

“BE-ing Spirit Led With Heavenly Help”

Matthew 4:11

October 13, 2024

INTRO: What is your theology of/on HELP?

(Who? What? Where? When? Why? & How?)

Biblical ANSWER = Psalm 121:2

Revisit today's sermon with notepad & Bible... Look up every verse referenced & build your theology...
(This sermon is designed to equip believers... while fitting between Secret Church 7 & Grudem's Christian Beliefs.)

PRAYER

CONTEXT:

- Series: Matthew's Gospel on Christ's Gospel mMm
- Recent focus:
 - **“Let US fulfill ALL righteousness...”**
 - **“Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit...”**
 - Since then we have had the following focus:
 - See Christ's **divinity** AND His **humanity**
 - Sermon Titles: “BE-ing Spirit-Led...”
 - *Are You BE-ing Spirit-Led?*
 - *...Spirit-Led Into The Wilderness*
 - *...Spirit-Led Into Trials*
 - *...Spirit-Led Into Devil's Peril*
 - *...Spirit-Led In Extreme Discomfort*
 - *...Spirit-Led A Sabotage*
 - *...Spirit-Led With The Word*
 - *...Spirit-Led Until The Devil Leaves*

BIG IDEA: Humanity needs heavenly help!

PREVIEW:

1. The **Almighty's** Help
2. The **Angel's** Help
3. The **Ambassador's** Help

TEXT:

Matthew 4:11

*Then the devil left
him, and behold, angels
came and were ministering to him.*

I. The **ALMIGHTY's** Help

“Him, and behold!”

- A. Jesus is **Him...** (See again, PSALM 121:2)
- B. Him is The Word, The LORD, & Almighty God! -JDP
 - a. Almighty is Trinity: *Father, Son, & Holy Spirit*
 - i. Father = *Giver of all hope, help & healing*
 - ii. Son = *Gift & sacrificial & atoning Helper.*
 - iii. The Holy Spirit = *Church's Helper*
 - b. John 1:1ff (*Jesus is the Word, Creator, God!*)
 - c. Colossians 1:1-23 (vv.15-23... vv.15-17)

C. **Behold** = BELIEVE!

- a. See & hear **PASSION!**
- b. See & hear **VISION!**
 - i. This “*behold*” reveals Christ’s divinity.
 - ii. This “*behold*” reveals Christ’s humanity.
- c. See & hear **MISSION!**
 - i. *Behold* goes backward & FORWARD...
 - ii. *Behold* is a heads-up for HOPE & HELP!

T/S:

VIDEO 1: (3:02)

What Does The Bible Say About Angels?

- *Are there angels among us?*
- *Why does the Bible call angels ministering spirits?*
- *What about witches, witchcraft, psychics, etc...*
- *Who is Michael the archangel?*
- *Is there really an “angel of death?”*
- *Do we have guardian angels?*
- *Do real angels really appear to people today?*

II. The **ANGEL’S** Help

“angels came and were ministering”

(See again, **PSALM 121:2**)

- **angels** see above & Secret Church 7 + Grudem’s books...
- **came** = intentional... sent... missional...

VIDEO 2: (3:45)

Are There Angels Among Us?

- **and** > just showing up... (1 John 3:18)
- **were ministering / serving** = Passion & Purpose
 - **Ministering** here means *servicing*.
 - **Ministering** here means *missional servicing*.
 - **Ministering** here means **Messianic servicing**.
 - To
 - For

VIDEO 3: (4:15)

What Does It Mean That Angels Are Ministering Spirits?

- **Ministering later** means **Messianic servicing**.
 - Like
 - With

A. Angels Defined

a. BE biblical...

- i. **Messengers** (good & evil)
 1. God's good = angels
 2. **Devil's evil** = demons

VIDEO 4: (7:36)

Got Q's On Witches, Psychics, etc...

- ii. **Warriors** (ie. Michael vs. demons)

VIDEO 5: (3:23)

Who Is Michael The Archangel?

b. **BEWARE** cultural...

VIDEO 6: (2:23)

Is There An Angel Of Death?

B. Angels Described

- a. Heavenly helpers
- b. Heavenly ambassadors
- c. Heavenly warriors

VIDEO 7: (3:09)

Do We Have Guardian Angels?

C. Angels Deployed

- a. Deployed to Christ
 - i. Here...
 - ii. In the Garden of Gethsemane

- b. Deployed to Combat

- c. Deployed to Church
 - i. Luke 1:26ff
 - ii. Matthew 2:13-15
 - iii. Acts 5:19-20
 - iv. Acts 12:6-12

VIDEO 8: (6:00)

Do Angels Appear To People Today?

III. The **AMBASSADOR's** Help

“to Him.”

- A. Biblically, we know that here the angels are serving & ministering to Him/Jesus Christ...

- B. Biblically, we also know that TODAY His angels serve & minister to Christ's family.
 - a. See the O.T. examples:
 - i. Elisha in 2 Kings 6
 - ii. Daniel 10:13

 - b. See N.T. examples:
 - i. Jude 1:9
 - ii. Acts 5 (above)
 - iii. Acts 12 (above)
 - iv. Revelation 12:7-8
 - v. Ephesians 6:10ff

C. Ambassadors help...

- a. Their ***own ambassadorship vertically***

- b. The ***world horizontally***
 - i. Mission-field
 - ii. Ministries
 - iii. Mirror(s)

c. Their *family* (**Church & traditional**)

- i. Biblically
- ii. Missionally
- iii. Holistically

1. Prayer

2. Truth IN Love (> Logos + Rhema!)

3. Faithfully Abide-in & obey Christ

(7 I's, 5 E's, 3 HD's, & 1:8 period!!!)

- a. Initiate
- b. Invest
- c. Invite
- d. Inform
- e. Inspect
- f. Inspire
- g. Impact
- h. Engage
- i. Explain
- j. Equip
- k. Empower
- l. Exemplify
- m. Make 3H-Disciples
- n. Who 3H-Make Disciples
- o. Who 3H-Make Disciples
- p. **Locally**
- q. **Regionally**
- r. **Globally**
- s. No more. *(Biblically)*
- t. No less. *(Missionally)*
- u. No matter what! *(Passionately)*

v. By God's grace...
w. Thru Christ's Gospel...
x. For His glory!
y. ***Amen***
z. ***and AMEN!***

REVIEW: Humanity NEEDS heavenly help!
(See again, PSALM 121:2)

CLOSE:

1. See the Almighty Source & Sender of help.
2. See the sent & serving (good) angels of help.
3. *See the supernatural ambassadors of help.*

Isaiah 52:7 & Romans 10:15

And how are they to preach unless they are sent?

As it is written,

***“How beautiful are the feet
of those who preach the good news!”***

Christian...here's good news & your theology of HELP...

1. Help **CHOSE** you.
2. Help **FOUND/CAME**-to you.
3. Help **SAVED** you.
4. Help is **OVER** you.
5. Help is **IN/WITH** you.
6. Help is **ALL AROUND** you.
7. Help **IS** you.
 - a. *You are “the Good Samaritan.”*
 - b. *You “bear one another’s burdens...”*
 - c. *You “love one another” (TRULY love...)*
 - d. *You “go and make disciples...”*
 - e. *You “follow” Jesus & go “as the Father sent” Him*
 - i. *You do ALL things as unto the LORD*
 - ii. *You seek to live a life worthy of your calling*
 - iii. *You KNOW the enemy has been defeated*
 - iv. *You destroy Satan’s strongholds...*
 - v. *You are an overwhelming overcomer...*

TOGETHER...

We BE The Church!

PRAYER

WORSHIP: *Hold Us Together & And All The People Said Amen*

STUDY NOTES:

◀ Matthew 4:11 ▶

Text Analysis

[Go to Parallel Greek](#)

Strong's	Greek	English	Morphology
5119 [e]	Τότε Tote	Then	Adv
863 [e]	ἀφήσιν aphiēsin	leaves	V-PIA-3S
846 [e]	αὐτὸν auton	Him	PPro-AM3S
3588 [e]	ὁ ho	the	Art-NMS
1228 [e]	διάβολος, diabolos	devil,	Adj-NMS
2532 [e]	καὶ kai	and	Conj
3708 [e]	ἰδοὺ idou	behold,	V-AMA-2S
32 [e]	ἄγγελοι angeloi	angels	N-NMP
4334 [e]	προσῆλθον prosēlthon	came	V-AIA-3P
2532 [e]	καὶ kai	and	Conj

1247 [e]	διηκόνουν diēkonoun	were ministering	V-IIA-3P
846 [e]	αὐτῷ. autō	to Him.	PPro-DM3S

◀ 3708. horaó ▶

Strong's Concordance

horaó: to see, perceive, attend to

Original Word: ὁράω

Part of Speech: Verb

Transliteration: horaó

Phonetic Spelling: (hor-ah'-o)

Definition: to see, perceive, attend to

Usage: I see, look upon, experience, perceive, discern, beware.

HELPS Word-studies

3708 *horáō* – properly, *see*, often with *metaphorical* meaning: "to see with the mind" (i.e. spiritually see), i.e. perceive (with inward spiritual perception).

[The aorist form (*eidon*), is discussed at [1492](#) /*eídō*, "see." The future tense, and middle-passive form, are discussed under [3700](#) /*optánomai*, "see."]

NAS Exhaustive Concordance

Word Origin

a prim. verb

Definition

to see, perceive, attend to

NASB Translation

appear (2), appeared (21), appearing (1), behold (3), beware (1), certainly seen (1), do (2), look (5), look after (1), looked (12), perceive (3), recognizing (1), saw (180), see (129), seeing (20),

seen (63), seen...see (1), sees (2), suffer (1), undergo (3), underwent (1), watch (2), witnessed (1).

Thayer's Greek Lexicon

STRONGS NT 3708: ὁπτω

ὁπτω, see ὁράω.

STRONGS NT 3708: ὁράω ὁράω, ὁρῶ; imperfect 3 person plural ἑώρων ([John 6:2](#), where L Tr WH ἔθεώρουν); perfect ἑώρακα and (T WH in [Colossians 2:1, 18](#); ([1 Corinthians 9:1](#)); Tdf. edition 7 also in [John 9:37](#); [John 15:24](#); [John 20:25](#); [1 John 3:6](#); [1 John 4:20](#); [3 John 1:11](#)) ἑώρακα (on which form cf. (WHs Appendix, p. 161; Tdf. Proleg., p. 122; Stephanus Thesaurus, under the word, 2139 d.); Alexander Buttmann (1873) Ausf. Spr. i., p. 325; (Buttmann, 64 (56); Veitch, under the word)) (2 person singular ἑώρακες ([John 8:57](#) Tr marginal reading) see [κοπιᾶω](#), at the beginning), 3 person plural ἑώρακασιν (and ἑώρακαν in [Colossians 2:1](#) L Tr WH; [Luke 9:36](#) T Tr WH; see [γίνομαι](#), at the beginning); pluperfect 3 person singular ἑώρακει ([Acts 7:44](#)); future ὄψομαι (from ὀπτω), 2 person singular ὄψει (cf. Alexander Buttmann (1873) Ausf. Spr. i., p. 347f; Kühner, § 211, 3, i., p. 536), [Matthew 27:4](#); [John 1:50](#) (); ; but L T Tr WH (G also in [John 1:50](#) ()) have restored ὄψη (cf. Winer's Grammar, § 13, 2; Buttmann, 42f (37)), 2 person plural ὄψεσθε, [John 1:39](#) () T Tr WH, etc.; passive, 1 aorist ὤφθην; future ὀφθήσομαι; 1 aorist middle subjunctive 2 person plural ὄψησθε ([Luke 13:28](#) (R G L WH text Tr marginal reading)) from a Byzantine form ὠψαμην (see Lob. ad Phryn., p. 734, cf. Alexander Buttmann (1873) Ausf. Spr. ii., 258f; (Veitch, under the word)); the Sept. for הִרְאָה and הִרְאָה ; (from Homer down); to see, i. e.:

1. to see with the eyes: [τινα ὁρᾶν](#), ἑωρακέναι, [Luke 16:23](#); [John 8:57](#); [John 14:7, 9](#); [John 20:18, 25, 29](#); [1 Corinthians 9:1](#), etc.; future ὄψομαι, [Matthew 28:7, 10](#); [Mark 16:7](#); [Revelation 1:7](#), etc.; [τόν Θεόν](#), [1 John 4:20](#); [ἀόρατον ὡς ὁρῶν](#), [Hebrews 11:27](#); with a participle added as a predicate (Buttmann, 301 (258); Winer's Grammar, § 45, 4), [Matthew 24:30](#); [Mark 13:26](#); [Mark 14:62](#); [Luke 21:27](#); [John 1:51](#) (52); ἑωρακέναι or ὄψεσθαι τό πρόσωπον τίνος, [Colossians 2:1](#); [Acts 20:25](#); ὁ (which divine majesty, i.

e. τοῦ θεοῦ λόγου) ἑώρακαμεν τοῖς ὀφθαλμοῖς ἡμῶν (on this addition cf. Winer's Grammar, 607 (564); (Buttmann, 398 (341))), [1 John 1:1](#); ὄψεσθαι τινα, i. e. come to see, visit, one, [Hebrews 13:23](#); ἑωρακέναι Christ, i. e. to have seen him exhibiting proofs of his divinity and Messiahship, [John 6:36](#); [John 9:37](#); [John 15:24](#); ὁρᾶν and ὄψεσθαι with an

accusative of the thing, [Luke 23:49](#); [John 1:50](#) (); (L Tr WH ἐθεώρουν); ; [Acts 2:17](#); [Acts 7:44](#); [Revelation 18:18](#) (Rec.), etc.; (ἔρχεσθε καὶ ὄψεσθε (namely, τοῦ μένω), [John 1:40](#) () T Tr WH; cf. Buttman, 290 (250)); ὄψη τὴν δόξαν τοῦ Θεοῦ, the glory of God displayed in a miracle, [John 11:40](#). metaphorically, ὄψεσθαὶ τὸν Θεόν, τὸν κύριον, to be admitted into intimate and blessed fellowship with God in his future kingdom, [Matthew 5:8](#); [Hebrews 12:14](#); also τό πρόσωπον τοῦ Θεοῦ, [Revelation 22:4](#) — (a figure borrowed from those privileged to see and associate with kings; see βλέπω, 1 b. β.); οὐκ εἶδος Θεοῦ ἑώρακάτε, tropically equivalent to his divine majesty as he discloses it in the Scriptures ye have not recognized, [John 5:37](#); cf. Meyer at the passage

2. to see with the mind, to perceive, know: absolutely, [Romans 15:21](#); τινα followed by a participle in the accusative (Buttmann, § 144,15 b.; Winer's Grammar, § 45, 4), [Acts 8:23](#); τί, [Colossians 2:18](#); with a participle added, [Hebrews 2:8](#); followed by ὅτι, [James 2:24](#); **to look at or upon, observe, give attention to:** εἰς τινα, [John 19:37](#) (Sophocles El. 925; Xenophon, Cyril 4, 1, 20; εἰς τί, Solon in (Diogenes Laërtius 1, 52); ἑωρακέναι παρὰ τῷ πατρὶ, to have learned from (see παρὰ, II. b.) the father (a metaphorical expression borrowed from sons, who learn what they see their fathers doing), [John 8:38](#) (twice in Rec.; once in L T Tr WH); Christ is said to deliver to men ἃ ἑώρακεν, the things which he has seen, i. e. which he learned in his heavenly state with God before the incarnation, i. e. things divine, the counsels of God, [John 3:11, 32](#); ἑωρακέναι Θεόν, to know God's will, [3 John 1:11](#); from the contact and influence of Christ to have come to see (know) God's majesty, saving purposes, and will (cf. Winer's Grammar, 273 (257)), [John 14:7, 9](#); in an emphatic sense, of Christ, who has an immediate and perfect knowledge of God without being taught by another, [John 1:18](#); [John 6:46](#); ὄψεσθαὶ Θεόν καθὼς ἐστίν, of the knowledge of God that may be looked for in his future kingdom, [1 John 3:2](#); ὄψεσθαὶ Christ, is used in reference to the apostles, about to perceive his invisible presence among them by his influence upon their souls through the Holy Spirit, [John 16:16, 19](#); Christ is said ὄψεσθαὶ the apostles, i. e. will have knowledge of them, *ibid.* 22.

3. to see i. e. to become acquainted with by experience, to experience: ζῶν, equivalent to to become a partaker of, [John 3:36](#); ἡμέραν (cf. German erleben; see εἰδῶ, I. 5), [Luke 17:22](#) (Sophocles O. R. 831).

