Grace to You :: *Unleashing God's Truth, One Verse at a Time*

Angels: God's Invisible Army, Part 3
Scripture: Selected Scriptures
Code: 1363

Tonight we come to the concluding message in our brief series on God's invisible army, study of the holy angels. This is Part3 in our study. And in the first two parts– and in this one as well– we're really kind of preparing our hearts for a study of the book of Colossians. And we're going to begin that study, Lord willing, next week. So you might be reading the book of Colossians this week and kind of preparing your heart as we'll dive in on the following Lord's day.

Now, we've discussed in these messages many facts about the holy angels. In past years and past messages, we've covered in some detail the fallen angels, the demons, and so we felt that we ought to really give equal time to God's holy angels, the ones that didn't fall. And I hope that out of this study together we all have a greater understanding of angels. I'm sure we do, but beyond that, I hope we have a greater understanding of God. I think the one thing that I have gained out of this study, the one thing that keeps coming back to me, is the tremendous care that God has taken to assure and ensure the security of His children in a physical sense. It's alleviated a lot of the burden that I might normally bear over anxieties for physical accident or disease or some kind of danger, just to know that God's angels are ministering to the physical care and protection and guidance of God's children.

Now, we've found them to be amazing beings. And I'm sure that we'll never fully understand them until we meet them, and then maybe our understanding will be increased to really get a glimpse of what they're like. We kind of discussed a little bit last week, and I'll just jump in at this point, whether angels sing. And Esther Vernon sang that song about the song of the angels, and that was the most commented-on song that's ever been sung in this church. Everybody got up here after that and was analyzing the theology of the song. And the question comes up? Do angels sing? Let me show you something interesting about it, just as a starter tonight, Job chapter 38 verse 7, describing in this section the creation of God as He creates the world. Verse 4 talks about Him laying the foundation of the earth and verse 5, measuring it, and so forth. Verse 7 says that all of this creation occurred when the morning stars sang together and all the sons of God– and, of course, that refers to angels– shouted for joy. So we know the angels sang at the creation of the world, at the creation of the universe. All of the morning stars sang together. So we know the angels sing.

Now, to give you a parallel, look at Revelation chapter 5 verse 11. Revelation chapter 5 verse 11: "And I beheld and heard the voice of many angels round about the throne and the living creatures and the elders and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand and thousands of thousands saying with a loud voice, 'Worthy is the Lamb.'" And here the angels are crying out,

“Worthy is the Lamb.” Now, the question is: Are they singing? Verse 9– back up: “And they sang a new song.” Did the four living creatures, who are angels, and the four and twenty elders, I believe are representatives of the church, and it appears as though all the rest of the angels join that new song. So, yes– mark this– the angels are seen singing twice in the Bible. Once at the creation of the world, once again at the return of Jesus Christ. Do you know what is particularly interesting about that? There is no record of them ever singing in between those two things. It seems as though immediately after God made the world and man fell, the angels lost their song. And the thing that will restore the angels’ song is the return of Jesus Christ, and then they’ll sing again.

Now, in the meantime, while they’re not singing, they’re very busy doing other things, and we’ve been studying that. We have talked about their existence, their origin, the fact that they were created beings, their nature, that they are spirit beings and yet they have a form because they move from one place to the other. So we’ve seen their existence, their origin and their nature, and last time we began to look at their ministry. And we said there are four categories of ministry for angels. They minister to God, they minister to Christ, they minister to the believer, and they minister to the unbeliever. Those are the four categories in which angels minister.

First of all, to God, we said, they are ministers of worship and ministers of service. We see the angels in the Bible just standing around the throne of God saying, “Holy, holy, holy.” Just praising God, just exalting God, just worshiping God. Then we also see them serving God. God has something to do and He sends His angels as messengers.

Secondly, we said that angels have a ministry toward Christ. We saw the angels minister to Christ in announcing His birth. They ministered to Him right around the time of His birth, all through His earthly life. They ministered to Him at His temptation, early in His life. Later, at His resurrection, and they were there attending His ascension into heaven, and they’ll be with Him when He comes back. But we said in all of the life of Christ, there was one period of time when the angels weren’t helping. You remember what it was? Was when He died. And that’s the time He said, “If I wanted, I could have called 12 legions of angels,” but He chose not to in order that He might die for you and for me. Apart from that, the angels attended Him throughout all of His life. And they still serve Him and He’ll come back with them in His second coming.

