

## Teaching Angels

Harmony M.B.C., June 17, 2012 (Morning)

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**Eph 3:10** To the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly *places* might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God,

Angels know about the directing power and capacity of God, His sovereign prerogatives, His infinite creative talent, His ordering of that creation, His far reaching plans. But, it seems apparent from our verse that while the angels know ABOUT the great plan of God in relation to His creatures, they do not understand (as yet) the wisdom of God regarding the arrangement of events and purposes surrounding the church. That wisdom has so many dimensions, it springs from divinity alone, and there are no counselors whom God discussed His intents and techniques with. It is no surprise then, that even smart angels cannot plumb the depths of this wisdom, even though they were created with all the powerful attributes they have as angels. And it is no surprise that the angels desire to look into these things, as we are told by Peter in **1Pet. 1:12**.

Certainly we can assume that those angels know a lot of things, being around the Lord from the time that He created them until now. We can probably also assume that those angels have a level of reasoning capacity, so are able to think things through. But, the facets of God's wisdom that devised and implemented the things related to Christ's church are not intuitively known by these heavenly beings. And the most amazing part of all is that God has chosen to reveal those parts of His wisdom to them by giving them access to studying the church, and by unfolding that wisdom through the doings of the church in time.

So, we want to think about what it is about the goings and comings of the Lord's church, (that textbook for angels) which can provide such an education. We will look at this by starting from the premise that any characteristic of the church's experience, structure, or business as defined by the Lord, is some element that we can look at to consider the wisdom of God with respect to it. I trust that the Holy Spirit will put us in awe of the fact that exalted angels are looking at, and studying, us (as one of the Lord's churches) in order to advance their learning and gain insights into the many-faceted wisdom of God.

### **I. Let's look first at the aspect of God's wisdom that decrees that in Christ there will be an entity (the church) that is perpetuated (for all of time) on earth as it matures into a future bride of Christ**

- Angels know that on earth, things come and go. Nothing has permanency. They know that civilizations rise and fall, the construction and inventions of man pass away.
  - ▶ They have watched tents and temples rot and fall to the ground; watched cities and nations crumble and become part of the dirt. Mountains have washed away, seas have dried up, billions of flesh and blood bodies have given way to death and have turned back into dust over these 6,000 + years.
  - ▶ They have learned through time that this expression of the Second Law of Thermodynamics is God's wise way of ridding the earth of things and starting up new things.
  - ▶ But, here, in the church, they see a new entity that Christ Himself has promised the

sustain until the end of the age. This is something different about how God works. This is something about God's wisdom that doesn't fit the pattern He has validated again and again with other things on earth that have to do with the way of created things. In this is the study of another aspect of the wisdom of God.

## **II. Now, let's look at another feature of God's wisdom. God has laid things in order in such a way that humans become the members of that entity which is to be the bride of Christ**

- Angels know that humans are flawed. They know that humans fall short of the glory of God in their manner of life.
- It is possible that, to angels, humans are not very good building material for an entity that is one day going to be closer to Jesus Christ than is any other eternal being.
- They also must be aware that when God conducted His first creative effort that afterward He looked at all of it and pronounced that it was VERY GOOD. Now, he is using building material for a to-be-glorified entity that he has said there is none good. All this certainly must be mysterious to angels.
- In contrast, they have probably plumbed the wisdom of God regarding everything else He has created; they have reasoned out the wisdom in the manner and product of that creation.
- But here is another creation, the Lord's church, which is in no way put together like that first creation. Now, they know with certainty that God is all wise, (they do not question that) but they have not yet been able to scope out the wisdom of this work of His...establishing a church using faulty human beings as components of that body, and keeping it alive and functioning through all of time.

## **III. Here is another element of God's wisdom likely to provide angels with study material: the wisdom of God which has determined that this future bride of Christ will spend her formative years living among successive generations of unregenerate humanity**

- We as humans cannot see clearly the expression of God's wisdom in leaving the espoused of Christ, generation after generation, in the middle of a wicked and perverse generation. This even contradicts the wisdom of man.
  - ▶ We can talk about the purpose of the church here on the sin-cursed earth; talk about the fact that its members are ambassadors of Christ, etc. but when we think of it as being the most beloved of Christ, a chaste virgin; a dependent on the Lord for its very survival, then we come fac-to-face with the fact that from a human perspective, it doesn't appear to be the wisdom of God that Christ's beloved church stay here in the midst of such evil.
    - Illustrate: You propose to a woman and put an engagement ring on her hand. She is living in the slums of Chicago, the most criminal city in America. She doesn't have the means to get out. You leave her there. The wisdom of man would tell you that this was irresponsible and jeopardized your fiancé.
    - Regardless, however, of how it appears from human wisdom, remember that we MUST begin from the assumption that this state of the church is part of the unfolding wisdom of God.
    - So, looking at it that way, how does the situation become a learning tool for angels?
      - ✓ For all these centuries, angels have been able to note that regardless of the polluted, corrupted, totally depraved societies that the Lord's church has existed in,

she has been somehow able to continue to have a moral integrity and commitment to Christ about her.

