



04_Nothing Happens Without the Angels

0:00:00.3 Speaker 1: Are you dissatisfied with your spiritual progress, feeling stuck without knowing why, even after deliverance prayers or years of therapy? Recover your dignity, find your purpose, and discover the thrill of walking with God once again. Explore spiritual consultations with Sonja at biblestudyevangelista.com. Click "Go Deeper" on the home page, then "One-on-One" and find out how to cooperate more deeply with the Holy Spirit's action in your life with a spiritual consultation. If you like having Bible Study in your pocket, and you have an iPhone or iPad, why not leave a review? Search Bible Study Evangelista in iTunes and tell everyone how you're loving and lifting all you've been given. Here's Sonja.

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0:00:53.3 Sonja: It's the Bible Study Evangelista show, and we are in our fourth episode in our angels series. And today is going to be a little bit of an addendum to last week's show on the hierarchy of the angels. Because as I finished that show last week, I just had this unfinished sort of niggling question in the back of my mind. I couldn't quite put my finger on why I was so unsatisfied with everything that we had covered. And I got to sort of digging around a little further in all that I have read to this point. And I realized that one of the main fathers on the angels is Dionysius the Presbyter, or... And I wondered if perhaps I was missing something very important. And so I dug through the footnotes in most of what I have read so far. The book *Dominion* by Father Ripperger and Thomas Aquinas on the angels, the catechism, all that I've read so far. And I printed off the celestial hierarchy, Dionysius, I say Dionysius just 'cause that's the way it looks, but I think it's Dionysius. Either way, I was digging around because I just could not be satisfied with the why. I mean, what we really did last week was we looked at this vast forest from the point of view of the forest floor.

0:02:33.7 Sonja: And we're looking up at all of these trees and they, to me, all of that just made very little sense. I think my question was really why. Why does any of this matter? Why does it matter what the nine choirs of angels are called and what they do and all of that? Why does it even matter? And I got really aggravated at myself because [chuckle] I tend to have this tendency anyway. And as I started to just sit with it and try to understand what was happening inside of me, I recognized that it was my learning style that was unsatisfied. I have a global learning style, which means I need the big picture. I have to have the big picture in order for any of the little stuff to make sense. So when I was taking piano, it drove me nuts that I had to learn the scales and I had to... All the minutiae of learning music. You have to learn the little stuff before you can do the big stuff, which was fine. I understood that. But until I had a context to fit all of that in, there seemed like this unending process that led nowhere. Which I know it's silly to some degree, but that's just how I learn. I have to have a big picture, a map, so that I know something about what we're doing or else it just seems pointless.

0:04:01.7 Sonja: The same thing happened to me with math. I had a hard time with math because I wanted to know what are we going to use this for? What is the point of this? If there's no point in doing it, why are we doing it? [chuckle] That's kind of how I felt when we finished last week's show. I just kept thinking, why do we even need to know this? And as I sat with that and I realized that it was my learning style kind of pushing me forward, I started really thinking about all that we covered. And to be sure, the lowest hierarchy, the angels from which we get our guardian angels, that made the most sense to me because that seems pretty practical. But like the highest third, that highest hierarchy, those first three, the seraphim, the cherubim, and the thrones, they are contemplating God. And I don't know, I know this sounds blasphemous to y'all, but I was just thinking, so why? [chuckle] I just know enough about God that that is not the whole story. I just knew that was a whole story, that I was missing something really important.

0:05:13.0 Sonja: So I started really mulling it over and, oh my gosh, it just, it finally... When I started trying to put the whole thing together, instead of looking at it from the forest floor up, when I started to kind of rise up above all nine of those choirs, and thought about the divisions of the three, or the nine choirs in the three divisions, and sort of what those divisions do, I came to this wonderful realization and I ran to my husband and I said, "Oh my gosh, you're not going to believe what I just got." And he started laughing, which irritated me just a little bit, and I said, "Why are you laughing?" And he said, "Well, you're not gonna be able to stand it until you tell me, so just tell me." And I recognized this look on his face of, oh my gosh, here we go. [laughter] But I could not stand it. I mean, he knew I was gonna explode if I didn't tell. So I told him, I said, "Never mind, I'll call Luke," my oldest son, because he loves to talk about this stuff. And so I told him what I was thinking.

