

## Tom Ruggirello - Gabriel's Duty

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And I wish the Lord's blessing on each of you as you begin your new year of service to the Lord. I'm sure it will be prosperous in many ways. I found something new just a few moments ago that our pianist this morning, his middle name is Gabriel. I didn't know that. I told him.

If I would have known that, I would have spoken more about him to embarrass him any further. Well, brother, in Hebrews, the twelfth chapter, the apostle Paul is contrasting the experiences of Moses on Mount Sinai with the church's experiences in the Gospel age, and this is what it says. For you have not come unto the mount that might be touched and that burned with fire, nor unto blackness and darkness and tempest and the sound of a trumpet and the voice of words. That was Mount Sinai, but ye are come unto Mount Zion, unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, into an innumerable company of angels.

And then in the throne Scene of Revelation 5, we read this, and I beheld and I heard the voice of many angels round about the throne, and the number of them was 10,000 times 10,000 and thousands of thousands. 10,000 times 10,000. That's 100 million angels plus millions more.

And I often wondered, what do they do all day?

We know that the universe itself is controlled by fixed laws and principles, so it keeps itself in balance without the need for intervention. Maybe there's something they do out in the universe that they're assigned to cover.

We know on many occasions that stars collide, supernovas explode, and no one gets hurt when that happens, because there's no one out there.

But maybe they're guardians of the Earth, because here there is life, and here life is precious to God, and so maybe until man figures out how to do it, maybe the angels are assigned to cover and protect the Earth from those catastrophic events, whatever it is they do. We know that God does not create life in vain, and neither does he appreciate laziness. He so we know that they're not just laying around on this cloud playing harps, as sometimes they're depicted.

They're created for a purpose, and someday we will more fully understand what that purpose is. One thing we do know about them is that they love to sing. The text in Revelation 5 describes them singing around the throne of God, and I wondered, well, is that literal?

Because when we sing, we need air to push out of our lungs, and they're in a completely different environment. But I think there is a literal aspect to that, and if that's true, that they literally sing, try to imagine the sound of 100 million angels singing together. Then we have the discussion with Job. I'm sure you remember God asked him, where wast thou when I laid the foundations of the earth?

Whereupon are the foundations there unfastened? Or who laid the cornerstone thereof? When the morning stars sang together and all the sons of God shouted for joy? Someday I would love to see that reenacted. How God finished the earth, how he laid the foundations of the earth.

And I wonder if somehow, maybe the angels had some part in the creative process in bringing that about. It says here that as they looked upon the finished earth, they sang and they shouted for joy, knowing that this was the place where new, intelligent terrestrial life would be created. Human life was something new to the universe. So I think they were very excited to see everything happen

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here on earth. Though their abilities are not fully described in scriptures, from a human standpoint, they are obviously beyond our capabilities.

For example, in Elisha's day, the entire Syrian army was struck with blindness, and then in Hezekiah's time, One angel slew 185,000 Assyrian soldiers. These are powerful beings, more than we understand, and then there was the other end of that. There was the occasion when an angel appeared to Jacob in a dream.

How does someone appear in a dream except by manipulating the mind somehow? One of the special duties that God is assigned to the angels is the protection of his people. David wrote this. The angel of the Lord encamps around those who fear him and he delivers them. The word encamp means to pitch a tent.

Now think of that. If you fear the Lord and are in covenant relationship with him, the angels have pitched a tent around you, or maybe even in your driveway. For all we know. God is committed to protecting those who are dedicated to Him. So anytime you feel unsafe, recall the promise that he has enchant his angels round about you.

Brethren, one day the testimony of these guardians will be shared with each saint as they enter the courts of heaven. I look forward to that. I look forward to knowing what we see very little of on this side of the valley. But this passage tells us that they are always there, and I think when we, if we ever get that opportunity to sit down with them, it will be a season of rich fellowship as we become acquainted with our guardian angels.

