

Angels and Demons, Part 2

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A Christian businessman is driving down the freeway and he's passing a semi. All of a sudden, unknown to him and the semi driver, there is a malfunction in the [semi's] steering and [it] should just swerve to the left and kill [the businessman], but it doesn't happen. [The businessman] passes by [the semi] and goes on his way. Or, a mother is backing [her car] out of her driveway and unbeknownst to her, there is a little, four-year-old boy crouched down looking at ants right behind her car. She doesn't see the boy, but all of a sudden the boy is on the grass [next to the driveway], she backs out, and the boy is safe and grows up to be a preacher. Or, a student is taking a test and there is some unseen force helping him get just the grade he needs in order to get into a university where somebody is going to share the gospel with him and he's going to come to the Lord.

Do things like that really happen? Well, when you look in the pages of Scripture, you see a lot of different examples of [angels doing] a lot of different things. You see angels guarding people, angels as protectors, angels as visitors, angels as executioners, as rescuers, as gatherers, even as fast-food deliverers.

Now, we've been studying the Gospel of Luke and our next text [in that series] is going to be [about] the Gerasene demoniac in Luke 8:26–39. I thought it would be good before we get into that text, which talks about demons and demon possession, to stop and do a [short] series on angels,

and demons, and Satan. [That way we'd] get it all out of the way so that if people have questions after that we'd [be able to] say, "Go listen to the series." And then we can expedite everything else instead of trying to do an incomplete job at every passage we come to that mentions angels or demons.

Last week we learned that the world is obsessed with demons, and Satan, and the supernatural. [There are] TV programs, [movies, books, and magazines that are] just proliferating things about demons and Satan. They talk about Satan, and demons, and angels all the time. The problem is that they're teaching lies about all these things. Satan is actively lobbying against the notion that there is a God, that He is a sovereign God, and that He sent His only begotten Son to earth to die on the cross to save sinners by grace, having furnished proof by raising Him from the dead. And it is odd that while lobbying to try to just totally eradicate God from our country and from the world, [Satan] is at the same time promoting with a vengeance demons, angels, and supernatural phenomena. [He is promoting] distorted views thereof, [views] that are incorrect, that are false. And a lot of Christians think, "Well, that's not affecting me. I see these things, I maybe watch some things, but it's not affecting my view."

But last week, we took a quiz and some of you discovered otherwise. As a matter of fact, some of you were still trying to convince me that I must be wrong. [Someone said] that cherubim and seraphim are angels. [So I asked,] "Well, where's the verse?" [The person said,] "There's got to be a verse in there somewhere." There might be, but I just couldn't find it with the best Bible software money can buy. Now, it might be there. I looked for every cross reference, but [cherubim and seraphim] may be angels. All I'm saying is, the Bible doesn't call them that. And when you start looking at things from the world's perspective, then you start thinking the Bible is wrong. But listen, the Bible is the only authoritative source on angels, demons, Satan and the supernatural. All the other sources have to come under the foot of the Bible—not the other way around.

And so we are doing this series to try to prepare you to understand what the Scriptures say so that as the last times progress, and Satan is coming on the scene, and he is trying to educate the whole world in false views about these things, you will not be deceived. You'll know what is right so that you will not be led astray.

So, this morning we're going to examine several different ministries of angels as described in the Bible so that you can better understand what angels do, why they do what they do, and their relationship to your life and the whole world of unbelievers. So that when you encounter these false views in the world, you [can say], "No, that's not what the Bible says," and you won't be led astray.

The first thing we want to do is to look at [how] angels minister to [God] and on [His] behalf. Turn to Genesis 3 again—we went there last week. (We're going to be looking at some of these texts multiple times from different angles.) As you're [turning to Genesis 3], I'll just remind you of what has happened [in Genesis up to that point]. God has created everything. At the end of chapter 1, everything's "very good." Chapter 2 talks about the creation of man. In chapter 3, evil now exists in God's creation. So, somewhere between "very good" at the end of chapter 1 and [the beginning of] chapter 3, which is probably a very short time, evil has been introduced into God's creation. Satan has rebelled and now he is after mankind in order to spoil God's plan.

