

# Part 1. The Army Of Heaven

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[ 0 : 00 ] So tonight I'd like us to turn back to 2 Kings 6 and I'm going to read again verse 17 where we have these amazing words.

Then Elisha prayed and said, O Lord, please open his eyes that he may see. So the Lord opened the eyes of the young man and he saw and behold the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire all around Elisha.

So this evening we are starting a short series on angels and our title for the series is going to be Christ's mighty angels.

And I've taken that phrase from the passage that we read in 1 Thessalonians where it speaks here of Christ's mighty angels. And I'm excited and nervous starting this series together because angels are a fascinating subject for us to think about.

But it's definitely an area where we can quickly feel out of our depth. And it's a topic where we are pushing ourselves to the edges of the things that we know about reality.

[ 1 : 12 ] Many, many people believe in angels, even people who don't go to church at all. Yet, even in church where we do believe in angels, we don't talk about them very often. But we should talk about them because in the Bible they are a very important subject.

I want to start by showing you a list of 10 key words and phrases that are in the Bible and that we're very familiar with. Abraham, Peter, John, Paul, Gospel, Church, Faith, Repentance, Justification, Sanctification.

These are all very, very common, very important, prominent words in terms of the Christian message. They come up in the Bible loads. None of them come up as often as the word angels. So it comes up very, very frequently, more frequently than any of these. So reference to angels is common in the Bible, both in the Old Testament and the New.

And it's therefore definitely important for us to try and learn about them. So I want to start by asking you the question, what's the first thing that you think of when I say the word angels? What pops into your mind?

[ 2 : 25 ] I don't know. What is it? Maybe white robe? Maybe wings? Maybe shining? Maybe floating?

Maybe playing a harp? That's certainly often how angels are portrayed in movies or books or in art. But one of the things I hope we'll see is that that's not really how the Bible portrays angels at all.

Our series is going to be in three parts. And I hope that each of them are going to help give us a clearer understanding of what the Bible teaches about angels. And I hope that that in turn will give us a deeper understanding of how angels are part of God's great plan of salvation.

So in our series, we're going to see that angels are the army of heaven. They are the envoys of heaven. And they are the serving spirits of heaven.

And as we go through these over the next month or so, we're going to be aiming to learn more about ultimate reality, to learn more about angels themselves, and most importantly of all, to learn more about Jesus.

[ 3 : 36 ] We want our focus to be on the fact that they are Christ's mighty angels. As we begin, I'm going to give you seven key statements that summarize some of the key biblical teaching about angels.

And we're going to come back to these statements tonight and throughout our series. The fancy word for a list of statements like that is what we would call dogmas. And that's just basically a clear statement of something that we believe to be true.

So let me go through them. Number one, creation includes a spiritual realm. So in the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth.

And so there is a physical aspect to that and a spiritual aspect to that. And that creation is accomplished through the Son, through Jesus.

Colossians 1.16 tells us that it was by him all things visible and invisible were created. Number two, that spiritual realm includes incorporeal creatures called angels.

[ 4 : 48 ] Incorporeal means nobody, not physical. So we don't know a lot about angels, but we do believe that they exist because the Bible is very clear that they exist.

They don't have bodies. They are in the spiritual realm. Hebrews 1.14 describes them as spirits. And we don't know exactly how many there are, but we know that there are loads of them.

So Revelation 5.11, for example, speaks of myriads and myriads, thousands and thousands. So although we don't know the exact number, it's a big, big number.

Number three, within that spiritual realm, there is a conflict between good and evil. So God is good and his creation is good.

But some of his creatures have rebelled against their creator, and that includes some angels. So there are some angels that have fallen, as mentioned in 2 Peter 2.4, for example.

[ 5 : 54 ] And now there is a spiritual conflict between good and evil. That conflict is a reality.

Number four, these realms of good and evil have different allegiances, different objectives, different destinies.

So angels are loyal to God. Fallen angels or demons are loyal to the devil. Revelation 12 describes that. Angels want you close to God. Demons want you away from him.

And angels are destined to be part of the new creation. Fallen angels and Satan, their leader, are destined for hell. Again, 2 Peter 2.4 speaks of that.

Number five, angels are similar to us, but different from us. So like us, angels are rational, they are moral, and they are immortal, like our souls are.

So there are similarities there. But they are different in that they don't have physical bodies. So humanity is what you would call a psychosomatic unity, a unity of body and soul.

[ 7 : 00 ] Angels are not that. Angels do not bear the image of God like we do. We bear the image of God. Angels do not have the blood ties of family that we have.

