



ANGELS

AT YOUR SERVICE

Releasing the Power of Heaven's Hosts

MAC HAMMOND

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Angels at Your Service
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TABLE OF CONTENTS

1. Don't Believe Everything You Hear	5
2. A Little Lower Than...	8
3. Touched by an Angel	13
4. Deliverance and Judgment	20
5. Messengers of Mercy	26
6. Positioning Yourself for Angelic Assistance	30
7. Angels in the Cockpit	36
8. The Prayer Connection	47
9. Words and the Realm of Angels	56
10. Words of Life, Words of Death	68
11. War in the Heavens	81
12. Satan's Subtle Second Word	97
13. Put God's Angels to Work	110

DON'T BELIEVE EVERYTHING YOU HEAR

Humans have always been fascinated with the supernatural: Angels and demons. God and the Devil. Life and death.

These are all concepts beyond our natural understanding—yet they all trigger curiosity. What is the supernatural like? Do angels exist? What about demons? How often we do interact with the unseen realm without knowing it?

Ideas about these topics have grossed millions at the box office for they are exciting to consider, but we must be discerning. Some of that is based in reality, but most of it simply comes from the mind of man. That means that not everything we hear will be accurate. In fact, much of the information will be deceptive and even dangerous, and the reason is simple. Even though angels are real and the realm they inhabit is real, the human intellect alone cannot understand them.

Our minds have been created primarily to accommodate our needs in this earthly world. Our minds, in and of themselves, are not spiritual. Thus, on our own, we simply don't have the capacity to properly interpret spiritual manifestations.

The vast majority of people do not know as much as they should know about the mission and mandate of angels.

How can we solve this problem? How can we gather accurate information about angels? By studying the only reliable resource we have—the Bible.

THE WORD AS OUR GUIDE

You cannot discern spiritual truth with your natural senses. Therefore, anything you hear or read that does not originate from the Word of God has to be the opinion of man, and as such, is highly suspect and should be taken with a grain of salt.

For that reason, it is my purpose to approach the subject of angels with the Bible alone as my resource. In the chapters that follow, we will use the Word to define who angels are, how they were created, for what purpose they were created, what their capabilities and capacities are, and how we are to relate to them. With the Word of God as our guide, we will also study the role angels play in the realization of your eternal destiny and your life on this earth.

Know that this book is not meant to simply satisfy your curiosity about angels. It is meant to help you understand what God created them to do for you.

How important is it to have this understanding? Well, let me put it this way. After studying what the Bible says about the subject, I am firmly convinced that if you don't understand and draw upon the ministry of angels, it is unlikely you will ever realize God's highest purpose for your life. Without the ministry of angels, you will probably never experience the fullness of His blessing or the magnitude of the destiny He has planned for you.

It's that important.

All of us, as Christians, need a greater revelation of the ministry of angels if we are to be used in the way God wants to use us. It is my hope that this book will open the door to that thrilling revelation and help you see the role angels can play in your life.

“A LITTLE LOWER THAN...”

If we are to relate properly to the ministry of angels, the first thing we must understand is where they fit in God’s order of things. What position do they hold? This is important because their place in the kingdom of God helps identify our place in His kingdom as well. We need to know where *they* stand in order to know where *we* stand.

Now here’s some potentially startling news in that regard. In God’s hierarchy of created beings, angels hold a *lower* position than that of men.

That’s right. Your role in God’s scheme of things is actually elevated above that of angels. The Word of God is clear on this. Hebrews 2:5 says:

For it was not to angels that God subjected the habitable world of the future, of which we are speaking. (Amp.)

That’s a very definite statement. It declares that God has not put the world to come in subjection to angels. Rather, it has been placed in subjection to someone else. To whom then? Read verses six through eight and you will see.

It has been solemnly and earnestly said in a certain place, What is man that You are mindful of him, or the son of man that You graciously and helpfully care for and visit and look after him?

For some little time You have ranked him lower than and inferior to the angels, You have crowned him with glory and honor, and set him over the works of Your hands, For You have put everything in subjection under His feet. (Hebrews 2:6–8 Amp.)

God has not put the world to come in subjection to angels but to mankind—to you and me. He has put all things under our feet. We are the ones who have been set over the works of God’s hand. That is our created destiny.

At first glance, that seems to contradict what we read in verse seven: “You have made him a little lower than the angels.” Why would we be lower than the angels if we are the ones who are going to exercise authority over God’s creation? Conceptually, it does not seem possible. A deeper look into the text solves this problem.

A MISTAKE IN TRANSLATION

This dilemma is resolved when you read the passage in the Old Testament that the writer of Hebrews is quoting in verse seven. The passage is Psalm 8:5. If we want to fully understand this New Testament reference, it would be beneficial for us to have a clear understanding of what the Psalmist meant in that passage since it is being quoted here almost directly.

In Psalm 8:5, the Hebrew word translated “angel” is actually the word *Elohim*. Interestingly enough, this is the only place in the Bible that word is translated “angel.” There is a different Hebrew word for angel that is used over 100 times in Old Testament writings. *Elohim*, on the other hand, is the word that is normally

translated “God.” It is the Hebrew plural word for God and it is always used in reference to the Godhead.

For example, *Elohim* is used repeatedly in the creation account in the first chapter of Genesis: “And God said” and “Thus God made” (vs. 3, 7). Later on in the chapter it reads, “Then God said, Let us make man in our image, according to our likeness” (vs. 26). The expression “our image” indicates the plurality of the Godhead. The Hebrew word for God in that verse is *Elohim*. It refers to the Trinity: God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit.

It is this same word that is used in Psalms 8:5. It literally says that man has been made a little lower than *Elohim* and it is referring to the Godhead and not an angel.

TEMPORARILY INFERIOR, BUT ETERNALLY SUPERIOR

In fairness to the original translators, however, I do acknowledge that while we are on this earth, we are in a corruptible body and our physical and intellectual capacities are comparatively less than those of angels. That may well be the intended meaning behind Hebrews 2:7. In fact, some translations say, “a little while inferior to angels.” In other words, we are limited in our capabilities while in this present condition.

Scientists have discovered the average human being uses only about 20% of the capacity of his brain. They have no idea what the other 80% of the human brain is supposed to do or why it is not being used. I believe it relates to the fall of man. Man could no longer be entrusted with supernatural capabilities after he

sinned and was separated from God. As a result, he—and therefore, we—lost many of his original abilities and giftings.

Angels, on the other hand, have access to the complete realm of the spirit. They are unhindered by sin. They are not bound by space and time. They are stronger and more intelligent than we are.

Obviously, we are, for a little while, inferior to the angelic hosts, but don't confuse that with God's creative purposes or your divinely appointed destiny. You are the creation made a little lower than God, in His image and His likeness, and He has given you dominion over this creation. God has put all things under your feet.

As long as you are in a mortal body, you will be temporarily below angels in supernatural abilities—but never forget that you are eternally superior. Through Jesus, you are a son or daughter of God!

The appointed day will come when, as believers, we will exchange our mortality for immortality. We will trade our present, corruptible bodies for our new and glorified bodies. We will no longer be bound by the limitations of this temporal earth. At that time, according to 2 Corinthians 5:4, our mortality will be “swallowed up by life.” We will reign with Jesus as kings and even be called upon to judge the angels (1 Corinthians 6:3).

Thus, we see the divine order as follows:

1. God
2. Mankind
3. Angels

ANGELS AT YOUR SERVICE

When you read about God's creative order and purpose, always remember: you are second behind God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost. You have been created to rule with Him for an eternity over the vastness of this universe.

That is *your* divinely appointed destiny, not the destiny of angels.

TOUCHED BY AN ANGEL

Now that we know where the angelic host fits in God's order of things, we need to examine the purpose of angels. We need to understand how the fulfillment of their destiny relates to our own eternal destinies.

In short, we must ask: Why were angels created and what are they supposed to be doing?

The answer to those questions is found at the end of the first chapter of Hebrews where angels are identified as “ministering spirits sent forth to minister for those who will inherit salvation” (Hebrews 1:14). That means you. You are an heir of salvation if you are born again and are in Christ. In fact, the Bible says you are a joint heir with Jesus (Romans 8:17).

Therefore, the angels have one purpose. They are sent forth to minister for you, both in the present time and in the eternal hereafter.

The Greek word translated “minister” is actually *diakonia* and it literally means *to serve*. The angelic host has been commissioned to serve you. You ought to be excited about that, especially when you realize just how great a destiny God has prepared for you.

THE ANGEL ON THE ICE

Once you understand the purpose of angels, the various testimonies you hear about them begin to make perfect sense. In virtually every instance, the testimonies are the same: an angel intervenes in the normal course of somebody's life to rescue them from disaster.

I have done a lot of reading in preparation for this book and much of my research contained reports of people who had personally encountered an angelic manifestation. While there are numerous accounts from many different sources, let me share with you several stories I feel are most instructive. For example, a national publication in New Jersey recorded the following event:

Two construction divers were working on a bridge in New Jersey. It was winter time and they were using special cold water wetsuits and other cold weather equipment. They had just finished their day and one of the two divers, a man named Nelson, threw all of his gear into the back of his truck.

Nelson said later he usually didn't do that. He normally put all of his gear into his locker at the construction site, but for some reason, he threw it in the back of his truck that particular night.

As the two divers were driving home, they noticed a number of rescue vehicles pulled over to the side of the road. It was obvious there was some problem and they were curious about what it was. So they pulled over to the side of the road to see.

Not far from the road was a large pond that had iced over. There was a hole in the ice near the center and, apparently, someone had fallen through. They quickly learned that it was a seven-year-old boy. He had been playing on the ice.

Rescue efforts for the boy had been hindered because a creek ran through the pond. Not only did the creek make the ice unstable, the current had swept the boy downstream and under the ice. He was no longer directly beneath the hole. The people who had gathered around the pond, including the rescue teams, were not able to find him.

Without hesitating, Nelson ran back to the truck and began to put on his wetsuit and diving gear. He then ran back to the pond and dove down through the hole in the ice.

As soon as he got into the water, he realized the gravity of the situation. The water was so murky he couldn't see his hand in front of his face. The strong current could have swept the boy's body anywhere. Nelson would never be able to see it.

Knowing the search was hopeless, he reluctantly returned to the surface to give the bad news to those who were waiting—but when he broke through the ice and looked out across the pond, Nelson saw a man standing 25 to 30 yards away from the hole. The man was some distance away from the crowd and although everyone else wore heavy winter coats, this man was wearing a light, pastel-colored windbreaker. He was tall and had blonde hair.

Nelson looked at the man and saw him point to a spot on the ice beneath his feet. “Immediately, I thought that somebody had located the boy and this man was showing me where he was,” Nelson said.

Diving back into the water, Nelson swam to the place where the man was pointing and discovered the boy. He brought the boy back to the hole in the surface and handed him to the rescue team.

Now, when someone, particularly a child, is submerged in extremely cold water, something happens to the cardiovascular system and brain. It goes into a suspended state so that often an individual can be revived even after being submerged for long periods of time. Consequently, the rescue workers were able to completely resuscitate the boy and he is fine today.

After the boy had been pulled out of the water, Nelson looked around for the man who had pointed out the boy’s location. When he began to inquire about the man, he discovered that no one had seen anybody in a light, pastel-colored windbreaker. The man with the blond hair simply could not be found.

Because Nelson had a Christian background, he quickly assumed he had witnessed an angelic visitation and intervention on behalf of this young boy.

Several days later, Nelson visited the boy in the hospital. He brought the boy a small figurine of an angel as a gift because he was convinced that an angel was the reason the boy had survived. When Nelson gave him the figurine, the boy looked up

at him and, matter-of-factly, said, “Thank you for this gift. An angel visited me yesterday in my room here and told me that he was glad that I was alive.”

A SPECIAL STRANGER

Let me relate another account that appeared in a well-known news magazine about a woman named Mrs. Kennedy.

According to the magazine report, Mrs. Kennedy had been diagnosed with a certain type of cancer and given only a year to live. Because this type of cancer produced tremendous suffering and pain, the doctors warned her that her remaining year of life would be terribly difficult for her loved ones and herself.

Mrs. Kennedy was a Christian who went to a traditional, main-line church and had never been taught much about healing. After the report of her cancer, she had cried out to God in prayer. “Lord, I don’t want my husband to go through that kind of year. If I have to die, just let me die now.”

The doctors had scheduled her for exploratory surgery the next day on the off-chance that they might be able to prolong her life and catch the cancer before it spread. That morning at her home, there was a knock at the door. Mrs. Kennedy opened the door and found a tall, black man standing on her porch.

She said he was as dark as anyone she had ever seen yet had bright blue eyes. Her husband is 6’ 5” and, according to Mrs. Kennedy, this man towered over him. He introduced himself as

Thomas and asked if he could come in. Although under normal circumstances the Kennedys would not have invited a total stranger into their home, Mrs. Kennedy said, “There was something so special about this man’s presence that my husband and I agreed that we should let him in.”

Once inside, Thomas gave them a simple message. “God said, ‘By the stripes of Jesus, you are healed.’” He then held out his hand to Mrs. Kennedy but did not touch her. She said she felt intense heat as his hand neared her forehead. She then became unconscious and fell to the floor.

When she woke up some time later, Thomas had departed and, of course, you can guess the rest of the story. She went to the hospital the next day for her scheduled surgery. The doctors could find no cancer though they spent two days looking for it.

A COMMON THREAD

In yet another account of angelic activity, a Christian organization on the West Coast published a story about four of their members who were returning from a church meeting. They were in a car together on their way home. They had just come to the crest of a hill when, suddenly, a car which was totally out-of-control swerved into their lane.

The oncoming car was estimated to be traveling over 100 miles an hour according to their report, and was headed straight toward their car. There was no time to do anything to avoid the collision.

The account of each of the four passengers is identical. The driver cried out, “Jesus, save us!” and the next thing they knew, their car was slowing to a stop on the side of the road. There were no skid marks or screeching of tires. They simply drifted to a stop.

It is the driver’s belief that an angel or angels had lifted up their car and the runaway car passed beneath them. Then they were set gently back on the ground and came to a stop. Whatever happened, it was clearly a supernatural deliverance.

These types of accounts are everywhere. In all of them, one common element becomes apparent: an angel or group of angels will manifest and invade this realm in order to bring deliverance or administer aid to a Christian or to someone that a Christian knows and has prayed for. There is always a Christian link or connection in these various testimonies.

If you’ll think back to Hebrews 1:14, you’ll see why. Angels are ministering spirits sent forth to minister for those who are the heirs of salvation. As Christians, you and I are the heirs of salvation. We are the ones who have been made a little lower than God, in His image; He has put all things under our feet.

Angels are sent forth on our behalf. All of the accounts and testimonies I have read bear out this truth.

DELIVERANCE AND JUDGMENT: THE ANGELIC ASSIGNMENTS

Now that we understand the role of angels as ministering servants, what should we do with this exciting information? A look back at Hebrews 1:14 and the verses that follow give us the answer:

Are they (angels) not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation? Therefore we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard, lest at any time we should let them slip. For if the word spoken by angels was steadfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompense of reward; how shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation; which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord. (Hebrews 1:14, 2:1–3)

Look again at the second verse listed above (Hebrews 2:1). “Therefore we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard, lest at any time we should let them slip.” In the place of “earnest heed,” the Amplified Bible uses this terminology: “Pay close attention to....”

This is a stern warning. The writer of Hebrews is telling us that angels are being sent to us as ministering servants and, therefore, we need to pay close attention to what the Word of God says about their ministry lest at any time we should fail to take proper advantage of their services to us.

Most Christians have a casual knowledge of angels. If you want to experience the full benefit of angels' ministry, you'll have to pay more attention to what the Word says about them.