0:06:21.2 Sonja: And God loved that child. I did him a great service as his main teacher in our home school, because he came back to me and he said, "Well, that's all well and good, mom, but you got to search your source. Where did you get that from?" And I said, "Well, I got it from my contemplation and my meditation, just sitting here thinking about it." And he said, "Well, that's just you." [chuckle] And I got a little bit irritated by that, but at the same time, I was like, he's right, he's right. So I started digging some more in Thomas Aquinas, and I found something absolutely stupendous. I found that Thomas Aquinas says almost exactly what I said to my son, and I'm gonna tell you what it was. So as I'm thinking about the nine choirs of angels and their purpose, remember that God showed them the plan of everything and invited them to participate in that plan. And some of them fell because they didn't wanna serve human beings. They didn't wanna worship God in Jesus, who is a divine human. But also, there is a tradition that says that Mary was actually part of that, too.

0:07:37.4 Sonja: And I believe, I can't remember if I mentioned that last week or not. I'm pretty sure that I did, because the fact that Mary was going to be elevated to the queen of angels meant that she would be over all of the angels, even the highest of those, the seraphim. And it is said that that's part of why Lucifer fell. And then, there is another tradition in the church that says that that's actually how Michael was elevated from archangel to the highest levels of angelic dignity and power, because what he lacked in his created excellence as an angel, God provided for him in the order of grace, because he said, supposedly, to Lucifer, "Who is like God?" Something like, "Who would dare put their personal opinion on an equal plane with God's mind and plan?" And so his name, Michael, means "Who is like God?" And it is thought that that sort of challenge to Lucifer and his pride was what elevated... What caused God to elevate him by grace to a loftier stature than he actually was created with. So anyway, all of that.

0:08:52.2 Sonja: And then as I'm kind of mulling all that over, what I realized was how all of the pieces that we spoke about last week went together. We talked about how the highest level, the highest hierarchy, the seraphim, the cherubim, and the thrones, how their task is to contemplate God and to contemplate the end of all things and the end of creation in the plan of God. And I realized that God gave them the whole plan. God gave the highest hierarchy, those first three, the seraphim, the cherubim, the thrones, who contemplate God all the time, they were given the full plan as much as they were created to receive. As much as God willed to show them, that's what he showed them. He gave them the plan. And then they are responsible for handing that plan to the middle hierarchy, the dominions, the virtues, and the powers, because they are the ones who run everything. Remember, they are the ones who take that truth and that knowledge and that wisdom and they run things. They're over the weather and politics and all of that stuff. They govern things.

0:10:22.0 Sonja: And then the lowest hierarchy, the principalities, the archangels, and the angels, they're the ones who put everything into place. So, here's what I came to. So, the first and highest hierarchy, they got the what. The second hierarchy got the how. And the third hierarchy is given the doing it, the carrying it out. That is why that highest hierarchy, all they do always is contemplate God. They're constantly thinking about this plan. And I say that like they're in time. They're not in time. I mean, all of this happens for them in the now. It's already done. For us, we're in time. So, we have to carry everything out for ourselves. We have to plod through these moments and these days and years and millennia. But they don't see it like that. To them, it's already finished in the same way that it is for God. And so, when God gave them the plan, He gave it to the top hierarchy. The top hierarchy gave it to the knowledge of it to the next hierarchy who decided how it's all going to work. And that hierarchy gave it to the lowest ones to do it all. So, what I'm coming to realize is nothing happens without the angels.

