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Let's begin our worship this morning by asking God's blessing on us as we study His Word together. Father, we thank You for Your sustaining grace. We thank You for Your saving grace.

We thank You for the position that we have before You through Jesus Christ, our Lord. We thank You that we enjoy not only blessings directly from You through Your Word and through Your Spirit, but also through the ministry of Your Spirit in the lives of fellow believers. We thank You for the gifts of the Spirit that minister to the body, and that through fellowship and encouragement, we are able to be a blessing to one another.

We pray this morning that as we spend time together in Your Word, that God the Holy Spirit will minister it to each of our hearts. We pray that it will join the truths that are already resident in our souls to build us up and transform us to more closely match the example and the thinking of our Lord Jesus Christ. We pray that as a result, He will be glorified and Your plan will be accomplished in our lives today and in the days to come.

We ask these things in Jesus' name. Amen. For our scripture reading this morning, I would like to return to a chapter that we looked at last week, Psalm 29.

Psalm 29. Our study in Genesis has brought us to chapter 6, where we see the sons of God intermarrying with the daughters of men. We see God making a profound statement having to do with His Spirit and the association of His Spirit with man and some 120 year period of time.

This is perhaps the most difficult statement in the whole book of Genesis to rightly understand and rightly interpret. It has been widely discussed, widely studied, and many conclusions have been drawn, no two of which seem to have any common ground. In our investigations thus far, elsewhere in scripture, we have seen that the word Ruach, or Spirit, that is used there in Genesis 6, is translated in several different ways in the Old Testament.

We find it translated Spirit with a capital S, Spirit with a small s. It is translated Wind. In investigating some of these passages, we have seen that perhaps our choices in translation have not always been on the mark. We saw last week that in many of these cases, the presence of God associated with Ruach is a reference to angels.

In the clearest passage, He makes His angels spirits, His ministers a flame of fire. In those references to the cherubim and the seraphim, which we have traced through the Old Testament, we have seen that in many cases, God's Spirit, or the action of God's Spirit, is mediated in ways that we have not always appreciated. We tend to think of the ministry of God's Spirit as coming either through endowment, or the Spirit coming on a human being in the Old Testament, in sort of a temporary fashion for a specific purpose,

such as the judges, the tabernacle workmen, and so forth.

We see a more permanent ministry of the Spirit to the King of Israel in the case of Saul, and the case of David, and Solomon, where Scripture explicitly mentions that the Spirit came upon the King. Of course, our New Testament understanding involves both indwelling and filling of the Spirit. We could go into quite extensive studies on these, but our interest is in another manifestation of God's Spirit, and that is the ministry of God's Spirit to mankind mediated through angels.

This sounds weird, and there's a lot of angel propaganda about today. You walk into a bookstore, and there will be a whole shelf of books on angels. It's a popular fad, sort of an interest reflected in TV shows and movies.

There are a couple of movies out now where, very interestingly, in connection with our study, I think there's a movie out now where it's the story of an angel who comes to earth and falls in love with a woman, and sort of gives up his angelship to have a more permanent relationship with this woman. It echoes, in many ways, the situation that we find in Genesis 6. We're not subscribing to the winds of interest in angels and the misconceptions about angels. At the same time, we do not want to neglect the clear teaching of Scripture having to do with this facet of the ministry of God's Spirit.

We want to take a look for our Scripture reading at Psalm 29, which is one of several passages in the Old Testament that refers to God's dealings in creation, not only with man, but also with his angelic creation, the heavenly hosts. There are a variety of ways in which they are referred to. We have seen in Psalm 29 that the forest and the trees are used to refer to these creatures, just as they do in Ezekiel and other places.

With that sensitivity in mind, as we see this psalm that appeals to the mighty ones, the heavenly creation, to give glory to God, that these principles are in view. Psalm 29, a psalm of David. The voice of the Lord is over the waters.

The God of glory thunders. The Lord is over many waters. The voice of the Lord is powerful.

The voice of the Lord is full of majesty. The voice of the Lord breaks the cedars. Yes, the Lord splinters the cedars of Lebanon.

He makes them also skip like a calf. Lebanon and Syrian like a young wild ox. The voice of the Lord divides the flames of fire.

We'll pause at this point to note a couple of things. This is poetry. The psalms are song lyrics.

In this case, this is a song written by David. And in poetic language, words can function on several levels. All of these references are well-known poetic or literary words or terms

that carry more freight than they would at first appear to carry.

We see the clear reference and the signal to tell us to be listening on some of these other levels right in the first verse. Give unto the Lord, O you mighty ones. And these mighty ones are the heavenly hosts.