One thing this particular passage teaches us about angels is that their word is "steadfast, and every transgression and disobedience receive(s) a just recompense of reward..."

What does that mean? Angels are sent forth by God and they cannot change the orders or words they have been given. When an angel speaks, it is steadfast. He can't alter what he says. He doesn't have the ability to forgive or extend mercy if you ignore his message. That's not his job. Only God can do that.

BLESSING OR JUDGMENT

Throughout the Bible angels are seen doing two things: either ministering the blessing of God or administering the judgment of God. Sometimes they do both on the same trip.

For example, the angel Gabriel appeared to Zacharias to bring a blessing and announce the glorious news that Zacharias' wife, who had been barren, was going to have a baby (Luke 1:5–25). The baby's name was to be John. The word makes it clear that Zacharias was in unbelief. He responded to the angel by saying, "Give me a sign that I may know what you say is true."

Sure enough, Gabriel gave him a sign. He told Zacharias that because of his unbelief, he would remain dumb until the baby was born. The word of Gabriel was steadfast. Zacharias did not

speak until John was born. Gabriel made sure that Zacharias' tendency to speak words of doubt did not thwart the plan of God.

We see the same truth demonstrated when the angels brought Lot and his family out of the doomed cities of Sodom and Gomorrah (Gen. 19:1–26). Two angels had been sent to deliver Lot and his family from the judgment that was about to fall. They were essentially on a rescue mission.

As they were leaving the city, one of the angels turned to Lot and said, "Don't look back!" Now, that word was intended to be a blessing to Lot and his family. Terrible destruction was about to rain down on the cities they considered their home.

Many of the people they knew were about to experience the judgment of God and there would be a tremendous amount of agony and suffering. The angel was trying to assure Lot and his family that the judgment was not intended for them.

However, Lot's wife looked back on the cities and turned into a pillar of salt. What the angel spoke was intended to be a blessing, but it became a judgment to Lot's wife because of her inappropriate response.

You see, angels are sent to minister to us, the heirs of salvation, but they can't extend mercy or grace. They are on assignment to minister blessing. They are sent to deliver us from the judgment that is already in this earth because of sin. If we don't properly respond to them, we will miss the blessing and experience judgment instead.

That's what happened to Lot's wife. She did not heed the word of the angel. She looked back and, consequently, she experienced the very judgment from which she was being delivered.

The same thing can happen to us. That's precisely why Hebrews 2:3 warns us that we will not escape judgment either if we neglect so great a salvation.

For centuries, Christians have read that verse this way: "How shall we escape hell and damnation, if we neglect so great a salvation through Jesus...." While that is certainly true—we will escape hell and damnation through the salvation available to us through Jesus—that is not what this verse is saying. If we interpret it in its context, we can see the writer of Hebrews is still talking about the ministry of angels here. That's why the verse begins with "Therefore."

"Therefore, we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard...." What things? The things about angels and ministering spirits discussed in the previous verses!

Why should we pay attention to those things? So that we won't miss out on the great salvation available to us through the ministry of angels.

That's what verse three is talking about here. It is saying, "How shall we escape the judgment or curse that is in the earth? How shall we escape impossible circumstances if we neglect so great a deliverance as the one available to us through angels? This is the

context in which salvation is being discussed. It is in the context of angelic ministry.

72,000 ANGELS!

Verse three of this same passage goes on to say, "...which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord." It refers to the fact that Jesus spoke about angels at the beginning of His ministry.

Look at John 1:51 and you can see that for yourself. There, Jesus said, "...Verily, verily I say unto you, Hereafter ye shall see heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of man."

What picture does that paint for you? It depicts angels going up and coming down. Heavenly beings going back and forth ministering to the heirs of salvation!

Later in His ministry, Jesus referred again to the service of angels. He was in the Garden of Gethsemane with His disciples. A great multitude of people, led by the chief priests and elders, had entered the garden in order to seize Jesus and take Him to Caiaphas to stand trial.

As the mob surrounded Jesus, Peter drew his sword and cut off the ear of one of the servants of the chief priests. Jesus stopped Peter and proceeded to heal the man's ear.

Then Jesus said, "Thinkest thou that I cannot now pray to my father, and he shall presently give me more than twelve legions

of angels?” (Matthew 26:53). There were 6,000 men in a Roman legion and Jesus said He could call up 12 legions of angels if He needed them. That’s 72,000 angels!

Later in this book, you will see that *one* angel is capable of more than we can imagine—so just think what 72,000 angels are capable of doing!—and Jesus said He could call them up instantly if He needed.

In light of that, think again about what I’ve been saying. Jesus is the firstborn of many brethren (Romans 8:29). We are His heirs. If Jesus can summon twelve legions of angels to come to His aid, guess who else can call upon twelve legions of angels?

We can!

This is the great salvation the writer of Hebrews is talking about. This is the great source of deliverance spoken about by Jesus throughout His ministry. It is confirmed later by the apostles and other New Testament writers.

The ministry of angels is real and it is vital to our lives here on this earth. It is part of God’s supernatural provision for you as a Christian, but if you neglect this great source of deliverance, you will not escape the difficult places you’ll encounter in life. So pay close attention and give earnest heed to this ministry and to what the Word says about it. You certainly don’t want to miss this great salvation!

MESSENGERS OF MERCY

One very encouraging fact has become clear to me as I've studied what the Bible has to say about angels. *God doesn't send them because we deserve it. He sends them because we need help.* Angels are literally messengers of God's mercy.

Think again about Lot and his family and you'll see what I mean. Angels brought deliverance to them from the impending judgment and destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah (Gen. 19:1–26) even though they had of their own free will chosen to live in those evil cities. Lot didn't really deserve the personal angelic escort that took him to safety yet God sent it anyway.

We see a similar example in the account of Elijah given in 1 Kings chapters 18 and 19. There, we find that Elijah had just experienced the power of God in a mighty way. God had poured out fire from heaven in answer to his prayers and enabled him to defeat 400 idolatrous prophets of Baal.

This, however, infuriated Queen Jezebel. She threatened to kill Elijah and he was so terrified that he ran for his life and hid in the wilderness. Elijah sank into a pit of oppression, doubt, and despair. The Bible says:

...He requested for himself that he might die; and said, It is enough; now, O Lord, take away my life; for I am not better than my fathers. And as he lay and slept under a juniper tree,

behold, then an angel touched him, and said unto him, Arise and eat. And he looked, and, behold, there was a cake baken on the coals, and a cruse of water at his head. And he did eat and drink, and laid him down again. And the angel of the Lord came again the second time, and touched him, and said, Arise and eat; because the journey is too great for thee. And he arose, and did eat and drink, and went in the strength of that meat forty days and forty nights unto Horeb the mount of God.
(1 Kings 19:4–8)

Think of it! Elijah had run away in doubt and fear on the heels of one of God's greatest displays of power. Certainly, at that moment, Elijah did not deserve God's mercy. Nevertheless, God sent an angel, a messenger of mercy, to sustain him and encourage him.

Another interesting point to notice is that in this account, as in almost every other, whether in the Old Testament or the New, the visitation of an angel came immediately at the moment of greatest need. It came right on time! God didn't wait around for the person in need to prove himself deserving of intervention. He moved quickly.

Surely, God is rich in mercy! He delights in demonstrating His love and compassion!

That's wonderful news for every Christian. Why? Because we *all* need the mercy of God. All of us make mistakes from time to time and need immediate help. Through the ministry of angels, that help can come to us right on time.

A LIFE OF FAITH

A word of warning is appropriate at this point. The help that angels can provide is a wonderful blessing. We are not, however, to live continually by the ministry of angels. The Bible says the just shall live by *faith* (Hebrews 10:38). That is God's highest way for us. We are what we believe, and what we believe needs to be cultivated along the lines of God's Word. Look at these Scriptures:

For as a man thinketh in his heart, so is he. (Proverbs 23:7 KJV)

But Jesus beheld them, and said unto them, With men this is impossible; but with God all things are possible. (Matthew 19:26 KJV)

Jesus said unto him, If thou canst believe, all things are possible to him that believeth. (Mark 9:23 KJV)

“But Mac,” you might be thinking, “If we are called to live by faith and faith brings the answer, why do we even need the ministry of angels?”

We need it because learning to live by faith is a process. It's not something you decide to do today and become an expert at tomorrow. Faith begins with a decision, but it must be developed in you as you grow spiritually.

Romans 10:17 tells us that “faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.” The Word has to be planted in you. It has to be watered. It has to be cultivated. Through that process, faith comes.

Faith doesn't always come overnight, however. That's why Galatians 6:9 says, "...let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not." If we'll keep on confessing the Word, meditating the Word, and acting on the Word, we'll reap a harvest.

When? In due season!

Sometimes you'll come up against a hard place in your life before your due season arrives. You'll encounter an emergency you haven't yet developed the faith to handle. That's when you need God's immediate intervention. That's when you need a messenger of mercy to be involved in your circumstances. You need a source of deliverance and provision other than your faith.

The ministry of angels has been given to us for just such times. They come as God's ministering spirits, sent forth on our behalf to enable us to escape those especially hard places in life.

Just as angels came to help Lot and his family, just as Elijah experienced the provision of God's mercy at the hand of a ministering spirit, we too can expect that kind of assistance. It is one of the ways God helps us while we are here on this earth, particularly as our faith deepens in Him.

Thank God for His angels!

POSITIONING YOURSELF FOR ANGELIC ASSISTANCE

We've already established the fact that angels are often dispatched to help individuals who do not necessarily seem worthy of their aid. They come simply as God's messengers of mercy.

It's obvious, however, that angels do not always intervene. There are times when they are desperately needed but they do not come. The people of Israel, for example, were taken into captivity many times in their history, whether by the Babylonians or Egyptians or others, and often there was no angelic rescue team to help them.

There are other instances where God *did* intervene, where mercy was extended, or deliverance came at a crucial moment. What made the difference?

As I studied the various angelic visitations in the Bible with this question in mind, I noticed a pattern. I found there was a lifestyle, an attitude, or an approach to living that was common among individuals who received angelic help. In short, they met certain qualifications.

This is an encouraging discovery. Why? It tells us that there is a way we too can live—an attitude and an approach to life we can embrace—that will enable God to dispatch angelic messengers of mercy for us just as He did for people in the Bible.

When you are in the middle of a hard season or when you've blown it, there is an answer. If you live a certain way and do certain things, the ministry of angels can be brought to bear in your life to help you when you need it most.

I'm not suggesting there is some kind of magic formula that releases the power of angels. I am simply pointing you toward a lifestyle that is clearly identified in the Word of God, a lifestyle that puts you in a position to operate in true spiritual power.

You see, ultimately you want to grow spiritually to a place where you can consciously commission angels on a daily basis—not arrogantly ordering them around, but commissioning them to help you accomplish the will of God in your life. The way you live your life will have a direct impact on your ability to do that.

WHEN ONLY GOD CAN HELP

Let's begin our investigation into the qualifications for angelic ministry by looking in Isaiah 36–37. There you'll find the example of a man who clearly met those qualifications. It is an amazing story. It's the story of how Judah's king, Hezekiah, overcame the evil Sennacherib, king of Assyria, and the Assyrian army. It's also an example of the power of God's angels.

Chapter 36 begins during the 14th year of King Hezekiah's reign. Sennacherib, king of Assyria, had come up against the cities of Judah and conquered them. He then set his sights on Jerusalem with plans to take it by siege.

Sennacherib sent his “Rabshakeh” to Jerusalem to meet with King Hezekiah. (Rabshakeh is not a man’s name. It is a military term which refers to an office of state much like that of secretary of state. It literally means the king’s representative charged with negotiating truces and surrenders.)

Sennacherib assumed that because of the destructive force of his great army, Hezekiah would surely surrender Jerusalem to him without a struggle. Rabshakeh was sent, therefore, to deliver the terms of surrender to Hezekiah.

As Rabshakeh met with Hezekiah’s representatives, he spoke so that all of the people of Jerusalem could hear. He warned them not to be persuaded by Hezekiah to trust in the Lord for deliverance. He reminded the people that the Assyrian army had just defeated the forces in Judah and that, frankly, nothing could stand in the way of King Sennacherib.

In order to get the full picture, let’s back up a little and look at what had happened just prior to Rabshakeh’s visit. Historically, this event took place in 701 B.C. and Assyria was the dominant power of that time. They had embarked on a two-year campaign to conquer the rest of the civilized world and the primary obstacle standing in their way was Egypt. In order to conquer Egypt, Assyria had to march south through Israel.

Hezekiah had learned of the Assyrians plans well in advance of their attack on the cities of Judah. He realized he did not have the military strength to face the Assyrian army alone and in an attempt to save his kingdom, Hezekiah had made an alliance with Egypt (in direct disobedience to repeated instructions from the Lord).

Egypt was eager to make this alliance because if Judah turned back the Assyrians, the Egyptians would never have to fight them on their own soil.

Thus, a pact was made. Egypt supplied Hezekiah with paid mercenaries to bolster his forces.

It was these combined forces that the Assyrian army had defeated at Lachish, one of the cities in Judah. In fact, this is the city from which Rabshakeh came when he ordered the surrender of Jerusalem (Isaiah 36:2). As he called for the surrender, he reminded the people of Israel that no alliance or nation had been able to stand up against the great Assyrian army (Isaiah 36:5–7).

As Hezekiah listened to Rabshakeh’s message, he realized he could no longer depend on natural, military might. His alliance with Egypt had failed him. Disaster was at the door and only God could help him now.

REPENT, SEEK GOD’S WORD, AND PRAY!

What did Hezekiah do to secure that divine help? Verse one of chapter 37 tells us, “And it came to pass, when king Hezekiah heard it, that he rent his clothes, and covered himself with sackcloth, and went into the house of the Lord.” In other words, Hezekiah repented of his sin.

What sin? The sin he had committed when he made the alliance with Egypt. For generations, it had been a standing order of the Lord not to enter a covenant or agreement with Egypt.

The second thing Hezekiah did was turn to the Word of the Lord. “He sent Eliakim, who was over the household, and Shebna the scribe, and the elders of the priests covered with sackcloth, unto Isaiah the prophet the son of Amoz” (v. 2). Hezekiah sought the Word of the Lord as represented at that time by the prophet Isaiah.

The third thing Hezekiah did was pray. Look at verse 14. “And Hezekiah received the letter from the hand of the messengers, and read it: and Hezekiah went up unto the house of the Lord, and spread it before the Lord.” Earnestly, he made his case before God in prayer and said:

Incline thine ear, O Lord, and hear; open thine eyes, O Lord, and see: and hear all the words of Sennacherib, which hath sent to reproach the living God. ... Now therefore, O Lord our God, save us from his hand, that all the kingdoms of the earth may know that thou art the Lord even thou only. (Isaiah 37:17, 20)

It’s important to understand that Hezekiah couldn’t have prayed that prayer if he hadn’t first repented. Prayer is not going to work if you’re still walking in the wrong path and your heart is wrong. You first have to change and get in line with God—and that’s exactly what Hezekiah did.

FOLLOW HEZEKIAH’S EXAMPLE

Do you know what happened in that situation? The Lord sent an angel to help Hezekiah. “The angel of the Lord went forth, and smote in the camp of the Assyrians a hundred and fourscore and five thousand: and when they arose early in the morning, behold, they were all dead corpses” (v. 36).

Hezekiah woke up the following morning and found his enemies were all dead. God sent his angel and that angel slew 185,000 soldiers of the most powerful army on the earth at that time—and he did it in one night. Friend, that’s the way to fight a battle!

Thank heaven Hezekiah qualified for that kind of assistance! He lived in such a way that he allowed God to send an angel on his behalf, even when he had blown it. He was quick to repent. He sought out the Word of the Lord. Most importantly, he prayed.