✓ Angels cannot help but to have noticed that when an individual church begins to be polluted, influenced toward too much worldliness by the culture around it, the Lord has gone to work on her and either turned her or extinguished her. These are the textbook cases angels have studied, and they have learned something about the many-faceted wisdom of God in how he deals with churches.

✓ These kinds of things then, are what angels are looking at. This is part of their study. What is God doing? How can we (say the angels) define that aspect of His wisdom, or discover the secrets of it when we look at how Christ's fiancé is exposed to this kind of environment?

#### **IV. Yet another aspect for the study of angels lies in that ingenuity of God's wisdom that has devised to separate and preserve Christ's bride-to-be from the destroying forces of the world and the wicked one.**

- Since the workers of darkness have such power, the wisdom of God that has perceived and implemented a way to keep Christ's beloved separate from the world and preserved from those forces is of great interest to celestial minds. Those preserved angels know about the fall of the rejected angels, and they know what did it. They know that this same influence is a mighty force on earth. As the great plan of God unfolds, they are looking for those aspects of its unfolding to reveal to them how God devised a strategy that preserves His church and keeps stability among His people, in the face of the awesome powers of the wicked one and his lackeys.
  - ▶ As they study the guiding, coaching, protecting presence of the Holy Spirit working in His church, they will find evidences of God's wisdom to help them understand more.
  - ▶ As the angels see the Lord's church, time and time again, snatched out of destruction, grow stronger...not weaker, when tried, and miraculously escape the dangerous forces posed by a world insane with sin, and virtually manipulated by the devil, they will see again and again proofs of the wisdom of God (manifested by these impossible outcomes) and learn yet more about it (See **Acts 8:1** for a great illustration of this - 1) the church members flee to other cities per Christ's instruction, spread the word there and grow the church; and 2) the Holy Spirit miraculously protects the apostles and enables them to stay in Jerusalem even amidst this terrible persecution).
  - ▶ As they watch the controlling providence of God operate for the protection and routing of His church through this world they will gain more understanding about that wisdom

#### **V. This thing of angels learning from the church also points to the fact that they are able to look on the function of a church as led by the Spirit and see into the workings of God in manifesting Himself to the world.**

- Angels know that every facet of God's creation that man can look at, feel, and hear witnesses of the presence of an Omnipotent, self-sustained, creative Being.
- They know that God created those things in a way that would lend themselves to that
- They know that the creature resonates in a limited way with those things
- Now, in this era, they watch the Lord's church go forth with the message about Jesus Christ, God with us, Omnipotent Lord, King of Kings, and they note that humanity DOES NOT

resonate with the Lord's church, nor with the TRUTH it brings. Here is a great mystery.

- From their perspective, they may reason that a messenger which the recipient would be able to bond with, identify with, empathize with, would be a better messenger. But, God has elected to send His despised and rejected church (I send you forth as sheep among wolves) forth with the Gospel of the great Christ, and this piece of God's wisdom is not comprehended by angels, no doubt. So, they are studying the gospel evangelistic effort of the church to be able to delve into this aspect of the wisdom of God.

#### **VI. More revelations of the manifold wisdom of God: Angels can look at the workings of the Lord's church and see the workings of God as it relates to cooperation among men when God is the coordinator (see 1Cor. 12:4-11).**

- Angels know that men have been at war with men from the day that Cain decided he didn't like his brother very much
- They know that nations have been enslaved by other nations because of arguments over boundaries, or because of greed
- Angels have watched as people have been enslaved by their own fellow-citizens because proud and arrogant men have imagined that they were brilliant enough to know what everybody needed, and were willing to lie, cheat, steal and kill in order to get control of their societies.
- They have observed the behavior of humans long enough to know that cooperation among men is usually brought about because some dominant individual, or dominant and powerful group, was going to have things their way...then there would be cooperation...the subordinate would cooperate with the ruling class
- Now, in this era, here is this institution, founded by Christ, in which God has declared that they will be able to voluntarily cooperate with one another to advance the goals of Christ.
  - ▶ The angels watch us as we strive **together** (that is, in cooperation, not in competition or conflict with each other) for the faith of the gospel (**Philip. 1:27**)
  - ▶ They look on, studying our order, our business, our progress, our aspirations, seeking answers for this mysterious aspect of God's manifold wisdom. That is, the wisdom exhibited by Him in putting born again believers together in a common cause, with common interests, and mutual willingness to glorify the Lord that bought them. Those angels can see the outcome of what God has done, and it is in those outcomes in the church that they find their lessons which will lead them to understand that glorious wisdom of God which designed this arrangement and which understood how to make it successful.