

Ten Thousand Angels

Jesus could have stopped the crucifixion with one command to His angels
Don Ruhl • Savage Street, Grants Pass, Oregon • October 7, In the year of our Lord, 2018
Scripture Reader and Reading: Jake McNeil – Psalm 22.14–18
Song Leader and Song Suggestions: Larry Amberg – Sing as the invitation

Introduction:

I. The story of “Ten Thousand Angels”:

“In 1958, while writing one of his most well known songs, ‘Ten Thousand Angels,’ Ray had a life changing experience.”

“I had left my television show ‘Ray’s roundup’ and entered the nightclub scene. I was drinking pretty heavily. I began thinking there must be a better life than the nightclub, show-business whirlwind. I was so intent on changing my lifestyle that I went home and told my wife that I was quitting all of the smoking, drinking and cursing. I wanted to cleanup my own life.

“One day I thought to myself: I’ve written secular songs, I’d like to write a song about Christ. I opened the Bible, which I knew very little about, and began to read the portion of Scripture that describes Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane telling Peter to put away his sword. I read where Jesus told Peter that He could ask His Father and He would send twelve legions of angels. I didn’t know at the time that would have been more than 72,000 angels.

“I thought a good title for a song would be He Could Have Called Ten Thousand Angels. I didn’t know what happened during the life of Christ, so I began doing a little research. The more I read about Jesus, the more I admired him for what He had done. I then remembered that He did this all for me.

“I was playing in a nightclub in Battle Creek, Michigan, when the Lord impressed me to write the song. I wrote the first verse and put it in my guitar case. I then gave the club my notice that I was quitting. As I opened my guitar case to put my instrument away, one of the other musicians saw the music written out and he asked, ‘What are you doing there?’ I told him I was writing a song about Jesus. He asked the title and I told him. He said, ‘It will never go.’ I asked why? He said, ‘I don’t even like the title.’ But I finished the song and sent it to a publishing house, which reluctantly agreed to publish it.

“Sometime later I found myself singing at a small church. I sang ‘He Could Have Called Ten Thousand Angels.’ Following my singing, the preacher spoke a message that gripped my heart. I knew I needed Christ, so I knelt there and

accepted, as my Savior, the One whom I had been singing and writing about.”

II. He died just 10 years ago, September 2008.

III. There is an incident recorded in Matthew 26

A. that is the stimulus for this song.

1. In the four verses of the song
2. we are reminded of the way men treated Jesus.

B. Then we hit the chorus and

1. we realize that He could have stopped the whole thing, but
2. He did not because He had someone in mind.

C. This is what Matthew 26 shows,

47 And while He was still speaking, behold, Judas, one of the twelve, with a great multitude with swords and clubs, came from the chief priests and elders of the people. 48 Now His betrayer had given them a sign, saying, “Whomever I kiss, He is the One; seize Him.” 49 Immediately he went up to Jesus and said, “Greetings, Rabbi!” and kissed Him. 50 But Jesus said to him, “Friend, why have you come?” Then they came and laid hands on Jesus and took Him. 51 And suddenly, one of those who were with Jesus stretched out his hand and drew his sword, struck the servant of the high priest, and cut off his ear. 52 But Jesus said to him, “Put your sword in its place, for all who take the sword will perish by the sword. 53 *Or do you think that I cannot now pray to My Father, and He will provide Me with more than twelve legions of angels?* 54 How then could the Scriptures be fulfilled, that it must happen thus?” 55 In that hour Jesus said to the multitudes, “Have you come out, as against a robber, with swords and clubs to take Me? I sat daily with you, teaching in the temple, and you did not seize Me. 56 But all this was done that the Scriptures of the prophets might be fulfilled.” Then all the disciples forsook Him and fled (Matt 26.47–56).