So there's no parent-child relationship. There's no physical bond in the angelic world. And there's no angelity in the same way that there's a humanity. So humanity is a clear concept.

There's no kind of angelity in the same kind of way. And angels are not the bride of Christ. We are. And there's therefore important differences.

Number six, angels are active and powerful in the physical world, all under the direction of God.

And so that's true of the angels being used by God to accomplish His purposes.

But it's also even through of fallen angels. Because although they are opposed to God, and they're in rebellion against Him, yet God is still in ultimate control. And ultimately they're only able to do things because of the permission that God allows.

[ 8 : 10 ] And when a fallen angel is confronted with God, as we see so often in the Gospels, when Jesus met those who were being oppressed by fallen angels, by demons, when Jesus commands them, they cannot but obey.

They're compelled to obey Him. So there's a sovereignty of God over them. And number seven, angels are not to be worshipped, but in the Bible there is a special status given to the angel of the Lord.

And in the Old Testament there is frequent mention of the angel of the Lord. And it's clear that there's something unique and special about this individual. So these are seven key statements that we're wanting to think about in regard to angels, and we'll be coming back to them throughout our series.

Tonight our title is The Army of Heaven. And as we look at that, we're going to turn back to 2 Kings 6. And in each of our sermons we're asking three questions.

What does this teach us about ultimate reality? What does it teach us about angels? And most importantly of all, what does it teach us about Jesus Christ? So first of all, this question, what is this teaching us about ultimate reality?

[ 9 : 26 ] 2 Kings 6, the passage we read, is one of my favorite narratives in the Old Testament. At that time, Israel is being oppressed by the Syrians to the north.

But the Syrian king's combat strategy is constantly being thwarted by Elisha the prophet. We read about that. He was going to go here, but the Israelites knew where he was going to go, so they

avoided it.

And the king's thinking, look, who is betraying me? Who's the mole that's telling Israel what's happening? And the servant said to him, nobody but Elisha the prophet. He can tell the king of Israel the words that you speak in your bedroom.

So the king responds by sending a massive army to Dothan in order to seize Elisha. And Elisha was all around the city. And he says, verse 15, and went out and behold, an army with horses and chariots was all around the city.

And he says, my master, what are we going to do? And Elisha replies with the wonderful, magnificent prayer. He says, Lord, please open his eyes that he may see.

[ 10 : 33 ] And the Lord opens his eyes and he sees the mountain full of horses and chariots of fire all around Elisha.

And the outcome is a magnificent victory and triumph for God's people over a hostile enemy. There's loads we could say about this passage. I just want to focus on two key lessons that Elisha's servant is teaching us about ultimate reality.

The first is that there was more around him than what he could physically see. There was more around him than what he could physically see.

So he got up in the morning, he saw this massive Syrian army outside, he felt totally helpless. But there was more around him than what his eyes could perceive.

And that's just a great example of the fact that creation includes a spiritual realm. There is such a thing as unseen spiritual reality.

[ 11 : 32 ] That's the first thing on our list of dogmas. Now, some people deny that. And particularly in the last 200 years in the West, a worldview has become very prominent that basically denies the existence of anything that's not physical.

The Bible disagrees with that. And I think it's actually true that most people disagree with that. Even in a secular nation like ours, many, many people will say that they are spiritual in some way or that they believe in some sort of spiritual reality.

Now, sometimes that's quite vague and sometimes it can be a wee bit strange what people believe. But most people have an awareness that there is more to existence, more to reality than simply what we can see.

And so, when we're thinking about angels, one of the most basic but most important questions we're thinking about is whether or not statement number one is true, whether there really is a spiritual realm.

The Bible says that there is. Do you agree? And the second thing that we see from Elisha's servant is that once his eyes were opened, what he saw was an immensely powerful army.

[ 12 : 55 ] So, he saw spiritual reality and the reality he saw was an army. So, he didn't see gentle harps and he didn't see fluttering wings and he didn't see chubby cheeks or curly hair or anything like that.

He saw an army that was far, far more powerful than the Syrian troops that were surrounding the city.

And that's a very big emphasis that the Bible makes. When people in the Bible get a glimpse of angels, what they very often see is a mighty, powerful army.

And that's captured by a word that we actually often see in the Old Testament. We often see it in the Psalms. It's the word hosts. So, Psalm 46, for example, the Lord of hosts is with us.

That's a phrase that you see again and again in Scripture. In 1 Kings 22, Prophet Micaiah speaks about how he saw the Lord sitting on his throne and the host of heaven was standing beside him.