4. to see to, look to; i. e.

a. equivalent to **to take heed, beware** (see especially Buttman, § 139, 49; cf. Winer's Grammar, 503 (469)): ὁρᾷ μή, with aorist subjunctive, **see that ... not, take heed lest**, [Matthew 8:4](#); [Matthew 18:10](#); [Mark 1:44](#); [1 Thessalonians 5:15](#); supply τοῦτο ποιήσης in [Revelation 19:10](#); [Revelation 22:9](#) (Winer's Grammar, 601 (558); Buttman, 395 (338)) (Xenophon, Cyril 3, 1, 27, where see Poppe; Sophocles Philoct. 30,

519; El. 1003); followed by an imperative, [Matthew 9:30](#); [Matthew 24:6](#); [ὄρατε καὶ προσέχετε ἀπὸ, Matthew 16:6](#); [ὄρατε, βλέπετε ἀπὸ, Mark 8:15](#); [ὄρατε, καὶ φυλάσσεσθε ἀπὸ, Luke 12:15](#); [ὄρα, τί μέλλεις ποιεῖν](#), equivalent to **weigh well**, [Acts 22:26](#) Rec. ([ὄρα τί ποιεῖς](#), Sophocles Philoct. 589).

b. equivalent to **to care for, pay heed to**: [σύ ὄψη](#) (R G ὄψει (see above)), **see thou to it, that will be thy concern** (cf. Winer's Grammar, § 40, 6), [Matthew 27:4](#); plural, 24; [Acts 18:15](#) (Epictetus diss. 2, 5, 30; 4, 6, 11f; (Antoninus 5, 25 (and Gataker at the passage)))).

5. passive 1 aorist [ὄφθην](#), **I was seen, showed myself, appeared** (cf. Buttman, 52 (45)): [Luke 9:31](#); with the dative of person (cf. Buttman, as above (also § 134, 2; cf. Winer's Grammar, § 31, 10)): of angels, [Luke 1:11](#); [Luke 22:43](#) (L brackets WH reject the passage); [Acts 7:30, 35](#) ([Exodus 3:2](#)); of God, [Acts 7:2](#) ([Genesis 12:7](#); [Genesis 17:1](#)); of the dead, [Matthew 17:3](#); [Mark 9:4](#), cf. [Luke 9:31](#); of Jesus after his resurrection, [Luke 24:34](#); [Acts 9:17](#); [Acts 13:31](#); [Acts 26:16](#); [1 Corinthians 15:5-8](#); [1 Timothy 3:16](#); of Jesus hereafter to return, [Hebrews 9:28](#); of visions during sleep or ecstasy, [Acts 16:9](#); [Revelation 11:19](#); [Revelation 12:1, 8](#); in the sense of **coming upon unexpectedly**, [Acts 2:3](#); [Acts 7:26](#). future passive [ὄν ὀφθήσομαι σοι](#), on account of which I will appear unto thee, [Acts 26:16](#); on this passive see Winer's Grammar, § 39, 3 N. 1; cf. Buttman, 287 (247); (Compare: [ἀφοράω](#), [καθοράω](#), [πρωράω](#).) [SYNONYMS: [ὄραν](#), [βλέπειν](#), both denote the physical act: [ὄραν](#) in general, [βλέπειν](#) the single look; [ὄραν](#) gives prominence to the discerning mind, [βλέπειν](#) to the particular mood or point. When the physical side recedes, [ὄραν](#) denotes perception in general (as resulting principally from vision), the prominence in the word of the mental element being indicated by the construction of the accusative with an infinitive (in contrast with that of the participle required with [βλέπειν](#)), and by the absolute [ὄρας](#); [βλέπειν](#) on the other hand, when its physical side recedes, gets a purely outward sense, **look** (i. e. open, incline) **toward**, *Latin* spectare, *vergere*. Schmidt, chapter 11. Cf. [θεωρέω](#), [σκοπέω](#), [εἰδῶ](#), I. at the end]

Strong's Exhaustive Concordance

behold, perceive, see

Properly, to stare at (compare [optanomai](#)), i.e. (by implication) to discern clearly (physically or mentally); by extension, to attend to; by Hebraism, to experience; passively, to appear -- behold, perceive, see, take heed.

see GREEK [optanomai](#)

◀ 32. aggelos ▶

Strong's Concordance

aggelos: an angel, messenger

Original Word: ἄγγελος, ου, ό

Part of Speech: Noun, Masculine

Transliteration: aggelos

Phonetic Spelling: (ang'-el-os)

Definition: a messenger, angel

Usage: a messenger, generally a (supernatural) messenger from God, an angel, conveying news or behests from God to men.

HELPS Word-studies

32 *ággelos* – properly, a messenger or delegate – either human (Mt 11:10; Lk 7:24, 9:52; Gal 4:14; Js 2:25) or heavenly (a celestial *angel*); someone *sent* (by God) to proclaim His message.

32 (*ággelos*) is used 176 times in the NT (usually of heavenly angels), but only the context determines whether a human or celestial messenger is intended. For example, 32 (*ággelos*) in Rev 1:20 can refer to heavenly angels or key leaders (perhaps pastors) of the seven churches.

[32 (*ággelos*) can refer to "a human messenger" (cf. John the Baptist, Mt 11:10, quoting Mal 3:1; see also Lk 7:24, 9:52). 32 /*ággelos* (plural, *angeloi*) refers to *heavenly angels* over 150 times in the NT, i.e. *spiritual* beings created by God to serve His plan.

In Rev 2, 3, "angels" seems to refer to heavenly angels that serve God in conjunction with these seven local churches.

(Rev 2:1) – "Probably 'the *angels* of the churches' (Rev 1:20, 2:1, etc.) – i.e. *really angels*, and not pastors" (*DNTT*, Vol 1, 103).]

Thayer's Greek Lexicon

STRONGS NT 32: ἄγγελος

ἄγγελος, , ό,

1. a messenger, envoy, one who is sent: [Matthew 11:10](#); [Luke 7:24, 27](#); [Luke 9:52](#); [Mark 1:2](#); [James 2:25](#). (From Homer down.)

2. In the Scriptures, both of the Old Testament and of the New Testament, one of that host of heavenly spirits that, according alike to Jewish and Christian opinion, wait upon the monarch of the universe, and are sent by him to earth, now to execute his purposes ([Matthew 4:6, 11](#); [Matthew 28:2](#); [Mark 1:13](#); [Luke 16:22](#); [Luke 22:43](#) (L brackets WH reject the passage); [Acts 7:35](#); ; [Galatians 3:19](#), cf. [Hebrews 1:14](#)), now to make them known to men ([Luke 1:11, 26](#); [Luke 2:9ff](#); [Acts 10:3](#); [Acts 27:23](#); [Matthew 1:20](#); [Matthew 2:13](#); [Matthew 28:5](#); [John 20:12f](#)); hence, the frequent expressions ἄγγελος (angel, messenger of God, מַלְאָכִים) and ἄγγελοι κυρίου or ἄγγελοι τοῦ Θεοῦ. They are subject not only to God but also to Christ ([Hebrews 1:4ff](#); [1 Peter 3:22](#), cf. [Ephesians 1:21](#); [Galatians 4:14](#)), who is described as hereafter to return to judgment surrounded by a multitude of them as servants and attendants: [Matthew 13:41, 49](#); [Matthew 16:27](#); [Matthew 24:31](#); [Matthew 25:31](#); [2 Thessalonians 1:7](#), cf. [Jude 1:14](#). Single angels have the charge of separate elements; as fire, [Revelation 14:18](#); waters, [Revelation 16:5](#), cf. [Revelation 7:1](#); [John 5:4](#) (R L). Respecting the ἄγγελος τῆς ἀβύσσου, [Revelation 9:11](#), see Ἀβαδδών,

3. Guardian angels of individuals are mentioned in [Matthew 18:10](#); [Acts 12:15](#). 'The angels of the churches' in [Revelation 1:20](#); [Revelation 2:1, 8, 12, 18](#); [Revelation 3:1, 7, 14](#) are not their presbyters or bishops, but heavenly spirits who exercise such a superintendence and guardianship over them that whatever in their assemblies is worthy of praise or of censure is counted to the praise or the blame of their angels also, as though the latter infused their spirit into the assemblies; cf. DeWette, Düsterdieck (Alford) on [Revelation 1:20](#), and Lücke, Einl. in d. Offenb. d. Johan. ii., p. 429f, edition 2; (Lightfoot on Philip., p. 199f). **διὰ τοὺς ἀγγέλους that she may show reverence for the anqels**, invisibly present in the religious assemblies of Christians, **and not displease them**, [1 Corinthians 11:10](#). ὥφθη ἀγγέλοις in [1 Timothy 3:16](#) is probably to be explained neither of angels to whom Christ exhibited himself in heaven, nor of demons triumphed over by him in the nether world, but of the apostles, his messengers, to whom he appeared after his resurrection. This appellation, which is certainly extraordinary, is easily understood from the nature of the hymn from which the passage ἐφανερώθη ... ἐν δόξῃ seems to have been taken; cf. Winer's Grammar, 639f (594) (for other interpretations see Ellicott, at the passage). In [John 1:51](#) (52) angels are employed, by a beautiful image borrowed from [Genesis 28:12](#), to represent the divine power that will aid Jesus in the discharge of his Messianic office, and the signal proofs to appear in his history of a divine superintendence. Certain of the angels have proved faithless to the trust committed to them by God, and have given themselves up to sin, [Jude 1:6](#); [2 Peter 2:4](#) (Enoch c. vi. etc., cf. [Genesis 6:2](#)), and now obey the devil, [Matthew 25:41](#); [Revelation 12:7](#), cf. [1 Corinthians 6:3](#) (yet on this last passage cf. Meyer; he and others maintain that ἄγγελοι without an epithet or limitation never in the N. T. signifies other than good angels). Hence, ἄγγελος Σατᾶν is tropically used in [2 Corinthians 12:7](#) to denote a grievous bodily malady sent by Satan. See δαίμων; (Sophocles' Lexicon, under the word ἄγγελος; and for the literature on the whole subject B.

D. American edition under the word Angels — and to the references there given add G. L. Hahn, Theol. des N. T., i., pp. 260-384; Delitzsch in Riehm under the word Engel; Kübel in Herzog edition 2, *ibid.*.)

STRONGS NT 32b: ἄγγος ἄγγος, (εὐαγγέλιον, τό (plural ἄγγη), equivalent to εὐαγγέλιον, which see: [Matthew 13:48](#) T Tr WH. (From Homer down; (cf. Rutherford, New Phryn., p. 23).)

Strong's Exhaustive Concordance

angel, messenger.

From *aggello* (probably derived from [ago](#); compare [agele](#)) (to bring tidings); a messenger; especially an "angel"; by implication, a pastor -- angel, messenger.

see GREEK [ago](#)

see GREEK [agele](#)

◀ 4334. proserchomai ▶

Strong's Concordance

proserchomai: to approach, to draw near

Original Word: προσέρχομαι

Part of Speech: Verb

Transliteration: proserchomai

Phonetic Spelling: (pros-er'-khom-ahee)

Definition: to approach, to draw near

Usage: I come up to, come to, come near (to), approach, consent (to).

NAS Exhaustive Concordance

Word Origin

from [pros](#) and [erchomai](#)

Definition

to approach, to draw near

NASB Translation

agree (1), approached (2), approaching (1), came (64), came forward (2), come (2), comes (1), coming (3), draw near (4), go (1), visit (1), went (6).

Thayer's Greek Lexicon

STRONGS NT 4334: προσέρχομαι

προσέρχομαι; imperfect 3 person plural **προσῆρχοντο** ([Acts 28:9](#)); (future 3 person singular **προσελεύσεται**, [Luke 1:17](#) WH marginal reading); 2 aorist 3 person plural **προσῆλθον** and (so L Tr WH in [Matthew 9:28](#); [Matthew 13:36](#); [Matthew 14:15](#); T Tr WH in [Matthew 5:1](#); [Luke 13:31](#); WH in [Matthew 19:3](#); [Matthew 21:23](#); [John 12:21](#)) in the Alex. form **προσῆλθαν** (see **ἀπέρχομαι**, and **ἔρχομαι**); perfect **προσελήλυθα** ([Hebrews 12:18, 22](#)); from Aeschylus and Herodotus down; the Sept. for **בָּרַךְ** and **שָׁאַל**; **to come to, to approach** (**πρός**, IV. 1);

a. properly, absolutely, [Matthew 4:11](#); Luke (WH marginal reading); ; [Acts 8:29](#); [Acts 28:9](#); **προσῆλθον λέγοντες**, [Luke 13:31](#); with rhetorical fullness of description (see **ἀνίστημι**, II. 1 c. (also **ἔρχομαι**, p. 250b bottom)) the participle **προσελθών** is joined to a finite verb which denotes a different action: [Matthew 8:2](#) L T Tr WH, [Matthew 8:19, 25](#); [Matthew 9:20](#); [Matthew 13:10, 27](#); [Matthew 14:12](#); [Matthew 15:12, 23](#); [Matthew 16:1](#); [Matthew 17:7](#) (R, G); T Tr WH marginal reading (according to a reading no doubt corrupt (cf. Scrivener, Introduction, p. 16)), ; ; [Mark 1:31](#); [Mark 10:2](#); [Mark 12:28](#); ([Mark 14:35](#) Tr WH marginal reading); [Luke 7:14](#); [Luke 8:24, 44](#); [Luke 9:12, 42](#); [Luke 10:34](#); [Luke 20:27](#); [Luke 23:36](#); [Acts 22:26f](#); **προσέρχομαι** followed by an infinitive indicating the reason why one has drawn near, [Matthew 24:1](#); [Acts 7:31](#); [Acts 12:13](#) (here WH marginal reading **προσηλθε**); with a dative of the place (examples from Greek authors are given in Passow, under the word, 1 a., p. 1190a; (Liddell and Scott, under the word, I. 1)), [Hebrews 12:18, 22](#); with the dative of a person (see Lexicons as above), [Matthew 5:1](#); [Matthew 8:5](#); [Matthew 9:14, 28](#); [Matthew 13:36](#); [Matthew 14:15](#); [Matthew 15:1, 30](#); [Matthew 17:14, 24](#); [Matthew 18:1](#); [Matthew 19:3](#); [Matthew 20:20](#); [Matthew 21:14, 23](#); [Matthew 22:23](#); [Matthew 24:3](#); [Matthew 26:7, 17, 69](#); [John 12:21](#); [Acts 10:28](#); [Acts 18:2](#); [Acts 24:23](#) Rec.; (with **ἐπί** and the accusative [Acts 20:13](#) Tr WH marginal reading). The participle **προσελθών αὐτῷ** with a finite verb (see above) occurs in [Matthew 4:3](#); [Matthew 18:21](#); [Matthew 21:28, 30](#); [Matthew 26:49](#); [Matthew 27:58](#); [Mark 6:35](#); [Mark 14:45](#); [Luke 20:27](#); [Luke 23:52](#); [Acts 9:1](#); [Acts 23:14](#).

b. tropically, **a.** **προσέρχεσθαι τῷ Θεῷ**, **to draw near to God** in order to seek his grace and favor, [Hebrews 7:25](#); [Hebrews 11:6](#); **τῷ θρόνῳ τῆς χάριτος**, [Hebrews 4:16](#); without **τῷ Θεῷ**, [Hebrews 10:1, 22](#) (in the O. T. **προσέρχεσθαι**, simply, is used of the priests about to offer sacrifices, [Leviticus 21:17, 21](#); [Deuteronomy 21:5](#); with the addition of **πρός Θεόν**, of one about to ask counsel of God, [1 Samuel 14:36](#); with **τοῖς θεοῖς**, of suppliants about to implore the gods, Dio Cassius, 56, 9); **πρός Χριστόν**, to attach oneself to Christ, to come to a participation in the benefits procured by him, [1 Peter 2:4](#) (cf. Winer's Grammar, § 52, 3). **β.** equivalent to **to assent to** (cf. German beitreten (Latin accedere);

English **come (over) to**, used figuratively)): *ὑγιαίνουσι λόγοις*, [1 Timothy 6:3](#) (Tdf. *προσέχεται*, which see 3).

Strong's Exhaustive Concordance

approach, come to

From [pros](#) and [erchomai](#) (including its alternate); to approach, i.e. (literally) come near, visit, or (figuratively) worship, assent to -- (as soon as he) come (unto), come thereunto, consent, draw near, go (near, to, unto).

see GREEK [pros](#)

see GREEK [erchomai](#)

◀ 1247. diakoneó ▶

Strong's Concordance

diakoneó: to serve, minister

Original Word: διακονέω

Part of Speech: Verb

Transliteration: diakoneó

Phonetic Spelling: (dee-ak-on-eh'-o)

Definition: to serve, minister

Usage: I wait at table (particularly of a slave who waits on guests); I serve (generally).