And, of course, if we remember what happened, God told Adam before that, "You can eat of any tree you want, but of the tree in the midst of the garden, the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, you shall not eat" [see Genesis 2:16–17]. So Satan says, "Well, God doesn't want you to eat from that tree, so that's the tree I'm going to try to trick you into eating." And so, he deceives Eve in the form of a serpent. He talks to her, gets her to take of the tree, and after eating, she willingly gives [the fruit] to her husband. Adam [eats the fruit], rebels against the covenant that God had made and then, we have sin entered into the world. Adam and Eve, then, both realizing they're naked, cover themselves with fig leaves. God comes

walking along and he says, “Hey, did you eat from the tree that I told you not to eat from?” And Adam is quick to blame Eve and God, “It was the woman *You* gave me.” Then Eve was quick to blame the serpent, “It was the serpent. He deceived me” [see Genesis 3:1–13]. And of course, God then deals out consequences for their sin and then the Trinity has a little discussion and this is what we read in Genesis 3:22–24:

Then the Lord God said, “Behold the man has become like one of Us, knowing good and evil; and now, he might stretch out his hand, and take also from the tree of life, and eat, and live forever”—therefore, the Lord God sent him out from the Garden of Eden, to cultivate the ground from which he was taken. So He drove the man out; and at the east of the Garden of Eden He stationed the cherubim and the flaming sword which turned every direction to guard the way to the tree of life.

The point I want to make here is that this is the first place we see in the Bible where God dispatches some sort of angelic creature. [In this instance] it is cherubim. Again, we don’t know if they’re angels or not—the Bible doesn’t say—but we’re going to include cherubim and seraphim in our discussions because I don’t know how [else] to categorize them. Here they are, two of them, at least—they are *cherubim*. Whenever you have a Hebrew word and you have the “im” ending on there,—*cherubim*—that tells you it’s plural. So, there are more than one cherubs here and they are guarding the way to the tree of life so that man will not eat of the tree of life and then live forever in a state of sin. So, [in this passage,] we see them working for God [as] guards.

In Psalm 103:20, the psalmist writes, “Bless the Lord, you His angels, Mighty in strength, who perform His word, Obeying the voice of His word!” That is a summary statement of what angels do. Angels are “mighty in strength,” and they obey God’s voice—they obey His word. Can you think of any other intelligent creatures that are called to do the same thing? Us. We are called to do the *same thing* that angels are called to do.

Turn over to Isaiah 6. This is the vision that Isaiah has—we looked at this last week. Isaiah is explaining this incredible vision he had, where the seraphim—these six-winged creatures—are ministering to God around His throne and this is what [Isaiah] writes in Isaiah 6:2–3:

Seraphim stood above Him, each having six wings: with two he covered his face, and with two he covered his feet, and with two he flew. And one called out to another and said, “Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts, The whole earth is full of His glory.”

And right after that the [seraphim] say, “Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts, The whole earth is full of His glory,” and after that they say the same thing, and after that they say the same thing. Always before the throne of God there are these incredible creatures who keep reminding everybody who gets near the throne that this is a “holy, holy, holy” God and the “whole earth is full of His glory.”

Turn over to Revelation 4, in Revelation 4 and 5, there’s kind of a heavenly scene going on where John, who is on the island of Patmos, is allowed to see what’s going on in heaven. So, this is kind of a big worship session going on in heaven. In Revelation 4:8–9, we read this:

And the four living creatures, each one of them having six wings, are full of eyes around and within; and day and night they do not cease to say, “Holy, Holy, Holy is the Lord God, the Almighty, Who was and Who is and Who is to come.” And... the living creatures give glory and honor and thanks to Him who sits on the throne, to Him who lives forever and ever.

Look down at Revelation 5:11–13:

Then I looked, and I heard the voice of many angels around the throne and the living creatures and the elders; and the number

of them was myriads of myriads, and thousands of thousands, saying with a loud voice, “Worthy is the lamb that was slain to receive power and riches and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing.”

What are these angels doing here? They’re worshipping God. Now, isn’t it interesting that angels are called to obey God and worship God, just like we are? As a matter of fact, when we get to heaven, we are going to worship God and obey God *just like* the angels. It’s not like angels are sitting around waiting for the Second Coming so they can do something. They are *now* obeying God. They are *now* worshipping God, and we’re going to be doing the same thing that they’re doing in heaven now.

What about their ministry to believers? This begins to get really fascinating. What about you? What about me? What about other believers? How are angels ministering to people today who know Christ? Well, [there are] books and a whole bunch of movies and TV programs about angels. Also, there are Internet sites that talk about [angels]. There [are] all sorts of stories [out there] and many of them are kind of trite, and flippant, and self-serving. But some of the [stories] could be true. I’ve known a couple of people who [have] said they thought they had angelic encounters and they seemed legitimate. I have no way of telling.

But one thing is abundantly clear: Angels minister to people. You may not know that they are ministering to you, but if you are a believer, they are. They are. In Exodus 23:23, God, speaking to Moses, tells Moses, “My angel will go before you.” And so when they went through the wilderness, they had an angelic escort. Think of Elijah in 1 Kings 19, the story of how [Elijah] slew the prophets at Mount Carmel—the prophets of Baal—and then Jezebel, the wicked queen, got mad and she was going to chase him down and kill him and he got all freaked out, which was kind of strange. He stood up against all these false prophets and one woman gets mad and he runs for his life. But anyway, he runs for his life. He is scared to death. He is sitting there, despairing for life and what happens? Fast-food delivery.