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[music]

0:12:54.8 Sonja: Now what is so spectacular about this to me is that God gave the angels his plan and he turned the entire thing over to them. All of it. So they do invisibly, they do spiritually what needs to be done so that we can do what we need to do here to live out that plan, we'll say. So the highest hierarchy who contemplate God, they were given the what the whole and full plan start to finish all of what's in heaven and all of what's on earth, they have the whole plan as much as at least

God was willing to share with them. They in turn pass it down the hierarchy to the next level of angels, which is in charge of the how, how's this going to get done. What about the nations? What about the politics? What about the leaders? What about the God's people and how they fit in? And actually, it's actually the opposite. It's not that God's people fit into the politics, it's that the politics and the nations fit into the plan of God's people. We're not the tangent. The world is the tangent. The whole plan is us. The whole plan is God's people. Everything else fits into that. It's not the other way around. We're immersed in it so we don't see it that way.

0:14:24.0 Sonja: But God's plan is God's plan and it's about his people and salvation and love and the nations and the politics and the leaders and all that stuff, that fits into the plan of salvation, not the other way around. He's not fitting in salvation to what's happening in the world. It's the world that's fit into the plan of salvation. And it's the middle tier of angels that decides how that's all gonna happen, specifically in the spiritual realm, but also how to assist us in carrying out our roles and our tasks. Because ultimately, God gave the rule of the whole earth, the dominion of the earth, to the human being. And we forfeited it in the garden, in sin, and all of this plan of salvation is about restoring the rightful dominion that the human person has over the earth. And the angels are the ones who facilitate all of that in the background invisibly. They're the powers. That's why in the scriptures, and I actually saw it just yesterday and I was thinking about Mary Jo. We had this conversation on the community about how in the scriptures, sometimes it's called the angel of the Lord. And I mentioned that as we were going through the encyclopedia, which I promise we'll get back to that after probably this show.

0:15:51.6 Sonja: But we spoke about who these angels of the Lord are, because they seem so God-like. And there was one in the reading just yesterday, or this week. You're listening to this on Monday, or next week, and I'm doing it this week. So it was in the reading, this angel of the Lord idea. And it goes back to what I was talking about last week, and how the angels appear God-like to us. They are miraculous. They have so much power that is so above us and so beyond us that they seem very God-like to us. And yet when the people in the scriptures encountered one of those angels, they always said "Don't worship me, worship God only." But they did things that seemed very miraculous. And this is why, because God has turned over the entire plan to the angels so that they are the ones, they know the plan in the top hierarchy, they plan the plan in the middle hierarchy, how it's gonna go. And the lower hierarchy puts it into place. They are our assistants in bringing back the dominion of the human person to the earth, and taking it back from Lucifer who fell from heaven to earth, which was his dominion.

0:17:10.2 Sonja: I also found, and I believe I mentioned this, but in looking at these divisions of the angels, I was looking at the names, and this is really what kind of put me on to this whole idea. I was wondering how do the church fathers come up with these divisions, and what the divisions do. And what I discovered was, as I'm looking up the names, I'm realizing that's how they did it. They looked into the scriptures, they looked up what the names mean, for instance seraphim means burning, seraph, which means burning. And that's because of their love for God, their contemplation of God. But it's not just the contemplation of God, it's God and his plan, it's God and his love, it's the whole of everything from beginning to end as much as God was willing to share with them. And the cherubim share in that psalm, and the cherubim, the word cherubim, it comes from light, it comes from knowledge. The word cherubim, it comes from the word knowledge. And so they have this gift of light, which makes me think, and later I discovered that Thomas Aquinas thought this too, for the same reason, that Lucifer was probably not a seraphim, he was probably a cherubim. Because of the light idea, because Lucifer's name, the word Lucifer, means light, one of light.