That’s the lesson for us today. We need to recognize those times when we fail or are not in faith, and then we need to repent. Of course, true repentance calls for a change of direction.

Once you’ve repented, get in the Word. Study and meditate on God’s promises. See what He says about your condition or circumstances.

Finally, pray! Prayer is hard work, but don’t give up. Press in and seek the Lord’s face with an attitude of humility.

Remember, this is a process, and this process is a way of living. It’s an attitude we have and a lifestyle we embrace. When we are quick to repent and determined to change our course, when we consistently spend time in God’s Word, and when we pray, then we are candidates for the ministry of angels. We open the way for God to send them to intervene on our behalf.

ANGELS IN THE COCKPIT

I am a pilot. Perhaps that's why I have been particularly fascinated by the experience of a man I'll call Henry. I think you'll find it interesting, too.

Henry is a private pilot and years ago he was able to acquire a small, single-engine airplane of his own. The small plane could seat four people and it was perfect for Henry. It enabled him to fly more (which he loved to do) and log the hours necessary to keep his license current.

Soon after Henry got his plane, he learned that one of his friends had a family member who was battling cancer. The family member lived in another city and Henry's friend had to make a number of trips to that city to visit the ailing relative. Henry saw this as an opportunity to help his friend and increase his hours in the air, so he offered to fly his friend once or twice a week to the city where the relative lived.

On one particular day in which he was going to be making the trip, Henry had gotten behind schedule. He was late to the airport so he rushed through his preflight preparations. In his haste, he decided not to have the airplane refueled. After all, they were only flying a short distance—from Greenville to Asheville. They had more than enough fuel to make it.

The weather forecast for that day was not great, but it wasn't too bad either—or at least that's what he told himself. In short order, the two friends were taxiing down the runway.

Unfortunately, once they were airborne, the weather became worse than what had been forecast. As a result, Henry had to make several changes in his flight plan as air traffic control steered them around storms.

By the time they reached Asheville, Henry's fuel gauge was bouncing on empty. They were barely going to make it. As Henry prepared for landing, the voice of the tower crackled over the radio, "The Asheville field is closed due to fog. You need to return to Greenville or go to your alternate."

A wave of dismay swept over Henry as he realized the extent of the mistake he had made. "I don't have enough fuel to do either," he said to the operator. "I have to land now!"

"All right, then," answered the operator. "You are cleared for an ILS approach at zero-zero." Henry had been given permission to make an instruments-only landing in near zero visibility. There was just one problem.

With the fog increasing, Henry was now uncertain of his location. He had become distracted. He'd lost his bearings and he wasn't set up correctly for an ILS approach. Even so, he knew he had to start down on a blind descent. He was certain he would miss the airport and run out of fuel if he didn't.

About 45 seconds into his descent, a new voice suddenly came rasping over the headset. “Pull up! Pull up!”

Quickly, Henry pulled up. As he did, he broke through the thick clouds and caught a glimpse of the ground. Not only had he missed the airport, but he was very low and over an interstate highway. There was a bridge directly in front of him. If he hadn’t pulled up as commanded, he would have surely plowed into it.

As Henry drew a sharp breath, the new controller’s voice came through the headset once again. “Follow my instructions and we’ll get you on the ground.”

Gratefully, Henry responded. “Yes, thank you—and be aware that we’re very short on fuel. We need to land very quickly.”

The controller gave Henry the headings he needed to bring him back around again. He established Henry on a final approach and told him when to begin his descent. Then he gave Henry some course corrections coming down on final approach. They were exactly right.

As the plane touched down, Henry caught a glimpse through the fog of the runway lights flashing by. He was squarely on the runway center line.

Henry landed and began to taxi in to the terminal. He called the tower controller to thank him for his help. “I just want you to know, you saved our lives today!”

The tower controller sounded puzzled. “Say again?!”

“I want to thank you. What you did today saved our lives,” Henry repeated.

“Sir, I lost contact with you when I told you the airport was closed,” said the controller. “This is the first time I’ve talked with you since then.”

After an hour or so on the telephone, it was verified that none of the approach controllers in the Asheville area had any kind of communication with Henry. His story was published years ago in a secular magazine and it was titled, “Angels in the Cockpit.”

MORE THAN A SAFETY NET

So often we get ourselves into situations where supernatural intervention is required. Usually, it’s because, like Henry, we did something stupid or made a mistake.

Aren’t you glad we serve a God of mercy? I certainly am! Listen to this:

It is of the Lord’s mercies that we are not consumed, because his compassions fail not. They are new every morning: great is thy faithfulness. (Lamentations 3:22–23)

As marvelous as those merciful interventions are, however, the truth is that God intended the ministry of angels to be something more than a mere “safety net” for us when we begin sinking in our circumstances.

Look at Exodus 23:20 and you'll see what I mean. There, God told the Israelites, "Behold, I sent an angel before thee, to keep thee in the way, and to bring thee into the place which I have prepared."

God is the same yesterday, today and forevermore (Hebrews 13:8). What He once did, He still does. That means He has assigned angels to go before you as His New Covenant child just as surely as He assigned them to go before His Old Covenant servants.

What does it mean for God to send angels before you? It means He dispatches them to make the way clear for you. He doesn't want your life to be characterized by crises and catastrophes. He sends angels before you to keep you on a safe path and to bring you into the destiny He has prepared for you. That is God's will for you!

Because angelic ministry is deployed to help you at all times, you don't have to live life bouncing from one emergency to the next. As Psalm 34:7 says, "The angel of the Lord encampeth round about them that fear him." In every area of life—in business and ministry, in finances and family affairs—God has commissioned angels to go before you to prepare the way.

God's best is for us to understand enough about this angelic ministry to deliberately and consciously commission our angelic hosts on a daily basis. He would prefer us to avail ourselves of them in advance so they can help us avoid the hard places instead of simply waiting for them to rescue us when we get into trouble.

Allow me to clarify something at this point. When I say we "commission" the angels, I'm not saying we simply order our

angels around. I believe God has made the ministry of angels available to us as a resource to enable us to fulfill our created destinies. That doesn't mean we have them at our beck and call. We can't arrogantly order them about as we see fit.

The angels wouldn't listen to our dumb ideas anyway. They get their instructions from God. They do *His* bidding on *our* behalf.

FOCUS ON THE UNSEEN

With that said, let's examine how this angelic system works and find out what we can do to take better advantage of it in our daily lives. Let's look back at Hebrews 2:1, keeping in mind that it is referring to angelic ministry:

Therefore we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard, lest at any time we should let them slip.

In scripture, the word "things" is frequently used when making a distinction between the material realm and the spiritual realm. Look, for example, at the way Paul uses the word "things" in Colossians 3:2:

Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth.

If the ministry of angels is going to become a daily fact of our lives, there are some spiritual "things" to which we must give more earnest heed. We need to pay attention to the differences between the natural world and the world of the spirit.

The Bible makes clear distinctions between those two realms. Consider 2 Corinthians 4:17–18:

For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory; while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal.

Those verses are telling us that if we want our affliction or hardship to be “light” and “momentary” as opposed to something long and drawn out, then we must look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen. We need to look in the spiritual realm and not in the natural realm.

Obviously, you can’t literally acquire visual acuity into the unseen, spiritual realm (unless God supernaturally gifts you to operate in the discerning of spirits and enables you to see with your natural eye into that realm). That’s not what this passage is saying. It’s simply saying that the unseen realm needs to be the focus of our attention.

It’s telling us to give earnest heed to the unseen realm because it supersedes the temporal world in which we live. It’s urging us to pay more attention to the spiritual realm than we do to what we can see, hear, touch, taste, or smell. Why? Because that is the realm in which you access the ministry of angels—angels who can get you through those hard places quickly and easily!

Let me warn you. It won't be easy to give priority to the world of the spirit rather than the temporal realm. It goes totally counter to everything your flesh wants to do.

You've spent years being conditioned to rely upon what you physically see, hear, taste, smell, and feel. You've learned to rely upon your rational abilities when making decisions.

It takes a major adjustment to begin basing your life and your decision-making processes on the unseen realm, but the fact of the matter is, if you don't make that adjustment, your afflictions will not be light. They'll be long and hard. So it's worth the effort to shift your focus from the realm of the natural to the realm of the spirit.

GOD WILL DO IT FOR YOU TOO

When you continually walk with God, it is actually possible for the unseen realm to become more real to you than what you see or hear in this natural world. I know this because the Bible tells us about people who lived that way. One of them was the prophet Elisha.

In 2 Kings chapter 6, the Bible gives us a glimpse of how he operated in regard to the unseen realm. It tells us that during Elisha's ministry:

...the king of Syria warred against Israel, and took counsel with his servants, saying, In such and such a place shall be my camp. And [Elisha] the man of God sent unto the king of Israel, saying, Beware that thou pass not such a place; for thither the Syrians are come down. And the king of Israel sent to the place

which the man of God told him and warned him of, and saved himself there, not once nor twice. (2 Kings 6:8–10)

Do you get the picture here? Elisha is spoiling every battle plan the Syrian king can devise. By the word of knowledge, he finds out what the plans are and tells the king of Israel about them in advance. The Syrians are left looking like fools!

Therefore the heart of the king of Syria was sore troubled for this thing; and he called his servants, and said unto them, Will ye not shew me which of us is for the king of Israel? And one of his servants said, None, my lord, O king: but Elisha, the prophet that is in Israel, telleth the king of Israel the words that thou speakest in thy bedchamber. And he said, Go and spy where he is, that I may send and fetch him. And it was told him, saying, Behold, he is in Dothan. Therefore sent he thither horses, and chariots, and a great host: and they came by night, and compassed the city about. And when the servant of the man of God was risen early, and gone forth, behold, an host compassed the city both with horses and chariots. And his servant saith unto him, Alas, my master! how shall we do? (2 Kings 6:11–15)

Actually, a more contemporary paraphrase of the Hebrew exclamation made by Elisha's servants would be, "We've had it, master! We're dead meat!"

And [Elisha] answered, Fear not: for they that be with us are more than they that be with them. And Elisha prayed, and said, Lord, I pray thee, open his eyes, that he may see. And the Lord

opened the eyes of the young man; and he saw: and, behold, the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire round about Elisha. (2 Kings 6:16–17)

Friend, let me ask you a question. If God would send this kind of angelic help for Elisha, won't He do it for you? The Bible says God is no respecter of persons. (Romans 2:11) We know that angels are on assignment to serve our needs. Elisha needed an army, so God provided. Wouldn't He do the same for us?

Certainly He would! In fact, He already has. He has commissioned untold thousands of angels to minister on behalf of all of us who are heirs of salvation. Why haven't we benefited from them as fully as Elisha did? Because we haven't had his perspective!

Think again about how Elisha responded to his situation. When his servant came to him in great fear, Elisha could have seen with his natural eye the grave circumstances. He could have been terrified like his young servant was, but he wasn't.

As a prophet of God, Elisha didn't rely strictly on what he could see and hear. He had developed a sense for what is happening in the spirit realm—and he put far more confidence in that realm than he did in the natural realm!

We can learn to be the same way. We can develop our spiritual eyes and ears by spending more time focusing on the spiritual realm. As we spend more time in the Word and in prayer, we can learn to shift our attention away from temporal things and onto eternal realities.

ANGELS AT YOUR SERVICE

Remember, this is a process and it takes time, but you can take the first step in that process by making a decision today to focus on the unseen realm.

THE PRAYER CONNECTION TO THE UNSEEN REALM

As we've begun to understand through our study thus far, the unseen realm of the spirit has much more going on in it than most people ever realize. The spiritual realm is teeming with powerful activity. Even so, Christians fail to give it much thought.

Why is that? Primarily because the seen realm—the natural realm—constantly clamors for our attention. Our natural senses are continually assaulted with stimuli from that realm. It's no wonder the spiritual realm is often so neglected; the noise of the natural realm drowns it out!

The good news is, we *can* make a conscious decision to tune out the clamor of the natural realm—what we see, hear, touch, taste, and smell—and tune into the supernatural realm as revealed to us through the Word of God. We can train ourselves to be more responsive to the unseen realm than we are to that which is seen.

Actually, everyone responds to the spiritual realm in one way or another, whether they realize it or not. In this chapter, I want to examine four typical responses to spiritual things and briefly consider an example of each. As we do, I believe you'll learn some important lessons.

Before we start, reacquaint yourself with the account from 2 Kings 6:8–17 which we studied in the previous chapter. I want to

return to it and study the various people involved. Their individual responses to the spiritual realm are particularly interesting because we see the same responses today. We all relate to the unseen realm in one of the four ways we see in that story.

SPIRITUAL REALM? WHAT SPIRITUAL REALM?

The first type of response I want you to notice is that of the king of Syria. His response is basically that of denial. He acts as if the spiritual realm doesn't exist. When he has a problem, he doesn't even consider the possibility that the unseen realm might be the root of his problem. He simply assumes a natural explanation. He assumes that Israel has learned about his battle plans because someone in his camp is a spy.

Because he denies the existence of the spiritual realm, he immediately turns to a natural solution. He lashes out in anger at those closest to him and accuses them. In his mind, they are the only natural and obvious reason for the failure of his battle plans.

I see that pattern repeated again and again in people today. They don't understand that their problem originates outside the natural realm, so they don't even look to the unseen realm to see how their problem might be solved. Instead, they respond by getting frustrated and angry. They usually lash out at those around them, especially the people who are closest to them.

For them, there is no other explanation for the difficulty they are facing. Therefore, they respond this way over and over again.

The second response is similar to the first and we see an example of it in Elisha's servant. He was similar to the Syrian king in that he didn't give the unseen realm credit for the problem, but the servant's reaction was different.

Unlike the king who lashed out in anger, the servant allowed fear to rise up in him. He wanted to flee the situation. He saw the great Syrian army and realized there was no natural hope for his survival or the survival of his master, Elisha.

“LET’S GO GET HIM, GUYS!”

The third example of a person's reaction to the unseen realm can be seen in the king of Syria *after* he learned that something was, indeed, happening in an unseen realm.

His servant was able to convince him that his problem was not a natural one but rather God was showing a prophet in Israel the king's plans. When the king began to understand that his problem was supernatural, he became aware of another realm of reality. He acknowledged the possibility of the spiritual realm when he sent his army out to capture Elisha.

Personally, it strikes me as funny that the king of Syria thought he could catch Elisha. He'd already been told that Elisha could hear what he was saying in his bedroom. What made him think he could sneak up on Elisha now? Didn't it occur to him that Elisha could hear the plans the king was making for his capture? That makes no sense!

Be that as it may, the king did finally acknowledge the unseen realm, but he responded to his spiritual problem by applying a natural solution. He said to his soldiers, “If Elisha can hear in the spirit, then let’s go get *him!*”

This is a mistake many Christians make today. For years, they’ve been taught about the two different realms and most would affirm their belief in those two realms. The Bible says that we war not against flesh and blood, but against principalities and powers of darkness (Ephesians 6:12).

There’s more to life than what meets the eye; most Christians realize this now. They see the real challenges in their lives comes from the unseen realm, but like the king of Syria, they are still trying to meet those challenges by applying strictly natural solutions. If they run out of money, they say, “Let’s go get another loan at the bank.” If they get sick, they say, “Let’s go to a doctor and get some help.” If they run into trouble, they say, “Let’s figure this out rationally.”

Let me assure you, I don’t have any problem with people who borrow money from the bank or go to the doctor and use medicine. None of those things are wrong. In fact, they all have a place in our life as we grow in God.

DON’T PANIC—PRAY

The fourth response—Elisha’s—is obviously the correct response to a spiritual problem. Consider the way he dealt with this potentially life-threatening situation. He relied totally on the resources

and power of the unseen realm. He based his decision-making process upon what was happening in the spiritual realm instead of what was happening in the natural realm.