Thirdly, in the ministry of angels, we began to see the ministry of angels toward believers, how angels minister to us as Christians. And that really was exciting. In Hebrews 1:14, we took a kind of a basic verse. It says: “Sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation.” Angels are servants, sent forth to minister for the heirs of salvation. That’s us. Angels have as their ministry taking care of Christians. Now, that would be a full-time job. No question about it. God has some of them busily occupied caring for us. There is some indication that there are certain angels assigned to certain believers. People always ask me, “Do we have a guardian angel?” Well, I’m not sure we only have one. I would rather think we probably have a whole bunch of them that are on command for our

needs.

What do the angels do for the believer? First of all, we saw last time– and this is just a quick review– they are busy watching us. They watch the church. Remember I told you they watch the women to make sure that they're in submission? They watch the preacher. They watch the believer in his life. In fact, Daniel even calls angels by the name "watchers." Secondly, they reveal God's truth. We see them in the Bible days many times as the agency by which God's Scriptures are brought. When God wrote with His finger on Mount Sinai in the stone, the law, the angels then took the law and brought it to Moses. They are the delivery agents of God's revelation in many cases. Thirdly, for the believers, they are busy guiding. We see throughout God's history angels guiding men of God to various places. An angel guided Philip. An angel guided Cornelius. An angel guided Peter. Fourthly, they are busy providing. You remember when Elijah ran down the road and didn't have anything to eat? An angel came and ministered to him and touched him and fed him, nourished him. And so, they are watching, revealing, guiding and providing. And then we come to a fifth, and that's where we begin for tonight.

The fifth ministry that angels have as we find in the Bible toward believing people is protecting. They're involved in protecting us. They keep God's people from physical danger. Angels are involved in protecting. Let me give you an illustration of it. Turn in your Bible to Daniel chapter 3. In Daniel 3– I love this story, this is just terrific. Nebuchadnezzar had an ego problem– put it mildly– and he wanted everybody to stop worshiping any god except himself. And everybody had to be worshiping Nebuchadnezzar, made a law. Well, there were some Hebrew people who didn't care for that. And so they decided they'd worship God. Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego– you remember the story– and they said, "Nebuchadnezzar"– verse 16, backing up, they said, "Nebuchadnezzar, we're not careful to answer you in this matter." In other words, we aren't even concerned about this. We don't even have any anxiety over this whole deal, Nebuchadnezzar. We're just go about doing what we always do.

"And if it so be that our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and He will deliver us out of your hand, O king, but if not, be it known unto you, O king, we still won't serve your gods and worship the golden image which you set up." We're not about to. Well, Nebuchadnezzar was full of fury. He really got mad. And I like this, "The form of his visage was changed." You know what that means? It means he screwed up his face he was so mad. Oh, he just got furious. "And he spoke and commanded they should heat the furnace seven times more than it was usually heated." Heat that furnace up, they're going in. "He commanded the most mighty men that were in his army"– he was afraid he was going to get a fight, so he got the strong arms– "to bind them and throw them in the burning fiery furnace, and these men were bound in their coats, their stockings, their turbans, their other garments and cast into the midst of the burning fiery furnace. Therefore, because the king's commandment was urgent, and the furnace was so hot, the flame of fire slew those men who took up Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego."

The guys that threw them in all burned to death because the fire was so hot. “And the three men, Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, fell down, bound in the midst of the burning fiery furnace.” The other guys are burning and they’re just in there. “Nebuchadnezzar the king was astonished, and rose up in haste and spoke and said unto his counselors, ‘Did not we cast three men, bound, into the midst of the fire?’ They answered and said unto him. ‘King, true, O king.’” You’re right - three. “He answered and said, ‘Lo, I see four men loose, walking around in the midst of the fire and they are not hurt. And the form of the fourth is like a son of the gods.” Well, Nebuchadnezzar was shocked, so much so, verse 26 says, “Nebuchadnezzar came near the mouth of the burning fiery furnace and spoke and said, ‘Shadrach, Meshach, Abednego, you servants of the most high God, come out of there and come here.’ Then Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego came forth from the midst of the fire.”

It’s terrific, isn’t it? “And the princes and the governors and the captains and the king’s counselors, being gathered together, saw these men upon whose bodies the fire had no power, nor was an hair of their head singed, neither were the coats changed nor the smell of fire passed on them.” Not– absolutely unaffected. “And Nebuchadnezzar spoke and said, ‘Blessed be the God of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, who hath sent His angel and delivered His servants who trusted in Him.’” You know who the fourth was? Some say it was Jesus Christ. For sure it was an angel– maybe the angel of the Lord. “One like unto the son of the gods,” was the comment of the pagans. An angel delivered them from the midst of a furnace that burned to death the people who tried to throw them in.