0:18:31.7 Sonja: So they then are participating in this knowledge and this wisdom of God under the seraphim, and then you have the thrones. The thrones, it's from the word throne in Greek, or thronos, but it means a seat. It's a seat from which one rules. And sometimes it's translated in the New Testament, it's translated "cathedra." It comes from that "cathedra" idea, the seat of Moses. I saw that in the readings this week too, which made me, that sent me on another rabbit trail. [chuckle] But the seat of Moses, sometimes that word "throne" is also translated "cathedra" or "seat." And that's where we get the word "cathedral," the seat of the bishop. It's a throne, which drives Protestants absolutely crazy, I know, but this is all biblical, okay? And it's not the bishop in himself, and it's not even the angels in themselves, it's that God gave them that seat. God gave it to them. So how can we be full of envy or full of disdain for what God has structured in this way? Namely, a hierarchy. I know that that is such an ugly word anymore, but this is exactly where our church gets the word "hierarchy."

0:19:54.1 Sonja: The whole, according to Thomas Aquinas, a hierarchy is simply a holy order and knowledge and activity that participates in the divine likeness. And it corresponds to the imitation of God. Now, obviously that's how it's supposed to be, it's not always that way in a church full of men and women, sinners, but that's what it's meant to be, and God established it that way. So not only is the angelic hierarchy, that was established by God, but also the human hierarchy and the plant kingdom and the animal kingdom, all of it, it's all established in a hierarchy, and God wanted it that way. But if you think about the definition of hierarchy, according to Thomas Aquinas, who gets his definition from Dionysius, he says, "Hierarchy is, in my opinion, a holy order and knowledge and activity, which, so far as is attainable, participates in the divine likeness and is lifted up to the illuminations given it from God and correspondingly towards the imitation of God."

0:21:00.9 Sonja: And so, he begins, Dionysius, in the celestial hierarchy, from which Thomas Aquinas draws a lot of his discussion on angels. It begins like this, it says, "That every divine illumination, while going forth with love, in various ways to the objects of its forethought, remains one, nor is this all. It also unifies the things illuminated." So, Dionysius, he starts with this divine illumination, which is one, and it goes forth in a, we'll say, like a prism that fractures the light into pieces. It goes forth with love in various ways to the objects of its forethought, and yet it remains one. And not only does it remain one, but it also unifies the things that it's illuminating. That's how he begins the celestial hierarchy, his whole writing. So, he begins with the one, down to the many, and then back to the one, so that the one, God, he reflects himself in all of the various things that he creates, and all of those things, then, are drawn back into one, back into him, so that everything goes from God to the many, and back to the one.

0:22:33.0 Sonja: This whole series, it just blows my mind. The more I sit and think about it, and mull over it, and consider all the things that the church has given to us, it has really struck me that, as a Protestant, I missed so much richness in the writings of church history, and the writings of the church, because I didn't have any of this, and yet it's so rich. They basically just took the names that are given to us in the scriptures, they searched for the meanings of those names, and they extrapolated all that we know about angels from that. And of course, much of it is speculation, and they even say that. We can't really know all, but what we can know is given to us in the names of things, which I say all the time. And that was what I suspected as I'm sitting there after that last show last week, and I'm like, "What is the point here? [chuckle] Why do we need to know all this minutiae?" Well, we need to know the minutiae, because the minutiae tells us what the angels do, what their tasks are, and then we can pull it all together into that one plan.

[music]

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0:25:18.0 Sonja: Alright. So Thomas Aquinas puts it this way. He says, "Let us then examine the reason for the ordering of Dionysius, which we see that as said above, the highest hierarchy contemplates the ideas of things in God himself, the second in the universal causes, and the third in their application to particular effects. And because God is the end not only of the angelic ministrations, but also of the whole creation, it belongs to the first hierarchy to consider the end, to the middle one belongs the universal disposition of what is to be done, and to the last belongs the application of this disposition to the effect, which is the carrying out of the work." Is that not amazing? I couldn't believe it. I could not believe that when I sat down here and I was digging around some more in Thomas Aquinas that he just lays it out exactly like I started to put it together. So knowing all that, it makes perfect sense then that nothing gets done without the angels. Nothing. So it's not just that God sends them to earth occasionally, it's that they do everything. They do everything. That's why they show up all the time in the scriptures. I don't know, maybe you were thinking of it differently than I was.