They know us very well, but we don't know them hardly at all, and I think as they describe in great detail their intervention in our experiences on this side of the veil, we will be absolutely amazed seeing how God directed them to maybe alter an experience or Divert something that would have hurt us will undoubtedly, in our minds, magnify the wisdom of God even more, knowing that he knows what's best for us, and I think it will be a humbling experience to realize how much effort went into each one of us in our lives. Here Jesus said, he that overcometh the same shall be clothed in white raiment, and I will not blot out his name, but I will confess his name before my Father and before his angels.

Think of that. To be confessed, to have your name confessed before God, it's an incredible honor. The word confess means to acknowledge. It describes a public declaration saying the saints have overcome the temptations of the world, the flesh and the devil. But not only is this a declaration of conquering temptation, it will also be a declaration that this saint is Christlike.

Don't you want that said about you?

In fact, I never paid much attention to him. This text is that those hearing Jesus words will include the angels. Remember, Jesus came when he said that joy shall be in heaven over one sinner who repents. That tells us that the angels are thrilled when someone begins their Christian life with a repentant heart. But then here they acknowledge that life was faithfully completed, the earthly sacrifice was done faithfully.

And so the angels are at both ends of our human experience.

When describing the kingdom arrangement, Jesus shared one interesting fact. This is what Jesus said about the kingdom arrangement. For in the resurrection, they neither marry nor are given in

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marriage, but are as the angels of God in heaven. Of course, we know that one of the purposes of marriage is to propagate the human family, and once that is complete, apparently marriage will no longer be necessary.

But since that was never the purpose of angels, it wasn't a necessary arrangement for them to begin with. Now, if you think about that, that's an interesting distinction between man and angels, isn't it? For us, family is very important. We treasure our parents and our children and have a special bond with our families that in many ways we don't have with others, and I will tell you, I would never want to lose that.

But the angels experience is different, and in some ways, not having individual family members really makes them all members of one family, and so that family bond grows between those hundred million angels, and I would describe them maybe as brothers who share a common purpose, and so this little tidbit of information that Jesus shared provides a small insight into what their relationships with one another may be like.

There's a great sense of cooperation and helpfulness between them. Another thing we know about them is that in many instances they have only limited knowledge. For example, when discussing his return to earth, Jesus said of that day and hour knows no man, no, not the angels of heaven, but my Father only.

We might say that because of their limited role, they were on a need to know basis when encouraging the brethren with the knowledge of the truth. Paul added this. He said, we are made a spectacle unto the world, and to angels the word spectacle means, and to angels means a theater, a place of public show.

What a contrast when you think of the world watching you. You know, I think the world cares very little about what we do or what we say. But the angels, they're watching with great interest. They want us to be victorious because our victory is also theirs. Angels are mentioned over 300 times in scripture and are extensively employed by God.

However, only three specific names are provided for us in the Bible. I think I'm sure you know these. Michael is named five times, three times in Daniel, once in Jude and once in Revelation.

The angel Gabriel appears four times, twice in the book of Daniel and twice in Luke, and Lucifer is named once in Isaiah. There is one angel mentioned by name in Revelation chapter 9. However, it's probably a likely symbolism of an individual in the gospel age, and I would encourage you to see the New Albany Revelation Notes for an interpretation of what that angel might represent.

We won't look at that. Today Michael is termed the archangel in Jude 1:9. The word signifies chief angel. In fact you can see our angel there in statue was pointing to the chief.

The title Archangel suggests a hierarchy amongst the angelic hosts. Michael means who is like God, and although we are not told that Michael is a descriptive title of our Lord Jesus, the connection is very strong. In Malachi 3:1 Jesus is prophetically called the messenger of the Covenant, and this is what brother Russell writes.

