
Angels among Us

D&C 129:9

Since the early days of the Church, many Latter-day Saints have wondered about the administrative responsibilities of angels. The Prophet Joseph Smith recalled that while in Kirtland,

A man came to me ... and told me he had seen an angel, and described his dress. I told him he had seen no angel, and that there was no such dress in heaven. He grew mad, and went into the street and commanded fire to come down out of heaven to consume me. I laughed at him, and said, You are one of Baal's prophets; your God does not hear you; jump up and cut yourself: and he commanded fire from heaven to consume my house.¹

On February 9, 1843, at Nauvoo, Illinois, the Prophet Joseph spent the better part of the day conversing with Parley P. Pratt and other brethren who had recently returned from missions in Great Britain. During their conversation, Elder Pratt expressed a desire to discuss the role of angels. Joseph Smith instructed Elder Pratt and the other brethren, making known to them “three grand keys by which the correct nature of ministering angels and spirits may be distinguished” (D&C 129: Introduction).

Joseph taught,

Most generally when angels have come, or God has revealed Himself, it has been to individuals in private, in their chamber; in the wilderness or fields, and that generally without noise or tumult. The angel delivered Peter out of prison in the dead of night [Acts 5:19]; came to Paul unobserved by the rest of the crew [Acts 27:23–24]; appeared to

¹ Journal, December 1842–June 1844; Book 1, 21 December 1842–10 March 1843, 174. Joseph Smith Papers.

Mary and Elizabeth without the knowledge of others [Luke 1:28–30]; spoke to John the Baptist whilst the people around were ignorant of it [John 5:36–38].²

Joseph also taught:

An angel of God never has wings. Some will say that they have seen a spirit; that he offered them his hand, but they did not touch it. This is a lie. First, it is contrary to the plan of God: a spirit cannot come but in glory; an angel has flesh and bones; we see not their glory. The devil may appear as an angel of light. Ask God to reveal it; if it be of the devil, he will flee from you; if of God, He will manifest Himself, or make it manifest.³

Elder Kent F. Richards, in his general conference address in April 2011, told of angels watching over children:

Thirteen-year-old Sherrie underwent a 14-hour operation for a tumor on her spinal cord. As she regained consciousness in the intensive care unit, she said: “Daddy, Aunt Cheryl is here, ... and ... Grandpa Norman ... and Grandma Brown ... are here. And Daddy, who is that standing beside you? ... He looks like you, only taller. ... He says he’s your brother, Jimmy.” Her uncle Jimmy had died at age 13 of cystic fibrosis. For nearly an hour, Sherrie ... described her visitors, all deceased family members. Exhausted, she then fell asleep. Later she told her father, “Daddy, all of the children here in the intensive care unit have angels helping them.”⁴

Elder Ronald A. Rasband, in his general conference address in April 2014, spoke of angels protecting children at a schoolhouse during a tornado—

While in Oklahoma, I had the opportunity to meet with a few of the families devastated by the mighty twisters. As I visited with the Sorrels family, I was particularly touched by the experience of their daughter, Tori, then a fifth grader at Plaza Towers Elementary School. ...

² History, 1838–1856, volume C-1 Addenda, 69. Joseph Smith Papers.

³ Discourse, between circa 26 June and circa 4 August 1839–A, as Reported by William Clayton, 24. Joseph Smith Papers.

⁴ Kent F. Richards, “The Atonement Covers All Pain,” *Ensign*, May 2011.

Tori and a handful of her friends huddled in a restroom for shelter as the tornado roared through the school. Listen as I read, in Tori's own words, the account of that day:

"I heard something hit the roof. I thought it was just hailing. The sound got louder and louder. I said a prayer that Heavenly Father would protect us all and keep us safe. All of a sudden we heard a loud vacuum sound, and the roof disappeared right above our heads. There was lots of wind and debris flying around and hitting every part of my body. It was darker outside and it looked like the sky was black, but it wasn't—it was the inside of the tornado. I just closed my eyes, hoping and praying that it would be over soon.

"All of a sudden it got quiet.

"When I opened my eyes, I saw a stop sign right in front of my eyes! It was almost touching my nose."

Tori, her mother, three of her siblings, and numerous friends who were also in the school with her miraculously survived that tornado; seven of their schoolmates did not.

That weekend the priesthood brethren gave many blessings to members who had suffered in the storm. I was humbled to give Tori a blessing. As I laid my hands on her head, a favorite scripture came to mind: "I will go before your face. I will be on your right hand and on your left, and my Spirit shall be in your hearts, and mine angels round about you, to bear you up."

I counseled Tori to remember the day when a servant of the Lord laid his hands on her head and pronounced that she had been protected by angels in the storm.⁵

⁵ Ronald A. Rasband, "The Joyful Burden of Discipleship," *Ensign*, May 2014.