

Introduction: We have seen in recent Bible notes how God was able to preserve, protect and rescue His prophet Elijah from the clutches of those who would silence his witness to the one true God. In 2 Kings 1, the LORD delivered Elijah from the soldiers who came to arrest and destroy him – by sending fire from heaven down on the mountaintop where Elijah had taken refuge. May we be encouraged as we continue in 2 Kings 2 this week to see that the LORD cares just as much for us in our need for rescue and will not hesitate to do whatever it takes to respond to our cries for His aid. Moreover, since so often in the Scriptures God uses His angelic hosts as a visible sign of His rescuing power, we will look more closely at the doctrine of angelic hosts and how they help believers.

Mon/Tues/Weds/Thurs: read 2 Kings 2:9-14; 2 Kings 6:8-18 & Luke 22:39-46.

In the Nicene Creed, we affirm that we *don't only believe* that God creates and works through what is visible. We begin that creed by saying, "I believe in one God, the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth, and of all things visible *and invisible*."

This then is the first reason why we take note of the appearance of the heavenly hosts who rescue Elijah in 2 Kings 2:11. This is also why we see the same angelic armies protectively surround Elisha and his young servant in the city of Dothan in 2 Kings 6:17. It is because God is the "LORD of Hosts" (hosts meaning the mustered and ever vigilant angelic armies of heaven) and because He greatly values the survival and protection of His precious, blood-bought saints on earth, that He often brings an *overwhelming display of angelic force* to rescue His own. We usually don't see these invisible armies, and Elisha has to pray for his young servant's eyes of faith to be opened to see them, but they are there. It is these angelic hosts, in fact, who will be sent out at Christ's Second Coming to gather His elect into their eternal home (Matthew 24:31).

The pressing question, however, is this: "Why does God sovereignly decree that the work of gathering, rescuing and preserving of His people be carried out by these angelic hosts, when He could simply and fully accomplish our salvation by His own invisible arm?"

Well, we already hinted at the first answer. As John Owen says, "(God's use of these angels) is to be explained by His own sovereign will, wisdom and pleasure. thus we are always to live in a holy admiration of Him, whenever we consider any of His works or ways" (Romans 11:33).

Do you see the implication of this statement? How excited we should be to study the Scriptures on this subject of angels, since God has decreed that, through them, His wisdom, sovereignty and glory are displayed? For example, consider how the glory of God is advanced by these angels:

- 1) Consider the awe-inspiring funeral procession of the recently-deceased Queen of England: Her high standing in British society was displayed by row upon row of mounted soldiers trotting (and marching) in perfect order. In the same way, God is pleased to rule His creation as a supreme Lord and King. The rank upon rank of angels are a visible demonstration of the orderliness and obedience which God's glory is to inspire in every one of His creatures! This is one fruit of God's wise and sovereign use of angels.
- 2) Consider how a mighty King or President keeps his troops in working order, with everything polished; all weapons cleaned and maintained and ready for action. Just so: God is a Ruler that keeps His servants in constant readiness to act according to His will.

I love, for example, how the present passive participle is used in Hebrews 1:14 to describe the angels as “sent out” (continually and with a constant readiness to help) to serve us who inherit salvation! Heaven stands ready to intervene for our salvation!

- 3) Consider also how well God treats the angels themselves in giving them the privilege of hands-on participation in His ever-increasing glorious work to save sinners and build His church! John Owen writes:

God employs angels ... for the good of sinners who are heirs of salvation, to show *them* (the angels themselves) the greatness and glory of the work of gathering, preserving and redeeming His church, and to show them the value that the Father puts on all the fruits of the death and mediation of His Son Jesus Christ. For, as they desire to look into these things (1 Peter 1:12) their delight in the wisdom of God is more and more increased. (pg 246 of his commentary on Hebrews 1:14)

In other words, as the angels participate in God’s apex work of revealing the glory of His saving mercy towards sinners, their admiration and praise of God grows throughout all eternity! Think of that! How inspiring it will be for us to hear the praises of the angelic hosts, who will sing loudest because they marvel at how much God loves us – enough to send His own Son!

- 4) Consider, lastly, how we are to be comforted in the knowledge of how much God loves us. He loved us enough to send the ultimate gift in the person, work and saving power of Jesus Christ. Would He spare any of the creatures of heaven (such as angels) since He has already sent His Son? He will use them too, so that we will see that He is willing *to empty heaven* if that is what it takes to ensure our eternal security.

