221938 - Does the dying person see the angels of mercy or the angels of punishment?

the question

Does everyone, when dying, see the angels of mercy or the angels of punishment with their own eyes? Does he speak to them and do they speak to him?

Detailed answer

Praise be to Allah.

When death comes, if the individual is one of the righteous believers, the angels of mercy come down to him and give him the glad tidings of Allah’s mercy. But if he was one of the sinful disbelievers, the angels of punishment come down to him and give him the tidings of Allah’s punishment. Thus both the believer and the disbeliever see the angels.

Allah, may He be Exalted, says:

{On the day when they see the angels, on that day there will be no glad tidings for the evildoers. The [angels] will say: That [glad tidings] is absolutely forbidden for you} [Al-Furqan 25:22].

Ibn Kathir (may Allah have mercy on him) said:

That is, they do not see the angels on a day that is good for them; rather the day when they see the angels is a day on which there are no glad tidings for them. That happens at the time of death, when the angels give them the tidings of Hell and the wrath of the Almighty. So the angels say to the disbeliever when his soul is departing: Come out, O evil soul that was in an evil body; come out to scorching fire and scalding water, and the shadow of black smoke. The soul refuses to come out and disperses in the body, so the angels beat him, as Allah, may He be Exalted, says:

{And if you could but see when the angels take the souls of those who disbelieved... They are striking their faces and their backs and [saying]: Taste the punishment of the Burning Fire } [Al-Anfal 7:50].

And He says:

{If you [O Muhammad] could but see the evildoers when they are in the throes of death and the angels are stretching out their hands} that is, to beat them, { [saying]: Give up your souls! Today you will be recompensed with a humiliating punishment, because you used to tell lies against Allah and you arrogantly rejected His revelations} [Al-An`am 6:93].

Hence in these verses Allah says: {On the day when they see the angels, on that day there will be no glad tidings for the evildoers} [al-Furqan 25:22]. This is in contrast to the state of the believers when they are dying, for they receive glad tidings of good things and of happiness. Allah, may He be Exalted, says:

{ Indeed, those who have said, Our Lord is Allah, and then remained on a right course - the angels will descend upon them, [saying]: Do not fear and do not grieve but receive good tidings of Paradise, which you were promised.

We [angels] were your allies in the worldly life and [are so] in the Hereafter. And you will have therein whatever your souls desire, and you will have therein whatever you request [or wish]

As a recompense from One Who is Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful } [Fussilat 41:30-32].

Other scholars said: Rather what is meant by the words {On the day when they see the angels} is: the Day of Resurrection. This is the view of Mujahid, ad-Dahhak and others.

There is no contradiction between this and the previous view, because on both days – the day of death and the Day of Resurrection – the angels will appear to the believers and the disbelievers; they will give the believers glad tidings of Allah’s mercy and pleasure, and they will give the disbelievers tidings of disappointment and loss. So there will be no glad tidings for the disbelievers, but on that day there will be glad tidings for the believers.

End quote from *Tafsir Ibn Kathir*, 6/101-102.

Imam Ahmad (18534) narrated from al-Bara' ibn 'Aazib (may Allah be pleased with him) that the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) said:

"When the believing slave is about to depart this world and enter the Hereafter, there come down to him from heaven angels with bright faces like the sun, bringing with them shrouds from Paradise and perfumes from Paradise, and they sit around him as far as the eye can see. Then the Angel of Death (peace be upon him) comes and sits by his head, and he says: O good soul, come forth to forgiveness from Allah and His pleasure… But when the disbelieving slave is about to depart this world and enter the Hereafter, there come down to him from heaven angels with dark faces, bringing sackcloth, and they sit around him as far as the eye can see. Then the Angel of Death comes and sits by his head, and he says: O evil soul, come forth to the wrath of Allah and His anger. Then his soul disperses inside his body, but he pulls it out, like a skewer passing through wet wool, and he takes it…"

Al-Albani classed it as sahih in *Sahih al-Jami`*, 1676.

At-Tabari narrated in his *Tafsir* (13/224) that Ibn `Abbas said: When death comes to the believer, he sees the angels, and they greet him with salaam and give him the glad tidings of Paradise.

Ibn al-Qayyim (may Allah have mercy on him) said:

The angels come down to the dying person and sit close to him, and he sees them with his own eyes. They talk to one another and they bring with them shrouds and perfume, either from Paradise or from Hell, and they say Amin to the supplication, for good or for ill, of those who are present. They may greet the dying person with salaam and he returns their greeting, either verbally or with gestures or in his heart, if he is unable to speak or gesture.

Some dying persons have been heard to speak words of welcome to the angels.

Our shaykh told me about someone who was dying, and I do not know whether he saw him himself or was told about him, that he was heard to say: And upon you be peace, sit down here; and upon

you be peace, sit down here …

Then Ibn al-Qayyim mentioned some of the texts that speak about that, then he said:

But more eloquent and clearer than all of that is the words of Allah, may He be Glorified and Exalted:

{Then why do you not [intervene], when the soul [of the dying person] reaches the throat,

whilst you are looking on,

when We are nearer to him than you, but you do not see?} [Al-Waqi`ah 56:83-85].

That is, We are nearer to him through Our angels and envoys, but you do not see them. This is the beginning of the matter, when the angels are not visible to us and we do not see them, when the dying person is still in this realm.

Then the Angel reaches out his hand to take his soul, and addresses it, but those who are present do not see or hear him. Then the soul comes out, and there emanates from it light like the rays of the sun and a fragrance more pleasant than the fragrance of musk, but those who are present do not see that or smell it. Then the soul ascends between two rows of angels, but those who are present do not see them…

End quote from *Ar-Ruh*, p. 64-65.

The dying person sees the angels, and the angels speak to him and give him tidings either of Paradise or of Hell.

As for his speaking to them, that may happen to some people, as Ibn al-Qayyim (may Allah have mercy on him) said.

And Allah knows best.