

# Episode 147 The Divine Warrior with Andy Angel

## **Andy Angel**

Hi, I'm Andy Angel. I'm the Director of Formation for Ministry for the Diocese of Oxford in the UK. And what that means is that I look after the theological education of the clergy and the lay people in that part of the Church of England.

## **David Capes**

Dr. Andy Angel, welcome to The Stone Chapel. Great to see you here at the Lanier Theological Library.

## **Andy Angel**

It's fantastic to be here. It is the most phenomenal place and the more I walk around, the more I just want to stay and read these books. And to touch the incredible woodwork that is all around this place.

## **David Capes**

It's a beautiful spot. And you know, Mark has the idea that beauty matters.

## **Andy Angel**

I couldn't agree more. Genesis 1, tov. Why do we read it as morally good, why don't we read it as beautiful, right? The word means beautiful as well.

## **David Capes**

Yes, it does, and there's a lot of beauty around here. So, we appreciate that. And we're going to talk about other things that you might find on our property, including Leviathan.

## **Andy Angel**

Yes, very, very exciting indeed! When my wife showed me a photo of Leviathan.

## **David Capes**

Well, first, let's begin with the question for those who don't know, who is Andy Angel.

## **Andy Angel**

Andy Angel is an Englishman, married to a lovely Chilean lady with two grown up sons. I'm a clergyman in the Church of England. I'm passionate about my faith in Jesus Christ. I'm passionate about the truth. I believe that he wants to break into our lives in the here and now as he gently prepares us for what's going to come in the new heavens and the new earth. I'm passionate about the incredible things in life, much as there are tragedies, difficulties, things that break our hearts and crush us. I'm passionate about all the good things that there are in this life. We live in the most incredible world. On a day like this. It's sunny outside. And David, you're right. This is a very beautiful place. There seems to be beauty

everywhere. So, I guess I'm a bit of an aesthete as well. I really love beauty. I can stare at a flower for ages. I'm one of those people and just looks at the intricacy of it.

**David Capes**

Yes. All the colors and textures.

**Andy Angel**

Yes. And tastes. I like the taste of creation. Plenty of those this weekend.

**David Capes**

Yes, we're here for a lecture weekend featuring Dan Wallace, talking about text criticism and formatting of the Word of God. One of the things I want to say about you is that I did introduce you as Dr. Andy Angel. Tell, us a little bit about your academic preparation.

**Andy Angel**

I did my doctoral studies in Second Temple Judaism, and specifically looking at divine warrior myth. And it all started with a desire to see if we could find a political theology of Jesus. And I now think mistakenly, that in looking at Jesus' use of Second Temple Jewish apocalyptic, we might be able to find his political theology. And that was really rooted in the experience of a Christian community in a shanty town in Lima, Peru, where I was doing church work in a year out. However, once I had got involved in studying apocalyptic, I found it fascinating.

And then I became very interested in the debate between George Caird, Dick France, Tom Wright on one side and many others about whether the Son of Man, sayings of Jesus were about the destruction of the Jerusalem temple in AD 70, or whether they were about the *eschaton* whether Jesus was right or wrong in his prophecy and all the rest of it. And I hoped to solve that particular question when I started. I know! I started out very bold. Yes, I have been humbled since. And one of the questions I wanted to ask was, what do scholars now think about the use of the language which Tom Wright calls *cosmic catastrophe* language, which many other commentators call fear language, what does all this sun, moon and stars falling out of the sky, skies darkening. What does it mean?

**David Capes**

And is that a literal thing or is that a figurative thing? Is that at the heart of it?

**Andy Angel**

I would like to say it's mythical. I prefer not to use the term metaphor. Though one of my doctoral students has told me off in their thesis for using the word metaphor. So, I do make mistakes. I'll probably make a few on this podcast! But I see it as a mythical language about what is going on in the heavenlies which corresponds to what's going on in the earthly. It's a bit like Jesus' prayer, may your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.