What's more, Elisha wanted his servant to have the benefit of understanding that higher realm so he said, "Lord, I pray thee, open his eyes, that he may see" (v. 17).

This is what I want you to notice. When it was necessary for the servant to see that which was unseen—for him to give earnest heed and pay close attention to the realm of the unseen—Elisha prayed. It was prayer that opened up the servant's awareness and enabled him to see into that realm. The servant had panicked—but Elisha prayed!

Prayer has been involved in every example of angelic intervention we have seen so far. Prayer is what opens you to the reality of the unseen realm. If you are not a person who prays, you will not experience the reality of the spirit realm.

Please note: By prayer, I do not mean those token three-minute religious tidbits you throw out to appease your conscience. That's not the kind of prayer I'm talking about here. Real prayer involves a relationship with God. It is communion with Him. It is communicating with Him on a regular basis.

Prayer has to be a part of your life if the unseen realm is going to become real to you. It's the only thing that brings that realm into sufficient focus.

Time and again in this study you're going to see this. You cannot appropriate the ministry of angels without having a vital, dynamic prayer life. That whole realm will make no sense to you. It will forever elude you until you begin giving your life over to prayer.

SOME PRAYERS WORK; OTHERS DON'T

Prayer is the key, but not just any prayer will do. Some kinds of prayers don't work. James 4:2-3 tells us why:

Ye lust, and have not: ye kill, and desire to have, and cannot obtain: ye fight and war, yet ye have not, because ye ask not. Ye ask, and ye receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your lusts.

You can ask God for something and "receive not" because you ask to "consume it upon your lust." That tells me that prayers motivated by pure self-interest are prayers that won't be answered.

Many prayers fall into that category. A lot of people don't pray until they have a need so great they can't deal with it on their own. Something happens and they are overwhelmed by some circumstance or situation. They've tried to solve the problem in their own strength and failed, so now it's time to pray.

Most of the time, at that point, they are praying motivated by desperate self-interest. Because God loves us and is full of mercy, He will sometimes answer those prayers, but they are not the type of prayer that we are promised God will consistently answer.

Jesus said, “Whatsoever you ask in My name, I will do for you” (John 14:13), but you must ask in line with the Word, and the Word says that a prayer rooted in selfishness will not be answered. God can’t answer that prayer because we would only consume whatever He brought into our lives upon ourselves, our desires, and our own agendas.

That’s why the message of service to others is so important. It’s vital to be conscious of other people’s needs. This is bottom-line Christianity. Your purpose in life is not to meet your own needs; your purpose is to be a tool in the hand of God to meet somebody else’s need. When you do that, He can use someone else to meet your need.

The Word of God says you give first and then it will be given unto you (Luke 6:38). Your resources of time, talent, and money aren’t to be squandered on your own agenda, they are to be used as a resource to meet someone else’s need.

That’s God’s plan, plain and simple. It’s His plan for all of us! Until we get this message, nothing about our Christianity is going to work as it should, including our prayer lives.

If you have any doubts about it, get out your Bible and read the book of Job. Do you remember what happened to him? He moaned and groaned and cried to God about his circumstances for almost 40 chapters. He even blamed God for his problems, and nothing happened. No deliverance came. No healing came. He remained mired in the same terrible situation.

It was only when Job began to pray for his friends and their need that he received the answer to his own prayers. When Job prayed for his friends, God delivered him and gave him twice as much as he had before.

Job's success in prayer came from getting his eyes off his own problems (and they were certainly terrible!) and focusing on the needs of someone else. That's what he had to do in order to receive what he needed from God.

The same principle applies today. When you get your eyes off your needs and begin concentrating on what you can do to address the need in somebody else's life, God can then move on your behalf. That doesn't mean your needs won't get met. It means that God is now able to meet them instead of you trying to meet them—and it's a better deal when God meets our needs because His resources are limitless.

This is the key to the kind of prayer that opens you to the realm of the spirit. It's the prayer that emanates from a heart free of self-interest. I call this making the "prayer connection."

We said in the last chapter that the first step in appropriating the ministry of angels was to begin shifting our focus from the natural realm to the realm of the spirit. Always remember, the way you do that is through prayer. As you pray from a pure heart, undefiled by self-interest, the realm of the spirit begins to take on a measure of reality. You establish a prayer connection to the unseen realm.

THE PRAYER CONNECTION

This is the first thing that has to happen before you can appropriate the angelic ministry available to you through that realm. It will come no other way. Until prayer has the priority it should in your life, the unseen realm will not be a reality to you.

Elisha understood this principle. He had given his life over to prayer. He had a prayer connection. Whenever he faced a perilous or difficult situation, he did not rely upon that which he could see in the natural. He looked to God through prayer and was continuously delivered.

If you will give yourself over to prayer, you too will begin to see and experience the mighty deliverance of God!

WORDS AND THE REALM OF ANGELS

After you become fully aware of the presence and activity of the unseen realm of the Spirit, there is a second step in the process of appropriating the ministry of angels. It can be summarized in one short phrase: Speak the right words.

It is impossible to overestimate the importance of our words. Words, for example, generate the most powerful force there is—the force of faith. As Romans 10:17 says, “Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.”

Our words control our believing, our thinking, even our behavior and the direction our lives will take. James 3:3–5 puts the power of words in perspective:

Behold, we put bits in the horses' mouths, that they may obey us; and we turn about their whole body. Behold also the ships, which though they be so great, and are driven of fierce winds, yet are they turned about with a very small helm, whithersoever the governor listeth. Even so the tongue is a little member, and boasteth great things.

One of the greatest lies Satan has sold humanity is that “sticks and stones may break my bones, but words will never hurt me.” In reality, the very opposite is true. Words will either make us or break us. Proverbs 18:21 puts it this way:

Death and life are in the power of the tongue.

Why are our words so crucial? One big reason is that the words we speak either bind or loose those “ministering spirits” mentioned in the second chapter of Hebrews. Jesus said that whatever we as believers bind on this earth is bound also in heaven and whatever we loose on this earth is also loosed in heaven (Matthew 16:19). Certainly this applies to the angelic host.

Psalm 103 gives us even further revelation about how our words affect angelic activity. It says:

Bless the Lord, ye his angels, that excel in strength, that do his commandments, hearkening unto the voice of his word. Bless ye the Lord, all ye his hosts; ye ministers of his, that do his pleasure. (Psalm 103:20–21)

Notice these verses refer to angels as those “who excel in strength.” This identifies the supernatural capacity angels have to impact this physical world. We’ve seen scriptural evidence of that already. Do you remember what one angel did to the 186,000 Assyrians in Isaiah 37? He killed them all in a single night! Obviously, when you have angels at work for you, you have an absolutely awesome source of power at your disposal.

Psalm 103 further identifies angels as ministers of God “that do his pleasure.” It doesn’t say they do His dirty work. God doesn’t have any dirty work. It says they do His “pleasure,” and according to Psalm 35:27, God takes pleasure in the prosperity of His servant.

God doesn't take pleasure in your insufficiency or lack. He doesn't take pleasure in your sickness. He takes pleasure in blessing you. He takes pleasure in your prosperity. And His angels are the ones that help deliver that prosperity into your life.

What releases the angels to make those wonderful deliveries? The answer is found, once again, in Psalm 103:20. It says the angels "hearken unto the voice of God's Word." The word *hearken* in the Hebrew text means *respond*. Angels respond to the voice of God's Word. They don't respond to your panicky plea for help. They don't respond to anything but the voice of His Word.

Let me add this. They don't respond to the Bible lying on your coffee table. They don't respond to written pages in a book. You can't hold up your Bible and expect the angels to take off and do whatever needs to be done. The written Word, by itself, has no voice.

If you want the angels to have something to work with, you have to put voice to the Word of God. Don't put voice to your fear and unbelief; they won't respond to that. Put voice to the Word of God in faith. When you put the Word of God in your heart, then speak it out as a confession of faith. It puts the angels in motion!

DELIVERED FROM THE FIRE

You can see this principle in operation in Daniel chapter three. There you'll find the familiar story of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, three praying men who loved and worshipped God.

Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego were Jewish captives in Babylon at the time when the wicked King Nebuchadnezzar made

a decree that anyone who worshipped a god other than his god would suffer the consequences. Unmoved by the king's decree, the three devout Hebrews continued in their worship of God, most high. As a result, they were brought before Nebuchadnezzar for punishment. He said to them:

Is it true, O Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, do not ye serve my gods, nor worship the golden image which I have set up? Now if ye be ready that at what time ye hear the sound of the cornet, flute, harp, sackbut, psaltery, and dulcimer, and all kinds of musick, ye fall down and worship the image which I have made; well: but if ye worship not, ye shall be cast the same hour into the midst of a burning fiery furnace; and who is that God that shall deliver you out of my hands? (Daniel 3:14–15)

Now, pay careful attention to the way these three men responded to the king's ultimatum:

Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, answered and said to the king, O Nebuchadnezzar, we are not careful to answer thee in this matter. If it be so, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and he will deliver us out of thine hand, O king. But if not, be it known unto thee, O king, that we will not serve thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up. (Daniel 3:16–18)

People constantly misinterpret that last verse. They read it this way, “If God doesn’t deliver us—if it’s not the will of God to save us—then we’re still not going to worship the golden image.” That interpretation, however, makes no sense. Obviously, if God didn’t

deliver them, they wouldn't be worshipping anybody. They would be consumed in the fire! So there must be another meaning.

Read the verse again in context and you'll see what it is. Verse 17 begins, "If it be so..." Verse 18 begins, "But if not..." They are both talking about the same thing: being thrown into the fiery furnace. Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego were saying, "King, if it be so that you throw us into the fiery furnace, our God is going to deliver us. But if not, if you don't throw us into the fiery furnace, we're still not going to worship your god."

Notice these three men all had the same faith confession. "God is able to deliver and He will deliver!"

When they refused to obey him, Nebuchadnezzar ordered the furnace heated up seven times hotter than normal. It was so hot that the men who threw Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego into the furnace were instantly burned alive.

What happened next came as a shock to Nebuchadnezzar. He looked into the furnace and saw not three men, but four! "Did not we cast three men bound into the midst of the fire?" he said to his counselors in alarm.

"True, O king," they answered.

"Lo, I see four men loose, walking in the midst of the fire, and they have no hurt; and the form of the fourth is like the Son of God" (Daniel 3:25).

I'm sure you know the rest of the story. Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego were called out of the furnace. The king and all of his counselors marveled over the fact that they were not only unharmed, they didn't even smell like smoke!

Nebuchadnezzar was so impressed, he said, "Blessed be the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, who hath sent his angel, and delivered his servants that trusted in him" (v. 28). The fourth man in the furnace, although he looked like the Son of God, was identified as the angel of the Lord.

The point I want to make here is that Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego got into trouble because they were men who loved God, but they had a prayer connection to the unseen realm that brought them deliverance from that trouble. That's the first step.

Second, they put the Word of God in their mouth. They said, "Our God is not only able, but He will deliver us." Basically, they said the same thing God said in Psalm 34:7, "The angel of the Lord encampeth round about them that fear him, and delivereth them."

They spoke God's Word and, sure enough, an angel responded to it. He showed up there in the midst of that burning fiery furnace and brought out Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego safe and sound.

SHUTTING THE LIONS' MOUTHS

In Daniel chapter 6, we see yet another example of angelic assistance, this time in the life of Daniel himself. Daniel was a committed man of God and a man of prayer who, like his three

friends, ran head-on into one of Darius' ungodly decrees. There is one difference, however. Darius liked Daniel. He liked him so much that he had elevated Daniel to the highest level of authority in the land even though, technically, Daniel was a captive.

When Darius passed an ordinance that prohibited all prayer except that which was offered to an idol he had erected, Daniel was forced to disobey the king. He continued his practice of praying three times a day to the God of Israel. Since the king had already commanded that anyone who violated the ordinance be thrown into the den of lions, that's exactly what was done to Daniel.

The king was greatly dismayed about the situation, but there was nothing he could do. He had backed himself into a corner with his own decree. As they hauled Daniel away to the lions' den, the king spoke these words of help and hope to him. Actually, without realizing it, King Darius gave voice to a faith confession of the Word of God. He said, "Daniel, Thy God whom thou servest continually, he will deliver thee," (verse 16).

The king spent a restless night that night. The next morning he rose early to check on Daniel. Instead of finding a pile of bones in the lions' den, the king found Daniel alive and well. "O king, live forever!" Daniel called out. "My God hath sent his angel, and hath shut the lions' mouths, that they have not hurt me."

Here again we see angelic deliverance provided for a man who was committed to prayer and had a prayer connection to the unseen realm. We also see someone (in this case, the king) giving voice to the Word of God so that the angel of the Lord could be dispatched.

“I HAVE COME FOR THY WORDS”

We find yet another example of angelic help in Daniel chapter 10. In this account we read about Daniel and the various dreams and visions he had been receiving. He had been seeking God for the freedom of his people from captivity in Babylon.

It’s in this context that we read in verse two, “In those days I Daniel was mourning three full weeks.” The Hebrew interpretation is a little different here than what is rendered in the King James translation. Daniel was not grieving or mourning as we understand the word; he was seeking God in earnest. That’s what the Hebrew word translated *mourning* means.

Daniel was earnestly seeking the Lord about this matter of the Jews’ captivity in Babylon. He continues in verse three:

I ate no pleasant bread, neither came flesh nor wine in my mouth, neither did I anoint myself at all, till three whole weeks were fulfilled.

We see here that Daniel went on a partial fast. He was looking to God for an answer and he denied himself anything pleasant in order not to be distracted.

Some people might think such fasting is merely an Old Testament ritual but it’s more than that. It’s a spiritual tool that Jesus Himself taught and utilized. Do you remember the incident recorded in Matthew chapter 17 where Jesus’ disciples tried—and failed—to cast a demon spirit out of a young boy? They asked Jesus why

they were unable to do it and He answered, “This kind goeth not out but by prayer and fasting” (verse 21).

This is a spiritual principle. There will be times when we will encounter different levels of resistance in the unseen realm. If our prayers are not producing the desired effect, we may need to turn up the intensity. One way to do that is by fasting.

From time to time, you’ll need to deny yourself in order to focus more on the realm of the spirit—and I’m not referring to fasting in some typical religious sense. Fasting just means denying the flesh something it wants in order to be more attentive to things in the spirit realm.

Thus, we see Daniel fasting along with his praying. As a result, he is visited by an angel. In Daniel 10:5–6, he says:

Then I lifted up mine eyes, and looked, and behold a certain man clothed in linen, whose loins were girded with fine gold of Uphaz: His body also was like the beryl, and his face as the appearance of lightning, and his eyes as lamps of fire, and his arms and his feet like in color to polished brass, and the voice of his words like the voice of a multitude.

It’s fascinating to study the orders of angels and how they are described in scripture. Some have wings; some don’t. There are cherubim or seraphim. Each order is different. We’ll examine the physical characteristics of angels in a later chapter. For now, suffice it to say that this angel who appeared to Daniel had a very striking appearance.

When the angel spoke to Daniel, he said, “O Daniel, a man greatly beloved, understand the words that I speak unto thee” (vs. 11). The angel then told Daniel to stand up and not be afraid. Daniel was clearly overwhelmed at the presence of the angel, but he managed to stand, trembling.

The angel continued in verse 12, “Fear not, Daniel: for from the first day that thou didst set thine heart to understand, and to chasten thyself before thy God, thy words were heard, and I am come for thy words.”

The Word is very clear on this point. The angel came to Daniel for his words. Once again, we see an angel responding to the voice of God’s Word coming from the mouth of a man.

OVERCOMING SPIRITUAL RESISTANCE

I also want you to notice what the angel told Daniel next:

But the prince of the kingdom of Persia withstood me one and twenty days: but, lo, Michael, one of the chief princes, came to help me; and I remained there with the kings of Persia: now I am come.” (vs. 13).