Let me show you something else in Daniel 6. Angels were busy in the life of Daniel and his friends. This time it’s a different king, Darius, who has the same problem Nebuchadnezzar had, he wanted everybody to worship him and his kind of religion. So verse 16 of Daniel 6 says they called Daniel and brought him and cast him into the den of lions. Well, the king commanded to do that. “Now the king spoke and said to Daniel, ‘Thy God whom thou servest continually, He’ll deliver thee.’” You know, I really think that this king liked Daniel a lot. And I think he really believed in Daniel’s God and he said, “Don’t worry about it, Daniel. I’ve had the history of your God reported to me, and you’re going to be okay. You’re going to get in there and he’ll take you out.” Now, that’s what’s called the faith of a pagan, see? “And a stone was brought and laid on the mouth of the den; and the king sealed it with his own signet, with the signet of his lords, that the purpose might not be changed concerning Daniel.” And there he is in the den. “And the king went back to his room, in the palace”– verse 18– “and passed the night fasting.” Didn’t eat. “Neither were instruments of music brought before him and his sleep went from him.” He just probably paced around all night, worrying about Daniel.

“The king rose very early in the morning and went in haste to the den of lions. And when he came to the den, he cried with a lamentable voice unto Daniel and the king spoke and said to Daniel, ‘O Daniel, servant of the living God, is thy God whom thou servest continually able to deliver thee from the lions?’” Are you there, Daniel? “Then said Daniel unto the king, ‘O king, live forever. My God hath sent’”– what?– “‘His angel and shut the lions’ mouths, that they have not hurt me.’” Boy, that’s a fantastic story, isn’t it? How did God protect Daniel? By sending an angel– or angels in this case,

perhaps.

God’s angels are busy protecting believers. Look at 2 Kings chapter 6. And we alluded to this, I think, at the beginning of our study, but look at it again. Second Kings 6:8. “The king of Syria warred against Israel”– that’s verse 8– “and took counsel with his servants, saying, ‘In such and such a place shall be my camp.’” So, there’s a war between Israel and Syria, just want to establish that. Verse 14: “Sent he horses and chariots and a great host and came by night and compassed the city about.” “And when the servant of the man of God was risen early”– verse 15– “and gone forth, behold an host compassed the city both with horses and chariots and his servant said unto him”– this is Elisha– “‘Alas, my master, what shall we do?’” Look at us we’re surrounded by the enemy, the Syrians. And he said, “Don’t be afraid. They who are with us are more than they who are with them.” The servant kind of scratched his head and - “What do you mean by that?” “And Elisha prayed and said, ‘Lord, I pray You, open his eyes that he may see.’ And the Lord opened the eyes of the young man and he saw.” What did he see? “Behold the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire round about Elisha.” There was an entire angelic army surrounding them.

Do you know what that angelic army did? Interesting. Verse 18. “And when they came down to him, Elisha prayed unto the Lord and said, ‘Smite the people, I pray Thee, with blindness.’ And He smote them with blindness according to the word of Elisha.” The angels apparently came down and smote them with blindness. I don’t know whether they did it like that again, as in Sodom, however they did it, but they did that frequently, apparently. And they made them all blind and then they led them off to Samaria where they would be hopelessly out of the territory, just marched them off, stone blind, back to Samaria. And again God delivered, God protected His people. You say, “Well, what about in the New Testament? Do we have any illustrations in the New Testament of angels protecting the people of God?” Yes. No question about it.

In the 27th chapter of Acts. Now, you remember this, when we studied it, it’s a fantastic chapter. Paul is on his way to Rome and he’s in this ship and verse 14 of Acts 27: “Not long after, there arose against it a tempestuous wind called Euraquilo,” that’s a feared wind in the Mediterranean– a Nor’easter, if you will– “and the ship was caught and could not bear up into the wind, we let her drive.” In other words, they let go of controls and just let the wind take the ship, let it go. “And running under the lee of a certain island, on the south side of the island, which is called Cauda, we had much work to secure the boat.” In other words, they were afraid they were going to lose the dinghy which was tied to the back and so they labored hard to hold it on, and the storm was getting worse– which “when they had hoisted it”– they finally got the dinghy on board so they wouldn’t lose it– “they used helps undergirding the ship.” This is what was called frapping the ship. They would throw ropes around during the midst of the storm, throwing ropes around and securing and tightening with wenches, to literally tighten the boards together so the whole ship wouldn’t fall apart.