In verse 3, the voice of the Lord is over the waters. The voice of the Lord is over many waters. The waters throughout the Old Testament, especially in prophetic and poetic passages, are references to the chaotic or unruly forces of evil.

The establishing of God's throne upon the seas. In Isaiah, where he says, The wicked are like the troubled sea when it cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt. It adds a great deal to our understanding of God dividing the waters, of God allocating the waters and setting boundaries that they cannot cross.

It's a fascinating study as you read the psalms in particular to watch for references to the waters. This is a symbol or a figurative reference to the fallen portion of God's creation. It can include mankind.

It is often inclusive of the fallen angels. The sea is an uncontrollable force. It is too mighty for man to control.

You remember the disciples on the Sea of Galilee. What manner of man is this that even the winds and the sea obey him? This is very close in time to the casting out of the demons from the demon-possessed man that dwells in the graves and the caves. Men had tried to bind him.

Men had tried to chain him. None of those things worked. Jesus speaks and they leave.

The legion is driven into the herd of swine. Very close after that, you see Jesus exercising authority over the wind and the waves, the troubled sea. So when it says the voice of the Lord is over the waters, all of what we might understand about the physical world is certainly included here.

But this goes beyond. It talks about the fact that God is sovereign. God is sovereign over all creation including the rebellious and the chaotic and the unruly.

The God of glory thunders. The Lord is over many waters. The voice of the Lord is powerful.

The voice of the Lord is full of majesty. What is majesty? It's kingship. It's rulership.

It's authority. This should be a source of comfort to us. We look around us and many times we feel as though in some areas of our life we're in the grip of forces beyond our control.

There are things too large for us to handle. We don't have influence. We don't have leverage.

We don't have control. We sometimes feel as though we are powerless in the grip of these larger forces. It is a great comfort to remember that God is sovereign.

This is a proper application of the sovereignty of God, not so much in thinking that he overrides volition, but that he controls the largest and most chaotic of the forces in the universe. He doesn't still them, but he appoints their boundaries, and there are lines that they cannot cross. The fallen angels cannot return to the third heaven except by God's permission.

Satan, we see in the first chapter or two of Job, can come and stand before God and accuse, but there are limits to what he can do. God says you may do this, you may not do that. It is comforting to know that there is great force and great majesty behind the promise that we will never be tempted beyond what we are able to bear.

God sets limits. God is over the waters. Then in verse 5, the voice of the Lord breaks the cedars.

We saw in Ezekiel last time that the cedars are, again, representative of these angelic or heavenly creation. The Lord breaking the cedars and splintering the cedars of Lebanon. We have difficulty looking at this in the literal world and figuring out what the significance is.

Well, is there a forest up there and maybe it's talking about lightning. God speaks like lightning and the trees are struck and explode or something. What is this actually a reference to? Let's return briefly to Ezekiel chapter 31.

Ezekiel 28 is one of our favorite passages that talks about Satan under the terms of the king of Tyre and the woe song to the king of Tyre. Of course, in Ezekiel 28 verse 13, these words that are ostensibly addressed to the king of Tyre, we can see very clearly that this is actually a reference to Lucifer, to Satan. You were the seal of perfection, full of wisdom and perfect in beauty.

You were in Eden, the garden of God. Right away we have language that tells us we're once again in a prophetic or poetic passage that goes beyond the literal significance of the terms and imagery. We know that the king of Tyre has never been in Eden.

He's never been in the garden of God. He has never possessed every precious stone as a covering. He's never had the workmanship of timbrels and pipes and being prepared in the day that he was created and so forth.

This is all language. We see that the king of Tyre is being associated with larger and higher things. The anointed cherub who covers and so forth in verse 14 of Ezekiel 28.

But in Ezekiel 31, and by the way, it's fascinating to study these woe songs and these prophetic oracles against the kings and the nations that surround Israel and Judah in Isaiah and in Ezekiel because it's my belief that all of these carry this additional meaning beyond the historical significance of the nations and the political powers and the armies and so forth. We have glimpses and insight into prehistory. In Ezekiel 31, it came to pass in the eleventh year, the third month, the first day of the month, the word of the Lord came to me saying, Son of man, say to Pharaoh, king of Egypt, and to his multitude, Whom are you like in your greatness? Indeed, Assyria was a cedar in Lebanon with fine branches that shaded the forest.

What he's doing here, this parable of the cedar of Lebanon, this is a message to the Pharaoh of Egypt saying, Who are you like in your greatness? You're like Assyria. And here's what happened to Assyria. And Assyria was like a cedar in Lebanon.