HELPS Word-studies

Cognate: 1247 *diakonéō* (from [1249](#) /*diákonos*) – *actively serve* – literally, "kicking up dust" because "on the move." See [1249](#) (*diakonos*).

[1247](#) /*diakonéō* ("to serve") means caring for the needs of others as the Lord guides in an *active, practical* way.

[See the close connection of faith (4102 /*pístis*) and 1247 (*diakonéō*) in: Ac 6:2-7; 1 Tim 3:9,10; Heb 6:10-12.]

NAS Exhaustive Concordance

Word Origin

from [diakonos](#)

Definition

to serve, minister

NASB Translation

administered (1), administration (1), cared (1), contributing...support (1), do...the serving (1), employ...in serving (1), minister (3), ministered (2), ministering (3), servant (1), serve (4), serve as deacons (1), served (2), served as deacons (1), serves (5), services...rendered (1), serving (4), take care (1), wait (1), waited (3).

Thayer's Greek Lexicon

STRONGS NT 1247: διακονέω

διακονέω, **διακόνω**; imperfect **δηκόνουν** (as if the verb were compounded of **διά** and **ἀκονέω**, for the rarer and earlier form **ἐδιακονουν**, cf. Buttman, 35 (31); Ph. Alexander Buttman (1873) *Ausf. Spr.* § 86 Anm. 6; Krüger, § 28, 14, 13); (future **διακονήσω**); 1 aorist **δηκόνησα** (for the earlier **ἐδιακόνησα**); passive, present participle **διακονουμενος**; 1 aorist infinitive **διακονηθῆναι**, participle **διακονηθεις**; (**διάκονος**, which see); in Greek writings from (Sophocles), Herodotus down; **to be a servant, attendant, domestic; to serve, wait upon**;

1. universally: (absolutely **ὁ διακονῶν**, [Luke 22:26](#)); with the dative of person **to minister to one; render ministering offices to**: [John 12:26](#); [Acts 19:22](#); [Philemon 1:13](#); passive **to be served, ministered unto** (Winers Grammar, § 39, 1; (Buttmann, 188 (163))): [Matthew 20:28](#); [Mark 10:45](#).

2. Like the Latin ministrare, **to wait at table and offer food and drink to the guests**, (cf. Winer's Grammar, 593 (552)): with the dative of person, [Matthew 4:11](#); [Matthew 8:15](#); [Mark 1:13, 31](#); [Luke 4:39](#); [Luke 12:37](#); [Luke 17:8](#); absolutely **ὁ διακονῶν**, [Luke 22:27](#); so also of women preparing food, [Luke 10:40](#); [John 12:2](#); (Menander quoted in Athen. 6 c. 46, p. 245 c.; Anacreon () 4, 6; others; passive **διακονεῖσθαι ὑπὸ τίνος**, Diodorus 5, 28; Philo, vit. contempl. § 9).

3. to minister, i. e. **supply food and the necessities of life**: with the dative of person, [Matthew 25:44](#); [Matthew 27:55](#); [Mark 15:41](#); **δηκόνουν αὐτοῖς ἐκ**:

(Rec. ἀπό) τῶν ὑπαρχόντων αὐταῖς, [Luke 8:3](#); **to relieve one's necessities** (e. g. by collecting alms): [Romans 15:25](#); [Hebrews 6:10](#) τροπέζαις, to provide, take care of, distribute, the things necessary to sustain life, [Acts 6:2](#). absolutely, those are said διακονεῖν, i. e. to take care of the poor and the sick, who administer the office of **deacon** (see [διάκονος](#), 2) in the Christian churches, **to serve as deacons**: [1 Timothy 3:10, 13](#); [1 Peter 4:11](#) (many take this last example in a general rather than an official sense).

4. with the accusative of the thing, **to minister**, i. e. **attend to, anything**, that may serve another's interests: χάρις διακονουμένη ὑφ' ἡμῶν, [2 Corinthians 8:19](#); (ἀδρότης, *ibid.* 20); ὅσα δηκόνησε, how many things I owe to his ministration, [2 Timothy 1:18](#); ἐπιστολή διακονηθεῖσα ὑφ' ἡμῶν, an epistle written, as it were, by our serving as amanuenses, [2 Corinthians 3:3](#). with the accusative of the thing and the dative of person, **to minister a thing unto one, to serve one with or by supplying anything**: [1 Peter 1:12](#); τί εἰς ἑαυτούς, i. e. εἰς ἀλλήλους, **to one another**, for mutual use, [1 Peter 4:10](#).

Strong's Exhaustive Concordance

administer, serve, use the office of a deacon.

From [diakonos](#); to be an attendant, i.e. Wait upon (menially or as a host, friend, or (figuratively) teacher); technically, to act as a Christian deacon -- (ad-)minister (unto), serve, use the office of a deacon.

see GREEK [diakonos](#)

Ellicott's Commentary for English Readers

(11) **Angels came and ministered unto him.**

The tenses of the two verbs differ, the latter implying continued or repeated ministrations. Here also **we are in**

the region of the spiritual life, and must be content to leave the nature of the ministration undefined, instead of sensualising it as poets and artists have done.

What is instructive is, that the help of their service, the contrast between the calm and beauty of their presence and that of the wild beasts and of the Tempter, comes as the reward of the abnegation which refused to make their ministry the subject of an experimental test. In this case, also, we find strange coincidences. The fact recorded by St. Matthew explains the words recorded by St. John ([John 1:51](#)) as uttered but a few days later, and which speak of **“the angels of God ascending and descending on the Son of Man.”** The words with which **St. Luke** ends his record of the Temptation may well be noticed here: **“And having finished every temptation, the devil departed from him for a season”** (literally, *till a season*). The conflict was not yet ended, and was from time to time renewed—now in the passionate prayer of the disciple ([Matthew 16:22](#)), now in the open enmity of the prince of this world ([John 12:31](#); [John 14:30](#)).

Benson Commentary

[Matthew 4:11](#). *Then the devil* — Being so baffled and confounded as not to be able to present any other temptation which seemed more likely to prevail, *leaveth him* — Namely, for a season, as Luke observes meditating no doubt some future assault, and especially designing, by and by, to use all stratagems to take away his life.

And, behold, angels came and ministered unto him —

Not only furnishing him with proper supplies for his hunger, but also congratulating him on so illustrious a victory over the prince of darkness; and doing him honour by the appearance of a number of them, (for one of them would have sufficed to bring him food,) after this horrible combat with Satan, to which, for wise and gracious reasons, he was pleased to condescend. And it may encourage us in all our temptations to remember, that **if our conflict be thus maintained, the struggle will, ere long, be over; and angels, who**

are now spectators of the combat, will at length congratulate our victory.

God teaches us, by all this, that our lives are to have their vicissitudes of temptation and consolation, and that our temptation shall have a happy issue, and that...

when ordinary means fail we may expect extraordinary helps.

Barnes' Notes on the Bible

Then the devil leaveth him - He left him for a time, [Luke 4:13](#). He intended to return again to the temptation, and, if possible, to seduce him yet from God. Compare [John 14:30](#); [Luke 22:53](#). See the notes at [Hebrews 12:4](#).

The angels came and ministered - See the notes at [Matthew 1:20](#). They came and supplied his wants and comforted him. From this narrative we may learn:

(a) That **no one is so holy as to be free from temptation, for even the Son of God was sorely tempted.**

(b) That **when God permits a temptation or trial to come upon us, he will, if we look to him, give us grace to resist and overcome it, [1 Corinthians 10:13](#).**

(c) We **see the art of the tempter. His temptations are adapted to times and circumstances.** They are plausible.

What could have been more plausible than his suggestions to Christ? They were applicable to his circumstances. They had the appearance of much piety. They were backed by passages of Scripture misapplied, but still most artfully presented. Satan never comes boldly and tempts people to sin, telling them that they are committing sin. Such a mode would defeat his design. It would put people on their guard. He commences, therefore, artfully and plausibly, and the real purpose does not appear until he has prepared the mind for it. This is the way with all temptation.

No wicked person would at once tempt another to be profane, to be drunk, to be an infidel, or to commit adultery. The principles are first corrupted. The confidence is secured. The affections are won. And then **the allurements are little by little presented, until the victim falls. How everyone should be on his guard at the very first appearance of evil, at the first suggestion that may possibly lead to sin!**

(d) **One of the best ways of meeting temptation is by applying Scripture. So our Saviour did, and they will always best succeed who best wield the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God, [Ephesians 6:17](#).**

Jamieson-Fausset-Brown Bible Commentary

11. Then the devil leaveth him—Luke says, "And when the devil had exhausted"—or "quite ended," as in Lu 4:2—"every (mode of) temptation, he departed from him till a season." The definite "season" here indicated is expressly referred to by our Lord in Joh 14:30 and Lu 22:52, 53.

and, behold, angels came and ministered unto him—or supplied Him with food, as the same expression means in Mr 1:31 and Lu 8:3. Thus did angels to Elijah (1Ki 19:5-8). Excellent critics think that they ministered, not food only, but supernatural support and cheer also. But this would be the natural effect rather than the direct object of the visit, which was plainly what we have expressed. And after having refused to claim the illegitimate ministrations of angels in His behalf, oh, with what deep joy would He accept their services when sent, unasked, at the close of all this temptation, direct from Him whom He had so gloriously honored! What "angels' food" would this repast be to Him! and as He partook of it, might not a Voice from heaven be heard again, by any who could

read the Father's mind, "Said I not well, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased?"

Matthew Poole's Commentary

Resist the devil, saith James, [Jam 4:7](#), *and he shall flee from you*. Thus he did from the Head, thus he shall do from the members: but as he did not flee from Christ till commanded away, so neither till commanded off by God doth he leave the people of God; but upon our resistance God will command him off, that we may not be tempted above our strength. The evil angels leaving him, the good

angels came and ministered unto him, whether by bringing him food, or bringing him off the mount, or otherwise executing his commands, is not expressed, and it is too much curiosity to inquire. God by this teacheth us, that our lives are to have their vicissitudes of temptations and consolations, and that our temptations shall have a happy issue, and that when ordinary means fail we may expect extraordinary influences and assistances. Luke saith, *he departed from him for a season*, to let us know, that though there was an end of his more eminent temptations, yet he was not afterward without Satan's assaults.

The American Commentary on The N.T. (Broadus)

11. **Leaveth him.** An example of what was afterwards taught by James (4:7), '**Resist** the devil, and he will flee from you.' Luke (4:13) says, 'for a season.' Doubtless his temptations were frequently renewed throughout the Saviour's ministry (comp. on v. 1), and especially when it was about to close. (John 14:30.) *Bengel*: "This temptation is a specimen of Christ's whole state of humiliation, and an epitome of all the temptations, not only moral but spiritual, which the devil contrived from the beginning."

Angela came; came near to him (same term as in v. 3). **Ministered**, or, *were ministering—unto him*. This word signifies to attend as a servant, wait on, etc., often with particular reference to supplying food (comp, 8:15; 25:44; 27:55; Luke 8:3; 10:40 'serve'; 12:37; Acts 6:2 'serve'). And so apparently here.

They waited on him as human friends might have waited on one whom they found hungry, weary, lonely.

To Elijah (1 Kings 19:6, 7) an angel brought food *before* the forty days' fast; to Jesus at its close. He had refused to relieve his hunger by turning the stones into loaves of bread, referring to the case of Israel, to whom God supplied food in an extraordinary way; and now God makes an extraordinary provision for him.

He had refused to try an experiment upon a promise of angelic help (v. 6), and now angelic help comes unsought.

The term employed, 'were ministering to him,' not simply narrates the fact, but vividly describes it as going on. And so, with the baffled tempter withdrawn, and angels engaged in ministering to him, this wonderful and affecting scene comes to a close.

Our Lord is now fully prepared for his work as Messiah.

At his baptism the Father gave him an extraordinary recognition and greeting. During the forty days he has doubtless reflected upon the need and the character of that saving work which he has come into the world to do. And now the tempter's proposals have familiarized his mind with **the thought of three principal wrong courses which will often during his ministry be proposed to him, and which he will always instantly reject as he has done here:**

- 1. He will never use his supernatural powers to relieve his own natural wants, nor...**
- 2. To make a display before man, and...**

3. He will utterly avoid the favorite Jewish notion of a brilliant worldly kingdom, obtained by worldly means and used for worldly purposes.

HOMILETICAL AND PRACTICAL

V. 1. The occurrence of this special season of temptation immediately after our Lord's baptism and when he was about to enter on his ministry, while not wholly analogous to the case of his disciples, yet corresponds with a not infrequent experience.—ECCLUS. 2:1: "My son, if thou art coming near to serve the Lord, prepare thy soul for temptation."—EUTHYM.: "That thou also after baptism mayst no longer lead thyself, but rather be led by the Spirit, and that if after baptism thou fallest into temptations thou mayest not be confounded."—GILL: "And so it often is, that after sweet communion with God in his ordinances, after large discoveries of his love and interest in him, follow sore temptations, trials, and exercises."—God often brings his people into temptation (6:13), and so he brought the Captain of their salvation. (Heb. 2:10).—MILTON (Par. Reg.):

But first I mean
To exercise him in the wilderness;
There he shall first lay down the rudiments
Of his great warfare, ere I send him forth
To conquer sin and death, the two grand foes,
By humiliation and strong sufferance.

Some men have fancied that they would escape temptation by fleeing to solitude—and others by seeking society; behold, Jesus is tempted both in the wilderness and in the Holy City. There is here 1) a discipline to the tempted Redeemer; 2) an example to his tempted followers, and 3) a lesson of failure to the tempter. Three distinct practical evils are prevalent as to the devil, each of which must help him. (a) Some deny his existence, *i. e.*, either his personality or his agency—which gives him an admirable opportunity to carry on his work unsuspected, (b) A few persons associate him with the sublime conceptions of Paradise Lost, and thus feel a diminished abhorrence, (c) The great mass associate him with all that is ridiculous. The instinctive desire to shake off horrible thoughts has led to this, as men joke in a dissecting-room, and it has grown customary, and gained strength from prevailing skepticism. The practice of applying ludicrous designations to the devil, and making him the point of amusing stories and jests, as well as the grotesque nursery descriptions and stories, can never fail to be very hurtful, and should be avoided and discouraged.—V. 2. GREG. NAZ., (in Wordsw,):

“Christ hungered as man, and fed the hungry as God. He was hungry as man, and yet he is the Bread of

life. He was athirst as man, and yet he says, Let him that is athirst come to me and drink. He was weary, and is our Rest.... He pays tribute, and is a King; he is called a devil, and casts out devils; prays, and hears prayer; weeps, and dries our tears; is sold for thirty pieces of silver, and redeems the world; is led as a sheep to the slaughter, and is the Good Shepherd.” —EDERSH.

: “Moses failed after his forty days’ fast, when in indignation he cast the tables of the law from him; Elijah failed before his forty days’ fast; Jesus was assailed for forty days, and endured the trial.”

V. 3. The demand for special proofs of the divine mission of Christ is often made in a wrong spirit, by persons whom those very proofs would not convince; as Satan afterwards witnessed numerous miracles wrought by Jesus, but without effect.—GEIKIK: “No temptation is more difficult to resist than the prompting to do what seems needful for self-preservation, when abundant means are in our hands.”—**MORISON: “The prime temptation of**

millions, though they often realize it not, is to use improper means of making their bread.”

V. 4. Our Lord was ‘tempted like as we are,’ and he resisted like as we must. If he had wrought a miracle for his own relief, that would have been no example for us; but it was an example that he should in trying circumstances trust in God and wait—and that he should be guided and sustained by what ‘is written.’ If we would imitate this example, let us become thoughtfully imbued with the principles of Scripture (Ps. 119:11), and familiar with its precepts and examples, so that they may be naturally suggested to the mind, or readily recalled, just when they are needed.—ORIGEN (Wordsw):

“He routs the tempter by what all may wield, the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.

(Eph. 6:17.) Hence learn the value of Scripture, and the impotence of Satan against it”—STIER: “As Eve in the beginning rightly opposed the tempter with *God has said!* but alas, did not persist therein—even so now the Lord; but he holds Arm.”—LIGHTFOOT: “Observe (1) That the first word spoken by Christ in his ministerial office is an assertion of the authority of Scripture, (2) That he opposeth the word of God as the properest incounterer against the words of the devil. (3) That he alledgeth Scripture as a thing undeniable and uncontrollable by the devil himself. (4) That he maketh the Scripture his rule, though he had the fullness of the Spirit above measure.”—HENRY: “As in our greatest abundance we must not think to live WITHOUT God, so in our greatest straits we must learn to live UPON God.”—There is a common saying, ‘Necessity knows no law.’ But it *ought* to know the law of duty.