He says, from what we learn of his pre human glory, we conclude that he must have been the chief messenger. Surely we may well reason that Jehovah's firstborn, the beginning of the creation of God, would be the chief in the thought gathers forces. We remember that he was the only begotten

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of the Father, the only being whom Jehovah directly created, and in this sense the Alpha and Omega, the beginning and ending of Jehovah's creation, who was before all things and by whom as Jehovah's agent all things consist. Without him was not anything made that was made. Surely chief messenger would be a fitting title for this being so being chief messenger suggests his subservience to God.

The submissive role is clear from the text in Jude 1:9. There it says, yet Michael the Archangel, when contending with the devil, he disputed about the body of Moses, durst not bring against him a railing accusation, but said, the Lord rebuke thee. Well, apparently the devil intended to create an object of worship with the body of Moses or some other twisted idea, and so Michael was sent to prevent that from happening, and the fact that he was successful reveals that Michael is more powerful than the devil.

We always assume that, but here is scriptural evidence. But Michael's refusal to accuse Satan, leaving that to God, also shows again his submission to the authority of God. Now, his role as chief messenger in the word of God as described in John 1:1, suggests that every time an angel appeared to someone in the Old Testament, it was probably Michael, and if this is the case, there is an implied humility in the fact that when he appeared to them, he never gave his name. He never talked about himself.

Sharing his name just wasn't important to him. His only purpose was to give the message he was sent to convey. So even in this mighty angel, there is an implied humility in the way he served God. Now, Michael's appearance in the book of Daniel is interesting. There he is named.

The angel Gabriel had been sent to explain the prophecies previously given to Daniel, and in explaining the reason for Gabriel's delay, Gabriel said this. He said, the prince of the kingdom of Persia withstood me one and 20 days. But lo, Michael, one of the chief princes, came to help me and remained there with the king of Persia. Now, Young's Literal Translation says, Michael, one of the chief princes, should read Michael first of the chief princes.

So again, it shows Michael's superiority of all the others, and I thought Brother Streeter had a nice comment on this. He says, in this instance, God permits an angel to lift the curtain for a moment, thus enabling us to get a glimpse of what is taking place among the spirits of the power of the air. Indeed, the Scriptures from beginning to end picture the angels as participating unseen on behalf of God's people, as also in the divine overruling in the affairs of human governments. The prophet was permitted to get a glimpse of this invisible struggle that was going on between the princes or chiefs of holy and unholy angels.

The conflict seems to have been to determine which of these powers was to influence the mind of the worldly monarch, the king of Persia, then on the throne. In making an important decision in connection with the affairs of God's people, how closely associated are these invisible struggles or conflicts with the answer of God to the prayers of his people. Now, when you try to envision that scene where the curtain was kind of open for us a little bit, it's hard for us to understand what was really happening. There was some sort of spiritual struggle between a fallen angel, possibly Satan himself, and the angel Gabriel. Now we do not know exactly what Michael did that Gabriel could not do.

But this is one of the things we're going to find out one of these days. But this little glimpse tells that there are spiritual forces that battle from time to time. But for now the curtain falls back down. Apparently we don't need to know any more of what happened and has been revealed. But what

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this does tell us is that Gabriel's 21 day struggle means there are fallen angels more powerful than some holy angels, but that Michael again is more powerful than all of them.

Well, there's an interesting question that comes up from time to time. If Michael was the appointed mouthpiece of God, why on two separate occasions was Gabriel commissioned to convey God's message? And there are at least two possibilities. Either Michael was busy with other matters and was unavailable, or it was inappropriate for Michael to convey a particular message. You wonder why would it ever be inappropriate for Michael to share a message from God?

Well, the answer comes in the I think lies in the first recorded appearance of Gabriel. He first appeared by name to the prophet Daniel in chapter eight. Daniel revealed a vision of what was to transpire there. He saw a two horned ram which Gabriel later explained represented the kingdom of Medo, Persia. That kingdom would be the next world power following the current kingdom of Babylon in Daniel's day.

