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Men or Angels?

By Elder Keith Ellis

"And he shall send his angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other."

Matthew 24:31

Here The Lord says He will send His angels. In contrast to this in the second Thessalonian letter which speaks of the resurrection Paul says, "The Lord Himself shall descend." This language speaks volumes.

At this juncture I find it necessary to define the word '*angel*.' Of course many will simply think there is no need to define such a common word. Yet in our Bible studies we will find a much different usage than the language found in everyday conversation. Especially in a day and time when "*angel worship*" is on the rise.

In the New testament every use of the words '*angel*' and '*angels*' except for one instance is keyed to the Greek word '*aggelos*.' The only place where this differs is Luke twenty verse thirty six.

Now the word '*aggelos*' according to the Greek dictionary has singular and plural usage. It means "to bring tidings, to be a messenger, a pastor."

I agree the popular usage in today's society most often refers to angelic beings who are of greater power. Those who behold the face of God, the elect angels, and act as guardians over the children of God. Possibly this is the type of messenger Jacob beheld ascending and descending upon the ladder which reached into heaven itself. This particular teaching gives me great comfort and I believe God's word on the teachings concerning guardian angels.

Of course there are also "*fallen angels*" or more properly "the devil and his angels." The fallen angels are beings who desire to work contrary to God's will. They are not '*elect*.' It is their primary goal to make war with the saints of God here in time.

In Bible language many times men are referred to as '*angels*.' Not they may be exalted, but rather to describe their office and duty. When the apostle John was receiving the vision from God as it is recorded in the book of Revelation we find there are several references to the angels of the seven churches of Asia. These angels can be no more than the pastors of these churches. It is the pastor whom God burdens with His message in the church. The pastor is responsible for bearing the message of God to the people. So we see an angel is a messenger and can be a man and not necessarily a spiritual being.

Now I do not intend to tarry long with this point, seeing volumes could be written on the subject. Yet I want to show one more proof text from God's word.

When the apostle Paul was writing to the church at Galatia he reflects upon his previous visits with the brethren at that place.

"And my temptation which was in my flesh ye despised not, nor rejected; but received me as an angel of God, even as Christ Jesus."

Galatians 4:14

Here the apostle identifies part of his office work. It is of an '*angel*' or '*messenger*.' Not only the apostle Paul, but all the Apostles were called to bear the message of God. This message is the glad tiding and good news of Jesus Christ contained in the gospel.

Here we see our text in Matthew twenty-four verse thirty one takes on a different light. In context we see the angels which were sent forth were actually the Apostles and other disciples whom God burdened with the message of salvation by grace.

Secondly, we see the text mentions these angels would go forth with the great sound of a trumpet.

We know from reading the Old testament the trumpet had different uses. One use was to blow the trumpet to assemble the people together. Another use was to gather the people to battle. Another time the trumpet was blown and the walls of Jericho fell flat to the ground. The trumpet was used as an alarm to warn the people. The trumpet was to herald the year of Jubilee and so on. The different uses of the trumpet in the old testament were then figures of the gospel age. And figuratively this is what the gospel message is. It is a trumpet. It calls for God's people to assemble together. It warns Gods people. When believed it can cause the walls of Jericho to fall. It is a call to battle against the forces of evil. There are many more instances which I encourage the reader to research.

When Paul is addressing the Corinthian church and instructing them concerning the confusion their use of tongues causes he says...

"For if the trumpet give an uncertain sound, who shall prepare himself to the battle?"

1 Corinthians 14:8

Here, as in Matthew twenty-four, the trumpet means "**the gospel.**" The gospel message must be clear and concise in order for God's children to understand it. Today, in the churches of the world, the trumpet gives an uncertain sound. The people are confused about the battle. Many are taught the battle is to defeat evil so they can obtain eternal life. This uncertain sound has caused many of God's children to be led astray. They do not realize Jesus has fought this battle for us and won the war. The **certain sound** of gospel truth tells us the battle we have to fight is to keep the flesh under subjection. This would have to be the same message which the angels preached to God's people before the destruction of Jerusalem. They were not told of what they would have to do in order to get to heaven. They were told of what Jesus has done to secure their heavenly home. They were told that if they wanted to escape the untoward generation they lived in they must be obedient to the gospel message. (see Acts 2:40) By doing so they would save themselves from many heartaches and heavy sorrows which were to come upon that very generation. This is what God expects of His children even today. Be obedient, glorify your heavenly Father. Keep your flesh in subjection to the honor and glory of God. Resist the devil so that he will flee from you. But as far as heaven and immortal glory is concerned, rest in the finished work of Jesus Christ on the cross of Calvary. Trust in His grace. Period.

Next in the text of Matthew twenty-four verse thirty one we read about these angels or messengers gathering together God's elect from one end of heaven to the other. We remind our readers we discussed earlier the scriptural evidence showing the Apostles did indeed preach the gospel in all the world and to every creature. (Colossians 1:6, 1:23, Romans 10:18)

The elect are the creatures under consideration in what is commonly known as the great commission. They are the ones who found comfort and hope in the gospel message as it was preached by the angels of God in the apostolic age. I do not believe this text teaches us **ALL** of the elect were gathered together in a church capacity. Yet I do know it is only the elect who can spiritually respond to the trumpet (gospel) of God. (see 1 Corinthians 2:14) Many of God's own (see John 1:12) refused Christ and suffered the consequences in the destruction of Jerusalem.

Yet when the end of time as we expect it shall come, each and every one of God's elect shall either be resurrected or caught up to meet The Lord in the air. Literally. When this time arrives "*The Lord Himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God...*" (see 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17)