V. 5. HENRY: “Pinnacles of the temple are places of temptation. (1) High places *in the world* are so. (2) High places *in the church* are in a special manner dangerous.” V. 6. HENRY: “We must avoid going from one extreme to another—from despair to presumption, from prodigality to covetousness,” etc.—LANGE: “The holiest thing may be perverted to become the most vile temptation. (1) A stay in the holy city. (2) The prospect from the pinnacle of the temple. (3) The promise contained in an inspired Psalm.”—One of the subtlest and sometimes mightiest forms of temptation to a devout mind is the misapplication of Scripture, so as to give apparent warrant for doing what we incline to. We need not only to know the language of Scripture, but to understand the real meaning and legitimate application. A great aid in this is to compare other passages, as our Lord here does.—BENGEL: “Scripture must through Scripture be interpreted and reconciled.”—WORDSWORTH: “The devil may tempt us to fall, but he cannot *make* us fall; he may persuade us to cast *ourselves* down, but he *cannot cast* us down.”—V. 7. True faith never tries experiments upon the promises, being satisfied that they will be fulfilled as occasion may arise. We have no right to create danger, and expect Providence to shield us from it. The love of adventure, curiosity as to the places and procedures of vice, the spirit of speculation in business, the profits of some calling attended by moral perils,—often lead men to tempt God. It is a common form of sin. (See Chalmer’s Sermons on the Temptations.) GRIFFITH: “We violate the organic conditions of health, and then expect some miracle of restoration. We devote ourselves to seeming duty, labor on in what we fancy must be saintly self-sacrifice, till the brain is fevered,

the strength is exhausted, and imbecility and death come in to punish the presumption of ‘testing the Lord our God.’ ”—Jesus did afterwards work miracles equivalent to those proposed in the first and second temptations, when he multiplied food, and when he walked on the water; but in these cases he was using his supernatural power for the benefit of others.

V. 8. See Milton’s description in *Par. Regained*, Book iii. V. 9. How often are measures adopted by preacher or church that are unworthy of Christianity, and defended only by urging that they *take*, that they *succeed*. But Christ would not rule over the world by Satan’s help, and we must not seek to advance the kingdom of holiness by unholy means.—THEOPHYLACT: “Now also he says to the covetous that the world is his, so that they gain it who worship him.”—SCHAFF: “Satan’s greatest weapons are his half-truths, his perversions of the truth.” V. 10. Often the only proper way to deal with the tempter is to bid him begone. AUGUSTINE: “It is the devil’s part to suggest, it is ours not to consent.”—JER. TAYLOR: “The Lamb of God could by no means endure it when tempted to a direct dishonoring of God. Our own injuries are opportunities of patience; but when the glory of God and his immediate honor is the question, then is the occasion for the flames of a clear shining and unconsuming zeal.” V. 11. GROTIUS: “Formerly conqueror of our first parents and long conqueror of the human race, but now conquered by Christ, and to be conquered by Christians, (1 John 5:18.)”

GRIFFITH: “The successive temptations may be ranked as temptations to under-confidence, over-confidence, and other confidence. The first, to take things impatiently into our hands; the second, to throw things presumptuously on God’s hands; the third, to transfer things disloyally into other hands than God’s.”—LORIMER: “The spirit of evil takes things that are right in themselves and perverts them to our undoing; as here, the instinct of self-preservation, the feeling of self-confidence, the hope of self-aggrandizement.” We can see in these temptations a *progression*, (a) The tempter *appeals to*, (1) a bodily appetite, (2) an obscure nervous feeling, (3) ambition, which is wholly of the mind, (b) He *proposes* (1) a useful miracle, (2) a useless miracle, (3) a gross sin. (c) He *seeks to excite*, (1) distrust of God, (2) presumptuous reliance on God, (3) worldly-minded abandonment of God.¹

A Critical, Experimental, & Practical Commentary:

11. Then the devil leaveth him. Luke says, “And when the devil had exhausted”—or, ‘quite ended’ [συντελέσας], as in Luke 4:2—“every [mode of] temptation [πάντα πειρασμὸν], he departed from him till a season” [ἄχρι καιροῦ]. The definite “season” here indicated is expressly referred to by our Lord in John 14:30, and Luke 22:52, 53.

¹ John A. Broadus, *Commentary on the Gospel of Matthew*, American Commentary on the New Testament (Philadelphia: American Baptist Publication Society, 1886), 68–71.

and, behold, angels came and ministered unto him

— or supplied Him with food, as the same expression means in Mark 1:31, and Luke 8:3. Thus did angels to Elijah (1 Ki. 19:5–8). Excellent critics think that they ministered, not food only, but supernatural support and cheer also. But this would be the natural *effect* rather than the direct *object* of the visit, which was plainly what we have expressed. And after having refused to claim the *illegitimate* ministrations of angels in His behalf, O with what deep joy would He accept their services when sent, unasked, at the close of all this Temptation, direct from Him whom He had so gloriously honoured!

What “angels’ food” would this repast be to Him; and as He partook of it, might not a Voice from heaven be heard again, by any who could read the Father’s mind, ‘Said I not well, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased!’

Remarks.—1. After such an exalted scene as that of the Baptism, the Descent of the Spirit, and the Voice from heaven, and before entering on His public ministry, this long period of solitude would doubtless be to Jesus a precious interval for calmly pondering His whole past history, and deliberately weighing the momentous future that lay before Him. So would Moses feel his forty years’ seclusion in Midian, far from the glitter and pomp of an Egyptian court, and before entering on the eventful career which awaited him on his return. So would Elijah, after the grandeur of the Carmel scene, feel his forty days’ solitary journey to Horeb, the mount of God. So would the beloved disciple feel his Patmos exile, after a long apostolic life, short and uneventful though his after career was. So, doubtless, Luther felt his ten months’ retreat in the castle of Wartburg to be, after four years of exciting and incessant warfare with the Romish perverters of the Gospel, and before entering afresh on a career which has changed the whole face of European Christendom. And so will such periods, whether longer or shorter, ever be felt by God’s faithful people, when in His providence they are called to pass through them. 2. Sharp temptations, as they often follow seasons of high communion, so are they often preparatives for the highest work. 3. **What a contrast does Christ here present to Adam! Adam was tempted in a paradise, and yet fell: Christ was tempted in a wilderness, and yet stood.** Adam, in a state of innocence, was surrounded by the beasts of the field, all tame and submissive to their lord: Christ, in a fallen world, had the wild beasts raging around Him, and only supernaturally restrained. In Adam we see man easily and quickly falling, without a single incentive to evil save the tempter’s insinuations: in Christ we see man standing encircled by all that is terrific, and harassed by long-continued, varied, and most subtle attacks from the tempter. 4. Deep is the disquietude which many Christians suffer from finding themselves subject to internal temptations to sin, both continuous and vehement. It staggers them to find that, without any external solicitations, they are tempted so frequently, and at times so violently, that as by a tempest they are ready to be carried away, and in a moment make shipwreck of faith and of a good conscience. Surely, they think, this can only be accounted for but by some depth and virulence of corruption never reached by the grace of God, and inconsistent with that delight in the law of God after the inward man which is characteristic of His children. But here we see, in

the holy One of God, an example of solicitations to sin purely internal, for aught that we can perceive, continued throughout the long period of forty days. The *source* of them, it is true, was all external to the Redeemer's soul—they were from the devil solely—but the sphere of them was wholly internal; and it is impossible to doubt that, in order to their being temptations at all, there must have been permitted a vivid presentation by the tempter, to the mind of Jesus, of all that was adverse to His claims—so vivid, indeed, as to make entire and continued resistance a fruit of pure faith. And though probably no temptation of any strength and duration passes over the spirit of a Christian without finding some echo, however faint, and leaving some stain, however slight, the Example here presented should satisfy us that it is neither the duration nor the violence of our temptations—though they come as “fiery darts” (Eph. 6:16) thick as hail—that tells the state of the heart before God, but *how they are met*. 5. It has long been a prevalent opinion that the three temptations here recorded were addressed to what the beloved disciple calls (1 John 2:16) “the lust of the flesh (the first one), the lust of the eyes (Luke's second one), and the pride of life” (Luke's third one). Others also, as *Ellicott*, think they were addressed respectively to that three-fold division of our nature (1 Thes. 5:23)—the “body, soul, and spirit,” in the same order. Whether this does not presuppose Luke's order of the temptations to be the right one, contrary to what we have endeavoured to show, we need not enquire. But too much should not be made of such things. One thing is certain, that after so long trying our Lord *internally* without success, and then proceeding to solicit Him from *without*, the tempter would leave no avenue to desire, either bodily or mental, unassailed; and so we may rest assured that He “was in all points tempted like as we are.” The first temptation was to *distrust the providential care of God*—on the double plea that ‘it had not come to the rescue in time of need,’ and that ‘He had the remedy in His own hands, and so need not be at a moment's loss.’ This is repelled, not by denying His power to relieve Himself, but by holding up the sinfulness of distrusting God, which that would imply, and the duty, even in the most straitened circumstances, of unshaken confidence in God's word of promise, which is man's true life. O what a word is this for the multitudes of God's children who at times are at their wit's end for the things that are needful for the body—things easily to be had, could they but dare to snatch at them unlawfully, but which seem divinely withheld from them at the very time when they appear most indispensable! The second temptation was to just the opposite of distrust (and this may further show that it *was* the second)—to *presumption* or a *wanton appeal to promised safety*, by creating the danger against which that safety is divinely pledged. And O how many err here! adventuring themselves where they have no warrant to expect protection, and there, exercising a misplaced confidence, are left to suffer the consequences of their presumption. The last temptation is addressed to the principle of *ambition*, which makes us accessible to the lust of possessions, grandeur, and power. These, to a boundless extent, and in all their glitter, are held forth to Jesus as His own, on one single condition—that He will do homage for them to another than God; which was but another way of saying, ‘if thou wilt transfer thine allegiance from God to the devil.’ It is just the case, then, which our Lord Himself afterwards put to His disciples, “What shall it profit a man if he should gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?” And how many are there, naming the name of Christ, who, when, not the whole world, but a very fractional part of it, lies open before them as even likely to become theirs, on the single condition of selling their conscience to what they know to be sinful, give way, and incur the dreadful penalty; instead of resolutely saying, with Joseph, “How can I do this great wickedness, and sin

against God," or, with a Greater than Joseph here, "Get thee behind me, Satan, for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and Him only shalt thou serve." We thus see, however, that within the limits of this temptation-scene—however it be arranged and viewed—all the forms of human temptation were, in *principle*, experienced by "the Man Christ Jesus," and accordingly that "He was tempted in all points like as we are, yet without sin." 6. That the second stage of the Temptation was purely internal as well as the first—which is the theory of some otherwise sound critics, especially of Germany—is at variance with the obvious meaning of the text; creates greater difficulties than those it is intended to remove; is suggested by a spirit of subjective criticism which would explain away other external facts of the Evangelical History as well as this; and is rejected by nearly all orthodox interpreters, as well as repudiated by the simple-minded reader of the narrative. 7. What a testimony to the *divine authority of the Old Testament* have we here! Three quotations are made from it by our Lord—two of them from "the law," and one from "the Psalms"—all introduced by the simple formula, "*It is written*," as divinely settling the question of human duty in the cases referred to; while elsewhere, in quoting from the remaining division of the Old Testament—"the Prophets"—the same formula is employed by our Lord, "*It is written*," (Matt. 21:13, &c.) Nor will the theory of 'accommodation to the current views of the time'—as if that would justify an erroneous interpretation of the Old Testament to serve a present purpose—be of any service here. For here our Lord is not contending with the Jews, nor even in their presence, but with the foul tempter alone. Let any one take the trouble to collect and arrange our Lord's quotations from the Old Testament, and indirect references to it, and he will be constrained to admit either that the Old Testament is of divine authority, as a record of truth and directory of duty, because the Faithful and True Witness so regarded it, or if it be not, that Christ Himself was not above the erroneous views of the time and the people to which He belonged, and in regard to the true character of the Old Testament was simply mistaken: a conclusion which some in our day who call themselves Christians have not shrunk from insinuating. 8. See how one may most effectually resist the devil. "The whole armour of God" is indeed to be used; but particularly "the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God"—so called because it is the Spirit that gives that Word living power, as God's own testimony, in the heart. As His divine and authoritative directory in duty against all the assaults of the tempter, Jesus wielded that sword of the Spirit with resistless power. To this secret of successful resistance the beloved disciple alludes when he says, "I have written unto you, young men, because ye are strong, and the Word of God abideth in you, and ye have overcome the wicked one" (1 John 2:14). But 9. This presupposes, not only that the Scriptures are not impiously and cruelly withheld from the tempted children of God, but that they "search" them, and "meditate in them day and night." We have seen how *remarkably* apposite as well as ready was our Lord's use of Scripture; but this must have arisen from His constant study of it and experimental application of it to His own uses, both in the daily occupations of His previous life, and in the view of all that lay before Him. Nor will the tempted children of God find the Scriptures to be the ready sword of the Spirit in the hour of assault otherwise than their Lord did; but thus "resist the devil, and he will flee from you" (Jas. 4:7): "Whom resist *stedfast in the faith*, knowing that the same afflictions are accomplished in your brethren that are in the world" (1 Pet. 5:9). 10. Let not God's dear children suffer themselves to be despoiled, by the tempter, of the sense of that high relationship. It is their strength as well as joy, not less really, though on a vastly lower scale, than it was their Lord's. 11. What can be more glorious, to those who see in Christ the only begotten of the Father, than

the sense which Christ had, during all this temptation, of His standing, as *Man*, under the very same law of duty as His “brethren!” When tempted to supply His wants as man, by putting forth His power as the Son of God, He refused, because it was written that “MAN doth not live by bread only, but by every word of God,” Again, when tempted to cast Himself down from the pinnacle of the temple, because the saints—even as many as “made the most High their habitation”—were under the charge of God’s angels, He declined, because it was written, “Thou (meaning God’s people, whether collectively or individually) shalt not tempt the Lord thy God.” ‘I therefore refuse to tempt the Lord *my* God.’ Finally, when solicited, by a splendid bribe, to fall down and worship the tempter, He indignantly ordered him off with that scripture, “Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and Him only shalt thou serve.” Evidently, Christ read that command as *addressed to Himself* as man; and on the rock of adoring subjection to the Lord as His God He is found standing at the close of this whole Temptation-scene. How identical with our entire tempted life does our Lord thus show His own to be! And what vividness and force does this give to the assurance that “in that He Himself hath suffered, being tempted, He is able also to succour them that are tempted!” (Heb. 2:18.) This way of viewing our Lord’s victory over the tempter is far more natural and satisfactory than the quaint conceit of the Fathers, that our Lord, ‘by His divinity, caught the tempter on the hook of His humanity.’ Not but that there is a truth couched under it. But it is too much in the line of a vicious separation, in His actions, of the one nature from the other, in which they indulged, and is apt to make His human life and obedience appear fantastic and unreal. His personal divinity secured to Him that operation of the Spirit in virtue of which He was born the Holy Thing, and that continued action of the Spirit in virtue of which His holy humanity was gradually developed into the maturity and beauty of holy manhood; but when the Spirit descended upon Him at His baptism, it was for His whole official work; and in this, the very first scene of it, and one so precious, He overcame throughout as man through the power of the Holy Ghost—His Godhead being the security that He should not and could not fail. 12. Henceforth there is no mention of Satan making any formal assault upon our Lord until the night before He suffered. Nor did he come then, as he did now, to try directly to seduce Him from His fidelity to God; but in the way of compassing His death, and by the hands of those whose part it was, if He were the Son of God, to acknowledge His claims. Once before, indeed, He said to Peter, “Get thee behind me, Satan” (Matt. 16:22, 23)—as if He had descried the tempter again stealthily approaching Him in the person of Peter, to make Him shrink from dying. And again, when the Greeks expressed their wish to see Him, He spoke mysteriously of His hour having come, and had a kind of agony by anticipation; but after it was over, He exclaimed, “Now is the judgment of this world; now shall the prince of this world be cast out” (John 12:20–31)—as if, in the momentary struggle with the horrors of His final “hour,” He had descried the tempter holding up this as his master-stroke for at length accomplishing His overthrow, but at the same time got a glimpse of the glorious victory over Satan which this final stroke of his policy was to prove. These, however, were but tentative approaches of the adversary. After the last supper, and ere they had risen from the table, our Lord said, “Henceforth [ἐτι] I will not talk much with you: for the *prince of this world cometh, and hath nothing in me*” (John 14:30); as if the moment of his “coming” were just at hand. At length, when in the garden they drew near to take Him, He said, “When I was daily with you in the temple, ye stretched forth no hands against me: *but this is your hour, and the power of darkness*” (Luke 22:52, 53). The tempter had “departed from Him till a season,” and this at length is it. Not but that he was in everything that tried our Lord’s steadfastness from first to

last. But his formal and outstanding efforts against our Lord were at the *outset* and at the *close* of His career, and, as we have seen, of a very different nature the one from the other. Blessed Saviour, look upon our tempted condition here below; and what time the enemy cometh in upon us like a flood, by Thy good Spirit help us to tread in Thy footsteps: so shall we be more than conquerors through Him that loved us!²

St. Andrews Expository Commentary:

Then the devil left Him, and behold, angels came and ministered to Him (v. 11).

