

## Bound by an Angel

Thy Kingdom Come – Part V

Revelation 19:17-20:3

### Introduction

Ask the average person on the street what they think of angels and they will tell you of wonderful sightings and helpful guides.

According to a survey in *Time* magazine, 69% of the people interviewed believed in the existence of angels and 46% believed they had personal connections with at least one angel.

I did a survey some time ago on material in print and audio regarding angels and found incredible interest and unbelievable mysticism – and the embracing of mythology.

One author promised that the techniques in his book would allow the reader to tune into guardian angels, nature spirits, and even archangels.

Another stated that everyone has a spirit guide and their CD will help you get in touch with yours.

Yet another author promised that their book would teach nine specific ways that you are protected by angels, and how you can learn the actual language of the angelic kingdom.

There is an angel-watch network in one northern state that exists to monitor angelic comings and goings, with a bi-monthly journal and thousands of subscribers.

*Touched by an Angel* became a network winner as it ran program after program of angels who solved mankind's problems in just the nick of time.

But even *Time* magazine cut to the heart of the issue when it reported, "For those who choke too easily on God and His rules, angels are the handy compromise. All fluff and meringue, nonjudgmental

and kind; angels are like aspirin – they are available to everyone."

Protestant leaders are busy teaching their following how to bind demons and pray around their neighborhoods for the binding of the devil and his influence. That sure is a lot easier than witnessing to neighbors or learning a foreign language and going overseas with the gospel. Protestants are on the bandwagon.

Catholics have tied spiritual mysticism to angels for a long time. Former monks like Borgia and Bernard of Clairvaux encouraged devotion and prayer to angels.

The new Catechism of the Catholic Church includes this instruction, "From infancy to death, human life is surrounded by [angels'] . . . intercession . . . Beside each believer stands an angel as protector and shepherd leading him to life."

If this is true, then David got it wrong in Psalm 23, and he should have written, "My angel is my shepherd, I shall not want . . . Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for my angel is with me . . ."

Now my purpose in this introduction is not to offend Catholics or some mainline Protestants; my purpose is to offend everyone.

There are many things we do not understand about the world of angels and demons. However, if we let the Bible stand as our guide – being the disclosure of God's truth – one thing we come away with as we notice the appearance of angels is that they are very different than what we see in classic

paintings. One difference is that they are not fat little naked babies with wings and little halos.

C. S. Lewis wrote, “Fra Angelico’s angels [paintings] carry in their face and gesture the peace and authority of heaven. Later come the chubby infantile [angels] of Raphael; finally the soft, slim, girlish . . . angels of nineteenth century art . . . In scripture the [appearance] of an angel is always alarming; [the angel] has to begin by saying, ‘Fear not.’ The [current] angel looks as if [he] were going to say, ‘There there.’”

This is so true.

As the Lord descends on His white stallion and we, the church with Him on our own steeds – a thundering, majestic, descent that turns the armies of the world into one united army against our Lord – we discover the presence and activity of angels.

We could underline in the opening lines of John’s vision in verse 17 where we left off in Revelation chapter 19 words we have already encountered before.

*Then I saw an angel . . .*

Chapter 20 begins with the same phrase.

*Then I saw an angel . . .*

We could ask, “What were they like, John? All fluff and meringue? Fat little babies with halos?”

“Far from it. They were strong, determined, warriors with the voice of God’s holy authority and the righteous purpose.”

Before we dive into verse 17, keep in mind that the Battle of Armageddon is the primary setting.

“Har,” meaning “hill country,” and “Megidon,” the name of a Canaanite fortress in the Plain of Jezreel, allows us to understand the location as the hill country of Megiddo.<sup>i</sup>

This was the valley where Israel conquered their enemies in Joshua 12 and Judges 5; it was the scene of Josiah’s defeat in II Chronicles 35. Zechariah mentioned this region in connection with the final Battle of Armageddon (Zechariah 12). Armies coming from the east would have to cross the Euphrates River – a river we have already learned will be miraculously dried up. This was a renowned Old Testament battleground – a region that spanned a 200 mile long region.

Nebuchadnezzar fought in this region and so did Ramses. Titus the Roman general fought here as did Pompey, Richard the Lionhearted, and Napoleon, who personally called this valley region the world’s greatest natural battlefield.<sup>ii</sup>

None of these former warriors ever saw a battle unfold quite like the Battle of Armageddon. God is literally drawing the world into battle. They have been itching for a fight since the days of Babel and now the time has come.

Christ and His bride are descending to win this triumphant victory over the antichrist, and the world’s armed forces are energized and directed ultimately by Satan himself.