The angel that came to assist Daniel had encountered spiritual resistance of a magnitude and sort that we have no ability to understand. Unless God supernaturally opens the spirit realm to us, we can’t begin to imagine what goes on there.

We do know by reading the Word of God, however, that this realm is populated not only by God’s angelic hosts, but by evil,

fallen angels as well. The unified purpose of those fallen angels is to resist the will and plan of God. When they ascertain that something is beginning to happen in God's plan, the powers and principalities band together. Their resistance gets tougher.

In this case, one of God's chief angels, Michael, had to be dispatched in order to make the breakthrough—and it took three weeks to do it.

Thank heaven, Daniel didn't quit praying! If he had given up around the second week and said, "Well, I've done my best and I still don't have an answer," the angel wouldn't have been able to complete his mission.

The angel came because of Daniel's words. As long as the words were being spoken, as long as voice was being given to God's Word, as long as Daniel pressed in and continued to seek God on the matter, the angel kept fighting his way through to bring the answer.

Daniel received the help he needed because he maintained his diligence. He fasted and denied his flesh in order to heighten his sensitivity to the unseen realm. He was serious about it. He was determined to hear from God. We need to be the same way. The Bible says that God rewards those who diligently seek Him. (Hebrews 11:6)

If nothing else, understand this. There can be incredible spiritual resistance in this unseen realm, resistance we don't fully comprehend. That's why Ephesians 6:12 says, "For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against

powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places.”

We don't often know what is going on behind the scenes, but that doesn't mean we should quit. On the contrary, our part is to be consistent in prayer and consistent in speaking the Word.

With our words we either bind the angelic ministering spirits or we loose them to do God's pleasure. Therefore, we need to obey the Word of God when it says don't get weary in well doing because in due season we shall reap, if we faint not (Galatians 6:9). We need to keep on praying and giving voice to the Word of God!

WORDS OF LIFE, WORDS OF DEATH

I feel so strongly about the words we speak and the impact they have on our very lives, I want to spend one more chapter examining the power of our words. If you're going to experience the full benefit of the ministry of angels, you need a complete understanding of the powerful relationship of our words to the angelic realm.

I believe that all the words we speak can be divided into five basic categories. These different levels of words span the range of extremes between life and death. We can speak words of pure life, words of pure death, or words somewhere between the two.

Proverbs 18:21 warns us, "Death and life are in the power of the tongue: and they that love it shall eat the fruit thereof." That's pretty straightforward. Whatever words you say with your mouth, whether they fall in the category of life or death will determine the fruit your life produces.

Our words impact virtually every aspect of who we are and the quality of life we presently experience. As I have mentioned, those words range between life and death on five basic levels.

The first level or the highest level are the words of life. Obviously, these are the words we want to speak because these are the words that are full of life—the God kind of life. These are the words that enable the ministering angels to bring us the blessings of

God and the grace of God that will promote the experience of eternal life. These are the words to which the angels respond.

Words of life, when sincerely spoken, are accompanied by behavior that is consistent with them. It is behavior that could be described as acting on God's Word, or as James 1:22 says, being "a doer of the Word."

Being a doer of the Word means that we not only speak the Word of God, we also order our lives by what it says. It means we have made a decision to base our actions on what we find in the Word of God. When we have done that, we begin walking out the will of God for our lives. As we speak the Word, we loose the ministering spirits to do His pleasure, which is to prosper us in our way.

THE VOCABULARY OF SILENCE

Now let's look at the second level of words and the accompanying behavior. These words will still produce life, but not to the same degree as the words of life. I call this level of communication "the vocabulary of silence."

The Bible teaches that if you can't put voice to God's Word, the next best thing you can do is to say nothing at all. There are numerous examples of this in the Bible.

Consider Zacharias. The angel Gabriel visited Zacharias to tell him of the birth of his son, John the Baptist (Luke 1:5–20), but it became apparent to Gabriel that Zacharias did not believe. Something would have to be done about Zacharias' mouth if the plan of God was to go forth. So Gabriel said, "Behold, thou shalt

be dumb, and not able to speak, until the day that these things shall be performed” (vs. 20).

Now Zacharias loved God. He believed in God’s Word, but he had to have his mouth shut so he couldn’t say the wrong thing until after the will of God was manifest. That’s an example of the vocabulary of silence at work.

We see the same principle in operation in the Old Testament when the Israelites fought the battle of Jericho. Joshua, the military commander of the group, was given instructions by the Lord on how to take that city—and they were wild instructions! He was told:

And ye shall compass the city, all ye men of war, and go round about the city once. Thus shalt thou do six days. And seven priests shall bear before the ark seven trumpets of rams’ horns: and the seventh day ye shall compass the city seven times, and the priests shall blow with the trumpets. And it shall come to pass, that when they make a long blast with the rams’ horn, and when ye hear the sound of the trumpet, all the people shall shout with a great shout; and the wall of the city shall fall down flat!” (Joshua 6:3–5)

This was the supernatural instruction for battle that Joshua received; he wasn’t going to get through the fortified walls of Jericho any other way. Now I want you to notice something Joshua did. When Joshua relayed the battle plans to the children of Israel, he added something. He commanded the people saying, “Ye shall not shout, nor make any noise with your voice, neither shall any word proceed out of your mouth, until the day I bid you shout; then shall ye shout” (vs. 10). God didn’t say anything

about the people having to be quiet during the six days when they were to march around the city—but Joshua did.

Joshua knew his people well enough to predict what they might say. They were whiners! So Joshua commanded them to be quiet. He didn't want them to jeopardize the battle with their complaining and doubt-filled words.

You can imagine what some of those people would have said if they weren't under strict orders to be quiet—especially the men of war! There they were, all dressed for battle and no one was going to fight. “It's hot out here and this armor is heavy! What do you think has gotten into Joshua? Has he gone crazy? When are we going to attack? Look at them up there on the walls; they're all laughing at us!”

Can't you just hear them talk? They're just like you and me, and the principle that is illuminated to us is clear. If you're at a place in your life where you might be moved by the circumstances, if you're not really certain you can speak in faith, then keep your mouth shut!

If you can't put voice to God's Word, there is ample scriptural precedent for not saying anything at all. That's the next best thing. It's not the highest way, but the vocabulary of silence will get you through when you're struggling in your faith. If you'll just keep quiet, continue to do the Word and continue to put it in your heart, your faith will grow. Before long, you'll move up to the highest level and start speaking words of life.

WATCH OUT FOR IDLE WORDS

In Matthew 12:36 we read about the third level of words. There Jesus said, “Every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment.”

This is the level of idle words. The literal Greek meaning here is “non-working.” These words don’t do anything for you. They don’t do anything against you either.

Hebrews 12:1 tells us what to do with those kinds of words. It says, “Let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us.”

We all know what sin is, but what are the weights to which this verse is referring?

They are the things that don’t really hurt you, but they don’t help you either. They just weigh you down and keep you from running the race of life God has called you to run. Idle words go hand-in-hand with those kinds of weights.

Sometimes weights take the form of a hobby or recreational activity such as golf or fishing. For me, flying airplanes was a weight at one point in my life. Flying isn’t a sin, but at that point, it occupied too much of my time and thought life. It competed with God for the priority in my heart and life. It became a weight because of the time and consideration I gave to it and it kept me from running my spiritual race.

Consequently, much of the talking I did revolved around flying. Pilots love to get together and talk about flying. Airplanes and approaches, maneuvers and aerobatics and all the rest. It all related to flying.

The more I talked about flying, the more of a weight it became for me. I was speaking idle words. They weren't bad words; they were just unproductive words. They weren't promoting the purpose of God. They weren't releasing the angelic host. They did not hurt me, but they didn't bring the life of God to me either.

As you go through your day, you'll have many opportunities to speak idle words. Whether it's some current event in the news or something else that has attracted your attention, these are occasions that inspire idle, non-working words. Jesus said one day we will give account for our words in the day of judgment.

This does not mean literally that someone is taking down every word you say and that you're going to give account for every word that didn't work to promote God's purpose in your life. No, at the judgment seat of Christ, we will give account of the deeds done in this body, and the things that we do are a product ultimately of the words we speak. It's all tied together.

Out of the abundance of the heart, the mouth speaks and gives direction to our lives (see Matthew 12:34–35). The Lord is saying that the idle words—non-working words—will produce idle, non-productive behavior, and when you stand before the judgment seat of Christ one day to receive the rewards for the things you have done on this earth, you will have to give account for all of the wasted time.

Does this mean you can never talk about your hobbies? Of course not. It's quite possible for you to talk about those things in your life that are fun and enjoyable without speaking idle words. When you're out on the golf course or the fishing stream, you can praise God for the beautiful day and the hole-in-one and the 12" rainbow trout you caught. Then your words become something that contributes to the purpose of God.

Personally, I had to lay down my flying for a while in order to get it into the proper place in my life. I gave it up for several years. When I had grown enough in the Lord to be able to accommodate that interest without it weighing me down, God brought it back into my life.

Today flying is a great blessing to me, but it doesn't occupy all of my thought life—and when I am flying, the praises of God are in my heart and on my lips.

My copilot and I talk about what a blessing of God it is to be at 41,000 feet and look down on the clouds or see the sun rising in the distance. We talk about how God has blessed us to be able to get from point A to point B in this manner. Our words, although relating to that particular activity, are no longer idle or non-working words. They're glorifying God. They're lifting Him up. They're giving Him credit.

In short, they are words of life.

DON'T PROVOKE YOUR ANGEL

The fourth level of words you encounter as you descend lower on the scale from life to death can be seen in 1 Corinthians 10:10:

Neither murmur ye, as some of them also murmured, and were destroyed by the destroyer.

That verse is talking about the children of Israel who wandered and died after 40 years in the wilderness.

Verse 11 goes on to say:

Now all these things happened to them as ensamples: and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come.

Of course, we are the ones who are living in the end times. This verse is speaking specifically to you and me!

The example of the Israelites in the wilderness is given to us so we will understand the power that words have to thwart the will of God for our lives. The Israelites were the people of God, recipients of a wonderful miracle of deliverance from bondage in Egypt.

They witnessed the plagues against Egypt and later, the destruction of the great Egyptian army. They had crossed over a large sea as though on dry ground. God supernaturally brought them manna and quail to eat. Their clothes did not wear out. They watched as bitter water became sweet and drinkable. They saw miracle after

miracle, but they never made it to the land of promise. They never made it to the land that flowed with milk and honey.

The promised land was God's will for them. He had heard their cries and brought them out of bondage, but they missed what God had prepared for them. Why? Because they murmured and complained continually.

There is a place God has planned for each one of us, a divinely appointed destiny that flows with milk and honey. If we make the same mistake the children of Israel made, we can die outside the promise of God, outside the will of God, and outside His blessing. We can die in the wilderness and never know what it would have been like to experience the life of God on this earth.

So we need to learn from the example of the children of Israel. We need to pay attention to the instructions God gave them, instructions like the one found in Exodus 23:20–21:

Behold, I send an Angel before thee, to keep thee in the way, and to bring thee into the place which I have prepared. Beware of him, and obey his voice, provoke him not; for he will not pardon your transgressions.

Earlier in this book, we discussed the role that angels play in God's plan. We saw that they are messengers of His grace and blessing and that they don't have the ability to forgive or arbitrarily extend grace. This is what the children of Israel were being warned about in the above verse, but many didn't heed that warning. As Hebrews 3:16 says, "For some, when they heard, did provoke."

What did the Israelites do to provoke the angel God sent them to lead them in the way? They murmured and complained. Because of their continual murmuring and complaining, they provoked the angel of the Lord and completely missed out on the blessing God had prepared for them.

That account is in the Bible as an example to keep us from making the same mistake. It's warning us not to provoke our angels and miss out on what God has destined for us.

You'll want to make sure that grumbling, complaining, and murmuring are not part of your vocabulary. Those are the words that comprise level four and it's a bad level to be on because it opens you to death. Not totally, of course, because you still have your salvation; heaven is still going to be your home, but the touch of death can seriously affect you in this natural life. The blessings of God will escape you when you consistently murmur and complain.

DANGEROUS WORDS

Finally, we come to the fifth level of words. This is the lowest level and one that you certainly want to avoid. It is the level of words that brings death.

These are the words that are totally contrary to the Word of God and words of life. The Bible says that God and His Word are one (John 1:1). When you speak words contrary to the Word of God, you are speaking against God Himself.

Two kinds of angels exist that hearken to your words. One is the good and godly angelic host, who hearkens to the voice of God's

Word. The other kind of angel is of the enemy, the Devil. These are the fallen angels, the dark and evil principalities and powers. Like the other angels, they were created to respond to words. That's how they function. It's how they operate.

The next time you speak something contrary to the Word of God, you need to think about this. Not only have you disabled your ministering angels by failing to give voice to the Word of God, you have commissioned the angels of the realm of darkness to do the things they want to do in your life—to kill, steal, and destroy (John 10:10).

God wants you to be protected from those things. That's why the Word says in Ephesians 4:29, "Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth." Corrupt words are those that are contrary to the Word of God. Just as you put voice to God's Word by speaking words of life, in the same way, you put voice to the power of the enemy by speaking corrupt words.

Verse 31 continues this idea when it says, "Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice."

Evil speaking, born out of a bitter heart, wrath and anger all work together to corrupt the purpose of God and it keeps the ministering angels from their assignment on your behalf.

It's no coincidence that verse 27 of that same chapter warns us, "Neither give place to the devil." Every time you say something counter to the Word of God, you are giving place or access

to the Devil and his demons in your life. You must always be mindful of that.

ONE, TWO, THREE, FOUR, FIVE

Before we leave the subject of words, let's review the five categories of words and how they affect the angels working on your behalf.

First, put voice to the Word of God and be diligent to act on His Word in your life. This is level number one.

If you can't do that or if you aren't strong yet in your faith, keep doing what the Word of God says and just don't say anything until you can put voice to His Word. Use the vocabulary of silence. This is level two.

Be aware of the idle words in your life. These are the non-working words that won't necessarily hurt you, but they won't help you either. They are the weights that keep you from running your race. These are the non-productive words of level three.

Then there are the level-four words. These are the words of murmuring and complaining that we speak when things are not going our way or when we don't understand what God is doing in our lives. We need to heed the warning given to the children of Israel and not provoke our angel. We do not want to die out in the wilderness and miss the promised blessing and purpose of God.

Finally, there is level five. These are the words that are contrary to the Word of God. When you speak these words, death has

entry into your life. You immobilize your ministering angels and you loose the angels of darkness to operate and promote evil in your life. If uncorrected, these words will drag you all the way down into spiritual death.

Remember to give proper regard to the words of your mouth. If you will develop new patterns of habit with regard to your speech, eventually you will speak the Word of God naturally and instinctively.

Granted, it will take some practice. You'll have to catch yourself and discipline your speech for a period of time, but eventually you will fall into a new pattern of speech that aligns the way you talk with the Word of God. You'll speak words of life. You'll speak forth the principles of God's Word, and as you begin to speak the blessings of the Lord and words of life, the touch of death will become less and less frequent. Most importantly, your ministering angels will become a daily fact of your life.

WAR IN THE HEAVENLIES

Now that you know why angels were created, what they do, and what they respond to, I want to broaden your understanding of them even further. I want to give you a historical look at the origin of angels and the events that led to the fall of nearly a third of the hosts of heaven.

In order to do that, we first need to examine the history of the earth and creation in general. I mentioned at the beginning of this book that I would use the Bible as my primary source for study. The Bible is our only reliable resource with regard to these things. It alone establishes truth. It did not originate in the mind of man but was divinely inspired through the mouths of hundreds of prophets and scribes over thousands of years. It's crucial that we recognize the Bible as our basic point of reference.