The other Gospel narratives give us a bit more information here, saying that the devil left Him *for a season*. This was not the end of the battle. Satan watched the ministry of Jesus every single day, always looking for a way to trap Him.

The most glorious moment in Jesus earthly ministry was at the Mount of Transfiguration. Shortly after that Jesus asked His disciples, “Who do men say that I, the Son of Man, am?” and Simon gave the great confession: “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God” (Matt. 16:13, 16). Peter did not say, “*If* you are the Son” but “You are the Son.” At that time Jesus looked at Simon and said, “Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah, for flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father who is in heaven. And I also say to you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it” (vv. 17–18). Before hardly any time had passed, Jesus foretold that He would be delivered to His enemies, and in his boldness Peter said, “This shall not happen to You!” to which Jesus replied, “Get behind Me, Satan!” (vv. 22–23).

Right before Jesus went to Jerusalem, Satan showed up in the lips of his most trusted disciple.

It is almost always our closest friends and relatives who seek to dissuade us from our duty, if that duty promises suffering.

² David Brown, A. R. Fausset, and Robert Jamieson, [*A Commentary, Critical, Experimental, and Practical, on the Old and New Testaments: Matthew–John*](#), vol. V (London; Glasgow: William Collins, Sons, & Company, Limited, n.d.), 18–20.

Jesus' test in the wilderness concludes with exquisite irony. As soon as Satan left, the angels appeared and ministered to Him. They were there all the time. The fast was over. The Bible does not say this, but I believe the angels set before Jesus the most incredible breakfast that had ever been served to any human being. It was a gourmet feast. The angels that were not present there but were up in heaven surely noted what an honor it was for those angels who *were* there to minister to Him, because He is the Son of God in whom God is well pleased.³

The Holman New Testament Commentary:

4:11. Satan's departure from Jesus followed the king's authoritative command, **Away from me, Satan!** (4:10). It is ironic that Satan had just offered to be the benevolent master to Jesus, but Jesus' authoritative response and Satan's cowering obedience demonstrated who was the real Master.

Thus the battle has begun. The rest of Matthew demonstrates its further development. Never again in this book do we see Satan openly engaging the king in warfare. But he has not gone away. From time to time Satan will try to turn Christ from the Father's will and the route to the cross. But we will also see the wisdom and moral courage of the king as he dodges every blow, even taking the offensive at times, and ultimately finishing with the decisive victory.⁴

Expositor's Bible Commentary:

³ Robert Charles Sproul, [Matthew](#), St. Andrew's Expository Commentary (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2013), 59–60.

⁴ Stuart K. Weber, [Matthew](#), vol. 1, Holman New Testament Commentary (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2000), 42.

11 The devil left Jesus “until an opportune time” (Luke 4:13); and Matthew’s present tense (*aphiēsin*) may suggest the same thing (Hill, *Matthew*). Though the conflict has barely begun, the pattern of obedience and trust has been established. He has learned to resist the devil (cf. James 4:7). The angelic help is not some passing blessing but a sustained one (the imperfect tense is probably significant). Jesus had refused to relieve his hunger by miraculously turning stones to bread; now he is fed supernaturally (*diēkonoun*, “attended,” is often used in connection with food; e.g., Mt 8:15; 25:44; 27:55; Acts 6:2; cf. Elijah in 1 Kings 19:6–7). He had refused to throw himself off the temple heights in the hope of angelic help; now angels feed him. He had refused to take a shortcut to inherit the kingdom of the world; now he fulfills Scripture by beginning his ministry and announcing the kingdom in Galilee of the Gentiles (Mt 4:12–17).⁵

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Angels in the Bible: What Do We Actually Know About Them?

- wayne-grudem
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For centuries, artists have portrayed angels as beautiful humans with wings and glowing light, complete with halos, harps, and flowing white gowns (or perfectly sculpted bodies). But is that really what angels look like? Angels have inspired all sorts of imaginative stories and depictions, but what’s left when we separate fact from fiction? In order to know the truth, we have to ask, what does the Bible say about angels?

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⁵ D. A. Carson, “[Matthew](#),” in *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary: Matthew, Mark, Luke*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelin, vol. 8 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1984), 114–115.

14 Biblical facts about angels

These facts will help us learn a lot about the angels in the Bible: what they are, why God created them, how their hierarchy works, and much more.

1. God created angels

Angels haven't always existed. According to Scripture, they're part of the universe God created. In a passage that refers to angels (the "host" or "armies" of heaven), we read, "You are the Lord, you alone; you have made heaven, the heaven of heavens, with all their host . . . and the host of heaven worships you" (Nehemiah 9:6). In the New Testament, Paul tells us that God created all things "visible and invisible," and specifically includes the angelic world with the phrase "whether thrones or dominions or principalities or authorities" (Colossians 1:16).

While these Bible verses tell us that God created angels, the Bible also suggests that they don't "exist" in the same way we do. The author of Hebrews suggests that all angels are "spirits" (Hebrews 1:13-14). When Jesus appears to the disciples, he asserts that "**spirits**" **don't have bodies** like he does (Luke 24:39). In the Bible, angels can't usually be seen by humans unless God reveals them (see Numbers 22:31, 2 Kings 6:17, Luke 2:13). However, from time to time angels took on a bodily form and appeared to various people in Scripture (Matthew 28:5; Hebrews 13:2).

2. There are three types of angels in the Bible

Scripture names three categories of heavenly beings that appear to be types of angels: cherubim, seraphim, and "living creatures."

Cherubim

Cherubim are mentioned in several places throughout Scripture:

- They guarded the entrance to the Garden of Eden (Genesis 3:24).
- God is enthroned above them (Ezekiel 10:1–22).
- God rides on them (Psalm 18:10)
- Two golden figures of cherubim sit above the Ark of the Covenant, where God promised to dwell among his people (Exodus 25:22, see also verses 18–21).

Seraphim

Another type of angel, the seraphim, are only mentioned once in the Bible. They appear in Isaiah 6:2–7, where they continually worship the Lord and say, “Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts; the whole earth is full of his glory” (Isaiah 6:3).

Living creatures

Ezekiel and Revelation speak of other kinds of heavenly beings known as “living creatures” around God’s throne (Ezekiel 1:5–14, Revelation 4:6–8). They appeared like a lion, an ox, a man, and an eagle, representing various parts of God’s creation (wild beasts, domesticated animals, human beings, and birds). They, too, worship God continually: “Day and night they never cease to sing, ‘Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord God Almighty, who was and is and is to come!’” (Revelation 4:8)

3. Angels have a hierarchy

Angels in the Bible appear to have a rank and order. The angel hierarchy is supported by Jude 9, when the angel Michael is called an “archangel”—a title that indicates rule or authority over other angels. He’s also called “one of the chief princes” in Daniel 10:13, and appears to lead God’s angelic army in Revelation 12: “Now war arose in heaven, Michael and his angels fighting against the dragon; and the dragon and his angels fought, but they were defeated” (Revelation 12:7–8). Paul also tells us that the Lord will return from heaven “with the archangel’s call” (1 Thessalonians 4:16). Scripture doesn’t tell us if this refers to Michael, or if there are other archangels as well.

4. Only two angels have names in the Bible

Only two angels are specifically named in Scripture. As we said above, the archangel Michael is mentioned in Jude 9, Revelation 12:7–8, and Daniel 10:13 and 21.

Gabriel is the only other angel named in the Bible. He’s mentioned in Daniel 8:16 and 9:21 as a messenger who comes from God to speak to Daniel. He’s also identified as God’s messenger in Luke 1. He tells Zechariah, “I am Gabriel, who stand in the presence of God” (Luke 1:19). Then we read, “In the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent from God to a city of Galilee named Nazareth, to a virgin . . . and the virgin’s name was Mary” (Luke 1:26–27).

5. Angels are not omnipresent

Angels frequently appear as messengers in the Bible, traveling from one place to another (see the verse above, where Gabriel “was sent from God to a city of Galilee named Nazareth”).

The fact that angels are not omnipresent is made explicit when an angel comes to Daniel and says:

“I have come because of your words. The prince of the kingdom of Persia withstood me twenty-one days; but Michael, one of the chief princes, came to help me, so I left him there with the prince of the kingdom of Persia and came to make you understand what is to befall your people in the latter days.” —Daniel 10:12–14

If angels were omnipresent, Michael wouldn't have “came to help” because he would've already been there, and this angel wouldn't need to leave Michael to bring this message. **Unlike God, who is omnipresent, angels are finite creatures, limited to one place at one time.**

6. We don't know how many angels exist

The Bible doesn't tell us how many angels God created. But apparently, there are a lot of them. Here are a few of the ways the Bible tells us how many angels there are:

- On Mount Sinai, God “came from the ten thousands of holy ones, with flaming fire at his right hand” (Deuteronomy 33:2).
- We also learn that, “the chariots of God are tens of thousands and thousands of thousands” (Psalm 68:17 NIV).
- When we come to worship, we come into the presence of “innumerable angels” (Hebrews 12:22).
- John says, “I heard around the throne and the living creatures and the elders the voice of many angels, numbering myriads of myriads and thousands of thousands” (Revelation 5:11).

Every biblical reference to the total number of angels suggests that they're beyond counting.

7. We can't prove that guardian angels exist

The Bible clearly tells us that God sends angels to protect people: “He will give his angels charge of you to guard you in all your ways. On their hands they will bear you up, lest you dash your foot against a stone” (Psalm 91:11–12).

But are these what we think of as “guardian angels”? Jesus' words in Matthew 18:10 seem to support the idea that individual people (or at least children) have guardian angels, “in heaven *their angels* always behold the face of my Father who is in heaven.” But Jesus may only mean that angels are assigned to protect little children in general. (In sports terms, the angels may be playing “zone” rather than “man-on-man” defense.)

When the disciples in Acts 12:15 say that Peter's "angel" must be knocking at the door, this doesn't necessarily imply that they believe in individual guardian angels. It's possible that they believed an angel was simply guarding Peter *at that time*.

While arguments can be made, there seems to be no definitive biblical proof for the existence of "guardian angels."

8. Angels do not marry

Jesus taught that in the resurrection people "neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are like angels in heaven" (Matthew 22:30, see also Luke 20:34–36). **This clearly suggests that angels don't marry.**

No other passages address relationships between angels, so anything beyond this is simply speculation.

9. Angels are very powerful

Angels are called "mighty ones who do his word" (Psalm 103:20), "powers" (see Ephesians 1:21), and "dominions" and "authorities" (Colossians 1:16). They are certainly "greater in might and power" than humans (2 Peter 2:11, see also Matthew 28:2). Angels use their power to battle against Satan's demonic forces (Daniel 10:13, Revelation 12:7–8, 20:1–3).

During our earthly lives, we're "lower than the angels" (Hebrews 2:7). **But as powerful as angels are, when Jesus returns, followers of Christ will be raised higher than them (1 Corinthians 6:3).**

10. We don't know when angels were created

Genesis 2:1 tells us that the angels were made at some point before the seventh day of creation: "Thus the heavens and the earth were finished, and all the host of them" ("host" here refers to the heavenly beings).

Exodus 20:11 is even more explicit: "In six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, *and all that is in them*, and rested the seventh day." **We can at least confirm that all the angels were created by the sixth day of creation.**

But can we be any more specific? There may be a hint at the creation of angelic beings on the first day of creation, when we read that "in the beginning God created the heavens and the earth" (Genesis 1:1), immediately followed by, "the earth was without form and void" (Genesis 1:2). There's no mention of the heavens in this second verse. This may be intended to contrast the emptiness of the earth is with the heavens, where God already created angelic beings. This idea could be supported by Job, where we read that "the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy"

when God laid the “cornerstone” of the earth and sunk its “bases” (Job 38:6–7). If the angels (“the sons of God”) shouted for joy when God was forming the earth, **this could imply that God created the angelic beings early on the first day**. However, this is only speculation.

11. Angels are examples for us

Angels show us what perfect obedience looks like. Jesus teaches us to pray, “Your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven” (Matthew 6:10), **and in heaven God’s will is done by angels, immediately, joyfully, and without question**. Their delight is to be God’s humble servants, faithfully performing their assigned tasks, great or small. Our desire and prayer should be that we will do the same.

Angels also model worship. John sees around God’s throne a great angelic army, “numbering myriads of myriads and thousands of thousands, saying with a loud voice, ‘Worthy is the Lamb who was slain, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing!’” (Revelation 5:11–12). If the angels find it their highest joy to praise God continuously, shouldn’t we, too?

12. Angels carry out some of God’s plans

There are numerous ways in which angels carry out God’s plans on earth:

- They frequently bring God’s messages to people (Luke 1:11–19, Acts 8:26, 10:3–8, 22, 27:23–24).
- They carry out some of God’s judgments, bringing a plague upon Israel (2 Samuel 24:16–17), smiting the leaders of the Assyrian army (2 Chronicles 32:21), striking King Herod dead because he did not give God glory (Acts 12:23), or pouring out bowls of God’s wrath on the earth (Revelation 16:1).
- When Christ returns, angels will come with him as a great army accompanying their King and Lord (Matthew 16:27, Luke 9:26, 2 Thessalonians 1:7).
- They patrol the earth as God’s representatives (Zechariah 1:10–11).
- They carry out war against demonic forces (Daniel 10:13; Revelation 12:7–8).
- John records that an angel “seized the dragon, that ancient serpent, who is the Devil and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years, and threw him into the pit . . .” (Revelation 20:1–3).
- When Christ returns, an archangel will proclaim his coming (1 Thessalonians 4:16, see also Revelation 18:1–2, 21, 19:17–18, and other passages).

13. Angels directly glorify God

Humans aren't the only intelligent, moral creatures who glorify God. The Psalmist declares:

"Angels glorify God for who he is in himself, for his excellence.

Bless the Lord, O you his angels,

you mighty ones who do his word,

hearkening to the voice of his word!" (Psalm 103:20, see also 148:2)

The seraphim continually praise God for his holiness (Isaiah 6:2–3), and so do the four living creatures (Revelation 4:8).

Angels also glorify God as they witness his plan unfold. When Christ was born in Bethlehem, a multitude of angels praised God and said, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among men with whom he is pleased!" (Luke 2:14, see also Hebrews 1:6). Jesus tells us, "There is joy before the angels of God over one sinner who repents" (Luke 15:10), indicating that angels rejoice when someone turns from sin and trusts in Christ.

Peter tells us that "angels long to look" (1 Peter 1:12) into the glories of the plan of salvation as it works out in the lives of believers each day. To emphasize the seriousness of particular commands, Paul reminds us that our actions are carried out in the presence of angelic witnesses: "In the presence of God and of Christ Jesus *and of the elect angels* I charge you to keep these rules without favor, doing nothing from partiality" (1 Timothy 5:21, see also 1 Corinthians 4:9). If Timothy follows Paul's instructions, angels will witness his obedience and glorify God. If he neglects to obey, angels will also see and be grieved.

14. Angels are not to be worshipped

"Worship of angels" was one of the false doctrines being taught at Colossae (Colossians 2:18). In the book of Revelation, an angel warns John not to worship him: "You must not do that! I am a fellow servant with you and your brethren who hold the testimony of Jesus. Worship God" (Revelation 19:10).

We shouldn't pray to angels, either. God is able to answer prayer. Paul warns us against thinking that any other "mediator" can come between us and God, "for there is one God, and there is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus" (1 Timothy 2:5). If we were to pray to angels, it would implicitly give them a status equal to God. There are no examples in Scripture of anyone praying to an angel or asking angels for help.