## **An Angel’s Invitation**

Before the first shots are fired from earth’s arsenal toward the brilliant company of Christ and His redeemed, an angel appears. Notice verses 17 and 18 of Revelation 19.

*Then I saw an angel standing in the sun [that is, in the proximity of the sun – high in the heavens], and he cried out with a loud voice, saying to all the birds which fly in midheaven, “Come assemble for the great supper of God,*

*“so that you may eat the flesh of kings and the flesh of commanders and the flesh of mighty men and the flesh of horses and of those who sit on them and the flesh of all men, both free men and slaves, and small and great.”*

John Phillips describes this final showdown.

*[Imagine as] the armies march across the plains of Galilee, file through the passes and deploy on the fertile fields of Megiddo! What masses of military equipment are stockpiled in the hills! What fleets ride at anchor in the Red Sea, the Persian Gulf, and along the shorelines of the eastern Mediterranean [Sea]! What stirring strains of martial music are heard. The ground shakes to the beat of marching feet . . . Amazing new weapons, given to men by the [antichrist], are brought into place. Miracles are wrought by the false prophet to encourage the troops.<sup>iii</sup>*

Then an angel appears high up in the sky with an invitation from God – of all things, to millions of birds.

“Come to the supper provided by your creator God.”

Where is the food? It is arriving from all around the world. This redefines international cuisine.

What irony! There are two contrasting suppers or banquets: the marriage supper of the Lamb and the great supper of God.

Those who attend the wedding feast of the Lamb – the believers – will be *at* the supper; those who march against Christ at Armageddon will *be* the supper.<sup>iv</sup>

This is not material for another episode of *Touched by an Angel*. There is no fluff and meringue in this.

Ezekiel informs us that even after the birds gorge themselves on the flesh of the fallen millions of soldiers it will take nearly a year to bury the remains (Ezekiel 39:12).

I want you to notice the timing of this angel's invitation.

He announces this invitation for the birds to gather *before* the battle begins. In other words, the angel declares Jesus Christ's victory before the battle is ever fought.<sup>v</sup>

Before one missile is launched at the descending cavalry of heaven, the angel announces earth's defeat.

Have you ever been to a ballgame – high school, college, or even a professional game – where the fans begin to sing, “Na na na na, na na na na, hey hey-ey, goodbye”?

I used to love to sing, “. . . hey hey-ey, goodbye”.

When do we sing this? You are probably thinking, “Not in church, Stephen!”

We sing this while the game is still being played – but our team has enough points on the board that we are confident the game is over. We and thousands of other fans taunt the opposing team and the opposing fans, “. . . hey hey-ey, goodbye”.

Of course *we* are singing it in Christian love.

There is still time on the clock, but we are assured a victory. It is not really over, but it is over!

This battle has not even begun, but the angel is effectively saying, “It's over! Go ahead and march.”

Notice verse 19.

***And I saw the beast [that is, the antichrist] and the kings of the earth and their armies assembled to make war against Him who sat on the horse and against His army.***

While they assembled, would they notice that the skies are growing dark as the sun is shaded by the gathering, swarming, flapping, flying cacophony of millions of birds who have come at the invitation of an angel?

Sometime between verse 19 and verse 20 there is the beginning and ending of the battle – it occurs that quickly.

We are told in verse 15 that the word of Christ came from His mouth like a sharp sword – the same analogy that has crisscrossed the scriptures.

The Bible is likened to a sharp sword in Hebrews 4:12.

The believer is challenged to . . .

***. . . take . . . the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. (Ephesians 6:17)***

Jesus Christ rides from the skies and defeats this massive army with His word. Look at verse 21.

***And the rest were killed with the sword which came from the mouth of Him who sat on the horse, and all the birds were filled with their flesh.***

One word from Christ and earth is defeated. Oh, the power in the spoken word by the living Word.

In Mark 4:39, He stood in the ship being tossed around by the waves and the wind and said, “Quiet,” and immediately everything calmed. Don't you wish you had that ability in the van on the way to church?

Jesus Christ bent over a paralyzed man who had lived immobile and at the mercy of available friends and said to him, “Get up,” and the man got up and ran home (Luke 5:24).

Christ would stand at the grave of Lazarus and shout, “Lazarus, come out,” and a resurrection would occur (John 11:43).

To the little girl surrounded by friends and family who had come to pay their last respects, weeping and crying over the death of one so young, Jesus came and said, “Rise,” and she caught her breath, opened her eyes, and looked into the face of the One who is the resurrection and the life (Mark 5:41).

Jesus Christ interrupted every funeral He attended. He disturbed every gravesite He visited. He was life – in a word.

However, for these armies, He is death in a word. Isaiah 11:4b says this of the coming Messiah . . .