0:26:28.1 Sonja: I was thinking that when something really important has to be done, God sends the angels to do it. But that's not how it is at all. They do all of it. They do all of it. And sometimes we get to see them, and most times we don't, but they're always active. They're always present, they're always active, and the number of them, there's no way to even number them. Thomas Aquinas, he doesn't claim to know a number. Dionysius, he doesn't claim to know a number. Nobody knows the number. But we know that the number is so enormous that we could never number them. I'd also like to make a little clarification that someone brought up in the community, and this was such a great question. So I was talking about how Thomas Aquinas says that humans can be equal to the angels in the order of grace. And Eileen brought up in the community that we are supposed to judge the angels, and that's true, Paul says that. And so because we are to be divinized in Christ, that's the word that the church gives it, the divinization of the human being.

0:27:30.5 Sonja: Because Jesus is in us, and through the Holy Spirit, we then are divinized by His Spirit. We don't become God, but we become participators in God in a way that the angels are not

able to do because they haven't been redeemed. But here's the clarification. So humans can't assume the places of angels in the order of nature. Nature is the big distinction. By nature, they are higher than humans are. But because we have been redeemed, we have been elevated above them, some more than others. And I don't know if that means that every human being that is redeemed is elevated above an angel. I don't know. But I know that Paul says that we will judge angels, and that has to mean the fallen angels because the good angels don't need to be judged. So in the order of grace, then, human beings through redemption, which is the grace, we can be elevated above the angels but not by our nature because our nature is matter and spirit. Whereas they, by nature, are pure spirits. So by nature, they are higher than we are. But by grace, in Christ, then we can be elevated above them in the hierarchy.

0:28:42.8 Sonja: So how all that works, I don't really know. But I thought it was very interesting when I printed off and read the entire celestial hierarchy by Dionysius, I'm having a hard time with his name, y'all. [laughter] But when I printed that off and started looking at it, I love this because... We talked about what Ezekiel said about the seraphim particularly and how he attributed to them these weird mini faces and mini feet and they've got the brutishness of oxen, he says, and the savageness of lions and the curved beaks of eagles and the feathers of birds. And he talks about how the whole point in trying to give words and pictures to something that is invisible. He puts it like this. Theology in its sacred utterances, he means the scriptures, concerning the formless intelligences does indeed use poetic symbolism, having regard to our intelligence, as has been said, and providing a means of ascent, fitting and natural to it by framing the sacred scriptures in a manner designed for our upliftment.

0:29:52.5 Sonja: So he's saying that the scriptures give these kind of strange pictures to us to try to describe something that's formless to elevate our intelligence. He says, "For we might even think that the super celestial regions are filled with herds of lions and horses and re-echo with roaring songs of praise and contain flocks of birds and other creatures and the lower forms of matter and whatever other absurd, spurious, passion arousing and unlike forms, the scriptures use in describing their resemblances. For it might be said that the reason for attributing shapes to that which is above shape and forms to that which is beyond form is not only the feebleness of our intellectual power, which is unable to rise at once to spiritual contemplation and which needs to be encouraged by the natural and suitable support and upliftment which offers us forms perceptible to us of formless and supernatural contemplations, but it is also because it is most fitting that the secret doctrines through ineffable and holy enigmas should veil and render difficult of access for the multitude, the sublime and profound truth of the supernatural intelligences."