If you look at the way in Daniel 7 for example, what goes on in the heavenlies, with the Son of Man coming to the court of heaven, after the beasts that come out of the chaos sea, are imprisoned and vanquished. And the fourth one killed; we then see how what happens in the heavenlies corresponds to

what happens on Earth. I don't like to read it allegorically you know, point for point, interpretation and myth, I don't really like to read it as metaphor either. I think it's a bit more free-floating than that; it has coherence. And I think that's to do with its history, coming out of ancient Near Eastern mythology, of being a description of the heavenlies, which was adopted by the early Israelites, and it developed through tradition as a language of describing the workings of heaven, and how we understand the God of heaven, breaking into earth.

### **David Capes**

So the sun, the moon, the stars, what's happening, there is really a picture of what's happening in the heavenly realm.

### **Andy Angel**

It's a picture of what's happening in the heavenly realm, and what God does in the heavenly realm. God establishes in the earthly realm, as well. And the seer, looking at what's happening in the heavenly realm also has an eye to what's happening in the earthly realm. And very often, the seer is looking for what's happening in the heavenly realm at a point of crisis in the life of God's people, or in the life of the individual. So like Psalm 18, the psalmist is saying, I was in desperate trouble. I was being dragged down into the torrents of Belial. Now the cause of death encompasses me, Psalm 18, verse 4 in the English translation. The torrents of perdition assail me, the chords of Sheol entangled me, the snares of death confronted me.

And the psalmist then sees a vision of God coming from the heavenlies. The earth, reeling and rocking the foundations of the mountains, trembling, everything quaking. He bowed the heavens, verse 9, and came down. Thick darkness was under his feet. He rode on a cherub and flew, came swiftly on the wings of the winds. That's like God on a chariot coming to work. We have thunder, we have lightning in verses 12 and 13. He sends out his arrows, probably lightning, verse 14. Flashed forth his lightnings, the channels of the sea were seen. The sea flees away at this Warrior God coming on his cloud chariot. And foundations of the earth were laid bare at your rebuke.

And this for the psalmist, seeing God doing this in the heavenlies really has the cash value on earth of this in verses 16 and 17. He reached down from on high, he took me and drew me out of the mighty waters. He delivered me from my strong enemy, from those who hated me, for they were too mighty for me, verse 19. He brought me out into a broad place. He delivered me because he delighted in me. So, we have here the language of God and the heavens rising and coming to rescue. And we have this amazing myth that we find throughout the Hebrew Bible, the Old Testament of God defeating his enemy which is pictured either as a kind of a hostile sea, or as dragons within the sea.

Hence my excitement at discovering you have this dragon Leviathan here in Lanier Theological Library gardens. Suitably vanquished I note. He's not causing any trouble. And that kind of mythical picture, it is here all about the enemies of the psalmist being vanquished, and the psalmist being put back into a place of peace. So mythical heavenly language, about events happening on Earth, which at some point, was then translated to refer to what God does at the end of time.

And what interested me to begin with was, when did that happen? And did that happen wholesale? Did this language of the Divine Warrior, God coming in the storm clouds as a warrior against the sea, against the dragon, did that at the time of Jesus always refer to what happened at the end of time, which seems to be the default position of quite a few New Testament scholars? Was it still about the kind of thing we see here in Psalm 18? Where it's the Lord delivering us out of trouble? Now, I isolated about 160 texts which use this myth in the Pseudepigrapha, the Apocrypha, the Dead Sea Scrolls, Josephus.

### **David Capes**

So not just the Hebrew Bible, but more broadly in Second Temple Jewish literature.

### **Andy Angel**

I was looking at that stuff. Because it strikes me that Jesus as a second temple Jew is more likely to be using the language of Second Temple Judaism than, dare I say, simply the Hebrew Bible. I mean, no disrespect to Scripture, or Jesus in the authority of Scripture, but it strikes me that he would have used the language of his culture, right? And if we look at that, for example, the Psalms of Solomon chapter 2 and compare the Roman General Pompey to the dragon that the divine warrior vanquishes. There's a clear reference within the culture of Jesus time, more or less, we take that as being 200 BC to AD 200 of this myth being used historically.