[ 13 : 59 ] And then I want to just compare that with another verse in 2 Kings that talks about Naaman as the commander of the army of the king of Syria. And the reason I put these three verses up is because that word, that word, and that word is all the same word.

It's the same Hebrew word. And so, when you speak of the Lord of hosts, it's conveying military imagery to us.

And you will actually see some Bible translations will translate that phrase, the Lord of hosts, as the Lord of heaven's army. And alongside this, it's also suggested by some theologians that there's perhaps ranks or classifications within the number of angels.

And we see that, we see hints of that because there's some different terms that are used. So, one term that you see quite often in the Old Testament is the term cherubim. And the first place you see

that is actually the Garden of Eden.

God placed cherubim and a flaming sword that turned every way to guard the tree of life. And so, the cherubim, whatever kind of angels they are, they have this guarding role at the Garden of Eden. [15:22] And then the word appears again in lots of places, but one example is in the Ark of the Covenant. And during the construction of this, it's said that there should be two cherubim of gold and they're placed at either end of the Ark.

And again, it's conveying this idea of a kind of guarding posture. Then there's also these living creatures mentioned in Ezekiel 1, four living creatures.

And then later on in Ezekiel 10, these are identified as cherubim as well. So, there's this kind of classification of angels known as cherubim.

Alongside that, there's another group, though, called the seraphim, which are mentioned in Isaiah 6. Now, pause all thinking there for one second. Derek Lament replied, Great, thanks.

About 45 folk. So, all good. So, there we go. 45 people at least. So, that was wonderful. We thank God for that. Isaiah 6. Seraphim. This is the only place that they're mentioned, but it's possibly the case that they are sort of different rank or regiment within this angelic army.

[16:35] And then there's mention of individual angels. Michael is mentioned in Jude, and Michael is mentioned as an archangel. That seems to be perhaps some kind of senior position. And then Gabriel is mentioned, and he seems to have a particular role standing in the presence of God.

So, we can't be sure, and not everybody agrees with this, but there seems to be hints that there are maybe classifications, ranks within the angelic army, and it all just reinforces this imagery that when we think about angels, we should think about a mighty army.

Now, all of this is teaching us that ultimate reality is a realm that is spiritual, and within that spiritual realm, there is conflict.

Conflict between good and evil, between angels and demons, between the army of heaven and the powers of darkness. And all of that is really to say that all of this means that there's two very important things for us to think about.

We need to think about the conflict about spiritual reality, and we need to think about the reality of spiritual conflict. Now, what I mean by that is that in our society today, the whole question of spiritual reality prompts conflict, because some people just dismiss it.

[17:58] They think that spiritual reality doesn't exist. Others think that it does exist, but they have a sort of very vague and mystical view of it, and others argue that the Bible's presentation of spiritual reality is true.

So this whole question of spiritual reality is one that produces conflict, because different people have different views. And of course, the question for all of us is, well, what do you believe about spiritual reality?

Do you believe it exists? And if it does exist, what does it look like? And whatever we believe about that is going to have massive implications, because if we believe that it doesn't exist, and I'm sure that there's nobody in here who falls into that category, but if we think that spiritual reality doesn't exist, then it means that ultimately, non-physical concepts, things like hate and love, good and evil, joy and sorrow, they're kind of just illusions that have no ultimate meaning and reality.

If you believe in spiritual reality, but you think that it's kind of vague, then you have absolutely no idea if you're going to be safe when you enter into that realm.

But if you believe what the Bible says, then you know that this is something that you've got to think about, and that there are things that are true, and that there are things that are false that we need to reckon with in regard to spiritual reality.

[19:28] And it's important to think about it, and please remember that the physical cannot disprove or prove the spiritual. The physical cannot prove or disprove the spiritual.

And so physical things are proved physically, spiritual things are proved spiritually, and please don't make the mistake of thinking that you need to find physical proof or spiritual reality. They're two distinct but inseparable realms.

So we need to think about that reality of the conflict about spiritual reality, but we also need to reckon with the reality of spiritual conflict, that spiritual reality is a realm of conflict.

And this is where we discover that an obscure, weird-sounding sermon about angels is actually massively relevant to our lives today. Because this week, and every week of our lives, we look at the news, we look at communities, we look at our own lives, and we see awful things happening,

because people do things that are evil.

And ultimately, evil, we can say is, we can say it's ultimately either, these evil actions that we see around us are either a phantom or a fruit.