And we're going to see that this cedar in Lebanon that represents Assyria also represents Satan. Assyria was a cedar in Lebanon with fine branches that shaded the forest of high stature. Its top was among the thick boughs.

The waters made it grow. Underground waters gave it height, with their rivers running around the place where it was planted and sent out rivulets to all the trees of the field. It was planted in a prosperous place.

It reminds us of the scripture that the man of faith will be like a tree planted by the rivers of water. Its height was exalted above all the trees of the field. Its boughs were multiplied.

Its branches became long because of the abundance of water as it sent them out. All the birds of the heavens made their nests in its boughs. Under its branches, all the beasts of the field brought forth their young.

And in its shadow, all great nations made their home. Blessing by association. Thus it was beautiful in greatness and in the length of its branches because its roots reached to abundant waters.

The cedars in the garden of God could not hide it. And once we see this reference to the garden of God, we realize that God is elevating this communication to a new level. The fir trees were not like its boughs, and the chestnut trees were not like its branches.

This is a reference to different categories or different social strata, if you will, in the angelic creation, which Paul refers to as principalities, powers, rulers, and so forth. There are fir trees. There are chestnut trees.

They serve a purpose. They're valuable, but they're a different kind. They're not a cedar.

The cedars, being the tall, majestic trees, suggest rulership, authority, responsibility, and

so forth. No tree in the garden of God was like it in beauty. And in case we missed it the first time, God repeats this reference to the garden of God.

I made it beautiful with a multitude of branches, so that all the trees of Eden envied it, that were in the garden of God. And we have that threefold reference that rings the bell to tell us, pay attention, there's more going on here than initially meets the eye. Therefore, in verse 10, thus says the Lord God, Because you have increased in height, and it set its top among the thick boughs, and its heart was lifted up in its height, therefore I will deliver it into the hand of the mighty one of the nations, and he shall surely deal with it.

I have driven it out for its wickedness. This lifting up of the branches, lifting up of the heart, lifting up of pride that's referred to in Isaiah 14 and Ezekiel 28, is once again referred to here. The sin of pride.

The five I wills. I will be like the Most High. I will set my throne above the stars of God.

The stars being another classic reference to the angelic hosts. Aliens, the most terrible of the nations, have cut it down and left it. Its branches have fallen on the mountains.

Its boughs lie broken by all the rivers of the land, and all peoples of the earth have gone from under its shadow and left it. On its ruin will remain all the birds of heaven. We've studied in this connection before the parable of the mustard seed what the birds of heaven represent, and this is not a sign of blessing.

When the birds of the heavens come and roost in your branches, stand by because these are the carrion birds. These are the birds that pick the bones of the dead. And like other references in Scripture, the potter and the clay and so forth, when you find this particular image, it's like we talked about last week.

It's like warning music in a movie. You start hearing that minor key music and you say, whoa, wait a minute, birds of the air. This is Goliath.

This is the mustard tree. This is the cedar that splintered and fell. And the carrion birds are now picking at it.

And the purpose in verse 14, so that no trees by the waters, these are the trees that are referring to what we sometimes call the elect angels, although how we got that term, I'm not sure. But the unfallen, the angels that have retained their fidelity, their allegiance, their holiness before God. The trees by the waters.

The purpose is that they will not ever exalt themselves for their height or set their tops among the thick boughs. That no tree which drinks water may ever be high enough to reach up to them. That others will see this example and not be caused to stumble and fall by pride.

So God uses this decision by a free will agent to rebel against God, to sin the sin of pride and to depart from God. God is going to turn this cursing into blessing. This answers one of the age old questions in history, doesn't it? People, whenever you wind up getting into a discussion with someone who has sort of a mild interest in the things of God or they've debated from time to time whether they should trust God for salvation through Christ, they say, well, you know, what I don't understand is why does God allow evil? Why is there so much suffering in the world? Why is there war? Why is there pestilence? And if there really is a God, he's not doing a very good job of running the world, running the universe.

I have a hard time believing in a God that would permit children to starve and these awful catastrophes to take place. God permits departure from himself. God permits evil and God permits all of the concomitant circumstances, all of the results and the outgrowth.

The curse that accompanies departure from God, separation from God is manifested. Why does God permit these things? Is he just not powerful enough to stop them? Is he disinterested? There's many that view God as someone who kind of cranked up the universe and then got busy somewhere and didn't really keep an eye on it. And these things are happening.

This is the view, by the way, of many modern-day Jews. They say, I believe in God, but I wonder where he is. How could he let the Holocaust happen? How can he have abandoned his people and so forth? God has allowed history to run its course, has allowed people's decisions to produce their results as a demonstration.