### **David Capes**

To reference people of history, at Pompeii, 60 or so years before the birth of Christ.

### **Andy Angel**

Exactly. My question about the myth was how far is it used eschatologically about the end? How far is it used historically? And is it also used about creation? The prayer of Manasseh, verses 1-4, uses it to praise God as the Creator of the world. There's nothing eschatological about it at all, at least that I can see. So, it seems to me that within Second Temple Judaism, this language is used in a variety of ways, just as it was in the Hebrew Bible.

### **David Capes**

You're working on a book in our series *Studies in Early Christology* about the divine warrior myth in relationship to the Gospel of Mark. Give us a place or two where you think that figures prominently to the text of Mark.

### **Andy Angel**

I think it figures prominently throughout Mark's Christology. I think Mark builds up his Christology throughout the narrative. And I think there are three strands to this. I think the first strand is the sea miracles. So, Jesus calms the storm in Mark 4, and walks on the water in Mark 6. I think it's there in the exorcism narratives, the programmatic exorcism and Mark 1:21-28. He has the unclean spirit saying in verse 24, what have you to do with us. Not what have you to do with me. And I think that Howell Clark Key is right, that this is signaling that Jesus' exorcism ministry as a whole, is about Jesus battling against all the demons. Not just that particular demon.

And I think we also see it in Jesus' Son of Man sayings, Mark 8:38, Mark 13:24-27. We'll say the author of the gospel is Mark just for sake of ease of talking. Mark 14:62 demonstrate that of Mark, or at least our final redactor with the gospel traditions, clearly identifies the Son of man in Mark with the Son of Man of Daniel, 7:13, and 14. And the Son of Man in Daniel's 7:13 and 14 comes in to the ancient of days after the monsters, which are the beasts coming out of the sea. So like Rahab, and Leviathan and the helpers of Rahab, in Hebrew Bible texts have been vanquished.

So, Mark seems to take three strands to develop his picture of Jesus. I'm comparing Jesus with either the divine warrior of Israel, God Almighty, or with a divine warrior figure, a bit like the Archangel Michael in Revelation 12. And for me, the big question is, well which is He? Is Jesus, like a divine figure who is at the pinnacle of how far a divine figure can get, without necessarily being God? Or a heavenly Messiah figure who is taking on all these actions and attributes of God? Or does Jesus cross the line into divinity here? And I want to suggest that Jesus crosses the line into divinity.

Because one of the fascinating things that I think I've noted is that if you look at the Second Temple Jewish texts, they really exalted angels like the Archangel Michael, or Israel. They have different names for the commander in chief, different angels seem to be the commander in chief of Israel's heavenly armies in different texts. None of them actually ever still or defeat the sea.

### **David Capes**

Do you think the sea might be the key?

### **Andy Angel**

I think the sea is one of the keys because where Jesus stills the sea in Mark 4:35-41, that's an action, that so far as I can see, reserved for the divine warrior. But the God of Israel alone. Now the other sea miracle in Mark 6:45-52 has Jesus walk on the sea quoting the Septuagint of Job 9:8. I know it's hugely disputed on one level, but Job 9:8 has been taken by many to be using a motif which is used of the divine warrior. And given that Jesus also says here, take heart it is I, *ego eimi*. And many commentators like Dick France have changed their mind on this. Many commentators take that to be a reference to Exodus 3:14.

### **David Capes**

Right, the name of God, *ego eimi*. I am.

### **Andy Angel**

Seems to me that if Mark is trying to claim that Jesus is a highly exalted angel figure, he's done quite a bad job of it. Because, you know, he's equated him with Yahweh, the God of Israel in two different places. And when we look at the Son of Man sayings in Mark's gospel, they're bracketed by an equation of Jesus claiming to be the Son of Man with a charge of blasphemy. In Mark chapter 2, we have those who are looking at Jesus saying, Son, your sins are forgiven, some of the scribes question in their hearts. Why does this foe speak in this way? It's blasphemy. Who can forgive sins but God alone? And Jesus, a few verses later in verse 10, says, but so that you may know the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins.