[ 20 : 53 ] Now, I know that's a poor attempt at alliteration, but what I mean by that is that the evil that we see around us in the world, injustice, abuse, corruption, all sorts of evil things, either that is just a phantom, something that ultimately isn't real, something that's just, well, we just think it's a problem, but ultimately it's not, or it's a fruit.

And what I mean by that is that if spiritual conflict is real, it means that the evil that we see in the world around us week by week is the fruit of a bigger reality of evil that is seeking to destroy what God has created.

And that's so important to think of it because that is where the battleground really lies. That's why Paul can speak about saying we don't wrestle against flesh and blood, but against rulers, against authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places.

And so when we see evil and awful things happening in the physical world around us, that is the fruit of the reality of spiritual evil and spiritual conflict.

conflict. And that's where the ultimate conflict lies. The Old Testament conflicts are just a shadow of that, of that spiritual conflict. In other words, our physical existence is within a bigger spiritual realm.

[ 22 : 35 ] Now why is all this important? Why am I highlighting this? Well, it's so important because it means that evil is bigger than you. evil is bigger than you.

And that has two crucial implications. It means that evil is not ultimately of human origin. That's such an important thing to remember.

Evil is ultimately of satanic origin, not of human origin, unless you're an atheist, in which case evil has to be of human origin. But we don't believe it is.

And this also means that if evil is bigger than you, on our own, we are helpless in the face of it.

So it's teaching us a lot about ultimate reality. What does it teach us about angels? Right? Speed up, time is running out. Two things.

[ 23 : 36 ] One, angels are powerful and organized. So if the military imagery of Scripture is telling us anything about angels, it's telling us that they're not feeble. So please don't think of angels as kind of feeble, floaty, squishy things at all.

The chariots of fire in 2 Kings 6 is a massively powerful army, far more powerful than the Syrians. The flaming sword in Eden, the living teachers of Ezekiel 1, Michael standing up to the devil in Jude, all massively powerful.

And so the key point here is that the powers at God's disposal are more powerful than those who are against him. But not only are angels powerful, they're organized.

So in the army of heaven, there's structure and order and clarity. Now I don't know quite how far to press the idea of ranks and regiments and stuff like that, but it's absolutely clear that angels have roles, duties, instructions that they carry out.

It's all part of the immense resources that God has at his disposal. Angels are powerful and organized. Now that stands in direct contrast to the chaotic influence of the spiritual forces of evil.

[ 24 : 49 ] I don't have time to read this passage, but it's the account of legion possessed by many demons in Mark 5. And what is it, a picture of chaos in his life and then when the demons go into the pigs, chaos as they hurtle down the hill and drown.

And so you see in this passage a glimpse into the chaotic nature of spiritual evil. In so many ways, evil is almost always a manifestation of out-of-control power.

In God's army of angels, it's never like that. Massive power is always perfectly organized. So angels are powerful and organized. Second thing, angels are agents of protection and judgment.

So the army of heaven is deployed to protect God's people. Again, that's what's made so clear in 2 Kings 6. The protective power of God's angels is just spectacular.

And Elisha is able to say, look, don't worry, do not worry, those who are with us are more than those who are with them. Psalm 91 speaks of this, we sang about that, God will command us, angels, to guard you on their hands, they will bear you up.

[ 26 : 06 ] And in many ways, this is just a logical consequence of the fact that they're powerful and organized. Because they're powerful and organized, angels are one step ahead, always one step ahead.

That's definitely the case in 2 Kings 6, one step ahead of the Syrians and of everybody else. And it's also a frequently recurring theme in the accounts that you hear of people who speak of encountering angels.

Now, I'm going to just read a wee example of that. And this is from a book by Billy Graham on angels, there's other books that will give accounts like this as well.

Now, I want to say that, you know, if I'm quoting from the Bible, I will say to you this is absolutely true and we absolutely need to know that this is true.

Obviously, when we're reading accounts from people's experience, it doesn't carry the same authority and, you know, so I'm saying all of that, aware of that. But there are just many, many, many accounts of people who will testify to experiencing the protection of angels.

[ 27 : 14 ] And I'm going to just read an example about a Scottish missionary called John Payton. And so I'll just read two paragraphs here. Reverend John G. Payton, pioneer missionary in the New Hebrides Islands, told a thrilling story involving the protective care of angels.

Hostile natives surrounded his mission headquarters one night, intent on burning the Paytons out and killing them. John Payton and his wife prayed all during that terror-filled night that God would deliver them.