“And they were afraid”– verse 17 says– “lest they should fall into the Syrtis.” The Syrtis was a graveyard of ships on the North African coast. See, here they were on the north part of the Mediterranean, and this northeastern wind comes blasting down, a Euraquilo, the most feared wind. It’s driving them right toward the graveyard of ships down on the north coast of Africa and they’re trying to hold it all together. “They struck sail” literally means they lowered the gear, lowered everything, and just were driven with the wind. “Being exceedingly tossed with a tempest, the next day they lightened the ship.” They started throwing the cargo out. “The third day we cast out with our own hands, the tackle of the ship. And when neither sun nor stars and many days appeared and no small tempest lay on us, all hope that we should be saved was then taken away.” In the dark, you see, with no sun and no stars, there was no way to navigate, and being driven by a tempest like this, they had no idea what they were going to smash into.

“And after being long without food”– this is terrific– “Paul stood forth in the midst of them and said, ‘Sirs, you should have listened to me when I told you not to do this. I told you you shouldn’t leave Crete, now you’ve done it, and look what’s happened. And now I exhort you to be of good cheer’”– cheer up, men– “for there shall be no loss of any man’s life among you but only of the ship.” Now, you figure that out. How would you like that news? “Folks, nobody will drown, we’ll only lose the ship.” Right. And what do we do out here without a ship? You say, “How do you know that?” Verse 23: “For there stood by me this night”– what?– “an angel of God whose I am and whom I serve.” And you know what the angel said? “Fear not, Paul. Thou must be brought before Caesar and lo, God has given thee all them that sail with thee.”

You know, while that little ship was being blasted across the Mediterranean by that wind, there was a whole legion, or whatever, of angels hanging onto everybody and everything. God had sent His angels. The incredible story goes on to show how they came to a wonderful place of landing. They couldn’t believe it. Instead of being driven south, they were actually driven toward their destination. And they came in, the whole ship disintegrated on the rocks, everybody fell into the waves. A little while later as they began to come to on the shore, they checked, and every single solitary person was there but the ship was totally destroyed, just as the angel had said. God’s angels take care to protect God’s people.

One person was telling me one time they were driving on the freeway. And all of a sudden– they were very tired, and all of a sudden they woke up with a jolt and found themselves parked on the side of the freeway. And the explanation was “I don’t know how it happened. I fell asleep at the wheel. Last I knew, I was driving in the fast lane. Next thing I knew, I was parked on the shoulder.” See? Got to be angels. The way some of you drive, however, you do tax the angels. No use giving them needless worries. They protect. You know, I think about that in reference to my children. Don’t you? When I realize that God has His angels looking for them, I don’t worry about them as much because those angels can do things I couldn’t do if I was there. And as I think about that experience I told you on the airplane, recently, I’m not too sure but what the angels weren’t kind of under those wings taking care

of that thing.

All right, let me take you to a sixth thought, and this is kind of the same but it's just a little different degree. The angels are also in behalf of believers delivering them. And that's not just preventing trouble, that's getting you out of it– delivering. I love the story in Acts 5, one of my favorite stories in all the Bible, because it's again the evidence of God's care for His people. Well, you see, what happens is the early church is preaching and it's growing and the Jewish community of leaders is becoming very upset about the church. In verse 17, the high priest, probably Caiaphas, "rose up and all they that were with him, which is the sect of the Sadducees"– they were the wealthy ones– "and were filled with jealousy." Boy, they were really furious about the growth of this new sect, Christianity. They were really upset. "And they laid their hands on the Apostles." And as we've said before, it wasn't to ordain them, believe me. "They laid their hands on the Apostles and put them in the common prison." They threw them in jail, the public prison which was designed for criminals.

Now, what I love about this is the next verse: "But an angel of the Lord by night opened the prison doors and brought them out and said, 'Go, stand and speak in the temple to the people all the words of this life.'" You see, what's so interesting about that is the Sadducees were the ones who denied angels. And God, just as if to say, "Take that, Sadducees," sent an angel to let them out after the Sadducees had put them in. And this is kind of good, it says, "And when they heard that, they went into the temple early in the morning and they taught. But the high priest came, and they that were with him, and called the council together and all the senate of the children of Israel and sent to the prison to have the prisoners brought." Doesn't know they're already over in the temple preaching. "When the officers came, they found them not in the prison and returned and told, saying, 'The prison truly found we shut, with all safety.'" That's a good prison. "We went there– all locked up." "And the keepers were standing outside before the doors." Boy, the guards were there and the locks are secure. The only problem is, "We found no man within." How did they get out? Yeah, the angel let them out.