0:31:07.2 Sonja: So he says, the most holy mysteries are set forth in two modes, one by means of similar and sacred representations akin to their nature and the other through unlike forms designed with every possible discordance and difference. In order, he says, to elevate our intelligence and to elevate our contemplation. He's saying that they're presented to us with these metaphorical pictures with lions and oxen and animal faces and heads and all this weird stuff, these pictures, in order to elevate us to contemplation of what is actually and essentially an intelligence and completely formless, totally spiritual. I just thought it was interesting that he... Actually, that was one of the very first things that he addresses in that celestial hierarchy writing. So he says that it arouses the upward turning part of the soul and stimulates it through the ugliness of the images. I thought that was so interesting. Part of that reason, he says, is to stimulate our human intelligence to leave behind all material attachments.

0:32:08.7 Sonja: So we have our ideas of what angels look like, partly because of art and partly because of what we're told in the scriptures, but we all have these images and pictures. We do the same thing with God, but a purely spiritual being like an angel and particularly God who is the isness of everything. He is pure spirit. There's no picture that you can possibly attach to them. So everything that we imagine is so far off of what they really are. And so, in part, some of these images and metaphors and the symbolism that the Bible gives us is to help detach us from these pictures that we get in our minds of what they're like. I also found it interesting, and honestly, this was really most of what I was able to glean from Dionysius. Most of the rest of it was just more about the hierarchy, and Thomas Aquinas, I think, does a better job of talking about all of that. But he says something that I found funny, and I even wrote a smiley face in the margin reading it, 'cause he wants us to be very sure that we know our place.

0:33:17.6 Sonja: He says, "Now if anyone should say that God has shown himself without intermediary to certain holy men, let him know beyond doubt from the most holy scriptures, that no man has ever seen nor shall see the hidden being of God. But God has shown himself according to revelations which are fitting to God to his faithful servants in holy visions adapted to the nature of the seer." So he wants us to be very sure that we know that no one has seen God, and whatever we have seen, whether it be an angel or anything else, that what we have seen is adapted to the nature of the seer. So it's all condescension. He's making the point that whatever we know, whatever has been revealed, whatever we've seen, it is a condescension, particularly for human beings, but also even for the angels, because God is so wholly other that no man could ever see him. And even the angels do not know God in his essence. They only know what God has allowed them to know of himself, even the seraphim and the cherubim.

0:34:20.4 Sonja: Now, I'm going to digress for a moment and take a minute to mention the transcripts of the shows that are linked at the bottom of each of your weekly emails. I was not able to get the link to that transcript in the email in time for the Monday email, and I could not believe the number of emails that I got from you saying, "Where's the transcript? It's not linked there," and asking about it. That tells me that many, many of you are making use of those transcripts, and I am very, very glad to know that and see it. I would also ask you that if you are making use of those transcripts and you are able, that you would consider please making a monthly donation because those cost me \$40 a week. I had a volunteer that was doing that for me, and she was doing it between her work. Ms. Dora was doing those for us, and she was doing those in between work, but there were complaints about not being able to get them quick enough, and so I started having those done, first of all, so that Dora could concentrate on the show itself and not have to do all the transcribing, but also to accommodate you.

0:35:27.8 Sonja: So if you are making use of those transcripts, please, if you're able, also consider being a monthly giver at some amount because they cost me \$40 for every single show. So I just wanted to throw that out. I am tickled pink that that is not going to waste and that you are enjoying and making use of those.

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0:36:01.4 S1: If you love having bible study in your pocket, you can become a friend of the show. Click on the yellow Friend of the Show button on biblestudyevangelista.com and become a supporter of any amount and any frequency. Now, here's Sonja.