When daylight came, they were amazed to see that, unaccountably, the attackers had left. They thanked God for delivering them. A year later, the chief of the tribe was converted to Jesus Christ and Mr. Payton, remembering what had happened, asked the chief what had kept him and his men from burning down the house and killing them.

The chief replied in surprise, who were all those men you had with you there? The missionary answered, there were no men, just my wife and I.

The chief argued that they had seen many men standing guard, hundreds of big men in shining garments with drawn swords in their hands. They seemed to circle the mission station so that the natives were afraid to attack.

[ 28 : 38 ] Only then did Mr. Payton realize that God had sent his angels to protect them. The chief agreed but there was no other explanation. Could it be that God had sent a legion of angels to protect his servants whose lives were being endangered?

And there are many other fascinating accounts like that from the missionary field. The main point I want to highlight is that for God's people, the army of heaven is deployed for your protection.

So whether you're aware of it or not, you have probably been protected by an angel. And of course, the opposite is true that the activity of fallen angels is so often centered on enticing you towards danger.

And so you think of things like abuse, addiction, anger, greed, aggression. Every time we're tempted towards these things, we're being lured towards something that's going to hurt us or hurt others or both.

So God's angels are deployed to protect his people. But alongside the emphasis on protection, the Bible also speaks of angels as the agents of God's judgment.

[ 29 : 49 ] And we saw that in 1 Thessalonians 1 that we read. You see it in the Old Testament. Two angels came to Sodom in the evening. As morning dawned, the angels urged Lot saying, take up, because we're going to take up your wife and your daughters because the city's going to be punished.

In the Passover, you see the destroyer, which seems to be some kind of angelic agent in the death of the firstborn. You go to 2 Chronicles.

The Lord sent an angel to cut off the mighty warriors and commanders and officers in the king of Syria. Lots of examples like that in the Old Testament. But it carries on into the new and especially in the teaching of Jesus.

Jesus speaks of his angels being his agents of judgment. So in terms of judgment, the Son of Man will send his angels. They'll gather out of his kingdom all causes of sin and all lawbreakers and throw them into the fiery furnace.

Mark 8 speaks of the Son of Man coming in his glory with the holy angels. Same in Mark 13. the Son of Man coming in clouds, sending out the angels to gather his elect from the four winds and from the ends of the earth.

[ 31 : 06 ] So alongside protection, angels are the agents of God's judgment. In fact, it's important to realize that actually for everyone, if you're a Christian or if you become a Christian, God's judgment is protective because God's judgment is ultimately directed towards those who are enemies of God

and his people.

and by judging them, God is protecting all who trust in Jesus. And again, the military image makes sense of this. Imagine being surrounded by a massive group of soldiers.

Just imagine that. You're standing, there are huge soldiers surrounding you. If you're on the same side as them, then you have got massive protection.

If you're not on their side, then you're desperately exposed. And all of this is pointing us to the fact that when we think about spiritual reality, when we think about the conflict between good and evil, we cannot escape the fact that we're on one side or the other.

That's why to be spiritual can never be this kind of thing that you just dip in and dip out of, that sort of mystical and vague. The spiritual realm is a war zone. We're all caught in it.

[ 32 : 22 ] And that's why we desperately need a conqueror. And that takes us to our last point, even faster with this one. What does this teach us about Jesus Christ? What I want to highlight is the last of our seven statements, that angels are not to be worshipped, but that is, in the Bible, there's special status given to the angel of the Lord.

Now, if we're going to see this, we need to look at two passages, Exodus 3 and Joshua 5. So I'm just going to read them. Please ignore the clock. Please pretend that it's 10 to 7 and that I'm going to finish on time.

Now, Moses was keeping the flock of his father-in-law, Jethro, the priest of Midian, and he led his flock to the west side of the wilderness and came to Horeb, the mountain of God. And the angel of the Lord appeared to him, so there's the phrase, the angel of the Lord appeared to him in a flame of fire in the midst of a bush.

He looked, and behold, the bush was burning, yet it was not consumed. And Moses said, I'll turn aside to see this great sight, why the bush is not burnt. When the Lord saw that he turned aside to see, God called him out of the bush, Moses, Moses, and he said, here I am.

Then he said, do not come near, take your sandals off your feet for the place on which you're standing is holy ground. And he said, I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, the God of Jacob. And Moses hid his face for he was afraid to look at God.

[ 33 : 33 ] So that's a very important phrase right there at the end. Now, Joshua 5, this is Joshua, Moses' successor. While the people of Israel were camped at Gilgal, they kept the Passover and the 14th day on the plains of Jericho.

