

Scripture = Jude 1-25

Psalter Selection = 18A; 54B; 64B; 139C

* *On God's glory*

1. This is the first of four messages intended to heighten our awareness of God's glory in the salvation of His people through the ministry of the Lord Jesus Christ. In the midst of all of the sensationalism in this holiday season, we need the sobering sanity of the Scriptures to renew our appreciation of the incarnation of God the Son, and the saving work He accomplished. Where should we begin? Let's begin with a trustworthy statement.
2. "The saying is trustworthy and deserving of full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners" (^{ESV} 1 Tim. 1:15). Who is Christ Jesus, and why did He come to save sinners?
3. If we trace back the biblical revelation of God's glory by starting with the incarnation of the Son of God, we understand that He had to be like us in every way (Heb. 4:7), except for sin (1 Joh. 3:5), so that He could save from the wrath of God those whom the Father gave to the Son (Joh. 17:24) before the foundation of the world (Eph. 1:4). Before creation, God planned for sin and salvation to reveal His glory. Sin reveals the glory of God's wrath. Salvation reveals the glory of God's grace. Salvation also reveals the glory of the Trinity, one God who is Three Persons. God the Father selects specific sinners for whom God the Son actually saves, and to whom God the Spirit seals their salvation. The entrance of sin and salvation indicate "the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! ... For of Him and through Him and to Him are all things, to whom be glory forever. Amen" (Rom 11:33, 36).

* *On Salvation's Battlefields*

1. Our communion with God rests upon our union in Christ. Our union with Christ centers on the wonders of God's redeeming grace. This is a doctrinal presentation. Instead of bringing out from a single text the message of God, we want to bring together many texts in order to ponder the immensity of saving grace. The unifying theme is "The Battlefields of Our Salvation."
2. This exploration can be summarized in several ways. The theme is what God has done and what you must receive. It is about the wonders of saving grace and the wretchedness of deadening sin.
 - a. Theologically, we are studying the doctrine of union with Christ.
 - b. Practically, we see the horror of sin and the astonishment of salvation.
 - c. Devotionally, we meditate on the revelation of God's overwhelming grace.
 - d. Spiritually, we reflect on how much we depend on the Lord Jesus Christ.
3. Our purpose is to declare our real and desperate need of God's grace and His salvation, and to proclaim the **indispensable necessity of union with Christ**.

4. Our salvation is revealed in the context of warfare, in the language of the battlefield. We shall review four major battles of our salvation. These battles are:
 - a. **The Battle in Heaven** *The Sin of Angels* The Selection of the Father
 - b. **The Battle in Eden** *The Sin of Man* The Sin of Humanity
 - c. **The Battle in Palestine** *The Cross of Christ* The Salvation of the Son
 - d. **The Battle in the Heart** ... *The Triumph of Grace* .. The Sanctification of the Spirit

5. All of these battles teach the indispensable necessity of union with Jesus Christ, and your indispensable need for God's enabling and sustaining grace. Only He is able to keep you from falling.

6. The *Westminster Confession of Faith* offers this summary in the Chapter 3, "Of God's Eternal Decree."

WCF 3:1 = God from all eternity, did, by the most wise and holy counsel of His own will, freely, and unchangeable ordain whatsoever comes to pass: yet so, as thereby neither is God the author of sin, nor is violence offered to the will of the creatures; nor is the liberty or contingency of second causes taken away, but rather established.

WCF 3:3 = By the decree of God, for the manifestation of His glory, some men and angels are predestined unto everlasting life; and others foreordained to everlasting death.

7. Jude begins and ends with statements of God's enabling and sustaining grace.

Jude 1b = To those who are called, sanctified by God the Father, and preserved in Jesus Christ

Jude 24 = Now to Him who is able to keep you from stumbling, and to present you faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy

8. Jude refers to the insurrection in heaven.

Jude 6 = And the angels who did not keep their proper domain, but left their own abode, He has reserved in everlasting chains under darkness for the judgment of the great day;

9. Other Scriptures which may offer information on the battle in heaven include:

Isaiah 14:12-15 = "How you are fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning! How you are cut down to the ground, You who weakened the nations! For you have said in your heart: 'I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God; I will also sit on the mount of the congregation On the farthest sides of the north; I will ascend above the heights of the clouds, I will be like the Most High.' Yet you shall be brought down to Sheol, To the lowest depths of the Pit."

2 Peter 2:4 = ... God did not spare the angels who sinned, but cast them down to hell and delivered them into chains of darkness, to be reserved for judgment;

Revelation 12:4 = His tail drew a third of the stars of heaven and threw them to the earth.