Moreover, Scripture gives us no warrant to seek appearances of angels. They manifest themselves unsought. To seek such appearances would seem to indicate an unhealthy curiosity or a desire for some kind of spectacular event rather than a love for God and

devotion to him and his work. Though angels did appear to people at various times in Scripture, the people apparently never sought those appearances. Our role is rather to talk to the Lord, who is himself the commander of all angelic forces. However, it would not seem wrong to ask God to fulfill his promise in Psalm 91:11 to send angels to protect us in times of need.

The value of systematic theology

Much of what we see or hear about angels in culture is based on speculation, non-biblical sources, or just plain fantasy. The Bible has a lot to say about them—so much so, in fact, that it can be hard to say which of the things we hear about angels are rooted in Scripture. That's where systematic theology is helpful: scholars like Wayne Grudem carefully organize everything the Bible says about a topic, so you can see it all at once.

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February 8, 2000

You Will Be Eaten by Cannibals!

Lessons from the Life of

John G. Paton

Courage in the Cause of Missions

2000 Bethlehem Conference for Pastors

- Resource by DESIRING GOD & John Piper

In 1606, a chain of eighty islands in the South Pacific was discovered by Fernandez de Quiros of Spain. In 1773, **the Islands were explored by Captain James Cook and named the New Hebrides because of the similarities with the Hebrides Islands off the Northwest coast of Scotland.** In 1980, **the New Hebrides gained its independence from Britain and France and was named Vanuatu.** The chain of Islands is about 450 miles long.

If you draw a line straight from Honolulu to Sydney, it will cut through Port Vila, the capital of Vanuatu, two thirds of the way between Hawaii and Australia. The population today is about 190,000.

To the best of our knowledge, the New Hebrides had no Christian influence before John Williams and James Harris from the London Missionary Society landed in 1839. Both of these missionaries were killed and eaten by cannibals on the island of Erromanga on November 20 of that year, only minutes after going ashore. Forty-eight years later John Paton wrote, “Thus were the New Hebrides baptized with the blood of martyrs; and Christ thereby told the whole Christian world that he claimed these islands as His own” (p.75; All page references in the text refer to *John G.*

Paton: Missionary to the New Hebrides, An Autobiography Edited by His Brother [Edinburgh: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1965, orig. 1889], 1891).

The London Missionary Society sent another team to the Island of Tanna in 1842, and these missionaries were driven off within seven months. But on the Island of Aneityum, John Geddie from the Presbyterian church in Nova Scotia (coming in 1848) and John Inglis from The Reformed Presbyterian Church in Scotland (coming in 1852) saw amazing fruit, so that by 1854 “about 3,500 savages (more than half the population [Kenneth Scott Latourette, *A History of the Expansion of Christianity, The Great Century: The Americas, Australasia and Africa, 1800 AD to 1914 AD.* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1970, orig. 1943), p. 228.]) threw away their idols, renouncing their heathen customs and avowing themselves to be worshippers of the true Jehovah God” (p. 77). When Geddie died in 1872, all the population of Aneityum was said to be Christians (George

Patterson, *Missionary Life among the Cannibals: Being the Life of the Rev. John Geddie, D.D., First Missionary to the New Hebrides; with the History of the Nova Scotia Presbyterian Mission on that Group* (Toronto: James Campbell and Son, 1882), p. 508.).

This is part of a great work God was doing in the South Sea Islands in those days. In 1887 Paton recorded the wider triumphs of the gospel. When certain people argued that the Aborigines of Australia were subhuman and incapable of conversion or civilization Paton fought back with mission facts as well as biblical truth.

Recall . . . what the Gospel has done for the near kindred of these same Aborigines. On our own Aneityum, 3,500 Cannibals have been lead to renounce their heathenism . . . In Fiji, 79,000 Cannibals have been brought under the influence of the Gospel; and 13,000 members of the Churches are professing to live and work for Jesus. In Samoa, 34,000 Cannibals have professed Christianity; and in nineteen years, its College has sent forth 206 Native teachers and evangelists. On our New Hebrides, more than 12,000 Cannibals have been brought to sit at the feet of Christ, through I mean not to say that they are all model Christians; and 133 of the Natives have been trained and sent forth as teachers and preachers of the Gospel. (p. 265)

This is the **remarkable missionary context for the life and ministry of John G. Paton, who was born near Dumfries, Scotland, on the 24th of May, 1824. He sailed for the New Hebrides (via Australia) with his wife Mary on April 16, 1858, at the age of 33. They reached their appointed island of Tanna on November 5, and in March the next year both his wife and his newborn son died of the fever. He served alone on the island for the next four years under incredible circumstances of constant danger until he was driven off the island in February, 1862.**

For the next four years he did extraordinarily effective mobilization work for the Presbyterian mission to the New Hebrides, travelling around Australia and Great Britain. He married again in 1864, and took his wife, Margaret, back this time to the smaller island of Aniwa ("It measures scarcely seven miles by two," p. 312). They labored together for 41 years until Margaret died in 1905 when John Paton was 81.

When they came to Aniwa in November, 1866, they saw the destitution of the islanders. It will help us appreciate the magnitude of their labors and the wonders of their fruitfulness if we see some of what they faced.

The natives were cannibals and occasionally ate the flesh of their defeated foes. They practiced infanticide and widow sacrifice, killing the widows of deceased men so that they could serve their husbands in the next world (pp. 69, 334).

Their worship was entirely a service of fear, its aim being to propitiate this or that Evil spirit, to prevent calamity or to secure revenge. They deified their Chiefs . . . so that almost every village or tribe had its own Sacred Man. . . . They exercised an extraordinary influence for evil, these village or tribal priests, and were believed to have the disposal of life and death through their sacred ceremonies. . . . They also worshipped the spirits of departed ancestors and heroes, through their material idols of wood and stone. . . . They feared the spirits and sought their aid; especially seeking to propitiate those who presided over war and peace, famine and plenty, health and sickness,

destruction and prosperity, life and death. Their whole worship was one of slavish fear; and, so far as ever I could learn, they had no idea of a God of mercy or grace. (p. 72; This description was made of the natives on the island of Tanna, but applies equally well to the conditions on the nearby island of Aniwa.)

Paton admitted that at times his heart wavered as he wondered whether these people could be brought to the point of weaving Christian ideas into the spiritual consciousness of their lives (p. 74). But he took heart from the power of the gospel and from the fact that thousands on Aneityum had come to Christ.

So he learned the language and reduced it to writing (p. 319). He built orphanages (“We trained these young people for Jesus” p. 317). “Mrs. Paton taught a class of about fifty women and girls. They became experts at sewing, singing and plaiting hats, and reading” (p. 377). They “trained the Teachers . . . translated and printed and expounded the Scriptures . . . ministered to the sick and dying . . . dispensed medicines every day . . . taught them the use of tools . . .” etc. (p. 378). They held worship services every Lord’s Day and sent native teachers to all the villages to preach the gospel.

In the next fifteen years, John and Margaret Paton saw the entire island of Aniwa turn to Christ. Years later he wrote, “I claimed Aniwa for Jesus, and by the grace of God Aniwa now worships at the Savior’s feet” (p. 312). **When he was 73 years old and travelling around the world trumpeting the cause of missions in the South Seas, he was still ministering to his beloved Aniwan people and “published the New Testament in the Aniwan Language” in 1897** (Ralph Bell, *John G. Paton: Missionary to the New Hebrides* (Butler, IN: The Highley Press, 1957), p. 238.). Even to his death he was translating hymns and catechisms (Ibid., 238) and creating a dictionary for his people even when he couldn’t be with them any more (p. 451).

During his years of labor on the islands Paton kept a journal and notebooks and letters from which he wrote his *Autobiography* in three parts from 1887 to 1898. Almost all we know of his work comes from that book, which is available in one volume now from the Banner of Truth Trust.

Paton outlived his second wife by two years and died in Australia on January 28, 1907.

Today, 93 years after the death of John Paton, about 85% of the population of Vanuatu identifies itself as Christian, perhaps 21% of the population being evangelical (Patrick Johnstone, *Operation World* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1993), p. 572.). The sacrifices and the legacy of the missionaries to the New Hebrides are stunning, and John G. Paton stands out as one of the great ones.

What Kinds of Circumstances Called for Courage in Paton's Life?

The title of this message is “You Will Be Eaten By Cannibals!’ Courage in the Cause of World Missions: Lessons from the Life of John G. Paton.” So that is the focus of what I want to say. I conceive the rest of this message in three parts: (1) What kinds of circumstances called for courage in Paton's life? (2) What did his courage achieve? (3) Where did his courage come from?

He had courage to overcome the criticism he received from respected elders for going to the New Hebrides.

A **Mr. Dickson exploded, “The cannibals! You will be eaten by cannibals!”** The memory of Williams and Harris on Erromanga was only 19 years old. But **to this Paton responded:**

Mr. Dickson, you are advanced in years now, and your own prospect is soon to be laid in the grave, there to be eaten by worms; I confess to you, that if I can but live and die serving and honoring the Lord Jesus, it will make no difference to me whether I am eaten by Cannibals or by

worms; and in the Great Day my Resurrection body will rise as fair as yours in the likeness of our risen Redeemer. (p. 56)

This is the kind of in-your-face spiritual moxie that would mark Paton's whole life. It's a big part of what makes reading his story so invigorating.

Another kind of criticism for going was that he would be leaving a very fruitful ministry. Paton had served for ten years as a city Missionary in urban Glasgow among the lower income people with tremendous success and hundreds of unchurched people were attending his classes and services during the week. One of his loved professors of divinity and minister of the congregation where he had served as **an elder tried to persuade him to stay in that ministry. He reported that he argued that**

Green Street Church was doubtless the sphere for which God had given me peculiar qualifications, and in which He had so largely blessed my labors; that if I left those now attending my Classes and Meetings, they might be scattered, and many of them would probably fall away; that I was leaving certainty for uncertainty - work in which God had made me greatly useful, for work in which I might fail to be useful, and only throw away my life amongst Cannibals. (p. 55)

In fact Paton says, "The opposition was so strong from nearly all, and many of them warm Christian friends, that I was sorely tempted to question whether I was carrying out the Divine will, or only some headstrong wish of my own. This also caused me much anxiety, and drove me close to God in prayer" (p. 56). We will see shortly how he rose above these temptations to turn back.

He had courage to risk losing his loved ones and to press on when he did in fact lose them.

He and his wife arrived on the island of Tanna November 5, 1858, and Mary was pregnant. The baby was born February 12, 1859. "Our island-exile thrilled with joy! But the greatest of sorrows was treading hard upon the heels of that great joy!" (p. 79). Mary had repeated attacks of ague and fever and pneumonia and diarrhea with delirium for two weeks.

Then in a moment, altogether unexpectedly, she died on March third. To crown my sorrows, and complete my loneliness, the dear baby-boy, whom we had named after her father, Peter Robert Robson, was taken from me after one week's sickness, on the 20th of March. Let those who have ever passed through any similar darkness as of midnight feel for me; as for all others, it would be more than vain to try to paint my sorrows! (p. 79)

He dug the two graves with his own hands and buried them by the house he had built. (He had to sleep laying across both graves so as to prevent the local cannibals from digging up their bodies & eating them.... Later, after conversion, the local chief asked him: "Who were those soldiers that used to surround your home at night? - ANGELS!)

Stunned by that dreadful loss, in entering upon this field of labor to which the Lord had Himself so evidently led me, my reason seemed for a time almost to give way. The ever-merciful Lord sustained me . . . and that spot became my sacred and much-frequented shrine, during all the following months and years when I labored on for the salvation of the savage Islanders amidst difficulties, dangers, and deaths. . . . But for Jesus, and the fellowship he vouchsafed to me there, I must have gone mad and died beside the lonely grave! (p. 80)

The courage to risk the loss was one thing. But the courage to experience the loss and press on alone was supernatural. "I felt her loss beyond all conception or description, in that dark land. It was very difficult to be resigned, left alone, and in sorrowful circumstances; but feeling immovably assured that my God and father was too wise and loving to err in anything that he does or permits, I looked up to the Lord for help, and struggled on

in His work” (p. 85). Here we get a glimpse of the theology that we will see underneath this man’s massive courage and toil. “I do not pretend to see through the mystery of such visitations – wherein God calls away the young, the promising, and those sorely needed for his service here; but this I do know and feel, that, in the light of such dispensations, it becomes us all to love and serve our blessed Lord Jesus so that we may be ready at his call for death and eternity” (p. 85).

He had courage to risk his own sickness in a foreign land with no doctors and no escape.

“Fever and ague had attacked me fourteen times severely” (p. 105). **In view of his wife’s death he never knew when any one of these attacks would mean his own death.** Imagine struggling with a life-and-death sickness over and over with only one Christian native friend named Abraham who had come with him to the island to help him.

For example, as he was building a new house to get to higher, healthier ground, he collapsed with the fever on his way up the steep hill from the coast: “When about two-thirds up the hill I became so faint that I concluded I was dying. Lying down on the ground, sloped against the root of a tree to keep me from rolling to the bottom, I took farewell of old Abraham, of my mission work, and of everything around! In this weak state I lay, watched over by my faithful companion, and fell into a quiet sleep” (p. 106). He revived and was restored. But **only great courage could press on month after month, year after year, knowing that the fever that took his wife and son lay at the door.**

And it’s not as if these dangers were only during one season at the beginning of his missionary life. **Fifteen years later with another wife and another child on another**

island, he records, “During the hurricanes, from January to April, 1873, when the *Dayspring* [the mission ship] was wrecked, we lost a darling child by death, my dear wife had a protracted illness, and I was brought very low with severe rheumatic fever . . . and was reported as dying” (p. 384).

The most common demand for courage was the almost constant threat to his life from the hostilities of the natives.

This is what makes his *Autobiography* read like a thriller. In his first four years on Tanna, when he was all alone, he moved from one savage crisis to the next. One wonders how his mind kept from snapping, as he never knew when his house would be surrounded with angry natives or his party would be ambushed along the way. How do you survive when there is no kickback time? No unwinding. No sure refuge on earth. “Our continuous danger caused me now oftentimes to sleep with my clothes on, that I might start at a moment’s warning. My faithful dog Clutha would give a sharp bark and awake me. . . . God made them fear this precious creature, and often used her in saving our lives” (p. 178).

My enemies seldom slackened their hateful designs against my life, however calmed or baffled for the moment. . . . A wild chief followed me around for four hours with his loaded musket, and, though often directed towards me, God restrained his hand. I spoke kindly to him, and attended to my work as if he had not been there, fully persuaded that my God had placed me there, and would protect me till my allotted task was finished. Looking up in unceasing prayer to our dear Lord Jesus, I left all in his hands, and felt immortal till my work was done. Trials and hairbreadth escapes strengthened my faith, and seemed only to nerve me for more to follow; and they did tread swiftly upon each other’s heels. (p. 117)

One of the most remarkable things about Paton's dealing with danger is the gutsy forthrightness with which he spoke to his assailants. He often rebuked them to their faces and scolded them for their bad behavior even as they held the ax over his head.

One morning at daybreak I found my house surrounded by armed men, and a chief intimated that they had assembled to take my life. Seeing that I was entirely in their hands, I knelt down and gave myself away body and soul to the Lord Jesus, for what seemed the last time on earth. Rising, I went out to them, and began calmly talking about their unkind treatment of me and contrasting it with all my conduct towards them. . . . At last some of the Chiefs, who had attended the Worship, rose and said, "Our conduct has been bad; but now we will fight for you, and kill all those who hate you." (p. 115)

[Once] when natives in large numbers were assembled at my house, a man furiously rushed on me with his axe but a Kaserumini Chief snatched a spade with which I had been working, and dexterously defended me from instant death. Life in such circumstances led me to cling very near to the Lord Jesus; I knew not, for one brief hour, when or how attack might be made; and yet, with my trembling hand clasped in the hand once nailed on Calvary, and now swaying the scepter of the universe, calmness and peace and resignation abode in my soul. (p. 117)

As his courage increased and his deliverances were multiplied, he would make it his aim to keep warring factions separated, and would throw himself between them and argue for peace. "Going amongst them every day, I did my utmost to stop hostilities, setting the evils of war before them, and pleading with the leading men to renounce it" (p. 139). **He**

would go to visit his enemies when they were sick and wanted his help, never knowing what was an ambush and what was not.

Once a native named Ian called Paton to his sick bed, and as Paton leaned over him, he pulled a dagger and held it to Paton's heart.

