

**Review (32): *It's a Wonderful Life*: Angelic Hierarchy;  
Commentary on the Film: Clarence's Debriefing**

**[See document: Col-Heralds.ppt]**

- 25) These angels have military rank. A seraph-rank angel is decorated with six wings while a cherub-rank angel is indicated by four wings.
- 26) Those angels below the cherubs are rank and file and have no wings at all.
- 27) In the Angelic College of Heralds the highest-ranking angel in the hierarchy is a seraph-rank angel we designate as the King of Arms.
- 28) Under him are cherub-rank angels known as Heralds or Pursuivant Officers.
- 29) The rank and file under them are wingless Pursuivant Messengers.
- 30) The only angel mentioned by name in the Bible that is in the College of Heralds is Gabriel who has cherub rank.
- 31) All the angels received their rank in the pre-historic Angelic Conflict. The matter of angelic rank and promotion is settled forever.
- 32) Thus there is no basis to assume that a Pursuivant Messenger could earn a promotion to a winged rank by his acts of service toward individuals in human history.
- 33) In the movie we are about to study we find that its writers were weak in their angelology. They present us with a wingless Pursuivant Messenger who is challenged to earn cherub rank by delivering George Bailey from attempted suicide and then helping him resume his spiritual life
- 34) The assignment is made apparently by God the Father in response to intercessory prayers from citizens of Bedford Falls.

- 35) God issues the command to the King of Arms named Joseph and Joseph makes the assignment to a Pursuivant Messenger named Clarence Oddbody who has a rank of Angel Second Class.
- 36) But accuracy requires that the Person of the Trinity who issues the order to Joseph should be Jesus Christ who has supreme authority over the College of Heralds. As its Earl Marshal He would make His wishes known to the King of Arms.
- 37) In turn, the King of Arms would relay the order to a top-ranked Herald angel, most likely Gabriel, who would then make the assignment to the Pursuivant Messenger.
- 38) In the movie the Lord speaks to Joseph who must be the King of Arms and he personally makes the assignment to Clarence Oddbody who then moves into human history as the guardian angel for George Bailey.
- 39) The writers of course had to use poetic license in order to tell this story. Therefore, the Deity, either God or Christ, and Joseph must be shown as making the assignment to Clarence during George Bailey's lifetime.
- 40) This poetic license allows us to imagine how much impact one person has within the perfect plan of God. Every life that is lived is important and every decision each person makes has historical impact, whether positive or negative.
- 41) Therefore, before beginning we must remember that:

The decree of God is His eternal, holy, wise, and sovereign purpose, comprehending simultaneously all things that ever were or will be—in their causes, courses, successions, and relations and determining their certain futuration.
- 42) We are now ready to begin our analysis of Frank Capra's *It's a Wonderful Life*.

**V. Commentary on *It's a Wonderful Life*:**

- 1- The movie starts with citizens of Bedford Falls offering intercessory prayer for George Bailey who has come upon hard times.
- 2- Jesus Christ instructs seraph-rank angel Joseph to assign Pursuivant Messenger Clarence Oddbody the task of saving George Bailey's life.
- 3- Clarence asks the Lord the question, "Is he sick," to which He responds, "No, worse. He's discouraged!"
- 4- Discouragement is a mental attitude that finds its origin in fear. According to *Oxford* it means "to lose confidence and courage; a depression of spirit with regard to action or effort."
- 5- "Depression of spirit" according to *Oxford* has to do with being "cast down mentally; to be dispirited, dejected, or brought low."
- 6- It is helpful to remember that as the movie opens we hear prayers that are lifted for George on Christmas Eve *after* he has encountered the events that led to his "discouragement."
- 7- George has reacted to these outside adversities with fear followed by a cluster of sins associated with both the emotional and arrogance complex of sins.
- 8- But before Clarence can help resolve George's problems and their dénouement presented, Clarence must first be debriefed about George's life up to that point.
- 9- The debriefing is accomplished by God accessing details from George Bailey's PROM chip and relating pertinent details to Clarence.
- 10- The debriefing begins with events that took place during George's childhood and continues until the moment his discouragement drove him to the brink of suicide.
- 11- Certain principles from the Doctrine of Divine Decrees are pertinent:

- 1) God knows perfectly, eternally, and simultaneously all that is knowable, both actual and possible.
- 2) Every minute detail of both angelic and human history is completely known by God at all times.
- 3) God's omniscience perceives the free as free, the necessary as necessary, together with all their causes, conditions, successions, relations, and interactions, as one indivisible system of things, every link of which is essential to the integrity of the whole.
- 4) Every cause and effect is related to another cause and effect and to another and another. In this one, all-comprehensive, interdependent system of cause and effect, man's volition is the uncaused cause of human function.
- 5) Remember that time has nothing to do with God's omniscience. The future is as perspicuous to God as is the past.
- 6) God is able to distinguish the realities of human history apart from its alternatives and decree the former to be certainly future.
- 7) Only the actual can be included in God's foreknowledge of human history. Potentials never occur; actuals never fail to occur.
- 8) The decree of God is His eternal, holy, wise, and sovereign purpose, comprehending simultaneously all things that ever were or will be—in their causes, courses, conditions, successions, and relations and determining their certain futuration.
- 9) This decree of God is His eternal and immutable will regarding the future existence of events which will happen in time, plus the precise manner and order of their occurrence.

- 10) By the decree, God has rendered certain all events of the universe. Not the smallest incident or the slightest fact was unknown or left unrecognized by Him.
- 12- Foreknowledge may be described in finite terms if we imagine God watching a videotape of human history. God is able to view the tape of foreknowledge which plays back what He decreed to be actual.
- 13- And as the video of human history is played out in what we refer to as “time,” the day has arrived when extreme testing confronts George Bailey.
- 14- It is important to remember that in human history, the sovereignty of God and the free will of man must coexist by divine decree.
- 15- Therefore it is important to take into consideration what was decreed in eternity past into the ROM chip.
- 16- George Bailey is a believer in Jesus Christ. He has a strong spiritual life based on his confidence in the Word of God and that gave him courage toward life and circumstances. But that courage is being tested and he has been neutralized by fear.
- 17- Yet, God has offered the royal family a weapon called intercessory prayer. When spirit-filled believers know of other believers who are involved in the battles of the Angelic Conflict they are mandated to pray for that person.  

**1 Timothy 2:1 - First of all, I urge that entreaties and prayers, petitions and thanksgivings, be made on behalf of all men.**
- 18- The citizens of Bedford Falls did so and God processed those prayers in eternity past and inserted answers into the ROM chip.
- 19- The answer to the prayer is the provision of a guardian angel. Clarence is not only to deliver George from his attempted suicide but also counsel him about the historical impact every believer has in the perfect plan of God.

20- In order for Clarence to understand who he is about to save and counsel, God Himself offers a debriefing that includes the following events:

- 1) As a boy, George and his friends were snow sledding down a hill and across a frozen lake. George's younger brother, Harry, went too far out onto the lake and fell through thin ice. George jumped in to save him but in so doing caught a bad cold and subsequently lost hearing in his left ear.

PRINCIPLE: No event, no matter how small, can be misplaced in the decrees, or ignored altogether, without having profound impact on all events.

PRINCIPLE: By the decree, God has rendered certain all events of the universe. Not the smallest incident or the slightest fact was unknown or unrecognized by Him.

- 2) Henry F. Potter is introduced as the richest and meanest man in the county. He owns a factory which employs a large percentage of local residents with most living in his company housing.
- 3) Emil Gower is presented as the town druggist for whom young George worked as a soda jerk. One day George learned that Mr. Gower's son, Robert, had died suddenly of influenza while away at college. While seeking to offer his employer comfort, George observed the despondent druggist mistakenly fill a prescription for a sick child with poisonous pills. Unable to communicate successfully with his boss about the error, George sought council from his father but he was tied up in a meeting with Mr. Potter. Later, when Mr. Gower learned of George's failure to make the delivery, he became violent, striking George about the head, again injuring his left ear.