***. . . with the breath of His lips He will slay the wicked.***

All the might of man and demons combined are not strong enough to withstand one word from Christ! One word, and the armies of the world become bird food and the great supper of God begins.

According to this passage, all the invading armies are killed except two men.

## The Antichrist's and False Prophet's Condemnation

Notice verse 20.

*And the beast [the antichrist] was seized, and with him the false prophet who performed the signs [the miracles] in his presence, by which he deceived those who had received the mark of the beast and those who worshiped his image; these two were thrown alive into the lake of fire which burns with brimstone.*

Only two prisoners are taken alive, so to speak. All the others are dead, which means their spirits are at this point in time in Hades – the temporary place of torment where they await the final judgment (Luke 16:23).

For these two satanically empowered men, God does something drastic. They are publicly condemned.

John says in verse 20 . . .

*. . . these two were thrown alive into the lake of fire . . .*

The phrase “lake of fire” is a reference to the final place of everlasting torment. Jesus Christ and other biblical writers described it, but this is the first time we actually read this title, “the lake of fire”.

We will study this place later when we arrive at the end of Revelation chapter 20. The lake of fire will be mentioned four more times as Revelation comes to a conclusion.<sup>vi</sup>

However, for now, we are told that the very first inhabitants of hell are the antichrist and the false prophet – the wonder-working, miracle-performing, deceiving duo who once deceived the majority of humankind. They become a horrifying prelude to the eternal wrath of God by being thrown alive into the lake of fire.

The point of this, or one of them, is that unbelievers who influence others in their unbelief will receive a greater penalty. Those who lead others into sin will bear a greater responsibility before God for their evil ways and be subjected to more severe punishment. Yes, there are levels of suffering in hell, as we will study later.

The antichrist and his deceiving false prophet will be the first human beings to be delivered into hell.

This passage delivers a warning.

The university professor who delights in condemning the scriptures and causes unbelievers to

be further confirmed in their unbelief will one day receive a greater punishment.

The greedy man or woman who flaunts their wealth and causes those around them to live even more covetous lives will stand a greater judgment.

The immoral man who flaunts his immorality and maybe even publishes a magazine with his philosophy that causes the unbeliever to think of immorality as a good thing will one day serve a more terrifying sentence because of it.

It is one thing to be an unrepentant sinner; it is another thing to applaud, endorse, support, defend, introduce, and encourage others to sin.

We are moving toward these end time events where the scales of God's justice are now beginning to be seen. God is taking the wrapping paper off His scales and He is weighing out His judgment on the unbelieving world.

To the horror of the world, He is not treating everyone alike. The greater the sinner and the greater the influence of sinfulness on them, the greater the penalty.

We do not want to be there. If you have received Christ as your Lord and Savior you are there, only you are in the victorious wedding party that has accompanied the Savior from heaven to earth.

There is one more event that we will watch with our own eyes.

We have heard the angel's invitation.

We have seen the antichrist's and false prophet's condemnation.

Now notice the next event.

## The Adversary's Incarceration

Look at verses 1 and 2 of chapter 20.

*Then I saw an angel coming down from heaven, holding the key of the abyss and a great chain in his hand.*

*And he laid hold of the dragon, the serpent of old, who is the devil and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years;*

What a thrill this is to read. We will one day watch it happen.

An angel still hovering in the sky has an assignment.

We are told this angel has two things in his hand.

## 1. First, this angel has the key to the abyss.

The abyss has already surfaced in the book of Revelation. It is the temporary holding place of certain fallen angels or demons.<sup>vii</sup>

The word “abyss” is from the Greek word “abussos” (αβυσσος), which refers to the inability of man to fathom its depth.<sup>viii</sup>

The apostle John uses words to describe it as a deep cavern. The owner of the key is ultimately sovereign God.<sup>ix</sup>

II Peter 2:4 and Jude verse 6 inform us that some demons have already been sent to the abyss to await their final judgment.

Perhaps you remember God allowing Satan to open the lid of the abyss in Revelation 9 and releasing millions of demons to play havoc on earth for a period of time during the Tribulation.

We are now told that the key to this deep cavern is in the hand of an angel.

## 2. Secondly, this angel holds a great chain in his hand.

Obviously a spirit being cannot be chained with galvanized steel purchased by the foot from Lowe’s Hardware. This does not mean that God cannot create some kind of chain to bind Satan, which we are told He does.

Verse 3 tells us that after this angel came and bound Satan . . .

*. . . he threw him into the abyss, and shut it and sealed it over him, so that he would not deceive the nations any longer, until the thousand years were completed . . .*

I have a book on my desk with the title *I Wish I’d Been There*, in which the author brings up significant moments in world history and describes them, wishing he had been able to be there to see them firsthand. None of these historic events could hold a candle to this scene.