God's angels are involved in delivering His people. That's exciting to know. You can never get yourself in a situation from which God can't get you out if that's what He chooses to do. Exciting. You know, that ought to really give boldness to a missionary. To go into some place where he might be a little bit fearful and realize, "If I get into any kind of a problem here and God wants me out of it, that God has all of His angels at His beck and call to remove me."

Now, here's Peter in Acts 12– look at this one– and he's in prison again for preaching. Acts 12:5, persecution's getting worse, they've killed James, the brother of John. And now Peter's in prison and prayer is being made. Verse 6: "And when Herod would have brought him forth"– Herod was going to bring him out the next day, probably kill him– "the same night Peter was sleeping between two soldiers, bound with two chains, and the keepers before the door kept the prison." Now, get this. He's in a prison, maximum security, he's inside the prison, there are guards on the outside of the door of his cell, and inside he is chained to two guards, one on each arm. That's security. Watch. "And

behold, an angel of the Lord came upon him and a light shone in the prison and he smote Peter on the side, raised him up, saying, ‘Arise quickly.’ And his chains fell off from his hands.” The two guys there are sound asleep. The angel just touches him, the chains fell off, and the angel said, “Gird yourself and bind on your sandals”– put your belt on and get your shoes on, Peter, we’re leaving. “And so he did. And he said to him, ‘Cast your garment about you and follow me.’” Throw on your coat, let’s go.

“And he went out and followed him and knew not that it was true which was done by the angel, but thought he saw a vision.” He expected to wake up any moment and be lying there still chained to those two guys. He didn’t really realize it was true. “And when they were past the first and the second guard, they came to the iron gate that leads unto the city which opened to them of its own accord, and they went out and passed on through one street and immediately the angel departed from him. And Peter was come to himself.” He finally woke up and realized he’s standing in the street. “‘Now I know of a surety, that the Lord hath sent His angel and hath’”– what?– “‘delivered me out of the hand of Herod.’” And, of course, from there he went to the prayer meeting where they were praying to get him out. And he knocked on the door, and they came to the door and said, “It can’t be you, you’re in prison,” and shut the door and left him there. Great faith. Right?

You see, one of the ministries of angels is the deliverance of God’s people. A striking modern parallel comes from the experience of the Indian Christian, a famous Indian Christian by the name of Sundar Singh. Some of you may have read about him. By order of the chief lama of a certain Tibetan community, Sundar Singh was thrown into a dry well, which had had a lid put on it just for such purposes of throwing people in, and it was secured and locked. There, Sundar Sing was left to die. He said that there were many bones and there was even rotting flesh at the bottom of the well from others who had been put in there for the same reason. On the third night when he had been crying to God in prayer, he wrote, he heard someone unlocking the lid. And a voice spoke telling him to take hold of a rope that had been lowered. He did so and was glad to find a loop at the bottom of the rope in which he could place his foot, his arm having been broken when he was thrown down. He was then strongly pulled up, the lid was replaced and relocked, and when he looked around in the dark to thank his rescuer, there was no one.

When morning came, Singh returned to the city in which he had been arrested and began preaching again. News came fast to the chief lama, who denied that it could have happened since the only key was attached to his own belt.

How did it happen? Could have been one of God’s angels. Now, in cases like that, we see God’s deliverance. Now, God is active doing this. Think of how active He must have been in the lives of all the people in Hebrews chapter 11. I mean, just taking care of those people and delivering all of those people that are listed, the heroes, Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, David, Samuel– think of how the angels must have been active in the ones who through faith subdued kingdoms, wrought

righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, and *et cetera*, *et cetera*, *et cetera*, *et cetera*. Think of how the angels have served the people of God by protection and deliverance throughout history. And you know, the angels are going to be active in the future protecting God's people. ?

During the period of time known as the tribulation, after the Lord takes the church out, God is going to take 144,000 Jews– according to Revelation 7– 12,000 from every tribe, and make them evangelists. All Israel will be saved, Romans 11, says, but 144,000 of them are going to become the evangelists to preach the gospel. And in order to make sure nobody hurts those evangelists, Revelation 7:1 says this: "And after these things I saw four angels standing on the four corners of the earth, holding the four winds of the earth, that the winds should not blow on the earth, nor the sea, nor any tree." Now watch. "And I saw another angel ascending from the dawning of the sun"– ascending from the east– "having the seal of the living God. And he cried with a loud voice to the other angels to whom it was given to hurt the earth and sea, saying, 'Hurt not the earth, neither the sea, nor the trees till we have sealed the servants of our God on their foreheads.'"