**David Capes**

So, you're connecting the Son of Man title with the charge of blasphemy? Which happens again in Chapter 14.

**Andy Angel**

Exactly. And that is the final Son of Man saying, where Jesus answers the question, are you the Messiah, the Son of the Blessed One? Jesus says, I am. Again, *ego eimi*, picking up on chapter six. And you will see the Son of Man seated at the right hand of power and coming with the clouds of heaven. To which the high priest tears his clothes and says, why do we still need witnesses? You have heard his blasphemy.

**David Capes**

And blasphemy is not claiming to be the Messiah. The blasphemy is claiming to be the Son of Man.

**Andy Angel**

I think the Son of Man, because the Son of Man is identified as the divine warrior, in Mark's gospel.

**David Capes**

Coming on the clouds, but also in Daniel 7 as well.

**Andy Angel**

Exactly, because it picks up on Daniel 7 and Mark 8:38. And in Mark 13:24-27. And if I'm right, that there's a deliberate picking up of the Son of Man of Daniel 7:13, then the bracketing of all the Son of Man sayings, with the charge of blasphemy seems to me to suggest that Mark is identifying the Son of Man, as God the divine warrior, rather than a highly exalted angel figure. Now, I reckon that Mark links the sea stories with the exorcisms and the exorcisms with the Son of Man sayings. Because there's shared vocabulary between the first sea story and the programmatic exorcism. If we go back to those two stories, we find that Mark rebukes the sea and rebukes the demon using *epitimaō*, the demon is muzzled. And again, *epitimaō*, the same Greek word is used in both texts.

And the people have the same reaction in both stories. They ask the question: what is this? Again, using the same Greek vocabulary. And the reason they're shocked is that the demons and the sea, obey Him, again, using the same vocabulary. So, there's clear rhetorical linking, which links up the programmatic exorcisms and therefore the external narratives with the sea miracles, it seems to me. And then I think I'm right in saying, but I have left my computer with Bible works in the UK, which means I couldn't check it out. But the blasphemy route is only used in Mark in the opening Son of Man pericope and a closing Son of man pericope. And the debate in chapter 3 whether Jesus is casting out demons by Beelzebub, or by the hand of God.

**David Capes**

Which is in itself a blasphemy statement, right?

**Andy Angel**

Absolutely. That would then link the exorcism narratives with the Son of Man bracketing, Son of Man blasphemy. I reckon Mark has a strategy going on here, that takes these three strands, puts them together to build up a picture of Jesus, the Son of Man, as the divine warrior of Israel. And Mark is exploiting a particularly dodgy text in Daniel, which looks like there could be two powers in heaven, and which later on caused a discussion.

**David Capes**

A big discussion among Rabbis and others.

**Andy Angel**

And Mark uses it to include Jesus in the Godhead quite deliberately. I think Mark presents us with the highest Christology of all by using the divine warrior myth.

**David Capes**

That's fascinating! Now you got to get this book done. I want to read it. And I want to be your editor for the book, and we will make this thing happen. I've heard about the divine warrior myth. I've read it obviously and seen it at work in the Old Testament text, but I've never really brought it into the Gospels the way you have. I'm going to be interested in seeing that. Dr. Andy Angel, thanks for being with us today on The Stone Chapel.

**Andy Angel**

Absolutely. It's a pleasure. Thank you so much for having me.

Here's a nugget of wisdom from Dr. Any Angel.

**Andy Angel**

My nugget of wisdom comes from my Great Aunt Dorothy more fondly known as Aunty Dos and it's this. The Lord is on the throne and nobody's about to knock him off. I've just been doing a podcast on divine warrior myth and at the heart of divine warrior myth lies what we call the Zion theology or the royal theology of the Psalms. We have this myth about the waters assailing Zion, assailing God's Kingdom assailing God's people, about to drown them and crush them and yet the Lord is enthroned in Jerusalem. Quite often the myth is used in situations of absolute disaster, where God's people simply can't see a way out. And a myth is pulled out of the cupboard of Israel's faith and applied again in laments, as well as praise songs to say, the Lord is on the throne, and nobody's about to knock him off.