There is the glory of Christ descending, the armies of the world defeated, the church resplendent in white garments and mounted with Christ on white horses, the antichrist and false prophet judged, and then this climactic moment.

Satan, the old serpent is seized. The roaring lion is muzzled. The accuser is silenced. The enemy of the church is in chains.

This is accomplished by whom? An ordinary angel.

This is not an archangel. It is not Gabriel or Michael; not one of the four angels that stand near the throne of God.

This is just an angel. It is an anonymous, ordinary, run-of-the-mill angel who happens to be more powerful than Satan as he carries out the will of God.

So are we!

*. . . greater is He who is in you than he who is in the world. (I John 4:4)*

Even though the battle in your life and mine still rages on as we resist the enemy, listen to a song that says it really well, “Na na na na, na na na na, hey hey-ey, goodbye”.

“Hey, Satan, goodbye; hey, temptation, goodbye; hey, world and fleshly pull, goodbye!”

Yes, there is still time left on the clock in your life and mine, but the game is already decided. The score is already fixed – Satan loses. In fact, he does not just lose, he is crushed. Jesus Christ and His beloved win. And we do not just win, we conquer.

We have already won. In Christ, we are already sealed, we are already forgiven, we are already seated, and we are already, unchangeably, eternally accepted in Christ.

This past week my wife came into my study and said, “Honey, you’ve got to read this.”

She loves to read Charles Spurgeon’s devotional works. He was the insightful, oratorical preacher from London, England, in the late 1800s. I will close with a paragraph of his comments.

*[Paul writes in Ephesians 1:6, you are] “accepted in the beloved.” What a state of privilege! It includes our justification before God, but the term “acceptance” in the Greek means more than that. It signifies that we are the objects of . . . divine delight. How marvelous that we, worms, mortals, sinners, should be the objects of divine love! But it is only “in the beloved.” Some Christians [feel] accepted in their own experience . . . When their spirit is lively, and their hopes bright, they think God accepts them, for they feel so [happy], so heavenly minded, so drawn above the earth! But when their souls [collapse in] the dust, they are the victims of the fear that they are no longer accepted. If they could but see that all their high joys do not exalt them, and all their low despondencies do not [diminish] them in their Father’s sight, but they stand accepted in One who never alters,*

*in One who is always . . . perfect, always without spot or wrinkle, or any such thing, how much happier they would be, and how much more they would honor the Savior! Rejoice then, believer, in this: [you are] accepted “in the beloved”. [You look] within and [you] say, “There is nothing acceptable here!” But look at Christ and see if there is not everything acceptable there. [Your] sins trouble [you]; but God has cast [your] sins behind His back, and [you are] accepted in the Righteous One. [You have] to fight with corruption, and to wrestle with temptation, but [you are] already accepted in Him who has overcome the powers*

*of evil. The devil tempts [you]; be of good cheer, he cannot destroy [you], for [you are] already accepted in Him . . .<sup>x</sup>*

Wow! Listen, my friend, allow this scene in Revelation 19 and 20 and the truth of your position in Christ by faith in Him alone to motivate you to live, think, and feel in light of your position in Him – in light of your forgiveness, your acceptance, and your victory in Christ.

The game is not over, but it really is over – it is settled. It is settled – we have won. We can go ahead and start singing, “. . . hey hey-ey, goodbye”.

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<sup>i</sup> Robert Thomas, Revelation: Volume 2 (Moody Press, 1995), p. 270.

<sup>ii</sup> Adrian Rogers, Unveiling the End Times in Our Time (Broadman and Holman, 2004), p. 222.

<sup>iii</sup> John Phillips, Exploring Revelation (Loizeaux Brothers, 1991), p. 236.

<sup>iv</sup> Daymond R. Duck and Larry Richards, The Smart Guide to the Bible: Revelation (Thomas Nelson, 2006), p. 292.

<sup>v</sup> John MacArthur, Revelation: Volume 2 (Moody Press, 2000), p. 221.

<sup>vi</sup> Kendell H. Easley, Holman New Testament Commentary: Revelation (Holman, 1998), p. 357.

<sup>vii</sup> Thomas, p. 398.

<sup>viii</sup> Fritz Rienecker and Cleon Rogers, Linguistic Key to the Greek New Testament (Regency, 1976), p. 832.

<sup>ix</sup> Robert L. Thomas, Revelation: Volume 2 (Moody Press, 1995), p. 28.

<sup>x</sup> Charles H. Spurgeon, Morning and Evening (Hendrickson Publishers, 1991), p. 534.