I durst neither move nor speak, except that my heart kept praying to the Lord to spare me, or if my time was come to take me home to Glory with Himself. There passed a few moments of awful suspense. My sight went and came. Not a word had been spoken, except to Jesus; and then Ian wheeled the knife around, thrust it into the sugar cane leaf. And cried to me, "Go, go quickly!" . . . I ran for my life a weary four miles till I reached the Mission House, faint, yet praising God for such a deliverance (p.191).

One last call for courage that I will mention is the need for courage in the face of criticism that he did not have courage to die.

After four years, the entire island population rose against Paton, blaming him for an epidemic, and made siege against him and his little band of Christians. There were spectacular close calls and a miraculous deliverance from fire by wind and rain (p. 215), and finally a wonderful answer to prayer as a ship arrived just in time to take him off the island.

In response to this, after four years of risking his life hundreds of times and losing his wife and child, he recounts this incident:

Conscious that I had, to the last inch of life, tried to do my duty, I left all results in the hands of my only Lord, and all criticisms to His unerring judgment. Hard things also were occasionally spoken to my face. One dear friend, for instance, said, "You should not have left. You should have stood at the post of duty till you fell. It would have been to

your honor, and better for the cause of the Mission, had you been killed at the post of duty like the Gordons and others.” (p. 223)

Oh, how easy it would have been for him to respond by walking away from the mission at a moment like that. But courage pressed on for another four decades of fruitful ministry on the island of Aniwa and around the world.

What Did His Courage Achieve?

We have already seen one main answer to this question, namely,

The entire island of Aniwa turned to Christ.

Four years of seemingly fruitless and costly labor on Tanna could have meant the end of Paton’s missionary life. He could have remembered that in Glasgow for ten years he had had unprecedented success as an urban missionary. Now for four years he seemed to have accomplished nothing and he lost his wife and child in the process. But instead of going home, he turned his missionary heart to Aniwa.

And this time the story was different. “I claimed Aniwa for Jesus, and by the grace of God, Aniwa now worships at the Savior’s feet” (p. 312).

The courageous endurance on Tanna resulted in a story that awakened thousands to the call of missions and strengthened the home church.

The reason Paton wrote the second volume of his *Autobiography*, he says, was to record God’s “marvelous goodness in using my humble voice and pen, and the story of my life, for interesting thousands and tens of thousands in the work of Missions” (p. 220). And the influence goes on today – even in this room right now.

Oftentimes, while passing through the perils and defeats of my first four years in the Mission-field on Tanna, I wondered . . . why God permitted such things. But on

looking back now, I already clearly perceive . . . that the Lord was thereby preparing me for doing, and providing me materials wherewith to accomplish, the best work of all my life, namely the kindling of the heart of Australian Presbyterianism with a living affection for these Islanders of their own Southern Seas . . . and in being the instrument under God of sending out Missionary after Missionary to the New Hebrides, to claim another island and still another for Jesus.

That work, and all that may spring from it in Time and Eternity, never could have been accomplished by me but for first the sufferings and then the story of my Tanna enterprise! (pp. 222–223)

And the awakening was not just in Australia, but in Scotland and around the world. For example, he tells us what the effect of his home tour was on his own small Reformed Presbyterian Church after his four years of pain and seeming fruitlessness on Tanna. “I was . . . filled with a high passion of gratitude to be able to proclaim, at the close of my tour . . . that of all her ordained Ministers, one in every six was a Missionary of the Cross!” (p. 280). Indeed the effects at home were far more widespread than that – and here is a lesson for all churches.

Nor did the dear old Church thus cripple herself; on the contrary, her zeal for Missions accompanied, if not caused, unwonted prosperity at home. New waves of liberality passed over the heart of her people. Debts that had burdened many of the Churches and Manses were swept away. Additional Congregations were organized. And in May, 1876, the Reformed Presbyterian Church entered into an honorable and independent Union with her larger, wealthier, and more progressive sister, the Free Church of Scotland. (p. 280)

In other words, **the courageous perseverance of John Paton on Tanna, in spite of apparent fruitlessness, bore fruit in blessing for the mission field and for the church at home in ways he could have never dreamed in the midst of his dangers.**

Another one of those good effects was to vindicate the power of the gospel to convert the hardest people.

Paton had an eye to the sophisticated European despisers of the gospel as he wrote the story of his life. **He wanted to give evidence to skeptical modern men that the gospel can and does transform the most unlikely people and their societies.**

So in his *Autobiography* he tells stories of particular converts like Kowia, a chief on Tanna. When he was dying he came to say farewell to Paton.

“Farewell, Missi, I am very near death now; we will meet again in Jesus and with Jesus!” . . . Abraham sustained him, tottering to the place of graves; there he lay down . . . and slept in Jesus; and there the faithful Abraham buried him beside his wife and children. Thus died a man who had been a cannibal chief, but by the grace of God and the love of Jesus changed, transfigured into a character of light and beauty. What think ye of this, ye skeptics as to the reality of conversion? . . . I knew that day, and I know now, that there is one soul at least from Tanna to sing the glories of Jesus in Heaven — and, oh, the rapture when I meet him there! (p. 160)

And then, of course, there was old Abraham himself. He was not one of Paton’s converts, but he was a converted cannibal from Aneityum and Paton’s absolutely trustworthy helper on Tanna during all his time there. So Paton writes again in witness to European skeptics:

When I have read or heard the shallow objections of irreligious scribblers and talkers, hinting that there was no reality in conversions, and that mission effort was but waste, oh, how my heart has yearned to plant them just one week on Tanna, with the “natural” man all around in the person of Cannibal and Heathen, and only the one “spiritual” man in the person of the converted Abraham, nursing them, feeding them, saving them ‘for the love Jesus’ - that I might just learn how many hours it took to convince them that Christ in man was a reality after all! **All the skepticism of Europe would hide its head in foolish shame; and all its doubts would dissolve under one glance of the new light that Jesus, and Jesus alone, pours from the converted Cannibal’s eye.** (p. 107)

The list could go on as to what Paton’s courage achieved because in reality our second and third question overlap. What his courage achieved was, in fact, a vindication of the

value of all that produced his courage. So let's turn to that, rather than lengthen the list here.

Where Did this Courage Come From? What Was Its Origin?

The answer he would want us to say is: It came from God. But he would also want us to see what precious means God used and, if possible, apply them to ourselves and our situation.

His courage came from his father.

The tribute Paton pays to his godly father is worth the price of the *Autobiography*, even if you don't read anything else. Maybe it's because I have a daughter and four sons, but **I wept as I read this section, it filled me with such longing to be a father like this.**

There was a small room, the "closet" where his father would go for prayer, as a rule after each meal. The eleven children knew it and they revered the spot and learned something profound about God. The impact on John Paton was immense.

Though everything else in religion were by some unthinkable catastrophe to be swept out of memory, were blotted from my understanding, my soul would wander back to those early scenes, and shut itself up once again in that Sanctuary Closet, and, hearing still the echoes of those cries to God, would hurl back all doubt with the victorious appeal, "He walked with God, why may not I?" (p. 8)

How much my father's prayers at this time impressed me I can never explain, nor could any stranger understand. When, on his knees and all of us kneeling around him in Family Worship, he poured out his whole soul with tears for the conversion of the Heathen world to the service of Jesus, and for every personal and domestic

need, we all felt as if in the presence of the living Savior, and learned to know and love him as our Divine friend. (p. 21)

One scene best captures the depth of love between John and his father and the power of the impact on John's life of uncompromising courage and purity. The time came for the young Paton to leave home and go to Glasgow to attend divinity school and become a city missionary in his early twenties. From his hometown of Torthorwald to the train station at Kilmarnock was a forty-mile walk. Forty years later Paton wrote,

My dear father walked with me the first six miles of the way. His counsels and tears and heavenly conversation on that parting journey are fresh in my heart as if it had been but yesterday; and tears are on my cheeks as freely now as then, whenever memory steals me away to the scene. For the last half mile or so we walked on together in almost unbroken silence – my father, as was often his custom, carrying hat in hand, while his long flowing yellow hair (then yellow, but in later years white as snow) streamed like a girl's down his shoulders. His lips kept moving in silent prayers for me; and his tears fell fast when our eyes met each other in looks for which all speech was vain! We halted on reaching the appointed parting place; he grasped my hand firmly for a minute in silence, and then solemnly and affectionately said: "God bless you, my son! Your father's God prosper you, and keep you from all evil!"

Unable to say more, his lips kept moving in silent prayer; in tears we embraced, and parted. I ran off as fast as I could; and, when about to turn a corner in the road where he would lose sight of me, I looked back and saw him still standing with head uncovered where I had left him – gazing after me. Waving my hat in adieu, I rounded the corner and out of sight in an instant. But my heart was too full and sore to carry me further, so I darted into the side of the road and wept for a time. Then, rising up cautiously, I climbed the dike to see if he yet stood where I had left him; and just at that moment I caught a glimpse of him climbing the dyke and looking out for me! He did not see me, and after he gazed eagerly in my direction for a while, he got down, set his face toward home, and began to return - his head still uncovered, and his heart, I felt sure, still rising in prayers

for me. I watched through blinding tears, till his form faded from my gaze; and then, hastening on my way, vowed deeply and oft, by the help of God, to live and act so as never to grieve or dishonor such a father and mother as he had given me. (pp. 25–26)

The impact of his father's faith and prayer and love and discipline was immeasurable. So much more could be said.

His courage came from a deep sense of divine calling.

Before he was twelve years old, Paton says, "I had given my soul to God, and was resolved to aim at being a missionary of the cross, or a minister of the gospel" (p. 21). As he came to the end of his studies in divinity in Glasgow at the age of 32, he says, "I continually heard . . . the wail of the perishing Heathen in the South Seas; and I saw that few were caring for them, while I well knew that many would be ready to take up my work in Calton" (p. 52). "The Lord kept saying within me, 'Since none better qualified can be got, rise and offer yourself!'"

When he was criticized for leaving a fruitful ministry, one crucial event sealed his sense of calling, namely, a word from his parents:

Heretofore we feared to bias you, but now we must tell you why we praise God for the decision to which you have been led. Your father's heart was set upon being a Minister, but other claims forced him to give it up. When you were given to them, your father and mother laid you upon the altar, their first-born, to be consecrated, if God saw fit, as a Missionary of the Cross; and it has been their constant prayer that you might be prepared, qualified, and led to this very decision; and we pray with all our heart

that the Lord may accept your offering, long spare you, and give you many souls from the Heathen World for your hire. (p. 57) In response to that Paton wrote, “From the moment, every doubt as to my path of duty forever vanished. I saw the hand of God very visibly, not only preparing me before, but now leading me to, the Foreign Mission field” (p. 57). That sense of duty and calling bred in him an undaunted courage that would never look back.

His courage came from a sense of holy heritage in his church.

Paton was part of the Reformed Presbyterian Church of Scotland, one of the oldest but smallest protestant churches. It traced its lineage back to the Scottish Covenanters and had in it a strong sense of valor for the cause of the great truths of the Reformation.

Paton once wrote,

“I am more proud that the blood of Martyrs is in my veins, and their truths in my heart, than other men can be of noble pedigree or royal names”

(p. 280).

The truths he has in mind are the robust doctrines of Calvinism. He said in his *Autobiography*, “I am by conviction a strong Calvinist” (p. 195).

For him this meant, as we have seen, a strong confidence that God can and will change the hearts of the most unlikely people. **His Reformed doctrine of regeneration was crucial here in maintaining his courage in the face of humanly impossible odds.**

Commenting on the conversion of one native, he said, “Regeneration is the sole work of the Holy Spirit in the human heart and soul, and is in every case one and the same.

Conversion, on the other hand, bringing into play the action also of the human will, is never absolutely the same perhaps in even two souls” (p. 372). “Oh, Jesus! To Thee alone be all the glory. Thou hast the key to unlock every heart that Thou has created” (p. 373). In other words, **Calvinism, contrary to all misrepresentation, was not a hindrance to missions but the hope of missions for John Paton and hundreds of other missionaries like him.** So it’s not surprising that the fourth source of courage for Paton was

His confidence in the sovereignty of God controlling all adversities.

We have already seen the words he wrote over his wife and child’s grave: “Feeling immovably assured that my God and father was too wise and loving to err in anything that he does or permits, I looked up to the Lord for help, and struggled on in His work” (p. 85).

Over and over this faith sustained him in the most threatening and frightening situations. As he was trying to escape from Tanna at the end of four years of dangers, he and Abraham were surrounded by raging natives who kept urging each other to strike the first blow.

My heart rose up to the Lord Jesus; I saw Him watching all the scene. My peace came back to me like a wave from God. I realized that I was immortal till my Master’s work with me was done. The assurance came to me, as if a voice out of Heaven had spoken, that not a musket would be fired to wound us, not a club prevail to strike us, not a spear leave the hand in which it was held vibrating to be thrown, not an arrow leave the bow, or a killing stone the fingers, without the permission of Jesus Christ, whose is all power in Heaven and on Earth. He rules all Nature, animate and inanimate, and restrains even the Savage of the South Seas. (p. 207)

After getting away with his life and losing everything that he had on earth (“my little earthly All”), instead of despairing or pouting or being paralyzed with self-pity, he moved forward expecting to see God’s good purpose in time – which he saw in the ministry that opened to him, first of missions mobilization and then of work on Aniwa: “Often since have I thought that the Lord stripped me thus bare of all these interests, that I might with undistracted mind devote my entire energy to the special work soon to be carved out for me, and of which at this moment neither I nor anyone had ever dreamed” (p. 220).

Year after year, “disappointments and successes were strangely intermingled” (p. 247) in his life. **There was no long period of time, it seems, where life was very easy.** And we would distort the man if we said there were no low moments. “I felt so disappointed, so miserable,” he wrote about one period of his travels, “that I wished I had been in my grave with my dear departed and my brethren on the Islands who had fallen around me” (p. 232). It was not always easy after the words, “The Lord has taken away,” to add the words, “Blessed be the name of the Lord.” But the way out was clear, and he used it again and again. **When the mission ship, *Dayspring*, that he had worked so hard to fund, was sunk in a storm, he wrote:**

Whatever trials have befallen me in my Earthly Pilgrimage, I have never had the trial of doubting that perhaps, after all, Jesus had made some mistake. No! my blessed Lord Jesus makes no mistakes! When we see all His meaning, we shall then understand, what now we can only trustfully believe that all is well — best for us, best for the cause most dear to us, best for the good of others and the glory of God. (p. 488)

Near the end of his life, at age 79, he was back on his beloved island Aniwa. “I cannot visit the villages, or go among the people and the sick, as formerly, owing to an increased feebleness in my legs and lumbago. Which is painful for the last fortnight. But all is as our Master sends it, and we submit thankfully, as all is nothing to what we deserve; and

adored be our God. We have in our dear Lord Jesus [grace] for peace and joy in all circumstances” (Ralph Bell, *John G. Paton*, p. 238).

His courage came through a kind of praying that submitted to God’s sovereign wisdom.

How do you claim the promises of God for protection when your wife was equally faithful but, rather than being protected, died; and when the Gordons on Erromanga were equally trusting in those promises and were martyred?

Mr. and Mrs. G. N. Gordon were killed on Erromanga on May 20, 1861. They had labored four years on the island when they walked into an ambush. “A blow was aimed at him with a tomahawk, which he caught; the other man struck, but his weapon was also caught. One of the tomahawks was then wrenched out of his grasp. Next moment, a blow on the spine laid the dear Missionary low, and a second on the neck almost severed the head from the body.” Mrs. Gordon came running to see the noise and “Ouben slipped stealthily behind here, sank his tomahawk into her back and with another blow almost severed her head! This was the fate of those two devoted servants of the Lord; loving in their lives and in their deaths not divided, their spirits, wearing the crown of martyrdom, entered Glory together, to be welcomed by Williams and Harris, whose blood was shed near the same now hallowed spot for the name and the cause of Jesus” (p. 166).

Paton had learned the answer to this question from listening to his mother pray, even before he learned the theology that supports it. **When the potato crop failed in Scotland, Mrs. Paton said to her children, “Oh my children, love your Heavenly Father, tell him in faith and prayer all your needs, and he will supply your wants so far as it shall be for your good and His glory”** (p. 22). Compare this way of praying with the way Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego

faced the fiery furnace in [Daniel 3:17-18](#), “God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the furnace of blazing fire; and He will deliver us out of your hand, O king. But even if He does not, let it be known to you, O king, that we are not going to serve your gods or worship the golden image that you have set up.”

This is what Paton trusted God for in claiming the promises: that God would do what was for Paton’s good and for his own glory.