And then appeared in the vision a hairy goat with a single great horn that struck the ram and cast it to the ground. Gabriel again helped him. The goat represented Greece and the horn its most powerful king. History tells us that Alexander the Great, head of the Grecian empire when it conquered Medo Persia, became the next world power. For Daniel, this meant that gentile dominion over Israel would continue.

Then as the Grecian goat waxed great, the horn was surprisingly broken off, depicting the surprised death of Alexander at the age of 32 at the height of his power, and then Gabriel said four horns then grew to take its place. Each horn represented one of Alexander general who vied for power after his death. Then one of those horns, a little out of those, one of, out of one of those horns a little horn grew and says waxed exceeding great. History confirms for us that out of General Cassander who controlled Macedonia, one of the divisions the power of the Roman Empire grew to dominate the world.

And then one more horn. Gabriel then described a little horn growing out of the Roman horn, and he says that it would be fierce and powerful and would destroy many. He said this power would stand against the prince of princes. In other words, out of the Roman Empire would come the Antichrist.

Gabriel said that the little horn would take away the daily sacrifice and the sanctuary would be trodden underfoot for 2300 days. Now it's interesting that this timing was not explained by Gabriel. All he said to Daniel is shut up the vision for it shall be for many days, and with this message, Daniel was sick at heart. He understood that this was a long range prophecy.

I'm not sure if he understood the day for a year concept as we know today, but his reaction might indicate that he did. The fulfillment of this prophecy was 2300 years into the future, and you look at the passion of Daniel's heart, I think it should help us appreciate where we stand on the stream of time. We know the meaning of all these things to Daniel they were pretty obscure. We see them mostly in our rear view mirror.

We can identify the historical significance of these things, and that means a couple of things. First of all, we can be absolutely confident the Bible is inspired that it could predict things with such accuracy, and for us it also means that the kingdom is very close, far closer than Daniel could have hoped for. Daniel's sorrow was in the fact that the temple in Jerusalem would not be rebuilt for many years and his people would not be able to worship there.

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That broke his heart. But we now know there is a greater fulfillment to these prophecies. The building of the spiritual temple again is almost complete, and that temple will help not only Israel worship God, but it will bring back all the dead and help them come back to understand and to worship God as he so deserves. So brethren, these prophecies are not just puzzles to decipher or intellectual challenges.

They point to the reality of what God has planned for the restitution of humanity. They are huge. They are history altering, they are life altering, and you and I can have a part of that. Daniel would have loved to know what every one of us today knows.

Now. Since the vision of Chapter 8 described a desecration of the sanctuary, Daniel continued to mourn for Israel. In chapter nine we're told that he studied the writings of Jeremiah to find how long it would be, and he expressed remorse for his own sins and for the sins of Israel because he knew it was because of sin. That all that had happened to Israel.

And Gabriel was then again sent to comfort Daniel, and there he reveals more answers. This is what he says. Yea, while as I was speaking in prayer, even the man Gabriel, whom I had seen in the vision at the beginning, being caused to fly swiftly, swiftly, touched me about the time of the evening oblation, and he informed me and talked with me and said, o Daniel, I am now come forth to give thee skill and understanding.

At the beginning of thy supplications, the commandment came forth, and I am come to show thee, for thou art greatly beloved. Therefore understand the matter and consider the vision. Then Gabriel went on to give Daniel the prophecy of the 70 weeks, probably one of the most important prophecies that will ever be given. It indicated not only when the temple in Jerusalem would be rebuilt, but even more importantly, when Messiah, the savior of the world, would come. The prophecy leading to Messiah was given to this humble, passionate man who yearned for his people.

It's an indication of the heart condition that God is looking for in those he will reveal his plan to. Yes, the temple in Jerusalem would be restored, as the first part of the prophecy indicated. But the words of Gabriel again pointed to a far greater work, Nothing less than the payment of the ransom, leading to the fulfillment of God's promise to Abraham of blessing all the families of the earth. In this case, Gabriel, not Michael, was commissioned to speak for God. I said earlier that the angels had limited knowledge of what God was doing, but that they desired to look into these things.