And the day after the Passover, on that day, the produce of the land, manna ceased that day. There was no longer manna for the people of Israel. Then verse 13, when Joshua was by Jericho, he lifted up his eyes and looked, and behold, a man was standing before him with his drawn sword in his hand.

And Joshua went to him and said to him, are you for us or for our adversaries? And he said, no, but I am the commander of the army of the Lord. Now I have come.

And Joshua fell on his face to the earth and worshipped and said to him, what does my Lord say to his servant? And the commander of the Lord's army said to Joshua, take off your sandals from your feet for the place where you're standing is holy.

And Joshua did so. Now, there's important similarities between these two passages. So, both key moments in the Exodus. First is when Moses has been called to begin the whole process of the Exodus.

[ 34 : 42 ] And now, Joshua is being commanded to enter the land, the Exodus, in many ways reaching its climax. It's both key moments in redemptive history, the exit from Egypt, the entrance into the land that God had promised.

You've got similar things. Take off your sandals from your feet, the place where you're standing is holy. Same pattern in both places. And there's such a strong emphasis on divine presence.

So, Moses, afraid to look at God, Joshua fell on his face and worshipped. And so, there's lots of similarities, but there's an important difference.

To Moses, it was said, I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob. To Joshua, it was said, I am the commander of the army of the Lord.

Now, the question is, who is this? And is it the same figure in both passages? I think it is the same figure.

[ 35 : 51 ] And the key reason why I think it's the same figure is because there's such a clear emphasis on the fact that this is a divine appearance. There's only one divine, only one God. Now,

different theologians have different views on this, but many would suggest that in these passages, the angel of the Lord is a pre-incarnate appearance of Christ.

So, it's an appearance of Christ as a prelude to his full coming, which we read about in the New Testament. If that's the case, then in Joshua 5, Christ is appearing as the mighty commander of the Lord's army.

In other words, Christ appears as a mighty military warrior. And that means that if angels are God's army, Christ is their commander and the angels are Christ's mighty angels.

And what this means is that, like everything else in the Old Testament, what Joshua 5 is pointing towards is the mission that Christ has come to accomplish. It's telling us that Jesus has come to fight, but he's fighting with different weapons.

He's not using horses and chariots and swords. He is going to fight by going to the cross. It's telling us that Christ has come to conquer, but it's a different opponent. It's not the people of Jericho or the Canaanites dwelling in the land.

[ 37 : 16 ] He has come to conquer sin and death. It's telling us that Christ has come to rescue, but that rescue is far, far more than the Old Testament realized.

It's not just rescuing the people of Israel. It's rescuing all God's people being called from across every nation. Christ has come to protect and that protection is far more secure than the Old Testament ever imagined.

It's not just about defending a piece of land at the end of the Mediterranean. It's about eternal security through union with Christ and Christ will come to judge, but it's not happened yet.

And all of this is telling us that the reality of spiritual conflict has now, through Jesus, become the realm of spiritual conquest.

Jesus has come to win a magnificent victory. And in Joshua 5, when Joshua sees this commander of the Lord's army, he says, whose side are you on?

[ 38 : 25 ] Are you for us or are you for your adversaries? And the answer is that, no, that's not the important question. The question is not, is the commander on Joshua's side?

The question is, is Joshua on his side? And of course he is. And that's the crucial question. When we think about God's army of angels, if we think only about the angels, then we're missing the most important point because the most important point that we need to think about is the commander. Angels are the army of heaven. Christ is their commander. And the crucial point is this. Christ does not deploy his army for the benefit of angels.

He deploys his army for you. And there are myriads and myriads, thousands and thousands of angels under the command of Jesus for your protection.

And that gives us a deeper understanding of a passage like Romans 8 that we read at the start. I want you to imagine that you're standing outside Elisha's house in Dothan and for just that moment you can see the thousands and thousands of angelic chariots around you for protection.

[ 40 : 11 ] And then you read these words. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation or distress or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword as it's written for your sake we've been killed all the day we're regarded as a sheep to be slaughtered.

Elisha's servant felt like a sheep a blight to be slaughtered by the Syrians. No in all these things were more than conquerors through him who loved us for I'm sure that neither death nor life nor angels nor rulers nor things present nor things to come nor powers nor height nor depth nor anything else in all creation physical or spiritual nothing will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

When you think of angels you need to think of the most powerful army that you can imagine and you need to remember that Christ is deploying that army to protect you and that is telling us that our Saviour is amazing and we can have total confidence and security in Him.

Amen.