An angel shows up—angel food cake. And he eats that food and then he goes on the strength of that food for forty days, the Scriptures say [see 1 Kings 19:1–8].

Think of the prophet Daniel, who had angels visit him and tell him about his visions of the future [see Daniel 8]. Think of Zechariah who had the same thing. Think of Joseph and Mary who had angels visit them [see Matthew 1:20, 2:13, 2:19; Luke 1:30–38], and Peter who was freed from prison by an angel [see Acts 12:7–11]. Think of those women who came to the tomb and saw the angel [see Matthew 28:5].

Angels are sprinkled all the way through Scripture and they minister to people in different ways. We can't look at all the places [in the Bible that they are mentioned] because there would be too many. But if you want to turn to Matthew 18, there's a very fascinating verse there. It's really the only one of its kind. A lot of times people come up and they'll say things like, "Jack, do you think that people have guardian angels?" Well, in this text, Jesus is talking about those who caused believers to stumble and he describes [the believers] as "little ones." In Matthew 18:10, he says this, "See that you do not despise one of these little ones, for I say to you that their angels in heaven continually see the face of My Father who is in heaven." Now, notice what the text says: "*their* angels." What does that tell you? It seems to tell you that believers have an angel assigned to them.

Now, it is just amazing, when you start pondering the consequences of [the fact] that you might have an angel. (Of course, when you become a junior high-er, the angels can't handle you anymore so they're reassigned. Just seeing if you're listening.) But the verse does seem to say that people have angels. This is the only verse like it. You have an angel assigned to you. What do they do? I don't know. But they are assigned and I'm sure they're assigned for a purpose. I'm sure that when you die or [when] Christ comes back, you're going to know what [the angels] did and you're probably going to find out for all eternity just what they have done.

Jesus, speaking about the time of His [second] coming in Matthew 24:31 says, "And He will send forth His angels with A GREAT TRUMPET

and **THEY WILL GATHER TOGETHER** His elect from the four winds, from one end of the sky to the other.” This is talking about the end of the Tribulation. The people who have come to Christ during the Tribulation, those people who have made it to the end—to the second coming of Christ when He returns—those people will apparently be able to see the angels who had been ministering all along on their behalf. Those angels are going to deliver [those people] in their mortal bodies to Jerusalem. Think about that. It reminds me of Peter Pan and Tinkerbell, when the fairy shows up and sprinkles pixie dust on [the children] so they can fly away to Never Never Land. But [there are] no fairies and no pixie dust, but instead holy angels. And [it’s] not Never Never Land, but Jerusalem. That’s what the Scriptures tell us is going to happen.

In Luke 15:10, we learn about another kind of ministry angels have in relation to believers. This is right after Jesus gives the parable of the lost coin. You remember the parable—the person loses the coin and sweeps around trying to find it. When she finds it, she rejoices [see Luke 15:8–9]. And then Jesus says this: “In the same way, I tell you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents.” What does that tell you? Angels know what’s going on down here. They know when someone comes to Christ.

There’s probably no better narcotic than leading somebody to the Lord. (Elk hunting’s close.) When you are there and you’re leading somebody to the Lord, when God is pleased to have you share the gospel with someone, and [the person] actually wants to listen, and he believes, and he gives his life to Christ right in front of you, it is amazing. It is wonderful. It’s thrilling! And it just makes you want to go talk to somebody else because it’s so great that that person right there in front of your face has given his life to Christ. And you [know that you are] going to be with them forever in heaven, that God has done a miracle right before your eyes and it just makes you rejoice. Well, guess what? The angels do the same thing. They’re up there, going, “Yeah! Get him, Jesus!” They’re rejoicing, too. They rejoice

just like you would rejoice. The angels in heaven rejoice over even one sinner who repents.

In Luke 16, there is the story of the rich man and Lazarus. Most of us know the story: the rich man is living in opulence, stuffing his face, and neglecting the poor. Lazarus is the poor man outside and the dogs are licking his wounds. But then they both die and Jesus makes this comment in Luke 16:22: “Now the poor man died and he was carried away by the angels to Abraham’s bosom; and the rich man also died and was buried.” Now, what’s interesting in this story is that it says when Lazarus died, angels appeared and they escorted him to this place called “Abraham’s bosom.” The rich man, he just dies. But there is this angelic escort that happens with Lazarus.