Here comes an angel and he seals them. You know why? So that they couldn't be touched, they couldn't be hurt, they couldn't be injured in the time of the tribulation. They are God's evangelists. They are God's missionaries. And the angelic seal keeps them from death at the hands of the beast. It's an identifying mark, perhaps, for the angels to know who they are to protect when the slaughter of the tribulation occurs.

Earlier Paul read, quoted to you that beautiful designation in Isaiah 63:9, which describes how the angels helped in the deliverance of Israel out of Egypt. "In all their affliction"– I love this– "In all their affliction, He was afflicted." God looked down on Israel and every time an Israelite was beaten with a whip during the brick-making process, God felt the pain. Every time an Israelite was smashed across the face and cast to the ground, God felt the pain. In all their affliction, He was afflicted. "And the angel of His presence saved them, in His love and in His pity He redeemed them, and He bore them and carried them all the days of old." Israel and Egypt, and God loved them and bore them in His arms and carried them and sent the angel of His presence– that's none other than the incarnate Christ, that's a theophany– to get them out. God delivers His people with His angels.

Seventh, a seventh ministry that angels have, is they are active in answering prayer. Now, I want to clarify that. Angels do not answer prayer; they simply deliver answers. They are active in delivering answers to prayer. For example, I just read you Acts 12. The angel that took Peter out of prison, that passage starts by saying, "And there was praying going on for Peter." And God sent an angel in answer to their prayers. In Daniel 9, you have a very similar thing: a prayer and God sends an angel. In Daniel 10, you have it again: a prayer and God sends an angel. In Acts 12: prayer by the church and God sends an angel. And we do not pray to angels because angels do not have the independence to exercise their own will. They are only servants. They do not give their own orders.

They do not do what they want at any time. They only obey God, and the prayer that we offer to God is the only prayer that is heard. But God will activate His angels in response to that prayer. And I guess it would be all right to say, “Lord, I need Your angels. Could You spare a few? And send them my way? To help me out of this problem?” God answered the prayer of Sundar Singh, who prayed for three nights, and very likely an angel delivered him.

So, what do angels do for believers? Watch, reveal God’s truth, guide, provide, protect, deliver, and bring answers to prayer. Let me give you a last one. One other thing that angels do for believers is take care of them at their death, attend their death. And we kind of hinted at this last week, didn’t we? Angels are busy when you die.

Reverend William Kendall died on February 1, 1858. This very day, the anniversary of his death. He died with these words to his family: “Why, heaven has come down to earth. I see the angels. They’re flying all through the house.” Mrs. Anna Krosen said that the last words of her dying mother were these: “Oh, Anna, I can see the angels. Can’t you see them?” An old letter that I found reads this way: “Mademoiselle Bernard died after very much suffering. The end was very peaceful and her last words were these: ‘I see two angels coming for me.’”

Now, that’s kind of exciting. Turn with me to Luke 16, and let’s see if there’s support for that in Scripture. Luke 16 verse 19: “There was a certain rich man who was clothed in purple and fine linen” and ate well or “fared sumptuously every day”– rich man. “There was a certain beggar named Lazarus, who was laid at his gate full of sores.” Lazarus was sitting out there at the rich man’s gate, just oozing sores. And he was a pretty pathetic person, “desiring to be fed with the crumbs” That is, he wanted to eat garbage. He just hung around the rich man’s gate to eat the rich man’s garbage. Moreover, “the dogs came and licked his sores.” Now, that’s a pretty gross character, frankly. Look at verse 22. “It came to pass that the beggar died.” You say, “Big deal.” You better believe it was a big deal. “That beggar was carried by the”– what?– “angels into Abraham’s bosom.” That man may not have been significant to anybody in this world, but when he died, God dispatched His angels to bring him to Abraham’s bosom.

So, in these many ways do angels minister to believers. What a fantastic reality, to know the mighty angels minister on our behalf. And even in the future they’re going to minister. In days to come in the future, during the tribulation period, the angels are going to minister to the tribulation saints, the Christians that are saved, that are redeemed during the period of the tribulation are going to know an angelic ministry. When Jesus returns, He says in Matthew 24:31, “He will send His angels to gather His elect.” So the angels are going to be the ones that gather the saints together. The angels are going to be the ones that gather all the believers. And during the kingdom, during the kingdom angels are going to serve us again. It says in 1 Corinthians 6:2 and 3 that we will rule in the kingdom. First Corinthians 6– I’ll read it to you– verse 2: “Do you not know the saints shall judge the world?” Verse 3: “Do you not know that we shall judge angels?” In the coming kingdom, we’re going to rule with

Christ as co-regents, as joint heirs, and the angels are going to minister to us and the angels are going to serve us and the angels are going to be subject to us. They minister to us now; they'll minister to us in the future.