[music]

0:36:29.7 Sonja: Speaking of those givers, those Friends of the Show, I'd like to shout out my newest Friends of the Show from a couple of weeks now. Laura H., Elisa K, Robin N, Amy H, Kelly B, Melissa B, Ann K, Tiffany H, Mary C, Nicole G, Verna S, Sheila S, Gabriella C, Trez G, Catherine. D. A, Clara S, Kelly M, Edin-pat P, Ann B, Linda P, and Raquel P. Thank you so much for helping support me and my efforts at evangelization. I appreciate your prayers and your financial support so very much. So I'm going to just take this last bit of this last segment to do a review of what we know about the angelic hierarchy to this point, and I want to just mention once more that the angelic hierarchy is a sacred order of angels that share in the divine knowledge and the activity who also then in turn guide and convey that knowledge to the angels that are lower to them in the order. And then, we can also see that that's why it's appropriate that the Pope and the bishops in union with the Pope are referred to as the church's hierarchy because it too is a sacred order established by Jesus to convey truth to its members and then through them to the entire people of God.

0:37:53.7 Sonja: So we, as God's people, are also situated in a type of hierarchy, even though we are also brothers and sisters in Christ in a horizontal sort of relationship as well. So seraphim, we know from the name seraphim, seraph, it means burning, and we understand that that is because of their burning love for God, their contemplation, and they sing, they cry. I think it was, I was trying to remember who wrote this somewhere in my reading, and I wanna say it was probably Dionysius, but he said that they cry to one another. "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts. The whole earth is full of his glory." And I love that, this crying idea back and forth to one another in praise of God. And then the cherubim, we talked about them having that light of knowledge, or the fullness of that knowledge. The thrones are seats, places from which to rule. Then the dominions are the next hierarchy, dominions, the virtues, and the powers.

0:38:57.7 Sonja: There are actually three different hierarchies given to us, one from St. Thomas Aquinas, one from Dionysius, and one from St. Gregory, and they're all the same except for the order of the powers and the virtues and the principalities. But I'm just gonna stick with the two out of the three and go with that ordering. So the dominions, the virtues, and the powers are the second hierarchy. The dominions, that's the government. They are the lords. To have dominion is to have lordship over something. And it's not the kind of lordship... I saw this in the readings this week, it's not the kind of lordship that commands as much as... I mean it can, but it serves. And so true lordship is servant lordship. As St. Bonaventure said that the power to command pertains to the dominions, and St. Thomas adds that they appoint those things which are to be done by the lower angels in the governing of the plan of God. They make known to the lower choirs the commands that come from God. So it's not their own command, they're giving God's command.

0:40:04.2 Sonja: The virtues, I found this interesting. The name virtue, the word, actually means energy. So when we're thinking about trying to develop a virtue in our own lives, what we're doing is we're developing the good energy. [chuckle] We're trying to develop the good energy for charity and for humility and all that stuff, because that's what the word means. And so the virtues then, they exercise their... We'll say their task is to order the energies of the cosmos. So according to Thomas Aquinas, they direct the heavens and the natural processes of generation and movement and decay through the regular motion of nature. And so they control the elements and the seasons and the stars and the sun and the moon, all of the aspects of nature, and of course then they give to the lower

choirs the power to carry out what is to be done. And then we have the powers, and that's the ordering of how, with the dominions and the virtues, the ordering of how the plan is going to be done. So they assist that second middle hierarchy. They give the how to the lower hierarchy, the lower third of the hierarchy, in what they're gonna do.

0:41:22.9 Sonja: St. Bernard says that the powers are the ones that oppose the evil forces in the world, and St. Bonaventure said that the powers actually execute the chastisement of God in the order of justice. So the powers then would be in charge of the judgments. And we see that specifically in, say, the Exodus when the angels were involved in the plagues, those kinds of things. And then also in the book of Revelation we see the angels involved in the chastisements that are coming upon the earth. Then we have the principalities or the princes or the generals, and they're the ones who protect and help the human race. They preside over the nations of the world and the governing of the world. And so, St. Bernard and Thomas Aquinas say that the rise and the fall of nations and the political shifts in power are responsible in part from the principalities and the archangels. And that would be true in the principalities because this third hierarchy, the lower third, is involved with people.