Now, what you need to realize is that this is [set in] the time before Jesus had died and risen again. So this is the Old Testament era. In the Old Testament era, everybody who died went to a place called Sheol, the place of the dead. And in Sheol, according to this story (or this parable—we don’t know if it’s a story or parable—there’s disagreement about it), what happens is there are two different places. There’s a place where the rich man is. He is in agony in these flames and he is crying out because he can see across what is called this “great chasm,” which no one can cross over [see Luke 16:26]. There’s Lazarus in the bosom of Abraham, enjoying peace and comfort, and there’s the rich man across the chasm in agony and flames.

Well, we don’t know for certain [what happened when people during Old Testament times died] because things have changed now since Christ died—He emptied Sheol of its believers and now, when we die, we’re going to be with the Lord. But, it very well may be that when you die—you’re pining away in that hospital bed or let’s just make it a better thing, you’re preaching the gospel to somebody. Just as he says, “Yes, I want to give my life to Christ,” and you lead him to Christ, and you pray with him, all of a sudden [you gasp] and you hit the pavement. OK, that’s it. Your final deed was sharing the gospel. Well, the moment you quit living here on earth,

you wake up, and who's there? Angels. "Hey, we've been waiting for you to meet us. And you've been a handful!" There are these angels who have been with you [for] your whole life, who have not only been with you but also with other saints who have existed from the time of creation. [The angels have] witnessed all of history. Those angels are there. That's cool. That is *way* neat. I can't wait for that. Every time I do a funeral, I can't wait for that. I do a funeral, [and I think,] "Man, I can't wait to die." I *want* to see the angels. I *want* to see Christ. I *want* to see the saints of all the ages. I long for that.

No one has captured this whole thought better than John Bunyan. John Bunyan wrote *Pilgrim's Progress*. At the end of *Pilgrim's Progress*, when Christian and Hopeful finally make it across the River of Death. Bunyan writes this:

Now upon the bank of the river on the other side they saw the two shining men. . . , who there waited for them; wherefore, being come out of the river, they saluted them, saying, "We are ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for those that shall be heirs of salvation." Thus they went along towards the gate. . . .

Now you must note that the city stood upon a mighty hill, but the Pilgrims went up that hill with ease, because they had these two men lead them up by the arms; also they had left their mortal garments behind them in the river, for though they went in with them, they came out without them. They, therefore, went up here with much agility and speed, though the foundation upon which the city was framed was higher than the clouds. They therefore went up through the region of the air, sweetly talking as they went, being comforted, because they safely got over the river, and had such glorious companions to attend them.

The talk they had with the Shining Ones was about the glory of the place; who told them that the beauty and glory of it was

inexpressible. “There,” said they, “is the Mount Zion, the heavenly Jerusalem, the innumerable company of angels, and the spirits of just men made perfect. You are going now,” said they, “to the paradise of God, wherein you shall see the tree of life, and eat of the never-fading fruits thereof; and when you come there, you shall have white robes given you, and your walk and talk shall be every day with the King, even all the days of eternity. There you shall not see again such things as you saw when you were in the lower region upon the earth, to wit, sorrow, sickness, affliction, and death, for the former things are passed away. You are now going to Abraham, to Isaac, and Jacob, and to the prophets—men that God hath taken away from the evil to come, and that are now resting upon their beds, each one walking in his righteousness.”

The men then asked, “What must we do in the holy place?” To whom it was answered, “You must there receive the comforts of all your toil, and have joy for all your sorrow; you must reap what you have sown, even the fruit of all your prayers, and tears, and sufferings for the King by the way. In that place you must wear crowns of gold, and enjoy the perpetual sight and vision of the Holy One, for there you shall see him as he is. There also you shall serve him continually with praise, with shouting, and thanksgiving, whom you desired to serve in the world, though with much difficulty, because of the infirmity of your flesh. There your eyes shall be delighted with seeing, and your ears with hearing the pleasant voice of the Mighty One. There you shall enjoy your friends again that are gone thither before you; and there you shall with joy receive, even every one that follows into the holy place after you.”¹

¹<http://zbh.com/sermons/pilgrm6c.htm>

Does that sound good? Read the rest, man—it's great. It's fiction, but it's all based on the Bible. Something like that's going to happen: you're going to die and there are going to be angels there—"myriads of myriads, and thousands of thousands" [Revelation 5:11], who have all existed since creation and who have all witnessed the [entire] history of the world. You [will be able to] get to know each one of them. Imagine how long that's going to take: "So who'd you watch over? What did God have you do? Where were you when the Red Sea [parted] and [the Israelites] all crossed over on dry land?" Think about it: Regardless of whether or not you have an angelic escort within the presence of Christ, you will spend eternity with angels. It's going to be really fun.