But here was a time when Gabriel was informed of some very important elements of the divine plan. From the days of Daniel, there would be three more world powers, and out of the last would arise an unholy religious power. It was now revealed when Michael would be sent to be the Messiah. These were exciting truths that, you know, must have thrilled the angels and was a privilege for Gabriel to speak these words. He was honored to announce the Messiah.

There was no greater honor than an angel could have been given. Along with the other angels, he had witnessed the fall of man. He had seen the pain and suffering that came with it. Now he was sent to reveal how that would be fixed and when sin would be taken away. Brethren, again, I'll make the point.

You and I are similarly honored by what we know of God's plan. To understand why God permitted evil is huge. If you go out in the world and even into Christianity and ask that question, they have no idea, and yet it's a simple concept that we needed the experience with sin in order to appreciate

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righteousness, and if you don't have the kingdom concept, that kind of goes out the window.

And so we need to appreciate more deeply the privilege of understanding the kingdom, the ransom, the sin offering, and all the doctrines that go with it, because they magnify who God is, and that it is a special honor for you and I to understand those things. The Apostle Paul recognized this honor when he wrote Romans 8:30. He said, whom he did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, them he also called, and whom he called, them he also justified, and whom he justified, them he also glorified.

Now in the sixth volume, Brother Russell rightly explains that the word glorified is better translated honored, and he says it is more of an honor than many have supposed, as salvation is a gift of God to be thrown open to the world during the millennial age. It is a special honor to have a knowledge of the Lord's grace and an opportunity of reconciliation with him in the present time in advance of the world. You are specially honored by the knowledge you have been given.

As Gabriel must have appreciated the honor he was given. He also understood why Michael was not sent to explain this to Daniel. You may remember Brother Gene Burns speaking about this. His comment on this point has stuck with me for many years and really is at the heart of this whole talk. He said that sending Gabriel instead of Michael suggests a heavenly decorum.

I like that the word decorum describes a proper conduct in certain situations. Using Michael to announce prophecies related to his own sacrifice may have been considered by God as inappropriate. So instead, God chose Gabriel to announce the Great Redeemer's advent. This calls to mind Proverbs 27:2. Let another praise you and not your own mouth a stranger, and not your your own lips.

Well, Gabriel wasn't a stranger, but he gladly shared the good news of our great Messiah. Michael was somebody he loved dearly. He served willingly, and it was honor for him to say the words that he was expressing to Daniel about this dear, about Michael. When the Lord gives us advice like this, he does in Proverbs, when the situation calls for it. God himself asked the heavenly host to follow the same principles.

Well, brethren, the next time we hear from Gabriel isn't until centuries later. His appearance in the New Testament was not only because of heavenly decorum, but also because Michael wasn't available. The wonderful story you all know and that we read every year begins in Luke chapter one. It says, there was in the days of Herod, the King of Judea, A certain priest named Zacharias, and his wife was of the daughters of Aaron, and her name was Elizabeth.

And they were both righteous before God, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord, blameless, and they had no child, because Elizabeth was barren, and they both were now well stricken in years. According to the custom of the priest's office, his lot was to burn incense when he went into the temple of the Lord, and there appeared unto him an angel of the Lord, standing on the right side of the altar of incense.

And when Zacharias saw him, he was troubled, and fear fell upon him, and the angel said unto him, fear not, Zacharias, for thy prayer is heard, and thy wife Elizabeth shall bear thee a son, and thou shalt call his name John, and thou shalt have joy and gladness, and many shall rejoice at his birth.

For he shall be great in the sight of the Lord, and shall drink neither wine nor strong drink, and he shall be filled with the Holy Spirit even from his mother's womb, and many of the children of Israel

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shall he turn to the Lord their God, and he shall go before him in the spirit and power of Elijah, and to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just, to make them ready a people prepared for the Lord.