10. There was a battle in heaven of astonishing significance. We know little about that battle.
- a. However, there are fundamental ideas in Scripture for a summary of what happened.
 - b. John Murray wrote, "Sin was present in the universe prior to the fall of man. Already there was a kingdom of sin and of evil. Of that kingdom Satan was the head, a spirit of obviously exceptional ingenuity, skill and power. This pushes back the origin of sin and evil beyond the sphere of human life and experience. And it pushes back the problem of the origin of sin also. The mystery associated with the origin of sin goes back to, and enshrouds, the fall of Satan and of the angels who kept not their first estate. ... Back of all that is visible and tangible in the sin of this world there are unseen spiritual powers. Satan is the god of this world, the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now works in the sons of disobedience. The arch-foe of the kingdom of God is not the visible powers arrayed against it; for behind these visible agents and manifestations of evil is the ingenuity, craft, malicious design, instigation and relentless activity of the devil and his ministers." [*Collected Writings*, Vol. 2:67f.]
11. To investigate this battle in heaven, we ponder three areas concerning angels: Their CREATION; PROVOCATION; PROBATION

A. THE CREATION OF ANGELS

1. Angels were created as pure spirits.

- a. Angels were created by God through the agency of the Son.
Colossians 1:16 = For by Him all things were created that are in heaven and that are on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers. All things were created through Him and for Him. (Gen. 2:1; Exo. 20:11)
- b. Angels were created with a distinct nature, inferior to one that Christ has.
Hebrews 1:4 = having become so much better than the angels, as He has by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than they.
 - 1) Angels are holy or unholy.
Revelation 12:7 = And war broke out in heaven: Michael and his angels fought with the dragon; and the dragon and his angels fought.
 - 2) Angels love and rejoice.
Luke 15:10 = "Likewise, I say to you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents."
 - 3) Angels desire.
1 Peter 1:12 = To them it was revealed that, not to themselves, but to us they were ministering the things which now have been reported to you through those who have preached the gospel to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven -- things which angels desire to look into.
 - 4) Angels worship.
Hebrews 1:6 = But when He again brings the firstborn into the world, He says: "Let all the angels of God worship Him."
 - 5) Angels come and go.
Genesis 19:1a = Now the two angels came to Sodom in the evening, and Lot was sitting in the gate of Sodom.

- 6) Angels talk.
Luke 1:13 = But the angel said to him, “Do not be afraid, Zacharias, for your prayer is heard; and your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you shall call his name John. (Also Zech. 1:9)
 - 7) Angels have knowledge and finite wisdom.
Matthew 24:36 = But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, but My Father only. (Also 2 Sam. 14:20b)
 - 8) Angels minister in various acts.
Matthew 13:49 = So it will be at the end of the age. The angels will come forth, separate the wicked from among the just. (Also Luke 16:22; Acts 5:19)
 - 9) Angels are neither male nor female and cannot reproduce little cherubs. The whole vast host of angels was created in a moment. They are timeless spirits who experience either eternal glorification or damnation. Angels dwell with saints in heaven who resemble them.
Matthew 22:30 = For in the resurrection they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are like angels of God in heaven.
- c. Angels are exceedingly numerous.
Daniel 7:10 = A thousand thousands ministered to Him; Ten thousand times ten thousand stood before Him. (Also Gen. 32:1-2; Luke 2:13; 8:30; Mat. 26:53; Heb. 12:22)
 - d. Angels are called “spirits.”
Hebrews 1:14 = Are they not all ministering spirits sent forth to minister for those who will inherit salvation? (Also Luke 20:36; 24:39; Col. 1:16)
 - e. In summary, angels are intelligent and voluntary beings. They are invisible except when they assume bodies temporarily. They are inexpressibly quick in motion. Angels are able to occupy the same space with matter without displacing or being displaced by it. [Dabney, *Lectures*, p. 264ff.]
2. **Angels were created superior to and prior to man.**
 - a. They are beings of great power, passing over vast spaces with almost incredible speed (Dan. 9:23), exercising portentous physical powers (2 Kgs. 19:35; Zech. 12:8; Acts 12:7, 10; Mat. 28:2).
 - b. They are often spoken of as mighty beings (Psa. 103:2; Rev. 5:2; 10:1) and are spoken of as powers and principalities (Rom. 8:38; Eph 6:12; 2 Thes. 1:7). [Dabney, *Lectures*, p. 264ff.]

B. THE PROVOCATION OF ANGELS

1. **There are devils.** God did not create these beings as devils. God did not make this depraved world and evil men the way it actually is. God made angels upright, but some sought out their own devices.
2. **The fall of man is given in detail, but not the fall of the angels** (Jude 6; 2 Pet. 2:4). Some think Isaiah 14:12-15 gives a clue. There must have been a fall of angels because some were cast out of heaven. God is a good and would not have made evil beings. Since

there are evil beings, they must have brought it on themselves.