Another critical ministry of angels to believers is helping to communicate the Word of God. Stephen, toward the end of his sermon in Acts 7—right before he was stoned by the unbelieving Jews—speaks to them, and says, "You who received the law as ordained by angels, and yet did not keep it" [Acts 7:53]. Think about that. It seems that Stephen is speaking of the whole corpus of the Old Testament, though he may just be talking about the Law of Moses—the five books. Either way, he says it's "ordained by angels." That is, angels had some place in communicating the Word of God.

We see [this] in certain places [in the Bible]: for instance, in the Book of Daniel, or [with] John on the Island of Patmos—[Daniel and John] received revelation, and angels were there to help explain things. But it seems that beyond that, even, that angels hold a significant place in [the process of] human authors writing down the Word of God. We don't know if they're involved in the whole process of inspiration. You know, when it says "men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God" [2 Peter 1:21], it seems that maybe angels were somehow involved in that. We don't know. It just says it was "ordained by angels." So, the reason you have a Bible is because angels were part of bringing [it] to you. Isn't that amazing?

Turn over to Hebrews 1, where we have a general, all-purpose job description for angels in one verse. The author, in the previous context, has

just talked about Jesus, who is better than the angels. Now that [the author] is mentioning angels, he just makes this comment in Hebrews 1:14, and says, “Are they not all ministering spirits, sent out to render service for the sake of those who will inherit salvation?” Wrap your mind around that one. Every angel—all of them—are “ministering spirits,” and they were created for the express purpose of ministering to unworthy sinners. That is mind-boggling. If you’re one who is going to inherit salvation, you have angels ministering to you.

You know, I’ve never seen an angel ministering to me. There [have been] times in my life [when] I wondered about it. I remember times in seminary being so tired—having [only had] three hours of sleep for four days in a row—and having to study or write some paper. I was so brain-dead that I couldn’t do it. [Then] I prayed and all of a sudden, I was perked up and wrote the paper and then crashed. And I [would] wonder, “Was that just God? Were the angels there—angels strengthening [me]?” I don’t know.

But what’s amazing is whom they serve: sinners—weak, sinful, proud, lustful, boastful, covetous sinners. And they [have] ministered to us all of our lives. We don’t even know their names, but they minister to us. They serve us faithfully, though I’m sure at times they’re pretty disgusted by our behavior and what we say. And yet, they minister to us. They’re a great example, aren’t they, of humble service to others? They don’t get any credit. We’re never told to talk to them, we’re never told to pray to them, and yet they serve us faithfully for the glory of God and for our blessing. And it won’t be until we get to heaven when we actually find out who they were and what they did for us.

So, angels have a significant ministry to believers here on earth, but they also have a ministry in relation to unbelievers. [In] Exodus 12:23, when Moses has received instruction about the Passover, he says, “Guess what? The destroyer—this angel of death—is going to come over and sweep the whole land. That angel is going to execute all the firstborn of Egypt—kill them, all of them. And unless you put the blood of the lamb on the

doorpost of your house, you're going to die." And that night, the angel—the destroying angel—went forth and executed all those people who did not have the blood of the lamb on the lintel of their houses.

In 2 Chronicles 32:21, the Assyrians were attacking Jerusalem during the reign of Hezekiah. The [Israelites] didn't know what to do. They were all worried. The text says, "And the Lord sent an angel and destroyed every mighty warrior, commander and officer in the camp of the king of Assyria." And what's interesting here is that 185,000 men died that night. That's pretty serious. Angels are not anyone to trifle with. You can see why Scripture calls them "mighty in strength" [Psalm 103:20].

One of the more fascinating texts [about angels] is Daniel 10. In the Book of Daniel, on several occasions, Daniel has visions and he has angelic visitors who enter into his visions to explain things and help him figure out what he's seeing. And one of the angels who appears a couple of times in the previous chapters is the angel Gabriel, who is called by name. [He] helps Daniel understand the meaning of the vision of the ram, the goats, and the little horn [see Daniel 8:16–27]. Then later on, in Daniel 9:21–27, the angel Gabriel also appears to communicate the vision of the seventy weeks. If you remember, Gabriel is the one who appeared to Zechariah when he was ministering in a temple to tell him that his wife would give birth to John the Baptist [see Luke 1:11–20]. And remember when Zechariah refused to believe in the word of the angel Gabriel; do you remember what Gabriel said? He said, "I am Gabriel, who stands in the presence of God. And because you haven't believed, you're going to be deaf and mute" [see Luke 1:19–20].

If you look at Revelation 8:2, it tells us that there are seven angels who are appointed to stand in the presence of God. Gabriel is one of those angels, and so Gabriel is [saying to] Zechariah, "Listen, pal, I stand in the presence of God, and I left my post to come down here to you to tell you a message, and you aren't believing it?" Gabriel is a heavy hitter in the Bible. He is the one who also appeared to Mary to tell her that she would give birth to the Messiah [see Luke 1:26–27].