How should a believer feel toward angels? What should be our attitude toward them? Well, number one, we ought to respect them. After all they're servants of God and they're holy. Two, we ought to appreciate them. Well, I don't know about you but I appreciate them more than ever just knowing what they do. Three, I kind of feel like we ought to follow their example because they incessantly worship God and they incessantly serve God and there's never a break in either one of those. Boy, that's a beautiful pattern, isn't it? And while I can be thankful and appreciative and follow their example, I must add this: We cannot worship angels, for that would be sin. Angels do not want our worship. Listen to me. The angels worship God. They set the example for us to worship God.

Scripture forbids that we worship angels. Colossians 2:18 says: "Let no man beguile you of your reward in a voluntary humility and worshiping of angels." Don't let anybody trick you into worshiping angels. You'll lose your reward. And you know, angels don't want your worship. They don't want it at all. In Revelation 19:10, John fell at the feet of an angel, to worship him, "And he said unto me, 'See thou do it not.'" "Get up, John. I'm your fellow servant– worship God." That angel knew. Angels don't want worship. And again. "I, John"– 22:8 of Revelation– "saw these things and heard them and when I had heard and seen, I fell down to worship before the feet of the angel, and he said to me, 'Don't do it, John. Get up. I'm your fellow servant, worship God.'" Twice John did it. Twice they said don't worship us.

And so, the angels do all of that for us and what do they ask from us? Nothing– absolutely nothing– except that we worship God. Angels are only an extension of God's love. They're only an extension of God's care, only an extension of God's power, an extension of God's grace, an extension of God's provision. That's all. And God's is the glory. God's is the glory. Don't worship angels; worship God.

That leads us to a last category, just briefly. Angels minister to God, to Christ, to Christians, or to believers, and unbelievers. What do angels do to unbelievers? How do they operate? One way. One way and one way alone, the Bible defines: They are God's executioners. They are involved in the disastrous destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, that sinful city. They even were the executors of the firstborn. Exodus 12. In 2 Kings 19, one angel slew 185,000 Assyrian unbelievers in answer to the prayer of Hezekiah. They are God's executioners on unbelievers.

In Acts chapter 12, we meet a man by the name of Herod, one of the many Herods. Herods were a family of kings. And Herod set– he was so proud of himself that he established a Herod day. This was national Herod day and he was going to get his glory. And he was highly displeased with what was going on politically and so there was some politics in this. So verse 21– it was really supposed to be Caesar's, Claudius Caesar's commemoration day, but he turned it to make a Herod day. "A certain

day, Herod, arrayed in royal purple"– actually, if you read Josephus, the historian, he says he had on silver, he had royal purple on and then over it he had a silver robe made out of actual silver. I mean, he was really decked out to kill. "He sat on his throne, and he made a speech." He really laid it on. Tier upon tier in the Caesarean amphitheater there by the sea, remnants of which still exist, tier upon tier of cheering, yelling people, as Herod got up and gave his spiel. "And the people gave a shout, saying, 'It is the voice of a god and not a man.'" "Isn't he incredible? He's divine, this Herod."

But God wasn't happy with him. "And immediately an angel of the Lord smote him because he gave not God the glory and he was eaten of worms and died." Must have been a pretty dramatic scene. God sent His angel and smote him, and maggots consumed him.

Angels appear in Scripture, you see, in relation to unbelievers in only one way: as executioners. For example, look with me at Revelation for a moment, would you? From chapter 6 right on through to chapter 19, the angels again and again and again appear as emissaries of judgment.

Chapter 8, for example, verse 7, "The first angel sounded and there followed hail and fire mixed with blood, and they were cast on the earth and the third part of the trees burned up and the grass was burnt," green grass. "The second angel sounded and the great mountain burning with fire was cast into the sea and a third part of the sea became blood." This is some great meteor out of the sky, crashing and polluting the water. "A third part of the ships were destroyed, a third part of the creatures in the sea, and a third part of all of the sea died. A third angel sounded"– in verse 10– "and a star fell from heaven, and this hit the fresh water and polluted it, and many died because of the bitter waters. A fourth angel sounded and a third part of the sun was smitten, a third part of the moon, a third part of the stars." And you know what that would do? That would throw the calendar off, the seasons off, the tides off, everything, chaos. Again, the angel said– if you think that's bad, flying through heaven– in verse 13– "Woe, woe, woe to the next three trumpets that are yet to sound."