These things are recorded for all eternity. All of human history is going to be the large Bible, and the angelic history is going to be another testament in that Bible to remind us for all of the eternal future what the consequences are of pride, what the consequences are of rebellion and disobedience, apathy toward God. So this is another reference.

And you see that the cedar trees are a reference to these angelic creations. We return back to Psalm 29. The voice of the Lord breaks the cedars in verse 5. The Lord splinters the cedars of Lebanon.

He causes them to skip and so forth. The voice of the Lord divides the flames of fire. You remember in Ezekiel 28 that Lucifer at one time walked among the stones of fire in the garden of God, in the mountain of God, in the presence of God.

And, of course, the immediate presence of God in the third heaven is always associated with the cherubim, who are His honor guard and His traveling entourage, His bodyguard, if you will, ceremonially speaking, and the seraphim, the burning ones, who represent and guard the holiness of God. And when God divides the flames of fire with His voice, why are they divided? There has been a division within the holy ones. There has been a

division within the angelic creation.

And some of the trees have been struck down. Some of the mightiest trees, the cedars, and some of the flaming ones, the seraphim, have apparently also been divided and segregated out. The voice of the Lord shakes the wilderness.

The voice of the Lord makes the deer give birth and strips the forest bare. By the way, that verse 9, we don't have time to go into this in detail, but if you do an extended study in Hebrew, this is another forest reference. It's not causing the hinds to calve.

That was an old best guess at what the Hebrew meant here, but we're further along now. But all of these are forest references. They have to do with the trees withering and falling, splintering, and the forest being stripped bare.

You would look at verse 9 and think, what is the relationship between the deer giving birth and the forest being stripped bare? Well, there is none. And in his temple, everyone says what in verse 9? In God's temple, everyone says glory. In these things, even in rebellion, even in rejection, and in evil, and in the fall, God will be glorified.

God's character, God's essence, God's nature is manifested. God's sovereignty, His justice, His righteousness, His unchangeableness, His truth, all those characteristics and more are reflected, and all creation will look and say glory. The Lord sat enthroned on the flood, and the Lord sits as king forever.

The Lord will give strength to His people. The Lord will bless His people with peace. And that's the application of these things.

It's easy to get interested in mysterious goings-on in the heavenly realms, and think about angels, and wonder about their nature, and their activity in the human race, and so forth. What is the application that Scripture makes as we look at these things? Verse 10 and 11 are the application. The Lord sits enthroned over the flood.

The chaotic, unruly waters casting up mire and dirt, God is sovereign over them. God will divert them to His own purposes, and they will serve to glorify Him. The Lord sits as king forever.

There will be only one throne. There will be only one who rules over the stars of heaven, and it's God Himself. And what does that do for us? It strengthens us.

The Lord gives strength to His people. The Lord will bless His people with peace. When we see adversity, when we see chaotic forces of evil and adversity, over which we know that we have no control and no power, we turn to God.

We place our faith and our trust in Him. We recognize that if He can rule the fallen angels, if He can use as the foundation for His throne the chaotic waves of the sea, then

He can certainly deal with those things that oppose us and that threaten us. So that's our scripture reading in Psalm 29.

And it's a reminder to us that there is a legitimate need for us to understand the relationship of angels to human history. The Bible addresses it. The Bible brings it up.

And we need to be balanced. We need to be scriptural in our understanding of these things. And because it is a fad now, we tend to want to go the other way and say, well, don't worry your head about angels.

That's a waste of time. And all of this about them coming down and being little benevolent ministers in life and helping circumstances work out well is not a scriptural concept. What is the scriptural concept? Let's return now to Genesis 6, and we will see how God used angels to mediate the power of His Spirit in the early days of human history.

We have already covered over the course of the last two or three weeks the passages that link angelic presence with the term ruach. We have seen the Psalms and the prophetic passages that talk about God riding on the wings of a cherub and traveling on the wings of the wind, as it says in the English. And that parallelism tells us that the cherub and the ruach, translated wind, are references to the same heavenly creature.

The wings of the cherub are the wings of the wind, the wings of the Spirit. We think, well, now why would God use the term Spirit to refer to something other than His Holy Spirit? If He says, My Spirit, wouldn't that always be a reference to the Holy Spirit? Not necessarily. One of the great concepts that I learned under a pastor who faithfully taught the Word of God to me for many years is that there are two kinds of power that we can choose to operate with as human beings and believers in this life.

We can either operate on divine power, God's power. If we don't use that, what's left? It's our own strength, the flesh, human power. And a specific illustration of this came at the cross, where Jesus in His humanity is crucified on the cross.