To make ready a people prepared for the Lord, and Zechariah said unto the angel, whereby shall I know this? For I am an old man, and my wife well stricken in years, and the angel answered unto him, I am Gabriel, that stand in the presence of God, and am sent to speak unto thee and to show thee these glad tidings, and behold, thou shalt be dumb and not able to speak until the day that these things shall be performed, because thou believest not my words, which shall be fulfilled in their season.

And the people waited for Zacharias and marveled that he tarried so long in the temple, and when he came out, he could not speak unto them, and they perceived that he had seen a vision in the temple. For he beckoned unto them and remained speechless. I think about Zacharias, and I think my impression is that he was a practical man.

He was now old, and his wife was also old and barren, and so his practical mind probably said, this can't work. This isn't logical that we should have a son, and as a result of his practicality, Gabriel said that he would be dumb. One commentary says this.

The word, the original word, signifies deaf as well as dumb, and it seems plain that he was as unable to hear as he was to speak, for his friends were obliged to make signs to him that he might understand them well, lest we be too hard on Zacharias. Once he understood that what Gabriel said was true, his attitude through the whole experience was amazing. It was traditional, of course, to name a son after their father, and that's what everyone expected him to do. But Gabriel had told Zacharias to name the boy John, meaning the grace or mercy of Jehovah.

And after the birth and circumcision of John, the hearing and speech of Zacharias was restored. Verse 64 says, and his mouth was opened immediately and his tongue loosed, and he spake and praised God, and in his first words you can feel the excitement and the joy that he felt. This is what he blessed be the Lord God of Israel, for he hath visited and redeemed his people and hath raised up a horn of salvation for us in the house of his servant David, as he spake by the mouth of his holy prophets, which have been since the world began, that we should be saved from our enemies and from the hand of all that hate us, to perform the mercy promised to our fathers and to remember his holy covenant, the oath which he swear to our father Abraham that he would grant unto us, that we, being delivered out of the hand of our enemies, might serve him without fear, in holiness, in righteousness before him all the days of our life, and thou, child, shall be called the prophet of the highest and for thou shalt go before the face of the Lord to prepare his ways, to give knowledge of salvation unto his people by the remission of their sins through the tender mercy of our God, whereby the dayspring from on high hath visited us, to give light to them that sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace.

That's amazing. This man is very knowledgeable. You can see his heart, and he's saying, I was told that my son will be born, and then he's born, and his concept was, this has already happened.

The kingdom is already here, the ransom has already been paid. He's seeing his faith in such reality. It's as if it already happened. He knew the scriptures, he understood the need for redemption and the importance of the Abrahamic promise and the meaning of deliverance not only for Israel, but for the world, and so what a blessing that we see his real heart and his faith in what God promised so long ago.

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And so he should be remembered for these words, not his original skepticism this was his heart. As Gabriel and the other angels heard his words, they must have just been thrilled by his response and shared the enthusiasm of what was finally unfolding for man. Six months later, Gabriel would appear to Mary in one of the most memorable experiences of that angel's life.

Went ahead.

I'm way ahead here. Wait, I'm going the wrong way. Sorry.

There he is.

And in the sixth month of Elizabeth's pregnancy, the angel Gabriel was sent from God unto a city of Galilee named Nazareth, to a virgin espoused to a man whose name was Joseph of the house of David, and the virgin's name was Mary, and the angel came in unto her and said, hail, thou, that art highly favoured. The Lord is with thee. Blessed art thou among women, and when she saw him, she was troubled at his saying and cast in her mind what manner of salutation this should be.

And the angel said unto her, fear not, Mary, for thou hast found favour with God, and behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb and bring forth a son, and shall call his name Jesus. He shall be great and shall be called the Son of the Highest, and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David, and he shall reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there shall be no end.