His courage when he was surrounded by armed natives came through a kind of praying that claimed the promises under the overarching submission to God’s wisdom as to what would work most for God’s glory and his good.

I . . . assured them that I was not afraid to die, for at death my Savior would take me to be with Himself in Heaven, and to be far happier than I had ever been on Earth. I then lifted up my hands and eyes to the Heavens, and prayed aloud for Jesus . . . either to protect me or to take me home to Glory as He saw to be for the best. (p. 164)

That was how he prayed again and again: “Protect me or . . . take me home to Glory as you see to be for the best.” He knew that Jesus had promised suffering and martyrdom to some of his servants ([Luke 11:49](#); [21:12-18](#)). So the promises he claimed were both: either protect me or take me home in a way that will glorify you and do good for others. This meant that, in one sense, life was not simple. If God may rescue us for his glory, or let us be killed for his glory, which way to turn in self-preservation was not an easy question to answer.

To know what was best to be done, in such trying circumstances, was an abiding perplexity. To have left altogether, when so surrounded by perils and enemies, at first

seemed the wisest course, and was the repeated advice of many friends. But again, I had acquired the language, and had gained a considerable influence amongst the Natives, and there were a number warmly attached both to myself and to the Worship. To have left would have been to lose all, which to me was heart-rending; therefore, risking all with Jesus, I held on while the hope of being spared longer had not absolutely and entirely vanished (p. 173).

After one harrowing journey he wrote, “Had it not been for the assurance that . . . in every path of duty He would carry me through or dispose of me therein for His glory, I could never have undertaken either journey” (p. 148).

Often have I seized the pointed barrel and directed it upwards, or, pleading with my assailant, uncapped his musket in the struggle. At other times, nothing could be said, nothing done, but stand still in silent prayer, asking to protect us or to prepare us for going home to His glory. He fulfilled His own promise — I will not fail thee nor forsake thee.(pp. 329–330)

The peace God gave him in these crises was not the peace of sure escape but the peace that God is good and wise and omnipotent and will do all things well. “We felt that God was near, and omnipotent to do what seemed best in his sight” (p. 197).

Did ever mother run more quickly to protect her crying child in danger’s hour, than the Lord Jesus hastens to answer believing prayer and send help to His servants *in His own good time and way, so far as it shall be for His glory and their good?* (p. 164, emphasis added)

Paton taught his helpers to pray this way as well, and we hear the same faith and prayer in Abraham, his trustworthy Aneityumese servant.

O Lord, our Heavenly Father, they have murdered Thy servants on Erromanga. They have banished the Aneityumese from dark Tanna. And now they want to kill Missi Paton and me. Our great King, protect us, and make their hearts soft and sweet to Thy Worship. Or, if they are permitted to kill us, do not Thou hate us, but wash us in the blood of Thy

dear Son Jesus Christ. . . . Make us two and all Thy servants strong for Thee and for Thy Worship; and if they kill us now, let us die together in Thy good work, like Thy servants Missi Gordon the man and Missi Gordon the woman. (p. 171)

His courage came from a joy in God that he knew could not be surpassed anywhere in any other ministry.

Oh that the pleasure-seeking men and women of the world could only taste and feel the real joy of those who know and love the true God – a heritage which the world . . . cannot give to them, but which the poorest and humblest followers of Jesus inherit and enjoy! (p. 78)

My heart often says within itself — when, when will men’s eyes at home be opened? When will the rich and the learned . . . renounce their shallow frivolities, and go to live amongst the poor, the ignorant, the outcast, and the lost, and write their eternal fame on the souls by them blessed and brought to the Savior? Those who have tasted this highest joy, “The joy of the Lord,” will never again ask — *Is Life worth living?*

He goes on to expand the ground of this joy:

Life, any life, would be well spent, under any conceivable conditions, in bringing one human soul to know and love and serve God and His Son, and thereby securing for yourself at least one temple where your name and memory would be held for ever and for ever in affectionate praise — a regenerated Heart in heaven. That fame will prove immortal, when all the poems and monuments

and pyramids of Earth have gone into dust.

(pp. 411–412)

Near the end of his life he wrote about the joy that carried him on and about his hope that his own children would undertake the same mission and find the same joy:

Let me record my immovable conviction that this is the noblest service in which any human being, can spend or be spent; and that, if God gave me back my life to be lived over again, I would without one quiver of hesitation lay it on the altar to Christ, that He might use it as before in similar ministries of love, especially amongst those who have never yet heard the Name of Jesus. Nothing that has been endured, and nothing that can now befall me, makes me tremble — on the contrary, I deeply rejoice — when I breathe the prayer that it may please the blessed Lord to turn the hearts of all my children to the Mission Field and that He may open up their way and make it *their pride and joy to live and die in carrying Jesus and His Gospel into the heart of the Heathen World!* (p. 444, emphasis added)

Where did the joy of John G. Paton most deeply repose? The answer, it seems, is that it rested most deeply in the experience of personal communion with Jesus Christ mediated through the promise, “Lo, I am with you always.” Therefore, the final source of his courage I would mention is that:

His courage came from personal fellowship with Jesus through faith in his promise, especially on the brink of eternity.

The promise had been given precisely in the context of the Great Commission: ***“Go and make disciples of all nations . . . and Lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age”*** ([Matthew 28:19-20](#)).

More than any other promise, this one brought Jesus close and real to John Paton in all his dangers.

After the measles epidemic that killed thousands on the islands, and for which the missionaries were blamed, he wrote: “During the crisis, I felt generally calm, and firm of soul, standing erect and with my whole weight on the promise, ‘*Lo! I am with you always.*’ Precious promise! How often I adore Jesus for it, and rejoice in it! Blessed be his name” (p. 154).

The power this promise had to make Christ real to Paton in hours of crisis was unlike any other Scripture or prayer:

Without that abiding consciousness of the presence and power of my dear Lord and Savior, nothing else in all the world could have preserved me from losing my reason and perishing miserably. In his words, “Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world,” became to me so real that it would not have startled me to behold Him, as Stephen did, gazing down upon the scene. I felt His supporting power. . . . It is the sober truth, and it comes back to me sweetly after 20 years, that I had my nearest and dearest glimpses of the face and smiles of my blessed Lord in those dread moments when musket, club, or spear was being leveled at my life. Oh the bliss of living and enduring, as seeing “Him who is invisible”! (p. 117)

My constant custom was, in order to prevent war, to run right in between the contending parties. My faith enabled me to grasp and realize the promise, 'Lo, I am with you always.'

In Jesus I felt invulnerable and immortal, so long as I was doing his work. And I can truly say, that these were the moments when I felt my Savior to be most truly and sensibly present, inspiring and empowering me.

(p. 342)

One of the most powerful paragraphs in his *Autobiography* describes his experience of hiding in a tree, at the mercy of an unreliable chief, as hundreds of angry natives hunted him for his life. What he experienced there was the deepest source of Paton's joy and courage. In fact, I would dare to say that to share this experience and call others to enjoy it was the reason that he wrote the story of his life.

I pity from the depth of my heart every human being, who, from whatever cause, is a stranger to the most ennobling, uplifting, and consoling experience that can come to the soul of man — blessed communion with the Father of our Spirits, through gracious union with the Lord Jesus Christ.

(p. 359)

He began his *Autobiography* with the words,

“What I write here is for the glory of God”

(p. 2).

That is true. But God gets glory when his Son is exalted. And his Son his exalted when we cherish him above all things. That is what this story is about.

Being entirely at the mercy of such doubtful and vacillating friends, I, though perplexed, felt it best to obey. I climbed into the tree and was left there alone in the bush. The hours I spent there live all before me as if it were but of yesterday. I heard the frequent discharging of muskets, and the yells of the Savages. Yet I sat there among the branches, as safe as in the arms of Jesus. Never, in all my sorrows, did my Lord draw nearer to me, and speak more soothingly in my soul, than when the moonlight flickered among those chestnut leaves, and the night air played on my throbbing brow, as I told all my heart to Jesus. Alone, yet not alone! If it be to glorify my God, I will not grudge to spend many nights alone in such a tree, to feel again my Savior's spiritual presence, to enjoy His consoling fellowship. If thus thrown back upon your own soul, alone, all alone, in the midnight, in the bush, in the very embrace of death itself, have you a Friend that will not fail you then? (p. 200)

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DESIRING GOD: HERE WE STAND

_DAY 7

1496–1561

The Fearless Pacifist

BY RYAN GRIFFITH

Five hundred years ago, Martin Luther's bold stand ignited the Reformation, but he wasn't alone. The Reformation was a movement of many heroes, known and unknown, who shaped history. Explore the full collection of our *Here We Stand* [resources](#).

If you are familiar with the contemporary Mennonites, you may be surprised to learn that the group's founder started as a Catholic priest who had never read the Bible.

A Priest Without the Bible

In 1524, at the age of 28, Menno Simons was ordained a priest of the Catholic Church in Utrecht, Netherlands. Although familiar with Greek and Latin and studied in Catholic doctrine, Simons had *never* read the Scriptures themselves. "I had not touched them during my life," he later wrote, "for I feared if I should read them they would mislead me."

In 1526, **he began to question the truthfulness of the Catholic doctrine of transubstantiation** (the idea that the bread and wine transform into the actual flesh and blood of Jesus in the Eucharist). **Simons thought this doubt might be the devil deluding him, so he reluctantly began to study the Bible.** While he could nowhere find the doctrine of transubstantiation, **he discovered the gospel of salvation by grace through faith in Christ!** He began sharing his discoveries with others from the pulpit, propelling him to a place of regional prominence as an evangelical preacher.

Smoke but No Flame

Simons's study convinced him of the Bible's unrivaled authority, leading him to examine Catholic doctrine in Scripture's light. He also rejected the practice of infant baptism as unbiblical and began to encourage congregants to be baptized in accordance with their confession of faith in Christ. Despite his embrace of evangelical doctrine, he remained a priest in the Catholic Church and worked for its reform. All the while, however, **his fascination with biblical teaching was merely intellectual**. He relished the sweet smell of his newfound fame but lacked the pure flame of true affection for Christ.

The **execution of three 300 Anabaptists** at Old Cloister near Bolsward in April 1535 **brought him to the point of crisis:**

I reflected upon my unclean, carnal life, also the hypocritical doctrine and idolatry which I still practiced daily in appearance of godliness, but without relish. My heart trembled within me. I prayed to God with sighs and tears that he would give to me, a sorrowing sinner, the gift of his grace, create within me a clean heart, and graciously through the merits of the crimson blood of Christ, forgive my unclean walk and frivolous easy life.

Overcome by his sins of pride, timidity, and love of comfort, Simons decisively renounced his "worldly reputation, name and fame." **"In my weakness,"** he wrote, **"I feared God; I sought out the pious and though they were few in**

number, I found some who were zealous and maintained the truth.”



Enemy of the State — and the Devil

After being baptized, Simons immediately threw himself into preaching the gospel, explaining the Scriptures, and traveling extensively. **Simons discovered that the devil had kept him from the Bible and true conversion, and now he was determined to be Satan’s sworn enemy.**

His preaching quickly drew the ire of Catholic officials. Emperor Charles V even issued an edict against Simons, offering a significant reward to anyone who might deliver him into the hands of authorities.

Nevertheless, Simons exhorted his fellow Anabaptist Reformers to reject violent means for accomplishing reform, advocating pacifism and separation from worldly power. His preaching and reforms were so successful that, eventually, north German and Dutch Anabaptists would be known as Mennonites.

On the twenty-fifth anniversary of his renunciation of Catholicism, Simons's health rapidly declined, and he died the following day, January 31, 1561, at the age of 66.

Misled No Longer

As the devil misled young Menno, so our enemy would mislead us, too. He would keep us from Scripture, from fearing God, from confession of sin, and from humble faith. May we, instead, “with sighs and tears” plead for and joyfully receive the gift of grace in our promised Savior, Jesus Christ.

Although I resisted in former times Thy precious Word and Thy holy will with all my powers . . . nevertheless, Thy fatherly grace did not forsake me, a miserable sinner, but in love, received me . . . and taught me by the Holy Spirit until of my own choice I declared war upon the world, the flesh, and the devil . . . and willingly submitted to the heavy cross of my Lord Jesus Christ that I might inherit the promised kingdom. (Simons, *Meditation on the Twenty-Fifth Psalm*)

For more on Menno Simons:

All of Menno Simons's writings [are available online](#) free of charge. Start with the Preface to Foundations of Christian Doctrine.

[The Anabaptist Story: An Introduction to Sixteenth-Century Anabaptism](#) by William R. Estep Ryan Griffith (@ryangriffith) (PhD, The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary) is Dean of the [Classical Christian Honors College](#) and Associate Professor at the [University of Northwestern — St Paul](#) (MN). He also serves as a Senior Fellow at the [Andrew Fuller Center for Baptist Studies](#).

What does the Bible say about the angel Gabriel?

1. Gabriel is mentioned in the Old and New Testaments.

He's known for bearing good news of Jesus' coming birth, but his first biblical appearance is in [Daniel 8:16](#), when he is told to explain a vision to the prophet.

2. Gabriel stands in the presence of God.

This is how he describes himself to Zacharias, the father of John the Baptist ([Luke 1:19](#)). The Greek word for “stands” is *paristánō*, which means “to wait before a superior.” The [Septuagint](#) uses this word to describe how Joshua served Moses and how David assisted King Saul.


3. Gabriel is one of only two angels explicitly named in the Protestant Bible.

The other is Michael, a warrior archangel

4. The Bible doesn't call Gabriel the “archangel.”

The Book of Tobit (of Catholic and Orthodox canon) identifies the angels who stand in the presence of God as archangels, and so Gabriel has been called an archangel by tradition.

5. Gabriel looks like a man (but see #6).

The name Gabriel means “man of God” or “strength of God.” The second time Daniel encounters Gabriel ([Daniel 9:21](#) ) , he describes Gabriel as a “man [. . .] seen in the vision previously.” We don’t get any more details on Gabriel’s looks. Perhaps that’s because his messages are always so important.

6. Gabriel scares people.

When Daniel meets Gabriel, he is frightened and falls on his face. When Gabriel greets Zacharias, his first words are, “Do not be afraid.” Mary’s greeting is more celebratory, but Gabriel still follows up by telling her not to fear.

7. Gabriel anticipates Jesus.

Gabriel relays a prophecy concerning “Messiah the Prince” to Daniel. He tells Zacharias that John the Baptist will be a forerunner before the Lord. And most famously, he tells Mary that her son will be called “the Son of the Most High.”

The Bible has a lot more to say about angels than most people suspect. **Now you know more about Gabriel—but what about the other angels? Find out in *Angels: What the Bible Really Says about God’s Heavenly Host* by Dr. Michael Heiser.**

Related Articles

- [What Is the Septuagint and Is It Valuable for Bible Study?](#)
- [Are Demons Fallen Angels and 2 Other Common Misconceptions](#)
- [Who Are the Archangels in the Bible?](#)

Luke 1:19 ESV

And the angel answered him, "I am Gabriel. I stand in the presence of God, and I was sent to speak to you and to bring you this good news.

Matthew 1:20 ESV

But as he considered these things, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, "Joseph, son of David, do not fear to take Mary as your wife, for that which is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit.

Matthew 26:53 ESV

Do you think that I cannot appeal to my Father, and he will at once send me more than twelve legions of angels?

Psalms 91:11 ESV

For he will command his angels concerning you to guard you in all your ways.

Hebrews 1:14 ESV

Are they not all ministering spirits sent out to serve for the sake of those who are to inherit salvation?

Luke 22:43 ESV

And there appeared to him an angel from heaven, strengthening him.

Hebrews 13:2 ESV

Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for thereby some have entertained angels unawares.

Colossians 1:16 ESV

For by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things were created through him and for him.

Exodus 23:20 ESV

“Behold, I send an angel before you to guard you on the way and to bring you to the place that I have prepared.

Psalms 103:20 ESV

Bless the LORD, O you his angels, you mighty ones who do his word, obeying the voice of his word!

Luke 15:10 ESV

Just so, I tell you, there is joy before the angels of God over one sinner who repents.”

Acts 8:26 ESV

Now an angel of the Lord said to Philip, “Rise and go toward the south to the road that goes down from Jerusalem to Gaza.” This is a desert place.

Luke 4:10 ESV

For it is written, “‘He will command his angels concerning you, to guard you,’

1 Timothy 5:21 ESV

In the presence of God and of Christ Jesus and of the elect angels I charge you to keep these rules without prejudging, doing nothing from partiality.

[**Matthew 28:2**](#) ESV

And behold, there was a great earthquake, for an angel of the Lord descended from heaven and came and rolled back the stone and sat on it.