a phone call from a dear friend asking for biblical guidance in the wake of grief. Her teen daughter was experiencing the tragic loss of a classmate and she was looking for words of comfort. We talked at length about God’s sovereignty and how He controls the dates and times of all our lives here on earth. I gave her some helpful speaking points that would comfort her daughter and point to biblical truth. At some point in the conversation, I remember her saying, “So, I shouldn’t say God needed him or now he’s your guardian angel.” My heart sank. No. Please don’t say that. I’m not afraid to acknowledge the fact that the Bible is filled with strange things and angels are definitely on that list. Not to mention, passages on angels must be pieced together and that leaves quite a bit of room for our brains to fill in the missing blanks. So often we want to fill the space at the expense of accuracy and truth. When talking to your kids about angels (or giants, or people turning into salt pillars, or a donkey that talks, or hands that write on walls...), it’s ok to leave room for the unknown. What’s not ok is to fill in the blank with untruth. We don’t become angels when we die, and to soften the blow of grief with inaccurate and unbiblical information is to diminish and deny the truth of Scripture. Instead, focus on undeniable truth, be amazed at what God can do, and be excited that one day God will answer all the questions. We’re praying for you!

What Does The Bible Say?

Read Mt 18:10-14, Heb 1:14 and Ps 91:9-12

From Matthew, what do angels in heaven see in the face of children?

What does Heb 1:14 say about angels?

In Ps 91, what does God command His angels to do?

What Do You Think?

Do you think angels still guard and protect God’s people today?

What Do You Do?

What are some things that people say about angels? Can you find biblical truth to support these notions?

CORE COMPETENCY: Humility

I make others more important than me.

MEMORY VERSE: Isaiah 9:6

“For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.”

KidPIXCOUPON

Earn 1 KidPIX Token by completing the CENTRALKids Bible Study on this page and another token by memorizing and reciting the memory verse for this week.

Questions: kids@wearecentral.org

- _____ I completed my Bible Study
- _____ I memorized this week’s verse
- _____ I brought my Bible to church
- _____ I brought a friend



CHILD’S NAME

GRADE

PARENT SIGNATURE

OUR CORE COMPETENCIES

CENTRAL BELIEFS

Authority of the Bible (2 Timothy 3:16-17)
I believe the Bible is the Word of God and has the right to command my belief and action.

Church (Ephesians 4:15-16)

I believe the church is God's primary way to accomplish His purposes on earth today.

Eternity (John 14:1-4)

I believe there is a heaven and a hell and that Jesus Christ is returning to judge the earth and to establish His eternal kingdom.

The Holy Spirit (Romans 8:9)

I believe the Holy Spirit convicts, calls, converts and changes me as a child of God.

Humanity (John 3:16)

I believe all people are loved by God and need Jesus Christ as their Savior.

Identity in Christ (John 1:12)

I believe I am significant because of my position as a child of God.

Jesus Christ (Hebrews 1:1-4)

I believe Jesus Christ is the Son of God who became man, died for sinners and rose from the dead.

Life Purpose (Acts 20:24)

I believe I am a steward of God's resources and have been redeemed to participate in His Kingdom purposes for His glory.

Personal God (Psalm 121:1-2)

I believe God is involved in and cares about my daily life.

Salvation by Grace (Ephesians 2:8-9)

I believe a person comes into a right relationship with God by His grace, through faith in Jesus Christ.



CENTRAL VIRTUES

Love (1 John 4:10-12)

I sacrificially and unconditionally love and forgive others.

Joy (John 15:11)

I have inner contentment and purpose in spite of my circumstances.

Peace (Philippians 4:6-7)

I am free from anxiety because things are right between God, myself and others.

Patience (Proverbs 14:29)

I take a long time to overheat and endure patiently under the unavoidable pressures of life.

Kindness/Goodness (1 Thessalonians 5:15)

I choose to do the right things in my relationships with others

Faithfulness (Proverbs 3:3-4)

I have established a good name with God and with others based on my long-term loyalty to those relationships.

Gentleness (Philippians 4:5)

I am thoughtful, considerate and calm in dealing with others.

Self-Control (Titus 2:11-13)

I have the power, through Christ, to control myself.

Grace (Colossians 3:13)

I demonstrate forgiveness, mercy and generosity to others, even when they have offended me.

Hope (1 Peter 1:3-5)

I have a growing anticipation of God's promises and my secure eternity with Him.

Humility (Philippians 2:3-4)

I choose to esteem others above myself.



CENTRAL PRACTICES

Bible Study (Hebrews 4:12)

I study the Bible to know God, the truth, and to find direction for my daily life.

Biblical Community (Acts 2:44-47)

I fellowship with other Christians to accomplish God's purposes in my life, others' lives, and in the world.

Compassion (Psalm 82:3-4)

I seek to serve the last, the least and the lost in my community.

Disciple-Making (2 Timothy 2:2)

I multiply godly beliefs, virtues and practices in others to encourage their spiritual growth in Christ.

Evangelism (Acts 1:8)

I share Jesus with others through personal proclamation and demonstration of the gospel.

Generosity (2 Corinthians 9:6-11)

I gladly give my resources to fulfill God's purposes.

Prayer (Psalm 66:16-20)

I pray to God to know Him, to lay my request before Him and to find direction for my daily life.

Single-Mindedness (Matthew 6:33)

I focus on God and His priorities for my life.

Spiritual Gifts (Romans 12:4-6)

I know and use my spiritual gifts to accomplish God's purposes.

Worship (Psalm 95:1-7)

I worship God for who He is and what He has done for me.

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Stephanie Thomas (B.B.A University of Texas at Arlington). Stephanie is married to James and they have five children: Elijah, Levi, Bo, Ella and Simon. Stephanie has attended Central Bible Church for more than 20 years, has been on staff since 2014, and now serves as Children's Minister.

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