Then said Mary unto the angel, how shall this be, seeing I know not a man? And the angel answered and said unto her, the Holy Spirit shall come upon thee, and the power of the highest shall overshadow thee. Therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God, and behold, thy cousin Elizabeth. She hath also conceived a son in her old age, and this is the sixth month with her, who was called barren.

And Mary said, behold, the handmaiden of the Lord being unto me according to thy word, and the angel departed from her. Well, unlike Zacharias, who at first didn't believe Gabriel, Mary's only question was, how can this be? Since she had never been with a man? And I think it was more of a technical question than disbelief, because you see how easily she came to believe.

Once she was told, the Holy Spirit would come upon her. Now, a Skeptic would have 10 more questions, but when she was given that simple answer, she gladly accepted it. Once again, we see the type of individual that God chose to reveal his message. Yeah. I titled this discourse Gabriel's duty, but I am sure he saw his work as more than just his duty.

Like I said earlier, it was an honor and privilege for him to speak for God, and to announce the coming birth of Michael the Archangel, whom he saw as his own master. That must have been a personal joy for him, and, brethren, what I take from this is that if we approach our duties in the same way, we will see that it is an honor and privilege for us to serve when we understand who we are serving and why, the work is not burdensome at all, but joyful. We can never repay what the Lord has done for us, but we can express our deepest gratitude by the way we serve.

When Jesus was finally born in Bethlehem, an angel of the Lord again was sent to make the announcement, first to the shepherds. Now the angel is not named. But since Michael in this case was not available to share the message, the angel was again probably Gabriel, and the angel said unto them, fear not, for behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people.

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For unto you is born this day in the city of David a savior, which is Christ the Lord.

And this shall be a sign unto you. He shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger, and suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of heavenly hosts praising God and saying, glory to God in the highest and on earth, peace, good will toward men, and so this mighty angel Gabriel fulfilled his duties, and he rejoiced with every privilege, and we look forward to seeing what other duties that God gives him the privilege of performing.

His known appearances spanned two ages as he conveyed vital prophecies to Daniel and later announced the birth of our Savior. His appearances often seem very understated and humble, but when he sang with the other angels before the shepherds, I think his heart was rejoicing. It overflowed with love and respect for the one who he was charged to announce, who was changed from the Archangel of Heaven, the second most powerful being in the universe now to be born a baby in Bethlehem. As the Lord grew, the angels watched him first become a boy. They watched with great interest as he began his ministry by baptism from his cousin John.

And then as he taught the people, as he healed, as he blessed those who followed him. Finally, their hearts must have ached as they watched him suffer indignities and the agony of the cross. But when it was over, their love for Jesus must have been thrilled, absolutely thrilled to welcome him home, and finally, it may have been Gabriel himself who shared the message with Mary Magdalene as she stood at the empty tomb of Jesus, and the angel said, he is not here.

He is risen. Gabriel had shared prophecies that pointed forward to the coming Messiah he announced the birth of John, who had prepared the way for the Lord, and then he revealed to Mary that she had been chosen to bear the Son of God. He sang with the hosts of angels before the shepherds, and finally, hopefully, or likely announced the birth of the empty tomb, the resurrection of Jesus. There's no more important events in history than the ones that Gabriel was privileged to share.

The name Gabriel means man of God. Simple name for an extraordinary servant, one amongst tens of millions who serve God in heaven and on earth. Well, brethren, we're going to close this service a little differently than usual. We're going to listen to a selection from Handel's Messiah, and it conveys the sentiment that every faithful angel and each of you share in your heart about our Lord. It's based on the text in Revelation 5:12.

I'm sure we all know it. It's titled Worthy is the Lamb, and as you listen to the words, you can almost picture those hundred million angels singing them, because they are most appropriate. But think of how many things you have to be thankful for and what the Lord means to you and how he has changed your life, and yet, the big changes are yet to come.

And then after the hymn, I'll close with prayer, and then we'll turn the meeting over to our chairman. I hope this comes through with me.

Ha.

It sa sam ra.