With that said, let's begin our discussion of creation with Genesis 1:1. "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth."

Notice, this verse does not point to a definite date or a specific point in time. It references the dateless, ageless past. It just says, "In the beginning...."

I do think it is important to have a basic understanding of the time frames of creation because there are two different schools of thought regarding when the "beginning" really was.

One school of thought teaches that the beginning of the earth itself coincided with the creation of Adam. Chronologically, this can be traced back 6,000 years or so. According to the “young earth” interpretation, “in the beginning” refers to that point in time.

The scientific community, on the other hand, recognizes through fossil records and other geological dating methods, that the universe originated somewhere in the range of 15 billion years ago with some type of remarkable cosmic event or “big bang.” That, science would say, was “the beginning.” According to current scientific thought, the earth as we know it formed between four and five billion years ago. This time frame is mutually agreed upon by both the secular scientists and many creation scientists as well. These are “old earth” creationists.

While reasonable people of faith can differ on this point, I am persuaded that the weight of biblical evidence supports the “old earth” view, which also harmonizes nicely with scientific findings. Let me explain why.

We see in Genesis 1:1 that in the beginning—somewhere in the dateless past—God created “the heaven” and “the earth.”

What the Bible reveals here in its very first verse is the idea of universal creation. We know through physics and astrophysics how the galaxies and solar systems have been formed. God didn’t just set one planet here and another planet there with nothing in between. There is a universal system that holds them all together. We can assume that universal system came into being in Genesis 1:1.

AN ANGELIC CATASTROPHE

I believe that at the creation moment of Genesis 1:1, the angels had already been created. They were already in existence prior to the universal creation event. The book of Job bears this out when God says to Job:

Where wast thou when I laid the foundations of the earth? declare, if thou hast understanding. Who hath laid the measures thereof, if thou knowest? or who hath stretched the line upon it? Whereupon are the foundations thereof fastened? or who laid the corner stone thereof; when the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy? (38:4–7)

The two terms *sons of God* and *morning stars* are frequently used in the Bible to refer to the angelic hosts. So we see here that the angels were present when the creation of the earth began—and they rejoiced in it!

Then something happened. Some catastrophic event must have occurred because in Genesis 1:2 we read: “And the earth was without form, and void; and darkness was on the face of the deep.”

Now, the familiar phrase “without form and void” is a translation of two rhyming Hebrew words—*tohu* and *bohu*. The Hebrew-English Lexicon defines the word *tohu* as “formlessness, confusion, unreality, emptiness, chaos, or waste.” The word *bohu* is defined as “emptiness.”

Together, these two words describe a chaotic, confused mess. Interestingly, Yiddish-speaking mothers today, still use the term *tohu va bohu* to describe a messy, disorganized place. Many a Jewish teenager's room has been declared *tohu va bohu* by an irate mom.

Genesis isn't the only place in the Old Testament in which this phrase is used. In the fourth chapter of Jeremiah, we find the prophet seemingly looking back to the very time described in Genesis 1:2. See for yourself:

I beheld the earth, and, lo, it was without form, and void; [tohu va bohu] and the heavens, and they had no light. I beheld the mountains, and, lo, they trembled, and all the hills moved lightly. I beheld, and, lo, there was no man, and all the birds of the heavens were fled. I beheld, and, lo, the fruitful place was a wilderness, and all the cities thereof were broken down at the presence of the Lord, and by his fierce anger. For thus hath the Lord said, The whole land shall be desolate; yet will I not make a full end. (Jeremiah 4:23–27)

Did the first verse in the passage sound familiar? Just as in Genesis 1:2, we see the earth “without form and void” and we see darkness covering it. This passage indicates that the cause of this darkness and chaos was a great judgment of some sort. A little further along we'll see what that judgment might have been, but for the moment let's return our attention to Genesis 1:1–2.

In verse one we see the earth created. In verse two we discover that it is a chaotic, confused mess. The question arises: Is that the

way God created the earth? We find a clear, unequivocal answer to that question in Isaiah 45:8:

For thus saith the Lord that created the heavens; God himself that formed the earth and made it; he hath established it, he created it not in vain [tohu!], he formed it to be inhabited:

It's no accident the Word of God uses the same word (*tohu*) in this verse as it used in Genesis 1:2. This verse flatly states that God did not create the earth *tohu*. He created it perfect and inhabitable.

That means that something happened between verse one and verse two, something that distorted the surface of the earth and rendered it chaotic and confused. The earth *became* uninhabitable and dark. In fact, the original Hebrew syntax actually supports the use of the word “became” in this context.

With this knowledge we can safely translate the first two verses of Genesis this way:

In the beginning, God created the heaven and the earth. And the earth became chaotic and confused and darkness was on the face of the deep.

In actuality, millions or even billions of years could lie between these two verses.

What kind of cataclysm could have wrecked such havoc?

The answer to that question lies with one of the three chief angels, an angel by the name of Lucifer.

LUCIFER'S FALL

As I've pointed out previously, God created the angels for the purpose of managing and administering His affairs in the universal creation. He established them in different ranks and orders and assigned to them various areas of responsibility with differing levels of authority and power.

The cherubim, for example, were designated the ruling authority over certain physical areas of the universe. Placed over them in authority were three archangels: Gabriel, Michael, and Lucifer.

Gabriel was designated the messenger of God or the angel of the Lord. He appears in the Bible several times, most notably when he visited Zacharias in Luke 1:11–19 and announced the birth of John the Baptist, and later when he visited Mary with the news of Jesus' birth (Luke 1:26).

Michael, on the other hand, was assigned to battle. He is the warring angel. Remember the angel that appeared to Daniel? He was delayed three weeks because of a battle in the spirit realm (Daniel 10:13). Michael was the angel who was dispatched to help this particular angel in the battle with the prince of Persia.

Then we have Lucifer. I want to spend some time discussing him because he is the one responsible for the catastrophic event that left the earth "without form and void."

A LONG WAY TO FALL

To effectively discuss Lucifer, I must introduce a principle of Bible interpretation called the “law of double reference.” Throughout scripture, usually in the context of a prophetic utterance, the Spirit of God will address an individual when in reality He is speaking to the spirit that is prompting the individual’s actions and behavior.

A good example of this is found in Matthew 16:21–23. There, Jesus had just described what He must suffer when Peter pulled Him aside and argued, “Be it far from thee, Lord: this shall not be unto thee,” (verse 22). Jesus then turned to Peter and said, “Get thee behind me, Satan: thou art an offense to me!” (verse 23). Was Jesus speaking to Peter? Yes, but He was in reality dealing with Satan. This is the law of double reference in action.

Keeping that in mind, look at Ezekiel chapter 28. The law of double reference is applied here because even though the passage is addressed to the king of Tyrus, God is most certainly speaking about Lucifer or Satan.

Moreover the word of the Lord came unto me, saying, Son of man, take up a lamentation upon the king of Tyrus, and say unto him, Thus saith the Lord God; Thou sealest up the sum, full of wisdom, and perfect in beauty. Thou hast been in Eden the garden of God; every precious stone was thy covering, the sardius, topaz, and the diamond, the beryl, the onyx, and the jasper, the sapphire, the emerald, and the carbuncle, and gold: the workmanship of thy tabrets and of thy pipes was prepared in thee in the day that thou wast created. Thou art the anointed

cherub that covereth; and I have set thee so: thou wast upon the holy mountain of God; thou hast walked up and down in the midst of the stones of fire. Thou wast perfect in thy ways from the day that thou wast created, till iniquity was found in thee.
(Ezekiel 28:11–15)

Obviously, this does not strictly apply to the historical king of Tyrus. Although he was an evil king, in this passage God is addressing the spirit behind the king of Tyrus—the archangel called Lucifer. Here are a few of the things we learn about Lucifer from this passage.

He was “the anointed cherub that covereth.” This means he had been anointed to rule. Apparently, Lucifer was second only to God in his authority, a position not given to any other angel in scripture. He was perfect in beauty and full of all wisdom. He had special physical features such as tabrets and pipes inside him. We have reason to believe that because of these, he was responsible for praise and worship and the music in heaven.

Lucifer was a marvelous creature. He was the apex of God’s creation to that point. He was covered in every beautiful, glimmering stone and with gold as though it were a garment. He was perfect in all his ways from the day he was created until the day iniquity was found in him.

I want you to see something else that is said about him. Verse 13 says, “Thou hast been in Eden the garden of God.” The Bible says he walked in the Garden of Eden as a beautiful and majestic creature, yet we see him in Genesis 3:1 in the Garden of Eden

as a serpent, more subtle than any creature God had made. How do we reconcile these two dramatically different views of him?

Perhaps they refer to Satan as he was in two different time frames!

It's possible that the account in Ezekiel describes him as he was in the dateless past when he was perfect in all his ways and led the worship and praise that filled the heavens. God had appointed him to rule the universal creation as second in command. At that point, Lucifer made the planet earth his headquarters and operated out of the Garden of Eden. This was millions of years before he met Adam as a serpent in the Genesis account.

Lucifer's glory days took place long before the earth became without form and void. At that time, earth was an inhabited place and Lucifer was the ultimate authority there. He was second in command only to God and he was a brilliant and beautiful creature.

Yes, this paints a picture that is quite the opposite of the traditional view of Satan. He is not some grotesque and horrible being with horns and a pitchfork! He wasn't clothed in a bright red jumpsuit either! He was perfect in beauty. He was full of wisdom. His very name means "light bearer" and he is called the "son of the morning" (Isaiah 14:12).

Second Corinthians 11:14 tells us that Satan is transformed into an angel of light. That's why, when we encounter evil, it's not likely to come in the form of a ghost or goblin. Satan truly must have been a marvelous creature—and he knew it.

As we read previously, Ezekiel 28:17 verifies that fact. It says, “Thine heart was lifted up because of thy beauty, thou hast corrupted thy wisdom by reason of thy brightness: I will cast thee to the ground, I will lay thee before kings, that they may behold thee.” We see more about Lucifer’s fall in Isaiah:

How art thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning! how art thou cut down to the ground, which didst weaken the nations! For thou hast said in thine heart, I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God: I will sit also upon the mount of the congregation, in the sides of the north: I will ascend above the heights of the clouds: I will be like the most High. (Isaiah 14:12–14)

Lucifer desired to be exalted like God. So he was cast to the ground. He made the world a wilderness and destroyed the cities thereof (v. 17). He weakened the nations.

ARCHAEOLOGY DOESN'T CONTRADICT SCRIPTURE

Now, you might be thinking to yourself, if this is all happening in the dateless past, sometime well in advance of the creation of Adam, then why do these scripture references mention kings and cities and nations? Wouldn't that suggest there were people on the earth at that time?

Yes! Although one doesn't want to get dogmatic on this point, many Bible texts do support the existence of a pre-Adamic civilization. This would go a long way toward explaining numerous

archeological discoveries of different life forms and evidence that a fruitful, civilized world existed tens of thousands of years ago.

Dinosaurs and different kinds of strange creatures—there's room for all of that in the Bible. There may have even been intelligent life in this distant era before Genesis 1:2—life that was organized into communities, cities, and even nations. They are referred to in the Word as “men” or at least manlike in form, but they were not like Adam.

Adam was the first of a new kind of creation. Adam was different because he was created in the image and likeness of God (Genesis 1:26). Nothing had ever been created with that distinction before.

This God-likeness goes beyond our physical appearance. Angels and other beings can take on the appearance of man. We're not in the image and likeness of God just because of the way we look. It's our spiritual nature and capacity—who we are spiritually—that makes us unique in all of creation.

We are the first and only species created that can be joined with the Spirit of God. We can be one with God and God can indwell us. We can draw upon the very power and anointing of God that raised Jesus from the dead and created this universe. That's what makes us in the image and likeness of God.

So when Adam was created 6,000 years ago, that's what came into being: a new, Godlike creature that never existed before.

I believe that, prior to Adam's creation there was a race of manlike creatures on the earth. They were capable of developing communities and cities. What happened to this pre-Adamic civilization and its inhabitants?

I'm convinced they were all destroyed in the rebellion and fall of Lucifer. Revelation 12:7 speaks of that destruction when it says, "And there was war in heaven: Michael and his angels fought against the dragon; and the dragon fought and his angels."

We know that Lucifer was able to gather a third of the angelic host in his rebellion (Revelation 12:4)—but verses 8–9 say:

They prevailed not; neither was their place found any more in heaven. And the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world: he was cast out into the earth, and his angels were cast out with him.

This cosmic conflict took place long before Adam came on the scene. Obviously, whatever civilization existed on the earth at that time was deceived and became part of the rebellion. As a result, Satan and his angels were cast down onto the earth.

That's why verse 12 says, "Therefore rejoice, ye heavens, and ye that dwell in them, Woe to the inhabitants of the earth and of the sea! for the devil is come down unto you, having great wrath, because he knoweth that he hath but a short time."

This is the great catastrophic event that destroyed the earth and left it *tohu va bohu*—without form and void.

Jeremiah had a vision of this judgment from Jeremiah 4:23–26. The prophet described how the earth was without form and void and how the mountains trembled. He recounts there was “no man” and the birds had all fled. He says in verse 26, “I beheld, and lo, the fruitful place was a wilderness, and all the cities thereof were broken down at the presence of the Lord, and by his fierce anger.”

He was looking at the earth as we might see it in Genesis 1:2. It was a messed up place. The cities were all destroyed. Why? Because Satan had lost the battle waged in the heavens and was cast back onto the earth.

THE DEVIL’S DESTINY

In addition to providing us with insight into the history of Lucifer and the fallen angels, the Bible also sheds light on their destiny. Second Peter 2:4 tells us, “God spared not the angels that sinned, but cast them down to hell, and delivered them into chains of darkness, to be reserved unto the judgment.”

This verse makes it seem as if all the angels of the rebellion are chained down in hell and in darkness waiting for the final judgment, but they can’t all be down there because if that were the case. Satan would have to be there, too, and we know he isn’t because the Bible says he moves about as a roaring lion throughout the whole earth, seeking whom he may devour (1 Peter 5:8). He couldn’t be doing that if he was chained in hell.

So we must conclude that only some of the angels who rebelled have been chained in darkness. Which ones are they?

Consider Jude 6. “And the angels which *kept not their first estate*, but left their own habitation, he hath reserved in everlasting chains under darkness unto the judgment of the great day.”

Although all of the fallen angels rebelled, some did something even worse. Peter calls that something keeping “not their first estate.”

We find out what that means in Genesis 6:1–2. Those verses tell us about a time approximately 1,400 years after Adam was created when man had begun to multiply on the earth. The effects of sin were beginning to be felt and verse 2 says, “The sons of God saw the daughters of men that they were fair; and they took them wives of all which they chose.”

As I said before, “sons of God” is a phrase used to describe angels. We see here that these fallen angels were beginning to take human women as wives. As a result:

There were giants in the earth in those days; and also after that, when the sons of God came in unto the daughters of men, and they bare children to them, the same became mighty men which were of old, men of renown. (Genesis 6:4)

After Adam sinned in the Garden of Eden, God declared that the seed of man would crush the head of the serpent (Genesis 3:15). Satan tried to stop that from happening by poisoning the seed of man. He tried to genetically alter man’s offspring through cohabitation with human women. This would make man genetically predisposed to choose evil.

When the fallen angels cohabited with human women, they produced physically abnormal offspring described as giants. That, in itself, was bad enough, but in the eyes of God, something even worse had happened. Satan had tampered with the right of man to choose good and evil—and that’s where God drew the line. He condemned those angels who had “left their first estate” and moved into an area of procreation reserved for the human species.

Again, this is my opinion. I’m not prepared to be extremely dogmatic on these points but it is the way the Bible seems to read to me. I’m satisfied that these events led to the flood at the time of Noah.