Persuasion:

I. Verse 1—The Irony of It All

**They bound the hands of Jesus in the garden where He prayed;
They led Him through the streets in shame.**

**They spat upon the Savior so pure and free from sin;
They said, “Crucify Him; He’s to blame.”**

- A. Can you see the irony in every scene?
- B. What was He doing when they arrested Him?
 - 1. He was praying!
 - 2. Imagine seeing the image of the praying hands, and then
 - a) men binding those hands,
 - b) thinking that He was an evil man!
- C. He went from the privacy of a garden
 - 1. to the public streets
 - 2. where they shamed Him.
- D. He was so pure and free from sin, but
 - 1. they spat upon Him
 - 2. as though a vile criminal.
- E. Their conclusion was that He should be crucified because
 - 1. He was to blame.
 - 2. If the Romans came and took away their place (John 11.48),
 - a) it was His fault
 - b) for claiming to be a king.
- F. The prophecy of Isaiah 53 comes to mind.
 - 1. Slow meditation on these words
 - a) reveals the horrors
 - b) of what happened to our Savior.

**3 He is despised and rejected by men,
A Man of sorrows and acquainted with grief.
And we hid, as it were, our faces from Him;
He was despised, and we did not esteem Him.**

**4 Surely He has borne our griefs
And carried our sorrows;
Yet we esteemed Him stricken,
Smitten by God, and afflicted...
7 He was oppressed and He was afflicted,
Yet He opened not His mouth;
He was led as a lamb to the slaughter,
And as a sheep before its shearers is silent,
So He opened not His mouth...
(Isa 53.3, 4, 7).**

- c) This prophecy shows that as we are singing of
 - (1) the arrest,
 - (2) the shame,
 - (3) the spitting upon and
 - (4) the demands for His death,
- d) He was hurting very much inside and
 - (1) men did not even know
 - (2) that He was doing these things for them.

II. Verse 2—They Mocked the King

**Upon His precious head they placed a crown of thorns;
They laughed and said, “Behold the King.”
They struck Him and they cursed Him and mocked His holy name.
All alone He suffered everything.**

- A. Precious was His head, and
 - 1. so they put a crown on it,
 - a) not a crown of precious metals and jewels.
 - b) It was a crown of thorns.
 - 2. Picture yourself walking up to the Son of God.
 - a) See yourself raising your hands toward His head.

- b) You are about to touch the most precious head
 - (1) just as you lower your hands,
 - (2) see that what is in your hands is a crown of thorns.
- B. Now see men laughing at the King of kings,
 - 1. the King of the heavens and of the earth!
 - 2. They think what an absurd sight
 - a) that this pathetic man
 - b) with no visible kingdom and
 - c) no one defending Him
 - (1) with the sorriest looking crown
 - (2) that they have ever seen.
- C. The laughter was made worse by
 - 1. striking Him,
 - a) cursing Him and
 - b) mocking His holy name.
 - 2. Matthew 26 speaks the unbelievable words
 - a) of what they did to their true King.

67 Then they spat in His face and beat Him; and others struck Him with the palms of their hands (Matt 26.67).
 - b) The quiet reserve of the Creator of heaven and earth is unimaginable.
- D. To top it off, all alone He suffered everything.
 - 1. We know that the Father was with Him,
 - 2. at least until that moment when Jesus cried,
 - a) “My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?” but
 - (1) from our perspective,

(2) He was all alone.

b) Then at some point, even God turned His back.

III. Verse 3—The Sinful Work of Man

**When they nailed Him to the Cross, His mother stood nearby;
He said, “Woman, behold thy son.”
He cried, “I thirst” for water, but they gave Him none to drink,
Then the sinful work of man was done.**

A. Shortly after Jesus was born,

1. according to Luke 2,
2. His parents took Him to the Temple to fulfill the Law
 - a) that He be presented to the Lord,
 - b) since He was the male who opened the womb of Mary.
 - (1) They offered a sacrifice
 - (a) of a pair of turtledoves
 - (b) or two young pigeons.
3. While there a man named Simeon
 - a) had been told that he would not die
 - b) until he had seen the Lord’s Christ.
 - (1) Having seen Him,
 - (2) Simeon took Jesus and blessed God.
4. Then verses 34 and 35 reveal a future experience of Mary,

34 Then Simeon blessed them, and said to Mary His mother, “Behold, this Child is destined for the fall and rising of many in Israel, and for a sign which will be spoken against 35 (yes, a sword will pierce through your own soul also), that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed” (Luke 2.34–35).