In Daniel 10:11, Daniel describes what Gabriel said to him. This is what we read: “He said to me: ‘O Daniel, man of high esteem, understand the words that I am about to tell you and stand upright, for I have now been sent to you.’ And when he had spoken this word to me, I stood up trembling.” And just as a side note, when you read a lot of modern-day accounts of people being visited by angels, they seem pretty hokey. Here’s Daniel—he’s terrified, he’s not, “Oh, hi! An angel.” He’s *terrified*. He’s so terrified that if you look at Daniel 10:9, he said, “I heard the sound of his words; and as soon as I heard the sound of his words, I fell into a deep sleep on my face.” In other words, he fainted and fell on his face [because] he was so scared.

Look at Daniel 10:12: “Then he said to me, ‘Do not be afraid, Daniel, for from the first day that you set your heart on understanding this and on humbling yourself before your God, your words were heard, and I have come in response to your words.’” In other words, God heard Daniel’s prayer and dispatched Gabriel to speak to Daniel. [Read] verse 13: “But the prince of the kingdom of Persia was withstanding me for twenty-one days; then behold, Michael, one of the chief princes, came to help me, for I had been left there with the kings of Persia.” Here, Gabriel tells Daniel that he was sent by God to help Daniel out, but then he was prevented, or “withstood,” by the “prince of Persia,” which apparently is another angelic force—a demonic angelic force. Apparently, Satan has appointed certain demons over certain areas, and in this case, this “prince of Persia,” as he is called, withstood Gabriel so that [Gabriel] couldn’t come to minister to Daniel. But then Michael showed up.

Whenever you look in the Scriptures, Michael is the “super angel.” If you look at Jude 9, Michael is described as “the archangel.” When Paul in 1 Thessalonians 4:16 describes the Rapture of the Church, Paul says, “For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with . . . the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet of God.” Michael is an archangel. He is one of the most powerful angels that exist. And in Daniel 12:1, it tells us that Michael is “the great prince who stands guard over the sons of [Israel’s] people”

during their captivity. He is the appointed watchman of the people of God. And he's guarding them during their captivity. So it was this angel that was dispatched to free up Gabriel in 1 Thessalonians, who was being withstood by this other demonic force called the prince of Persia.

Revelation 12:7 tells us that Michael leads the heavenly angels in battle against Satan and his angels during the Tribulation and [Satan and his angels are] defeated and permanently cast down to earth. And so there is this war waging in heaven. And the war in heaven is a war among angels and demons, who are in turn influencing the world of men. Of course, demons, as we're going to learn when we get to that section of our study, mostly work through unbelievers to do their bidding.

But if you look down at Daniel 10:20–21, we learn a little bit more. The angel is finishing up with Daniel, and we read:

Then he said: 'Do you understand why I came to you? But I shall now return to fight against the prince of Persia; so I am going forth, and behold, the prince of Greece is about to come. However, I will tell you what is inscribed in the writing of truth. Yet there is no one who stands firmly with me against these forces except Michael your prince.'

So Michael is presented as a prince. Apparently, speaking of heavenly things going on here, there is this demon over Persia and a demon over Greece and Michael is a general leading the angelic host in battle in these wars that are waging in heaven. Now, I don't know if you ever think of that. You never read about that in the paper. But you read about it in the Bible. All of this is unseen. Humans never peer into these things and yet it's happening right now and has happened.

How do we know this? Well, turn over to Ephesians 6. Paul is talking to the Ephesians and he is closing up his book with his final exhortations. He wants to remind them—give them some final exhortation—of where the battle is. I don't know if you've ever tried reading your Bible and been distracted. Have you ever had that happen, or is that just me? You just want to

read your Bible, but you keep thinking about everything but the Bible. Or, you want to pray and you keep thinking about everything but what you're trying to pray for. But it never happens when you read the [news]paper, it never happens when you're reading your favorite magazine, it never happens when you're watching TV. But whenever you're engaged in a spiritual pursuit that is commanded, that is essential, [there is] constant distraction. You ever wonder why that is? Well, let's find out why. Look at Ephesians 6:10–12:

Finally, be strong in the Lord and the strength of His might. Put on the full armor of God, so that you will be able to stand firm against the schemes of the devil. For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places.

Think about that. He doesn't say, "We *might* be in the battle." He says, "Our present, ongoing, continuing battle is not against men, but it's actually against the demonic forces that are working against us and using those men to accomplish their evil designs." And we learned from Daniel that the holy angels are also involved in striving and battling against those things that are going on in the heavenly places.