Noah and his family would have been the only ones not effected by Satan’s scheme. The flood, then was intended to eradicate Satan’s effort to poison the seed of man.

One final thought. We have already examined 2 Peter 2:4 in which God says the angels were cast down to hell. Well, the Greek word translated “hell” there is an interesting word. It is *tartaros*, and it’s used only this one time in the entire Bible. The Hebrew and Greek words for *hell* used everywhere else in the Bible are *sheol* and *hades*, respectively. Second Peter 2:4 is the only place *tartaros* is used and it appears only in reference to the angels who are chained until the day of judgment.

Tartaros does appear frequently, however, throughout Greek mythology. Since Genesis 6:4 says that the children of the sons of God and the daughters of men “became mighty men which were of old, men of renown,” I have often wondered if this wasn’t a reference to the heroes of Greek mythology.

Do you remember the Titans of Greek mythology? They fought against Zeus and lost the war. Guess where they were confined. They were imprisoned in *tartaros*! This is just food for thought.

I realize this is a great deal of information for you to process. And, no doubt, in imparting it I have probably upset a few of your theological apple carts. If so, don't let it disturb you. This is not essential doctrine in the sense that your eternal future rests upon it. I simply believe it is a fair and reasonable interpretation of scripture with regard to the fall of Lucifer.

What it says to me more than anything else is that God will not allow the satanic host to override our free moral agency. God created us in His image and gave us the choice of life or death, blessing or cursing. Even Lucifer had that choice, but pride confused his wisdom and he was deceived in his own heart.

When Satan tried to override our free will in order to force us to do evil, he was held in check by the most high God. It's good to know that even Satan is forced to respect your moral freedom. It's good to know that God is always and forever protecting you!

SATAN'S SUBTLE SECOND WORD

As we have seen, there had been a lot of action in the spirit realm before Adam was ever created. Lucifer had gotten too big for his britches. He rebelled against God and took a third of the angels with him in that rebellion. These became the angels of darkness—the fallen angels. Their sole purpose now is to prevent the blessing of God from flowing to mankind. It's the only way they can forestall their own dark, eternal destiny.

These fallen angels know the Word. They know the prophecies that have been spoken against them. They know that the lake of fire is their ultimate destination (Revelation 20:14–15). They also believe they can postpone that day by keeping the will of God from happening in your life and mine. Their goal is to keep us from experiencing God's promised blessings.

So know this: Just as surely as God's angels are commissioned to minister His blessings to you, the fallen angels work with all diligence to hinder those blessings. If you're going to assist God's angels and frustrate the Devil's crew—and I'm sure that's what you want to do—you will have to be able to distinguish between them.

At times that can be more difficult than you may think. You see, Satan aspires to be like God. He tries to emulate or counterfeit Him, even today. According to 2 Corinthians 11:14, he has been transformed as an angel of light. So, sometimes the difference between the two kinds of angelic hosts are very subtle. If we're going to successfully identify those differences, we must under-

stand something about the strategies and tactics Satan and the fallen angels use to work against us.

UNDERSTANDING SATAN'S STRATEGIES

One of the first things we need to know is that Lucifer and his fallen angels are neither omnipresent (everywhere at once), omnipotent (all-powerful), or omniscient (all-knowing). This is an important point to understand because many believers seem to unconsciously ascribe these traits to them. The truth is, however, they are none of those things.

Lucifer is an individual being and cannot be in more than one place at one time. He can't be harassing you and at the same time be harassing some poor man over in China. He doesn't have that ability. Rather, he has to rely upon delegated authority. His angels have levels of rank and file just as the angels of God do.

There are different orders of authority and assignments of responsibility in the kingdom of darkness. We see an overview of this hierarchy in Ephesians 6:12:

For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places.

Satan has to rely upon the input he gets from his proxies because he can't be everywhere at once.

Just as we have seen in the Word that God assigns angels to you to keep you in your way and to take charge over you, be aware that there are also demonic angels on assignment against you as well. As your visibility in the kingdom of God increases—as the anointing on your life and your knowledge of the Word grows—you become a greater threat to the kingdom of darkness. As a result, the Devil assigns more resources against you.

Although Lucifer and his wicked host are not all-powerful, they are supernatural and have supernatural strength. Don't underestimate their abilities because, in their realm, they are powerful creatures. You are no match for them unless, of course, you are in Christ.

The Bible says, "Greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world" (1 John 4:4). That's part of the good news of the Gospel, but without the Lord, without the power of God, you wouldn't have a chance against the demonic host.

Another fact you need to know is that Lucifer is not omniscient. He does not know what you are thinking. That's why the demons assigned against you are so interested in hearing what you say and seeing what you do. The Devil has no idea what goes on inside your head. He has to wait until you tell him or show him. Once you do that, he shapes his strategy against you accordingly.

Let's say you are afraid of flying, for instance. A demonic spirit doesn't know that until you verbally say so. Once he is aware of it, however, he can begin magnifying that fear. He might send various people to you who want to talk about the dangers of flying or news of some recent plane crash. He'll use those people to feed the fear in you so it will grow.

You see, fear operates on the same principle as faith. Just as faith is believing in God's ability to bless you, fear is believing in the enemy's ability to do you harm. Just as faith draws good things to you, fear will cause the very things you fear to come upon you.

Satan will also watch for negative patterns in your behavior. When he sees one, he will make sure you get additional opportunities to pursue that behavior. If he sees that you always lose your temper in a certain situation, he'll bring that situation back time and again in hopes your anger will flare.

I used to wonder, with all of the illegal drugs that are being peddled in our culture, why nobody ever tried to sell me any of the stuff. Then I realized that drug use is not a demonstrated weakness for me. It never has been. The Devil knows I wouldn't be tempted to buy it so he doesn't bother to send it my way.

On the other hand, a former drug addict will have somebody trying to sell them drugs every time they turn around. Is that a coincidence? No! This is the demonic host at work in the unseen realm.

Of course, as I pointed out in the last chapter, God will not allow that host to impose their will upon you. You were created a free moral agent. God has already locked up the angels who tried to tamper with mankind's free will. Satan knows that if he wants to remain loose on this earth, he can't force evil on anybody.

His only tool is deception. It's the only thing he can legally use. Of course, no one deliberately chooses death. They must be

deceived first. Satan's only viable strategy is to trick you into making a wrong choice.

When it comes to deceiving unbelievers, his approach is very simple: keep them out of church and keep them away from Christians. Period. That's all that is necessary to keep them moving down the path to destruction.

That's why, in actuality, the Devil spends relatively little time on unbelievers. They are by default subject to the curse that is in this earth. That curse entered through Adam when he sinned and has been working here ever since. Just look at the world around us and you can see that for yourself! It's filled with infirmity, famine, heartache, pain—and most of all, death.

Satan doesn't need to spend that much time beating up a non-believer because the curse in the earth is already doing that. Therefore, he just does what's necessary to make sure they keep on being unbelievers. In Hosea 4:6 God says, "My people are destroyed for a lack of knowledge." If Satan can keep unbelievers from knowing the truth found in the Word, then the truth can't set them free (John 8:32). He's got them right where he wants them and that's outside the church!

THE SUBTLETY OF THE SECOND WORD

When it comes to the believer—the one whose life is hid in Christ—the enemy has an entirely different plan of attack. We have heard the Word of God. We have access to the truth through the Bible, the indwelling Holy Spirit, and anointed preaching

and teaching. So the enemy must work much harder to promote deception in our lives.

So if you're a believer, Satan's strategy is to bring you a second word—a "second-opinion" so to speak—that differs from what the first word (the Word of God) says on a given subject. Let me illustrate what I mean.

We see this demonstrated in the original "second-word" deception. The one that we read about in Genesis 3:1–6:

Now the serpent was more subtle than any beast of the field which the Lord God had made. And he said unto the woman, Yea, hath God said, Ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden? And the woman said unto the serpent, We may eat of the fruit of the trees of the garden: but of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God hath said, Ye shall not eat of it, neither shall ye touch it, lest ye die. And the serpent said unto the woman, Ye shall not surely die: for God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil. And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise, she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat, and gave also unto her husband with her; and he did eat.

God's first word on the subject had been delivered in the previous chapter. In Genesis 2:17 we read: "But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die."

The Word of the Lord on this subject was clear, but Satan, subtler than any other creature in creation, managed to bring a second word and tricked Adam and Eve into heeding it. They were deceived, plain and simple.

RED FLAGS ON THE ROAD TO DECEPTION

It's important to examine the above passage of scripture carefully. There are four red flags in it that will help you learn to identify the deception of the second word before you fall for it. Any deception the enemy tries to perpetrate in your life will probably carry one or more of these red-flag characteristics.

The first thing we invariably see when a second word comes is that it begins with a question. In the above example that question was: "Hath God said, ye shall not eat of every tree in the garden?"

This question, as is usually the case, challenges the authority of what God said. If you are not firm and clear about what God's Word says, you are vulnerable to being led down this progressive path to deception.

Eve didn't have God's words of instruction clearly imbedded in her heart. She made this clear in her response to the serpent. She said, "We may eat of the fruit of the trees of the garden: but of the fruit of the tree which is *in the midst of the garden*, God hath said, Ye shall not eat of it, *neither shall ye touch it*, lest ye die."

God did not say that. The "tree in the midst of the garden," as described in Genesis 2:9, was the tree of life. It was alongside

the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, but God didn't say, "Don't eat of the tree in the midst of the garden." In fact, He commanded them that they *should* eat of the tree of life. Neither had God said anything about not *touching* the tree.

The fact that Eve did not know exactly what God had said is significant. It is a red flag on the road to deception.

Don't be too hard on Eve, though. God had instructed Adam about these things and apparently he hadn't done a very good job of passing those instructions on to his newly-formed bride. God's first Word was fuzzy in Eve's mind. That enabled the deception of the second word to continue.

The next two stages in the process of deception began with an "innocent" question and turned into an outright contradiction of God's Word. It involved the questioning of God's character. The Devil took a shot at God by saying:

Ye shall not surely die: for God doth know in the day that you eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil. (Genesis 3:4-5)

He implied that God was withholding something really good from them. This is another warning flag in the process of deception.

To avoid the Devil's trap, you must know that the Word says God is good and has your best interests at heart. This is imperative. If you don't study the Word and let it get down deep into your spirit,

then you run the risk of having it twisted into a contradiction. You also open yourself to doubts about the character of God.

The last phase in the process of deception was an appeal to the flesh. Verse six says:

And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise, she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat.

The final step in Satan's plan was directed toward a fleshly desire. He offered Adam and Eve something that would appease the flesh, something their carnal nature desired. That carnal nature is a part of us that we all have to deal with on a regular, daily basis—and it's a major factor in any deception that occurs.

GOD DOESN'T CHANGE HIS MIND

Now that we have laid the foundation, I want to show you another example of the second word. This example is taken from a story found in 1 Kings chapter 13. The story begins with a young prophet, a man of God, who had come out of Judah at the prompting of the Lord to go to the town of Bethel. He'd been sent to Bethel to prophesy against an evil king named Jeroboam.

King Jeroboam had torn down the temples and the places where God was worshipped and in their place he had erected his own altars to golden images and false gods. As the young prophet cried out against the altars, he declared a sign would be given to verify that his words were from God. The sign was that the altars would be split in two and the ashes upon them would be poured out.

King Jeroboam happened to be near one of these altars as the prophet cried out. When he heard what the prophet said, King Jeroboam reached out with his hand to grab the young prophet and stop him. As he did, his hand withered instantly and he was unable to use it. At the same time, the altars were split in two and their ashes were poured out on the ground just as the prophet had said.

Jeroboam then begged for the prophet to pray to God for his hand to be restored. The young prophet agreed and after he prayed, the king's hand was healed. Then Jeroboam invited the young prophet to his house that he might be rewarded and refreshed with food and drink.

All this is recorded in the first seven verses of 1 Kings chapter 13 and it is a wonderful demonstration of what happens when, as the prophet did in this instance, a person obeys the Word of the Lord—the first word. When we respond to the Word of God, when we put voice to His Word, the kingdom of God gains greater visibility, the high places of the enemy are torn down, and we enjoy supernatural safety in dangerous situations.

Notice that when the king stretched forth his hand to bring harm to the young prophet, God supernaturally intervened. Divine protection goes with us as we obey the first word of the Lord.

Let's pick up the story again in verse seven where the king invited the young prophet to come home with him for refreshments:

And the king said unto the man of God, Come home with me, and refresh thyself, and I will give thee a reward. And the man of God

said unto the king, If thou wilt give me half thine house, I will not go in with thee, neither will I eat bread nor drink water in this place: for so was it charged me by the word of the Lord, saying, Eat no bread, nor drink water, nor turn again by the same way that thou camest. So he went another way, and returned not by the way that he came to Bethel. (1 Kings 13:7–10)

We see here that the young prophet had received a word from the Lord. He'd been told not to eat or drink there and he obeyed that Word. In the next few verses, something unexpected happens. It is here we see the deceptive nature of the second word.

An old, fellow prophet from that area follows the young prophet and makes him another offer:

Come home with me, and eat bread. And [the young prophet] said, I may not return with thee, nor go in with thee: neither will I eat bread nor drink water with thee in this place: for it was said to me by the word of the Lord, Thou shalt eat no bread nor drink water there, nor turn again to go by the way that thou camest. He said unto him, I am a prophet also as thou art; and an angel spake unto me by the word of the Lord, saying, Bring him back with thee into thine house, that he may eat bread and drink water. But he lied unto him. So he went back with him, and did eat bread in his house, and drank water.... And it came to pass, after he had eaten bread, and after he had drunk, that he saddled for him the ass, to wit, for the prophet whom he had brought back. And when he was gone, a lion met him by the way and slew him. (1 Kings 13:15–19, 23–24)

There's a lot we can learn from this account. It demonstrates the subtlety of the second word.

After the word of the Lord was given to the young prophet, it was questioned twice, once by Jeroboam ("Come to my house and eat") and again by the old prophet who said the same thing. To his credit, the young prophet declined firm in both instances.

Notice what happened next. Just as in the Garden with Eve, the word was contradicted. The old prophet told him that God had changed His mind. The angel of the Lord had instructed him now to go to the old prophet's house.

No doubt, the new instructions were appealing. After all, the young prophet was hot and tired. He had come a long way and had a long way to go. He hadn't eaten. He hadn't had anything to drink. Just as in the Garden, this second word contained a powerful appeal to his flesh. He needed rest and refreshment.

He yielded and it cost him his life.

It makes you wonder what kind of angel it was that came to the old prophet, doesn't it? What about that lion? First Peter 5:8 says, "Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour."

Satan is out there walking about and seeking those whom he *may* devour. He can't devour any believer he pleases. You have to give him permission before he can destroy you. You have to be

deceived into walking out from under God's protective umbrella through disobedience to His Word.

This is the process that leads to deception and, ultimately, to being devoured by the enemy. He invariably will bring a subtle second word. It's the only thing he can use to promote his evil agenda on the earth. That's why we're told to be sober and vigilant.

Your first line of defense against the deceptive tactics of fallen angels is to know the Word. Study it and meditate on it. Read it continuously and let it get down deep in you.

Then, be aware of the four red flags that indicate a possible "second-word" attack. Whether through a friend, relative, newscaster, or stranger, be on the alert when the Word is questioned, when it is contradicted, when God's character is maligned, or when it appeals to your flesh.

Do so, and you'll be able to distinguish between the angel of the Lord and the angel of the enemy every time.

PUT GOD'S ANGELS TO WORK

The purpose of this book is to help you learn God's principles for making full use of the angelic assistance available to you. I want you to know how to avoid thwarting, frustrating, or in any way limiting the angels' ability to bring you help.