5. Going back to the song,

- a) we are reminded that Jesus saw His mother standing nearby, and
 - b) He knew that the prophecy was now coming to pass,
 - (1) a sword was piercing the dear soul
 - (2) of His blessed Mother.
- B. Few things are recorded of what Jesus said on the cross, but
- 1. this song alludes to one of His statements,
 - 2. “Woman, behold thy son!”
 - a) He could be saying, see John as your son.
 - b) Or He could be saying, see Me and how I suffer.
- C. Another thing Jesus said was, “I thirst.”
- 1. The obvious request would be for water, but
 - 2. they did not give Him water.
- D. This put the capstone on the sinful work of man.
- 1. What more could man have done
 - 2. to show His disdain for God?

IV. Verse 4—Salvation’s Wondrous Plan

**To the howling mob He yielded; He did not for mercy cry.
The Cross of shame He took alone.
And when He cried, “It’s finished,” He gave Himself to die;
Salvation’s wondrous plan was done.**

- A. There was a mob crying out for His crucifixion, and
- 1. He yielded to their bloodthirsty lust.
 - 2. Not one plea for mercy came from His lips.
 - a) Nor did He complain.
- B. Jesus took the Cross of shame.
- 1. The manner in which the music is written,

- a) especially the word “alone” receiving three and a half beats, and
 - b) the second syllable receiving three of those beats,
 - (1) makes us sing with an emphasis
 - (2) upon His loneliness.
- C. Then He cried “It’s finished,” and
- 1. at that moment
 - 2. He gave Himself to die.
- D. It was shameful what man did,
- 1. yet Jesus was using it to save those very men.
 - a) He did not cry for mercy.
 - b) He *took* the Cross of shame.
 - c) *He* decided when it was finished.
 - 2. Therefore, He gave Himself to die, and
 - a) this concluded
 - b) God’s plan for saving man
 - (1) that God had made before the world began, but
 - (2) that He started to reveal to Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden.
- E. Look at the closing words of verses 3 and 4.
- 1. In verse 3 it is, “the sinful work of man [that] was done,” but
 - 2. in verse 4 it is, “Salvation’s wondrous plan [that] was done.”
 - a) It was the epitome of man’s sin, but
 - b) the epitome of God’s love.
- F. Now prepare yourself for the Chorus.

V. **The Chorus—What He Could Have Done**

**He could have called ten thousand angels
To destroy the world and set Him free.**

**He could have called, ten thousand angels,
But He died alone, for you and me.**

- A. The song builds our emotion
 - 1. in anticipation of what the chorus sings.
 - 2. Oh, the ease with which He could have ended the whole thing!
- B. While the biblical text says 12 legions of angels,
 - 1. the point is that the unlimited armies of heaven
 - 2. were at His disposal.
- C. He could have called ten thousand angels to do two things:
 - 1. To destroy the world.
 - 2. To see Him free.
 - a) And just how ready were those angels!
- D. He could have called ten thousand angels, but
 - 1. He did not, choosing instead to die alone.
 - 2. Why did He die alone?
 - a) It was for you and for me.

Exhortation:

I. Ray Overholt said that he knelt and accepted Christ as his Savior.

A. John 1.12–13 says,

12 [As] many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name: 13 who were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God (John 1.12–13).

- B. Notice that we absolutely must receive Him, but
 - 1. receiving Him only gives us the right to become children of God,
 - 2. it does not then and there make us children of God.

C. Later, in John 3 Jesus addressed more about being born of God:

5 Jesus answered, “Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God” (John 3.5).

1. Being born of the flesh merely
 - a) makes you a son or daughter of man,
 - b) it just makes you of the flesh.
2. Being born of water and the Spirit
 - a) causes you to be born of God, so that
 - b) you can then enter the kingdom of God.

II. When you are born of the water,

- A. you are born of the Spirit.
- B. You are born of the water
 1. when you are immersed in water
 2. for the purpose of having a new life:

4 Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life (Romans 6.4).

III. Have you received Jesus as the Son of God?

- A. Is that what you believe?
- B. If so, have you been baptized so that you could walk in newness of life?
 1. You gain a new life because
 2. the Lord washes away all your sins, and
 - a) He recreates you by the Spirit and
 - b) by the Spirit puts you into the body of Christ, which is the church.