0:42:24.2 Sonja: This lower third of the angels, the principalities and the archangels and the angels, are the ones that are involved with us, with us human beings. And so that would be the politics, not just in the rise and fall of nations, but specifically in the leaders and the shifts in power and the shifts in leaders, that kind of thing. Some commentators think that St. Jude singled out of the choir of principalities as the choir from which most of the angels who disobeyed God, that's the one from which they fell. So those principalities are the spiritual generals, and they have the greatest authority of this lower hierarchy in carrying out God's plan, especially as it has to do with us people, with human beings. And they're in the spiritual warfare for souls that takes place on the earth every day for all of us. Then we have the archangels, and archangel then indicates a role of leadership among the angels. The angels are the lowest of the hierarchy of the nine, and they are the ones who are directly involved with each of us. We each have one.

0:43:27.7 Sonja: The archangels then are leaders of those angels. So they're specific officers, we could say, of the lowest hierarchy, and they kind of hold a middle place in between the principalities and the angels. So they're commanders of that ninth angelic choir. And of course, we know three of the archangels, Michael, Gabriel, and Raphael, and then the angels of which that's the part where our guardian angels come from. The more I learn about these angels, the more in awe I am of my own guardian angel, and I hope that you are developing this sort of love for your own guardian angel as well. Because although, we have to walk through time to carry out the plan that God has given for us, whatever our purpose and our task is, the angels, we could say, even though they're not part of time, they live in that constant, eternal moment of now, but we could say that they've been waiting for you, or waiting for us from the beginning of creation to know you, to love you, and to guide you to heaven.

0:44:34.0 Sonja: Your guardian angel knows you better than any other human being. No human being knows you better than your guardian angel, and they love you more than any other human being, because they know you. [chuckle] Your angel has been given both an angelic sharing in God's knowledge of you, and also an angelic participation in His love for you. So we should develop a friendship. We should develop a love for our angels, and we know that they can't force their way into our wills or into our thoughts, so we have to do that by communicating with them. So we can talk to them, and we can open that line of communication and be aware. I forget who it was.

It may have been something. I don't remember what it was. I've read and seen so much over the last several weeks. I don't know where it was, but somebody said that the way to experience your guardian angel more is, first of all, to open those lines of communication more often. To be aware of his activity, and of course, remember that we assign the male gender to them, not because they have gender. Jesus said they don't have gender at all, but we assign the male gender to them because they're so powerful.

0:45:49.3 Sonja: And so we give them that male gender because they are so powerful and virile, but they don't really have gender. Either way, we speak of them as hymns, [chuckle] and so speak to your guardian angel. Open up that line of communication and do it regularly throughout the day. Try to remind yourself and keep him in mind for all of your tasks, for everything. I am convinced that this is why some of the saints had such wonderful manifestations and visualizations, we could say, of their angels is because they had such an intimate relationship with them. And we should do that. We should open up those lines of communication and be aware that nothing in our lives happens without their activity. Nothing happens without them. As I was reading through Dionysius and all of the times in the Scriptures that were shown how the angels were involved with the human race, I'm reading that in a completely different way now. I'm not seeing it as something that it was special, so God sent them. I'm seeing it as they do all of it. That's their whole job, their whole task.

0:47:02.0 Sonja: And so we really need to be aware and thankful and in contact with them on a regular basis because they love us so very, very much. Next week, we're gonna start on the fallen angels. We're not gonna spend a whole lot of time there because several times in my research, I've heard from these doctors of the church and teachers of the church, they say, "Don't focus your attention on the fallen angels. Always focus on the good, not the evil." So we're gonna do that. We'll do that next week just a little bit. We're gonna look at it because we really wanna be aware of their methods, but we don't wanna focus too much on it. So next week, the fallen angels.

[music]

0:47:51.6 Speaker 4: Thank you for listening to the Bible Study Evangelista Show. Find out more at biblestudyevangelista.com.