Now, as we shall learn, demons work through unbelievers. Unbelievers are described as [being] of "their father the devil" [John 8:44], doing the works of their father the devil, held captive by Satan to do his will. The Scriptures describe unbelievers as Satan "working in the sons of disobedience" [Ephesians 2:2]. And so unbelievers live every moment as pawns of demonic forces, and they don't even know it. They think they're in control, they think they're autonomous—that they're doing whatever they want, whenever they want—but actually they're deluded, they're deceived, and they're being led by demonic forces and they don't know it.

But holy angels are working so that the demons—Satan and his angels—do not go outside the bounds of God’s parameters. Have you ever wondered why we have to witness to people and why God wants us to pray and things like that? God asks us to do all these things, and you think, “Why doesn’t God do it? He’s all-powerful. [He should] just do it.” Why work at trying to clean up the earth when God can just [make it] clean [Himself]? The same thing is true of angels. Why doesn’t God just win the battle? Why does He dispatch angels and have them fight in the heavenly realms when He Himself can do it? Well, this is why: because it is a privilege to serve God. He doesn’t need us, but He gives us the *privilege* of serving Him. The same is true of angels: He gives angels the privilege of waging war on His behalf.

In Matthew 13:39–40, Jesus talks about the parable of the wheat and the tares. And if you remember the parable, the world is described as a field. Somebody goes out and plants the seed, and at nighttime the enemy comes and sows all these tares among the wheat. The tares are weeds, basically. And Jesus, describing how this happened when He’s interpreting the parable, says in Matthew 13:39–40, “The enemy who sowed them is the devil, and the harvest is the end of the age; and the reapers are angels. So just as the tares are gathered up and burned with fire, so shall it be at the end of the age.” [Therefore], not only will believers have angelic escorts to take them in their mortal bodies to Jerusalem to meet their King at the end of the Tribulation, so unbelievers will be executed and carried into hell by holy angels. [The angels] work for both believers and unbelievers as an escort service.

Not only that, not only are [angels] involved in the general execution of unbelievers, but at the end of the age—at the Second Coming of Christ—sometimes the angels are sent to specific unbelievers to execute them. One example we have of this is in Acts 12:21–23. After Peter was miraculously released from prison by an angel, Herod was furious and had the soldiers who were assigned to guard him executed, because they let Peter go. He

then traveled to Caesarea Philippi and there had to address some people from Tyre and Sidon. And this is what we read in Acts 12:21–23:

On an appointed day Herod, having put on his royal apparel, took his seat on the rostrum and began delivering an address to them. The people kept crying out, “The voice of a god and not of a man!” And immediately an angel of the Lord struck him because he did not give God the glory, and he was eaten by worms and died.

That is the biblical account. That is the accurate account of what happened. I’m sure that the people who knew Herod [thought] he just happened to get worms and die from it. [But] God says He dispatched an angel and the angel executed God’s judgment upon [Herod]. What’s amazing is that we actually have an extra-biblical account of this very thing. Josephus, an unbelieving Jewish historian at that time, writes this:

But now Herod’s distemper greatly increased upon him after a severe manner, and this by God’s judgment upon him for his sins; for a fire glowed in him slowly, which did not so much appear to the touch outwardly, as it augmented his pains inwardly; for it brought upon him a vehement appetite to eating, which he could not avoid to supply with one sort of food or other. His entrails were also ex-ulcerated, and the chief violence of his pain lay on his colon; an aqueous and transparent liquor also had settled itself about his feet, and a like matter afflicted him at the bottom of his belly. Nay, further, his privy-member was putrefied, and produced worms; and when he sat upright, he had a difficulty of breathing, which was very loathsome, on account of the stench of his breath, and the quickness of its returns; he had also convulsions in all parts of his body, which increased in strength to an insufferable degree.²

²<http://www.godrules.net/library/flavius/flaviusb17c6.htm>

Pretty bad, huh? And history tells us Josephus goes on to say that [Herod] tried everything to get better. He was rich—he tried every possible cure and no cure would work. Nothing would work. Finally, he gathered all of his friends [together] and gave them huge gifts in order to try and get them to like him before he died. He executed his son, Antipeter. Then he died a slow, painful, agonizing death being eaten by worms from the inside out. And mark it: an angel carried out the judgment. An angel did it.

Finally, we read that angels will be witnesses to the eternal punishment of unbelievers at the great white throne judgment. John in Revelation 14:9–10, speaking of those who worship the beast of the Tribulation period, who is the antichrist, writes that:

Another angel, a third one, followed them, saying with a loud voice “If anyone worships the beast and his image, and receives a mark on his forehead or on his hand, he also will drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is mixed in full strength in the cup of His anger; and he will be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels and in the presence of the Lamb.”