And chapter 9, "A fifth angel sounded and a star fell from heaven, and the bottomless pit was opened, and out came all the demons," and on and on it goes. And it just continues like that as angels come in acts of judgment, acts of taking over the earth from the ungodly. Terrible, terrible judgment. You have the unfolding of the bowls of wrath in chapter 16 as the angels pour out that final phase of judgment that hits so painfully. Says: "The angel poured out the bowl and a foul and painful sore"– 16:2– "fell on men." Another angel pours out a bowl "and the sea became like the blood of a dead man and every living thing in the sea died." And a third angel poured– in verse 4– "on the rivers and fountains of waters and they became blood," and it goes on and on. The fourth angel pours, in verse 8, "on the sun and power was given to scorch men with fire." The fifth angel poured, "they gnawed their tongues for pain," sores, terrible things that occurred physically, and it goes on and on like that.

You see, angels are God's instruments of judgment on the ungodly. In 2 Thessalonians chapter 1 verse 7, it says this: "To you who are troubled, rest with us." A Christian can rest, but listen to the rest:

“The Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels”– doing what?– “in flaming fire, taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power.” There’s coming a day when Jesus Christ is going to be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels in flaming fire, taking vengeance. The angels are instruments of God’s wrath and His judgment. Toward an unbeliever, this is what the angels do. Angels don’t guide unbelievers. They don’t protect them. They don’t deliver them. They don’t watch over them. They don’t deliver them in death to the presence of God. They don’t dispatch with answered prayers. All they do is wait until the time when they’re dispatched to carry out judgment.

In Matthew 13:41, “The Son of man shall send forth His angels, and they shall gather out of His kingdom all things that offend and them who do iniquity and cast them into a furnace of fire, there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth.” That’s what the angels do. They’re God’s executioners on the ungodly, those who reject the lovely Lord Jesus Christ. In Matthew chapter 25 verse 41: “Then He shall say also to them on His left hand”– that’s the unbelievers– “depart from me, you cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels.” And they’re going to spend their eternity with the fallen angels, those who rebelled against God. And this judgment is going to be carried out, according to verse 31, by the Son of man and all His holy angels. And again we see them in the role of execution.

It’s a tragic thing to think about the options that one has, that either you receive the ministry of angels that is given to believers or the ministry of angels for unbelievers. Sooner or later, everybody will receive the attention of the angels. That’s right. And each of us chooses which ministry we will receive: the care of the angels or the execution. If you choose Jesus Christ and believe in Him and receive Him as your Savior, the angels are yours for watching, revealing, guiding, protecting, providing, delivering, bringing answers to prayer, and carrying you into heaven. If you choose to reject Jesus Christ, they will cast you to hell. They’re God’s executioners.

You say, “Well, if the angels had a choice, which would they rather do?” Oh, I think that’s easy. Look at Luke 15. I don’t think angels like the ministry of judgment at all. Listen to Luke 15:8: “Either what woman having ten pieces of silver, if she lose one piece, does not light a lamp and sweep the house and seek diligently till she find it?” What woman wouldn’t look for it? “And when she’s found it, she calls her friends and her neighbors together saying, ‘Rejoice with me for I have found the piece which I lost.’ Likewise”– verse 10, watch– “I say to you there is joy in the presence of”– what?– “the angels of God, over”– what?– “one sinner that repents.” Which would the angels rather do? Would they rather care for you or be God’s executioner? That’s easy. “There’s joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repents.” Let’s pray.

Father, we have seen so much in just a brief time in this study to open our hearts and our understanding to this particular dimension of Your care for us. And how grateful we are. How thrilled

we are that You send Your angels on our behalf. At the same time, Lord, we're so very, very aware of the fact that there are people who do not know and do not experience that wonderful ministry of angels that is given to those who are the children of God. The only thing they really experience is the terror and the judgment that angels will bring in that day of execution. Father, we would pray that there would be no one in our midst tonight who has not opened his heart to Jesus Christ, who has not acknowledged Jesus as Lord and Savior, that the angels might be dispatched immediately in their care. May there be rejoicing in the presence of the angels of God tonight because some sinner repents and turns to Christ.

We're so thankful, Father, that Your wonderful grace has made it possible for us to avoid the execution of the angels and to enjoy their care. We pray that no one would leave tonight without firsthand experience of that love and that forgiveness and that salvation that You alone can give and the promise of that care that Your heavenly host attends to us. Bless us as we close, as we share together in these few moments that are remaining. In Christ's name, amen.

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