

Ministering Angels.

No Nine

From Genesis to Revelation the Bible relates numerous appearances of angels. Modern academic theologians, who have surrendered to the spirit of this age, do not believe in their existence. They are like Balaam, who did not see an angel even when his path was obstructed by one. His donkey was granted the gift of speech to make him aware of the heavenly being in front of him. The donkey was more spiritually in tune than Balaam (Num.2: 21ff). Heaven is populated by angels, whose number is fixed. They are God's mighty and glorious army (Ps.103: 20; Col.1: 6), reflecting His majesty and energy. Angels are worshipers. They have a definite role in the liturgy of heaven. "Let all God's angels worship him." (Hebr.1: 6) The angels give glory to God. Their liturgy shows human worshipers that they should never be over-familiar with God. We worship the same awesome God as the angels. They never draw attention to themselves but always point away to the Lord who uses them in His service. They are ministering angels. They work behind the stage of history. Heaven is their mission station. From the throne room of heaven commands are given to angels to work in behalf of and for the benefits of the heirs of salvation. They obediently do God's will. Even the archangels have been put to work in the interest of God's elect (Luke 1:11-38; Jude 9). God uses angels to reveal His will to His people, to intervene in times of danger, to show His power and glory. Dr. K.Schilder called them the "effective power of revelation and government." We must correct our traditional Christmas card image of sweet, idyllic, innocent, hymn singing, harmless angels, who resemble fairy tale characters rather than awesome heavenly beings. When angels appeared to human beings, the latter trembled with fear and awe. When an angel approached Zechariah at the right side of the altar of incense, "he was startled and gripped with fear." (Luke 1:12) When the angel Gabriel visited the virgin Mary, he assured her that she had nothing to fear from his appearance (Luke 1:30). When a glorious army of angels appeared to shepherds to announce the Saviour's birth, there was fear and even a sense of terror. The shepherds were overcome by the visible invasion from heaven. And like Zechariah and Mary, the shepherds were told not to fear (Luke 2:8-10). How real are angels? Unless the Spirit of God shows us through His word the reality of the angelic world, we will only hear rumours of angels. The world of angels is real. They are not imaginary. They work in ways unsung and unseen. To disregard their ministry will lead to spiritual deficiency and shallowness.