That's why I want to close this study of angels with Psalm 91. Why the 91st Psalm? Because it reveals more clearly than any other single chapter of the Bible what the heavenly hosts can do in your life.

It's a wonderful, scriptural picture of God's care, His love, and His provision for our every need. Furthermore, it's a beautiful promise of His protection and how He has ordained the ministry of angels to bring His blessings into our lives.

It is generally agreed that Moses was the author of Psalm 91 as well as the preceding one, Psalm 90. Both were written during the 40 years the children of Israel wandered in the wilderness. Moses wrote them to demonstrate the truth about fellowship with God and its impact on your life.

Psalm 90 describes what it's like to be out of fellowship with God and the negative effect that has on you. Psalm 91, on the other hand, describes what it means to be *in* fellowship with God and outlines the powerful benefits it brings.

In writing this book, I've made the assumption that you are a person who is *in* fellowship with God. Therefore, I will focus your attention on Psalm 91. I want to take you through the entire psalm verse by verse and point out some things you may have never noticed before and how they shed light on the role of angels in your life.

Let's first get an overview by reading the entire Psalm as a whole:

He that dwelleth in the secret place of the Most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty. I will say of the Lord, He is my refuge and my fortress: my God; in him will I trust. Surely he shall deliver thee from the snare of the fowler, and from the noisome pestilence. He shall cover thee with his feathers, and under his wings shalt thou trust: his truth shall be thy shield and buckler. Thou shalt not be afraid for the terror by night; nor for the arrow that flieth by day; nor for the pestilence that walketh in darkness; nor for the destruction that wasteth at noonday. A thousand shall fall at thy side, and ten thousand at thy right hand; but it shall not come nigh thee. Only with thine eyes shalt thou behold and see the reward of the wicked. Because thou hast made the Lord, which is my refuge, even the most High, thy habitation; there shall no evil befall thee, neither shall any plague come nigh thy dwelling. For he shall give his angels charge over thee, to keep thee in all thy ways. They shall bear thee up in their hands, lest thou dash thy foot against a stone. Thou shalt tread upon the lion and adder: the young lion and the dragon shalt thou trample under feet. Because he hath set his love upon me, therefore will I deliver him: I will set him on high, because he hath known my name. He shall call upon me, and I will answer him: I will be

with him in trouble; I will deliver him, and honour him. With long life will I satisfy him, and shew him my salvation.

FELLOWSHIP IS THE KEY

This psalm does a masterful job of putting the ministry of angels in proper perspective. It reveals not only how angels serve us but also what we must do to appropriate that service.

It begins with the assertion that *fellowship* is the basis for every good thing listed in the Psalm. It says:

He that dwelleth in the secret place of the most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty. (Psalm 91:1)

Fellowship with God is the most fundamental prerequisite for angelic ministry in your life. It is the key that opens the door to God's blessings and the angels who bring those blessings.

"Dwelleth" means *abides in* or *continues in*. It does not mean *occasionally visits*. To dwell in the secret place of the Most High doesn't mean spending 15 or 20 minutes with God every now and then. It means you fellowship with Him deeply and intimately every day.

I want to differentiate between *relationship* with God and *fellowship* with Him because many Christians assume that because they have a relationship with God, they are automatically in fellowship with Him. That's not necessarily true.

I have three children, two boys and a girl. I am their father and they are my children. Nothing will ever change that relationship. Even if I didn't see them for 20 years, didn't talk with them, didn't even write them a letter, I would still be their father. They would still be my children. It doesn't matter if they are good children or bad, our relationship is still father and sons and father and daughter. That won't ever change.

If, however, I don't see my children or hear from them in 20 years, I am obviously not in fellowship with them. I don't know them and they don't know me. Even though the relationship is intact, the fellowship is not.

The same thing applies to our relationship and fellowship with Father God. When we are born again, we are adopted into the family of God through the blood of His Son Jesus Christ (Romans 8:15–17). We become the children of God and He becomes our Father. That is relationship. Nothing can change that. Our fellowship with God, on the other hand, is something different.

When you're in fellowship with somebody, you know their heart and mind. You communicate with them. There's interchange, dialogue, a sharing of heart. That's the essence of fellowship.

When you're in fellowship with somebody, you know what they're thinking. You know who they are and where they stand. You know what they believe.

The same thing is true when you're in fellowship with God the Father. You know what He thinks about your life. You know His

heart and his mind. You've talked to Him and He's talked with you. You've been with Him in the secret place.

That secret place is a place with God that nobody knows about but you. You're the only one that knows you've been there—except, of course, the Lord. This is where you and the Father commune with one another. There is no mistake about it; when you're there—you know it.

We all get to that place in different ways because we are all unique individuals. When you're in the presence of the Lord—your secret place—there is no mistaking it. When you continue in that place, this verse says you will abide under the shadow of the Almighty.

The word *shadow* throughout the Bible is almost always used in reference to the anointing or power of God. For instance, in Luke 1:26–35 the angel, Gabriel, went to Mary and told her she would bear a son. When Mary expressed confusion about how that could happen, Gabriel said to her:

The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee. (Luke 1:35)

The term *shadow* is even used as a reference point for the anointing that flows through human vessels. In Acts 5:15, we're told that the passing of Peter's shadow healed the sick. Again, this is referring to the anointing and power of God.

When we dwell in the secret place of the Most High, that place of fellowship, we abide or remain in shadow of the anointing and power of the Lord.

Moving on, verse two of Psalm 91 reads: *I will say of the Lord, He is my refuge and my fortress: My God; in him will I trust.*

Not everyone can honestly say those things about God. Only the ones who are in continual fellowship with the Lord can say those things. If you don't abide in the secret place with Him, you're not going to be heard frequently declaring, "The Lord is my refuge; in Him will I trust!"

The Hebrew word translated *refuge* here is defined simply as "a place of hiding or a place of security." If you want to know where you are in the Lord, you can find out by getting honest with yourself and identifying your normal place of refuge.

When things get tough in your life, when the pressure is great, where do you hide? Some people use liquor as their hiding place. Alcohol is their refuge when their world gets rough. Others may turn on the television and vegetate for three or four hours. That becomes their escape from the difficulties of life. Others instantly run to friends or family.

What is your refuge? If you're in fellowship with the Lord, you will say, "He is my refuge and my fortress, My God; in Him will I trust!"

PROTECTION FROM DANGERS— GREAT AND SMALL

Indeed, when you are in fellowship with the Lord, you can make that statement. It comes out of your heart and you say it with thankfulness and excitement because when God is your fortress, verse three becomes true for you: *Surely he shall deliver thee from the snare of the fowler, and the noisome pestilence.* Deliverance will be a fact of your life.

As we go through Psalm 91, you'll consistently see things linked together in pairs. The first example of such a pairing is "refuge" and "fortress" in verse two. These terms essentially represent God's answer to both the small and large challenges in your life. A refuge is a secure place, a little hiding place. A fortress, on the other hand, is a large place like a castle or a stronghold. Through these terms, the Psalmist is telling you that whether you need just a little help or a lot, God is there for you.

Moving on to verse three we read, "Surely he shall deliver thee from the snare of the fowler and from the noisome pestilence."

The fowler in Old Testament times was the man who hunted with a bird. He would carry a bird of prey and would release it to bring in game. This is analogous to Satan. He is the spiritual fowler who launches his birds of prey, the demonic hosts, against you.

"Noisome pestilence" is an odd-sounding phrase that is merely a translation of a Hebrew term which literally means *rushing calamity*.

What does the pairing of these two terms—"fowler" and "noisome pestilence"—tell us? That whether it is a subtle trap set to snare you unaware or the enemy coming in like a flood, you can depend on God to deliver you.

The first part of the fourth verse brings us another promise: "He shall cover thee with his feathers and under his wings shalt thou trust."

This is a reference to the eagle. The Bible frequently uses the eagle as a metaphor depicting the traits and character of God. When you do a little research into the ways of eagles, you discover how appropriate this is.

For example, we know that when a storm comes, adult eagles do not flee from the storm. They don't take shelter. Instead, they face toward the storm and let the updrafts that come before it lift them above the storm.

If they have baby eaglets in the nest, however, they remain in the nest and cover their young with their feathers and their wings. When the storms of life come, our Father God, like the eagle, will cover you with His feathers. He will protect you under His wings. This is precisely what this portion of verse four tells us. Then true to the pattern, the metaphor of the eagle is paired with a second image.

"His truth shall be thy shield and buckler." The second half of verse four tells us. What is "His truth?" His Word, of course. God and His Word are one. According to this verse, when your

life is based on the truth of God's Word, that Word will become like a shield and buckler for you.

The shield and the buckler were two pieces of protective equipment used by soldiers. The buckler was a hardened piece of thick leather strapped to the forearm of a foot soldier to ward off blows from a sword. The shield was also used for protection in battle, but it was much bigger than the buckler.

A Roman shield was as tall as a man. When an attack came, the enemy would shoot waves of arrows into the sky and the soldier would crouch down behind his shield, protecting his whole body.

As before, this verse is depicting two levels of protection—one for small, concentrated attacks and one for massive onslaughts when the enemy comes in overwhelming strength.

What is the result of enjoying such multi-level protection? Verses five and six tell us:

Thou shalt not be afraid for the terror by night; nor for the arrow that flieth by day; Nor for the pestilence that walketh in darkness; nor for the destruction that wasteth at noonday.

It doesn't matter if you're facing a frontal assault in broad daylight or if the enemy is doing something behind your back of which you are totally unaware, you are protected. This is what is implied by the terms "the arrow by day" and "the terror by night." Make no mistake about it, very often the enemy comes at you with both!

You can be focused on some obvious crisis and along comes a relatively small problem that catches you off guard. That's how the Devil works. For those in the secret place, it doesn't matter. God will deliver you when you are in fellowship with Him.

Verse seven is very interesting. I believe many people misinterpret the symbolism of it. It says:

A thousand shall fall at thy side, and ten thousand at thy right hand; but it shall not come nigh thee. (Psalm 91:7)

Many commentaries on this verse suggest that it describes enemy attackers falling by the thousands all around you, while you remain unscathed. I don't believe that's what this verse is saying.

When you're in battle, those at your right and left sides are not the enemy; they're your own comrades. I believe this verse is describing other believers who, in the fight of faith called life, are at your side and at your right hand. The sad reality is, many of them will fall, but you can't let that stop you from trusting in God's protection.

It doesn't matter how many people you know who prayed to be healed but died of cancer anyway. It doesn't matter how many good Christians you know who went bankrupt. Those things won't come nigh you if you're in fellowship with God. A thousand other believers may fall, but as a dweller in the secret place, you will remain safely standing.

Many are going to fall, but those who remain and abide in the Lord shall stand in the end. If you're the only one left standing,

then “only with thine eyes shalt thou behold and see the reward of the wicked.” That’s what verse eight goes on to say.

You will see the wicked rewarded for their deeds. That doesn’t mean that you shouldn’t pray for them, but God is a just God and the wicked man shall receive his reward.

DELIVERANCE, SUCCESS, AND INFLUENCE

Verses nine and ten are the product of Moses’ personal life and testimony. He says:

Because thou hast made the Lord which is my refuge, even the most High, thy habitation; there shall no evil befall thee, neither shall any plague come nigh thy dwelling.

That’s *no evil*, my friend. None! I’m not saying evil won’t ever come against you, but if you’re a dweller in the secret place of the Most High, it won’t ever overtake you. It won’t succeed against you.

Not only are you promised divine defense, but if you’re in fellowship with God, He extends an umbrella of protection over your family as well. All of the above verses comprise a wondrous array of promises and assurances.

So how does God provide this formidable hedge of protection from harm? The next two verses give us the answer:

For he shall give his angels charge over thee, to keep thee in all thy ways; they shall bear thee up in their hands, lest thou dash thy foot against a stone. (Psalm 91:11–12)

God provides His protection and direction through the ministry of angels. This is their created purpose. No matter how many obstacles the enemy puts in your path, no matter how many stones he throws at you to keep you from your divinely appointed destiny, you'll rise above them supernaturally. The angels will help you do that by keeping you in all your ways.

As the next verse shows us, this hedge of protection gives you the ability to run roughshod over the enemy.

Thou shalt tread upon the lion and the adder: the young lion and the dragon shalt thou trample under feet. (Psalm 91:13)

“Lion... adder... dragon.” These are all metaphors for Satan. We know who the roaring lion is who is seeking someone to devour (1 Peter 5:8). The adder is a reference to a stealthy, poisonous attack. The young lion refers to strength and reckless boldness.

These all describe the nature of attacks of the enemy, and this verse says you will trample those enemies under your feet if you are in fellowship with the Lord.

The last three verses of this remarkable chapter are a prophetic summary. They are words spoken by God Himself as He directly addresses the one who abides in Him.

He says:

Because he hath set his love upon me, therefore will I deliver him: I will set him on high, because he hath known my name.
(Psalm 91:14)

This verse underscores once more the idea of fellowship. The use of phrases such as “Because he hath set his love upon me” and “He hath known my name” portray a deep level of intimacy and connectedness.

When we have that kind of fellowship, we are promised divine deliverance. We will be set up on high which implies great visibility in our communities and businesses. We will have visibility and influence.

God goes on to say:

He shall call upon me, and I will answer him: I will be with him in trouble; I will deliver him, and honour him. (Psalm 91:15)

Again, we are promised deliverance in times of trouble and a swift answer when we call upon Him. What’s more, He will honor us. He will give us success and honor us before men.

Finally, verse 16 says:

With long life will I satisfy him, and shew him my salvation.

This is a marvelous promise from God. It means you don't have to die until you are satisfied. In Psalm 90:10, we are told that the days of our years are threescore years and ten. We're guaranteed 70 years. If you reach 70 and you're not satisfied, then you can live on a while longer.

THAT COVERS IT ALL!

Before I close, let's take a step back and look one more time at the extent of your protection promised in this psalm and executed by God's angels.

First, it says you're protected in the front (verses 4 and 13).

You're protected on the sides (verse 7).

You're protected from behind (verses 11 and 13).

You're protected on top or over you (verses 1, 4, 10 and 14).

You're protected underneath (verses 12 and 13).

You're protected day and night (verses 5 and 6).

You're protected anywhere (verse 11).

You're protected throughout this life and into eternity (verse 16).

Glory to God, that covers it all, doesn't it? Remember, though, these things are for those who abide in the Lord, who live in

fellowship with Him. So make the decision now—if you haven't already—to be one of those blessed ones who dwell in the secret place of the Most High.

Determine that from here on out, you'll make your relationship with Him *the priority* of your life.

No question about it, that will take some effort on your part. It will involve laying down some worldly weights and picking up some heavenly habits. The Bible guarantees you, your efforts will be rewarded.

You'll enjoy the sweetest communion this life can offer, and you'll release all the power of heaven's hosts to work on your behalf.

Now that, my friend, is living!

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Mac Hammond graduated from Virginia Military Institute in 1965. Upon graduation, he entered the Air Force and received his wings in November 1966. He subsequently served two tours of duty in Southeast Asia, accumulating 198 combat missions. He was honorably discharged in 1970 with the rank of Captain.

Between 1970 and 1980, Mac was involved in varying capacities in the general aviation industry including ownership of a successful air cargo business serving the Midwestern United States. A business acquisition brought the Hammonds to Minneapolis where they ultimately founded Living Word Christian Center in 1980 with 12 people in attendance.

After 40 years, that group of twelve people has grown into an active church body of 10,000 members. Today some of the

outreaches that spring from Living Word include Maranatha Christian Academy, Living Free Recovery Services, CFAITH, and a national and international media outreach that includes hundreds of audio/video teaching series, a half-hour television broadcast called *The Winner's Way* with Mac Hammond, seen nationwide, and a daily 60-second television commentary called the *Winner's Minute*.

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