

“ABRAHAM AND ANGELS”

But the Angel of the LORD called to him from heaven and said, “Abraham, Abraham!”
So he said, “Here I am.” (Genesis 22:11 NKJV)

I am beginning a series of sermons on angels. To review what I said in previous sermons – We do not become angels when we die and go to heaven. Angels are separate creatures from humans. Humans were created a little lower than the angels. The angels serve God in many ways. They are His messengers. They worship Him continually. They are His army. His angels obey God perfectly. This is reflected in the prayer Jesus taught us: “...Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.”

Not all angels are in heaven obeying God perfectly. Satan was once an angel of high authority in heaven, but he aspired to be as great as God. A third of the angels followed him. Satan and all his followers were cast out of heaven to the earth. They are powerful. One of their powers is to deceive. Satan can appear as an angel of light, He is also the father of lies. He is like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour. Our Lord Jesus is mightier than Satan and can defeat him any time that we call Him to help us. “My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.” (2 Corinthians 12:8 NKJV)

Martin Luther said, “An angel is a spiritual creature without a body created by God for the service of Christendom and the Church.”

In the series of sermons to follow I hope that you and I will come to understand the roles of angels and that relates to us as Christians. Do we have guardian angels? Are angels active in our life as a nation? Are there angels whose responsibility is to a particular church? We should not worship angels. Their actions are for the purpose of directing our worship and wills toward God.

1.) God and Abraham

The story of Abraham begins near the end of Genesis 11 and continues through Genesis 25:11. It contains many accounts of angels.

When God has a message for Abraham, He usually speaks directly to Abraham. Sometimes He speaks in a vision, sometimes in a dream, other times He speaks, as He did with Moses "face to face." The LORD spoke directly to Abraham when He called him to leave his native land and go to a country that He would show him. When Abram and his family arrived in Canaan, the LORD appeared to him and said, "I will give this land to your descendants."

As the years passed, both Abram and Lot became wealthy and they both had so many animals their herdsmen were feuding over pastures. They decided to split up. Abram gave Lot his choice of land. Afterward, God appeared to Abram and promised him, "I am giving all this land as far as you can see to you and your descendants."

After Abram and his men rescued Lot and he had been blessed by Melchizedek, the LORD spoke to Abram in a vision. In it He promised to be a shield to Abram and that his reward would be great. He went on to promise Abram that he would have an heir from his own body and that his descendants would be as numerous as the stars in the sky

Abram's wife Sarai had the idea that Abram take her maidservant Hagar and produce a child by her. That is what happened and she bore a son for Abram named Ishmael. Fourteen years later Sarah herself produced a son by Abraham whom they named Isaac. Sarah demanded that Hagar and Ishmael be sent away. God appeared to Abraham and told him to do as Sarah had said.

2.) When God spoke to other persons in Abraham's family, He spoke to them through angels.

God spoke to Hagar through an angel on two occasions. After Hagar became pregnant with Abram's child, she became haughty with Sarai. Sarai in turn began to treat her harshly. Hagar ran away.

Now the Angel of the LORD found her by a spring of water in the wilderness, by the spring on the way to Shur. And He said, "Hagar, Sarai's maid, where have you come from, and where are you going?" She said, "I am fleeing from the presence of my mistress Sarai." The Angel of the LORD said to her, "Return to your mistress, and submit yourself under her hand." Then the Angel of the LORD said to her, "I will multiply your descendants exceedingly, so that they shall not be counted for multitude." And the Angel of the LORD said to her: "Behold, you are with child, And you shall bear a son. You shall call his name Ishmael, Because the LORD has heard your affliction. He shall be a wild man; His hand shall be against every man, And every man's hand against him. And he shall dwell in the presence of all his brethren." (Genesis 16:7-12 NKJV)

Ishmael grew up to be a teen age boy. As his only son, Abraham became fond of the boy. After Sarah gave birth to their son Isaac, she demanded that Abraham cast Hagar and Ishmael out of their home. Abraham reluctantly sent them away with some water and food. Out in the desert, they ran out of water and expected to die.

And God heard the voice of the lad. Then the angel of God called to Hagar out of heaven, and said to her, "What ails you, Hagar? Fear not, for God has heard the voice of the lad where he is. Arise, lift up the lad and hold him with your hand, for I will make him a great nation." Then God opened her eyes, and she saw a well of water. And she went and filled the skin with water, and gave the lad a drink. (Genesis 21:17-19 NKJV)

When God was going to destroy Sodom, He sent two angels to rescue Lot and his family from Sodom.

Abraham sent his servant to his own country, his own people to find a wife for Isaac. "The LORD God of heaven...will send His angel before you"

On only one occasion God spoke to Abraham through an angel. Abraham was ready to sacrifice his son Isaac,

But the Angel of the LORD called to him from heaven and said, "Abraham, Abraham!" So he said, "Here I am." And He said, "Do not lay your hand on the lad, or do anything to

him; for now I know that you fear God, since you have not withheld your son, your only son, from Me." (Genesis 22:11-12 NKJV)

Then the Angel of the LORD called to Abraham a second time out of heaven, and said: "By Myself I have sworn, says the LORD, because you have done this thing, and have not withheld your son, your only son - "blessing I will bless you, and multiplying I will multiply your descendants as the stars of the heaven and as the sand which is on the seashore; and your descendants shall possess the gate of their enemies. "In your seed all the nations of the earth shall be blessed, because you have obeyed My voice." (Genesis 22:15-18 NKJV)

3.) God, Abraham and the Angels

Genesis 18 is a very interesting chapter. Every time that I preach about it, I discover something new. Before this, I had noticed that in the conversation with Abraham, the three men seemed to be angels. I also noticed that in the dialogue with Abraham one of the visitors would speak to him and the next time the speaker was the LORD. What I noticed this time was that while Abraham was pleading with God on behalf of Sodom the Scripture says,

Then the men turned away from there and went toward Sodom, but Abraham still stood before the LORD. (Genesis 18:22 NKJV)

When they arrive in Sodom there are only two. They are called angels. So the LORD went His way as soon as He had finished speaking with Abraham; and Abraham returned to his place. Now the two angels came to Sodom in the evening, and Lot was sitting in the gate of Sodom. When Lot saw them, he rose to meet them, and he bowed himself with his face toward the ground. (Genesis 18:33 - 19:1 NKJV)

That means to me that the three persons who came to Abraham in the appearance of men were God Himself and two angels. One of the men speaks to Abraham. Sometimes He is identified as one of the visitors. Other times God Himself is identified as the speaker. Abraham is the only one to whom God speaks directly. He speaks to Abraham about Sarai laughing. Even when she denies it, God speaks to Abraham. On the mountain when Abraham was about to sacrifice Isaac, God sent an angel to stop him. Why? I think it is because Abraham was not alone. Isaac was there, so God spoke to Abraham through an angel.