And for many years we were taught and believed and understood that when Jesus says, My God, My God, why hast thou forsaken me? That the My God, My God is a reference to the other two members of the Trinity, God the Father and God the Holy Spirit. And Jesus as the Son, the second member, says, My God, meaning the Father, My God, meaning the Spirit, why have you forsaken me? The difficulty here, and this same pastor pointed this out in a pastor's conference back in the mid-80s. He came to a fresh understanding.

He had taught for many years that this was the Father and the Spirit moving away from Jesus on the cross. But in looking at the work of Christ from the standpoint of what power is it accomplished in, is salvation accomplished in human strength or in divine strength? Everything that's worth doing, everything that counts, everything that reflects

righteousness in the universe comes through divine power. The plan of God is accomplished in the power of God.

The plan of God is never accomplished in human strength. And we understand that and we recognize that God the Holy Spirit sustained Christ on the cross just as he sustained him throughout his earthly ministry. The miracles that Jesus performed were not performed in his second person of the Trinity power.

And they are not a proof of his divinity. Many prophets and many apostles performed similar works up to and including resurrecting or resuscitating dead individuals. Controlling the weather, raising the dead, multiplying food, all of these miracles, casting out demons, healing, all of these things were performed by other individuals.

By what power were those acts performed? It's the power of God the Holy Spirit. By what power did Jesus Christ perform them? The power of the Spirit. The plan of God is implemented through the power of God and in no other way.

It is always divine power. How does God implement his power? As I have asked many times, how does the power of God come into the life of a believer? Through the Spirit of God and the Word of God and in no other way. Well, let's think about this in terms of a parallel in the angelic creation.

If God has an angelic civilization or heavenly civilization, the sons of God, by what means do you think God's plan is accomplished among them? Is God's plan accomplished among the angels in angel power or in divine power? Certainly not human power. It's going to be by that same mechanism. Divine power is expressed through God's Spirit and that apparently holds true in the angelic realm as well.

How are they going to communicate the Word of God? When Gabriel appears to Mary, by what power does he communicate? By what authority does he give her and Joseph the Word of God? It is the ministry of God's Spirit. This begins to make sense out of some of our other passages when we find in the Old Testament and in Revelation references to the sevenfold Spirit of God before His throne or the prophecy that when the Messiah comes, God will put upon Him the sevenfold Spirit, the Spirit of wisdom and power and so forth. If God's Son Himself accomplishes God's plan through the Spirit, it is not surprising that He's going to do it in our lives that way and also in angelic creation in that way.

As we think about this, it's not quite such a bizarre notion that when God uses angels as intermediaries, they are going to be conduits for or means of expressing God's Holy Spirit power. This is important when we see the presence of God accompanied by angels who are called spirits, ministering spirits or who minister the Spirit. When God is associated with the wind, when God uses the wind, you have this in Jonah where it says, God hurled a wind into the sea.

It's Ruach. It is Spirit. At this point, after looking at these passages, if you are like me, you're probably teetering and saying, well, that's possible, but it's a little strange.

I'm going to need to chew on that for a while. And that's fine. It's a good thing to chew on.

Let me offer you one additional insight that weighs heavily, at least in my mind, that when we come to Genesis 6, verse 3, and God says, My Spirit, He is making a reference to angelic operations among men. Back in Genesis 1, verse 2, we have the only other reference thus far in Genesis to the Spirit of God. The earth was without form and void, and darkness was on the face of the deep, and the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters.

The interesting thing about the word Ruach in Hebrew is that it is a feminine noun. It doesn't mean that what it represents is female, but like Spanish and many other languages, nouns have gender. This is true in Greek.

It's true in Hebrew. It's true in most languages. English is something of an exception in that our words are sort of genderless.

But Ruach in Hebrew happens to be a feminine noun. And the form of the verb that it takes is feminine. There are different forms of Hebrew verbs depending on if the subject is feminine or masculine as a noun.

Well, in Genesis 1-2, we have a perfectly good Hebrew grammar, perfectly good construction. The noun for Spirit, Ruach, here is feminine. And the word for hovering is feminine as well.

Feminine noun, feminine verb. Everywhere else in the Old Testament where you find Ruach or one of its derivatives, it is a feminine noun accompanied by a feminine verb. Except two places.

Here in Genesis 6-3, where the word that is translated strive, or in some versions remain or abide, is masculine. And there's one other place. And it would be helpful to us to look at this other place where Ruach takes a masculine verb.

And that is in Job 4. Job chapter 4. This is a good place to pause and take our break. When we come back, we'll look at Job chapter 4 and we will see if this helps us out at all in our understanding of Genesis chapter 6. But let's pause here and take a break.