Angels who for millennia have fought against unbelievers and have fought against Satan and his demons, will, at the end of the days, see all unbelievers, Satan, his demons, the antichrist, and the false prophet cast into the lake of fire. [The angels] will be the firsthand witnesses of the evil deeds [of unbelievers, Satan, his demons, the antichrist, and the false prophet] and they will see them judged for eternity.

The apostle Paul speaks of angels in relation to the judgment of unbelievers in 2 Thessalonians 1:6–8. Here, he’s talking about how believers are afflicted by unbelievers, and so Paul is going to give a little encouragement to believers in the midst of their afflictions and he says this (notice how he encouraged them):

For after all it is only just for God to repay with affliction those who afflict you, and to give relief to you who are afflicted and to us as well when the Lord Jesus will be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels in flaming fire, dealing out retribution to those who do not know God and to those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus.

Here again, the angels are described as these “mighty angels in flaming fire, dealing out retribution to those who do not know God and to those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus.” In other words, they are going to participate in the judgment of unbelievers at the end of the age. They’re [also] described in 2 Kings 6. If you remember, we looked at that text last week, where Elijah’s servant has his eyes opened and what does he see in the hillsides? Horses and chariots of fire all around [see 2 Kings 6:17]. Well, here they are: mighty angels in flaming fire, the symbol of judgment.

We’ve looked at a lot of stuff about angels this morning. So what does this have to do with you? We haven’t looked at everything yet, but here are some things you can think about as you leave today—some practical applications.

1. If you’ve never thanked and praised God for creating angels to minister to you, you might want to try that, because He has. And they’re probably a greater blessing to you than you really know.
2. You need to follow the example of the holy angels whose sole purpose is to obey the voice of God and worship Him. We need to do what they’re doing. They do it perfectly—we’re getting there.
3. Remember that as you battle temptation, as you resist evil, as you seek to obey Christ, God has angelic helpers behind the scenes helping you achieve those purposes.
4. Be thankful for the part that angels have played in giving you your Bible. The Bible is ordained by angels.

5. Know that in the future, you will see angelic friends face-to-face. You'll get to know them by name, you'll get to learn from them and then you will worship with them forever and ever.
6. Be awakened to the fact that this world is passing away. And what is real—what is eternal—is going on behind the scenes. And there are angels—innumerable angels—battling, waging war as the end of the age draws near. They will be playing a part in your rescue as believers and in the judgment of unbelievers.

And finally, if you are an unbeliever, if you have rejected Christ, then you need to be afraid. There are a lot of people who say, "I'm a Christian." Well, do you love Christ? Do you live for Christ? Do you seek to obey God in every area of your life? That is what a Christian is: A Christian is somebody who has been changed by the grace of God. They're imperfect, but they're striving after holiness. They're striving to please God. They're serving God. They're praying to God. They're studying God's Word because they want to know what God wants them to do. And if you're out there and you're thinking to yourself, "Well, yeah, I'm willing to come to church every once in a while. I'm willing to read my Bible every once in a while, and pray once in a while. But I can't give [God] my whole life," then you are an unbeliever. You are deluded. You may think you're in control, but you're not. Satan is controlling you. You are doing his will. You're marching in his army.

You need to realize your life is in danger. There are no angels helping you. They are against you because you are against them. And you need to repent of your sins. You need to give your life to Christ. You need to trust only in Jesus Christ to save you. He died on the cross for your sins. He paid the penalty that you deserved, and then He was buried and rose again on the third day. He now sits at the right hand of the majesty on high. He commands the angelic forces that are around Him. He is the Lord that you will stand before either as a believer or an unbeliever. Make sure it's as a believer. Give your heart to Him today. Turn from your sins today. Receive

Christ today. And don't delay. Let God's grace transform your life so that you, too, can have reason to rejoice when you see that God's angels have been working on your behalf, not for your destruction, but for your good. Let's pray.

Father, we thank You for the great truths we have learned in Your Word. What a blessing it is. How amazing it is that we can read the Bible and never even notice all of these things about angels, but there is so much there. Father, how thrilling and stunning it is to even think of these things. It is so far beyond us, so outside of our experience, so far beyond what we know living here on Earth and yet Your Word tells us many things about angels. We need to believe and we need to know it's true. We need to live like it's true. And Father, if there's anyone here who doesn't know You, Father, maybe [there is someone here] who has been pretending to love You, pretending to be a Christian, professing to be a Christian with his mouth, but with his deeds denying you, loving his sin more than Christ, I pray that right now You would grant him repentance leading to the truth. [I pray] that he would commit in his heart right now to follow Jesus. He would cry out to You to save him, that he would admit that [salvation is] not of works, but only by Your grace and in believing in You, he would be transformed. And, Father, [I pray that] You would begin to minister to him from now on until you come back with Your ministering spirits that you have created to do us good. I pray this in Christ's name. Amen.