- a. Some suppose **blasphemy** against the Holy Spirit.
Mark 3:29 = “but he who blasphemes against the Holy Spirit never has forgiveness, but is subject to eternal condemnation”
- b. Some suggest **pride**.
1 Timothy 3:6 = not a novice, lest being puffed up with pride he fall into the same condemnation as the devil.
- c. Some suggest the angels’ **subordination** to man.
Hebrews 1:14 = Are they not all ministering spirits sent forth to minister for those who will inherit salvation?

3. The primary issue would have been unbelief in God’s word and rebellion against His law.

C. THE PROBATION OF ANGELS

1. **The nature of the probation of angels is not known exactly.** The only analogy we have is the probation of man. It may be that the fall of the angels was related to the incarnation. Angels were appointed as ministering servants of our salvation (Heb. 1:14). Did this disturb some angels and did some slip into arrogance (1 Tim. 3:6)?
2. **Angels are of a loftier order of being than we are.** They were created before us and excel in many respects as pure spiritual beings.
Psalm 148:2, 5 = Praise Him, all His angels; Praise Him, all His hosts! Let them praise the name of the LORD, For He commanded and they were created.
Colossians 1:16 = For by Him all things were created that are in heaven and that are on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers. All things were created through Him and for Him.
3. **Angels are subordinated to man.** This would have been a surprising thing in heaven. Did some angels entertain thoughts of pride and arrogance? Were some angels provoked by their service to humans?
 - a. Angels were by-passed by the Incarnation of the Son. God determined that He would save man by becoming a man, and deliver sinful man by His own ministry.
 - b. Angels were by-passed in the proclamation of the Gospel. God determined that He would ordinary proclaim salvation by men rather than by angels. (2 Corinthians 5:20 = ... we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were pleading through us: we implore you on Christ’s behalf, be reconciled to God.)
 - c. Angels will be judged by the saints. (1 Corinthians 6:2-3 = Do you not know that the saints shall judge the world? And if the world shall be judged by you, are you unworthy to judge the smallest matters? Do you not know that we shall judge angels? How much more, things that pertain to this life?)

4. Angels were tried individually.

- a. Some angels submitted to God's wisdom and ways and are known as the good angels. Some angels were offended, staged their battle against Almighty God in heaven, and are known as the evil angels, demons, or devils. Whatever the rebellion and resistance of those spirit beings which took exception to the decrees of God -- it was no contest.
- b. The problem of the origin of sin -- a good man choosing evil -- is more perplexing for the angels who had not known any external inducement to sin. Angels had individual probation which we did not have. They stood or fell individually. Their probation must be different because angels are non-physical and non-reproducing beings. Since angels are individuals without a representative, the features of covenants do not apply to angels which confirms that no salvation was planned for fallen angels.

5. Humans were tried by a representative.

- a. Is it **unfair** for us to be tried by a representative? No! It is **more than fair**. Adam had the additional incentive, beside the reward of life for faithfulness, the knowledge that the whole human race's destiny rested on his fidelity.
- b. God, who is not a respecter of persons, would have made clear what He wanted. He would have revealed that Adam represented the whole human race as well as himself. Similarly, He would have revealed to Cain and Abel what would be acceptable in their offering and in their attitude.
- c. With the progress of redemption, as it unfolded the drama of saving grace, angels appear with crucial events: Eden; Abraham; Moses; Elijah and Elisha; Daniel; Christ and the apostles.

Conclusion

1. The angels were sealed in their determined state of good or evil. God is not obligated to save any creature, nor did He offer salvation to fallen angels. There is no salvation for fallen angels. The justice of God we may always expect. The mercy of God is always surprising.
 2. Some angels, not being in union with God, fell from their created righteousness by their individual disbelief and disobedience, were cast out of heaven, and were damned. "By the decree of God, for the manifestation of His glory, some men and angels are predestined unto everlasting life; and other foreordained to everlasting death." [WCF 3:3]
- * Hebrews 2:14-18 = ¹⁴ Inasmuch then as the children have partaken of flesh and blood, He Himself likewise shared in the same, that through death He might destroy him who had the power of death, that is, the devil, ¹⁵ and release those who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage. ¹⁶ **For indeed He does not give aid to angels, but He does give aid to the seed of Abraham.** ¹⁷ Therefore, in all things He had to be made like His brethren, that He might be a merciful and faithful High Priest in things pertaining to God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people. ¹⁸ For in that He Himself has suffered, being tempted, He is able to aid those who are tempted. [NKJ]

3. The battle in heaven begins to reveal the indispensable necessity of our union with Christ. The sin of angels reveals the determined counsel of God the Father's supreme wisdom of selecting whomever He pleases, and His radiant holiness against the contrast of the abomination of sin.
4. God is glorified by revealing His holiness, His justice, and His sovereignty in the battle in heaven.

Resource: James M. Boice, Editor, *Our Savior God: Studies on Man, Christ, and the Atonement*, Baker Book House, 1980. Addresses presented to the Philadelphia Conference on Reformed Theology, 1977-1979.