Friday: read Ephesians 3:14-21 & Hebrews 12:22. When Paul bows in prayer for the Ephesians in chapter three verses 14-15, he is conscious that the God to whom he prays is, “the Father, from whom every family in heaven and on earth is named.” Paul has in mind here the family of God in heaven and on earth, since he goes on to pray for this family in Ephesians 3:16. In other words, there is only one family in the Kingdom of God – (the heavenly angels above along with the triumphant church around God’s throne and the church on earth). They are all joined now into one family because all the elect, in heaven and on earth, are reconciled not just with God as their Father, the Son as their elder brother and the Spirit as their Comforter – but also with the holy angels who serve God. God makes such angels “servants of those who will inherit salvation” (Hebrews 1:14). The sword which barred all sinners from communion with God after the fall in Genesis 3:24 has been sheathed!

Meditate and Pray: Give thanks that there is an “innumerable festal gathering of angels” (Hebrews 12:22) and that we share the joy of being in their family and worshipping alongside such illustrious beings. Even more amazingly, these angels under Christ’s leadership are committed to helping us in our trials, temptations and dangers down here. Just as they show up to help Elijah and Elisha, so we are to take heart that there are far more heavenly workers who are “for us” and who cheer us on throughout our earthly journey. Sing about this great fact about our communion with the angels, using hymn # 18 from our red hymn books:

*1 You holy angels bright,
who wait at God's right hand,
or through the realms of light
fly at your Lord's command,
assist our song, for else the theme
too high doth seem for mortal tongue.*

*2 You blessed souls at rest,
who ran this earthly race,
and now, from sin released,
behold the Savior's face;
God's praises sound, as in his sight*

with sweet delight you do abound.

*3 All nations of the earth,
extol the world's great King;
with melody and mirth
his glorious praises sing;
for he still reigns, and will bring low*

*5 My soul, bear now your part,
triumph in God above;
with a well-tuned heart
sing now the songs of love;
you are his own, whose precious blood
shed for your good his love made known.*

the proudest foe that him disdains.

*4 Sing forth Jehovah's praise,
you saints, that on him call!
Him magnify always,
his holy churches all!
In him rejoice, and there proclaim
his holy name with sounding voice.*

*6 Away, distrustful care!
I have your promise, Lord;
to banish all despair,
I have your oath and word;
and therefore I shall see your face
and there your grace shall magnify.*

Sat/Sun: read Zechariah 3:1-5; Jude 8-9 and Isaiah 37:36. Because of Christ's victory, the angels' power over Satan's kingdom represents our absolute security in days of grave temptation and unbelief. To protect Israel in the days of Hezekiah, 185,000 Assyrian invaders of the Promised Land were slain by the Angel of the Lord in one night! To preserve the body of Moses for a safe burial by the hand of the Lord (*even though Moses died outside the Promised Land*) Michael the archangel did battle against Satan according to Jude 8-9. When Satan sought to accuse the high priest of Jerusalem after Babylonian exile, the Angel of the Lord silenced Satan by rebuking him in the name of the LORD (Zechariah 3:2). Such is the might which the Son of God gives His angelic hosts, that with one word of rebuke they are able at any time to defeat the Devil.

Meditate and Pray: May the LORD increase our sense of security under the safe watch-care of our Savior and His angelic army. As in Pilgrim's Progress, we no doubt are at times terrified by the roaring of this terrible foe. But Satan the lion is chained!

Let us also give sober thanks that, *even now*, the sufferings of hell have begun in the mind of that fallen angel, Satan. As John Owen points out, every time the Evil One looks at the unfallen angels who so willingly serve us and worship God, he realizes what he could have been had he not thrown it all away in rebellion against God.

“God makes use of the ministry of angels in the service of the church *to reproach, awe, restrain, and torment the devil*. It is a continual reproach cast upon Satan, when he sees those unto whom he is like in nature, and with whom he was for some time a companion in glory, as they willingly, cheerfully, triumphantly obey the will of God in the service of Christ, to realize that by his own wickedness and folly, he cast out himself from the same honorable employment, and enslaved himself to the vilest

services that any creature could stoop to do – when he *used to have* the privilege of the highest and most noble service!” (pg 248, commentary on Hebrews 1:14)

But finally let us rejoice that, whereas Satan is an irredeemable spirit, God made man in His image with a soul and heart that can be reborn and redeemed. So by God’s enabling grace we are brought by the Spirit to see the vileness of our ways without God, and without hope in this world – and can turn in repentance to a new and living way of beauty, nobility, joy and holy purposes!

May God bring conversions in our midst, by convicting rank sinners of the wrath of heaven against them and by opening their eyes to see the King of the angels, the LORD of hosts: Jesus Christ. Amen