

September 29, 2019

St. Michael and All Angels

Text: Revelation 12:7-12

<sup>7</sup> Now war arose in heaven, Michael and his angels fighting against the dragon. And the dragon and his angels fought back, <sup>8</sup> but he was defeated, and there was no longer any place for them in heaven. <sup>9</sup> And the great dragon was thrown down, that ancient serpent, who is called the devil and Satan, the deceiver of the whole world-- he was thrown down to the earth, and his angels were thrown down with him. <sup>10</sup> And I heard a loud voice in heaven, saying, "Now the salvation and the power and the kingdom of our God and the authority of his Christ have come, for the accuser of our brothers has been thrown down, who accuses them day and night before our God. <sup>11</sup> And they have conquered him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, for they loved not their lives even unto death. <sup>12</sup> Therefore, rejoice, O heavens and you who dwell in them! But woe to you, O earth and sea, for the devil has come down to you in great wrath, because he knows that his time is short!" (ESV)

## The Truth about Angels

Billy Graham tells the story of a Philadelphia neurologist. He had gone to bed after an exceptionally tiring day. Suddenly someone knocking on his door awakened him. Opening it he found a little girl who was deeply upset. She told him that her mother was very sick and asked him if he would please come with her. Although he was very tired, the doctor dressed and followed the girl.

He found the mother desperately ill with pneumonia. After arranging for medical care, he complimented the mother on the persistence of her little daughter.

The woman looked at him strangely and then said, "My daughter died a month ago." She added, "Her shoes and coat are in the closet there." Amazed and perplexed, the doctor went to the closet and opened the door. There hung the very coat worn by the little girl who had brought him to tend to her mother.

Could the doctor have been summoned in this hour of need by an angel who appeared as this woman's young daughter? Was this the work of God's angels on behalf of the sick woman?<sup>1</sup>

It's quite possible. You see, the Bible tells us that God's angels are ministering spirits who are sent to serve Christians.<sup>2</sup> Angels are the foremost of God's created, but invisible beings. They are spirits. That is, they do not have bodies. They have neither flesh, nor bones, nor blood.

But from time to time, angels appear in human form.<sup>3</sup> Indeed, in Hebrews 13, we read, "Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for thereby some have entertained angels unawares."<sup>4</sup>

God created the angels sometime during the six days of creation. In the beginning, all of them were sinless. They were all equally good, righteous, and holy. We know this because Genesis 1:31 says, "And God saw everything that he had made, and behold, it was very good."

But then something catastrophic happened. A great number of the angels rebelled against God. We read in the book of Jude, "And the angels who did not keep their positions of authority but abandoned their proper dwelling, these he has kept in darkness, bound with everlasting chains for judgment on the great day."<sup>5</sup> i.e., Judgment Day.

The Bible usually calls the leader of this rebellion “Satan” or “The Devil.” We call the rest of the evil angels “demons.”<sup>6</sup> Because of this revolt, God confirmed the evil angels in their state of sin. They can never become good angels again. He also confirmed the good angels, those who did not rebel, in the state of perfection.

This revolt must have taken place after the sixth day of creation (when God said everything was “very good”) but before Satan showed up in the form of a serpent as the tempter of Adam and Eve in Genesis 3.

After getting Adam and Eve to sin, Satan’s preeminent objective was to prevent the promised Messiah from being born. Or, failing that, he would be just as pleased to destroy the Savior before he could accomplish God’s work of salvation in Christ.

We see this in Revelation 12. Satan is vividly pictured as being so evil that he wants to devour the Christ child as soon as he is born. We read these words:

And the dragon (i.e., Satan) stood before the woman who was about to give birth, so that when she bore her child he might devour it.”<sup>7</sup>

He failed. Although we do not know the exact timeline, Satan’s failure to destroy Christ was also due, in no small part, to a great battle fought between the good and evil angels. The leader of the good angels was the archangel Michael. The leader of the evil angels was Satan. Our text says ...

Now war arose in heaven, Michael and his angels fighting against the dragon. And the dragon and his angels fought back, but [Satan] was defeated, and there was no longer any place for them in heaven. And the great dragon was thrown down, that ancient serpent, who is called the devil and Satan, the deceiver of the whole world -- he was thrown down to the earth. (Rev. 12:7-9).

Let’s move forward now to the time when the wise men came to Jerusalem. They had a question: “Where is he who has been born king of the Jews?”<sup>8</sup> When wicked King Herod learned that there was a rival Jewish king born in Bethlehem, he ordered the death of all male babies in Bethlehem aged 2 and under.

Satan must have jumped for joy. Yes, Herod will kill Jesus for him. But God dispatches an angel to Bethlehem. The angel tells Joseph of Herod’s plan. Joseph was to take his family and flee to Egypt. Once again Satan is foiled. And once again God uses an angel to preserve the life of God’s Messiah.

There was yet another time when Satan jumped for joy. He thought he had finally won when Jesus died on the cross. But his celebrating ended when he rose from the dead!

Thus, we have a mini-course on the raging wickedness of Satan, the head of the demons and all the forces of darkness. But Satan still rages. He rages against us. He rages against the Church. He rages against every believer in Jesus Christ.

Since he couldn’t beat Jesus, he has turned his attention to believers. He wants to drag us to hell with him. His primary weapon is deception. He uses subtle lies. For example, Satan may

whisper in your ear, saying,

- Do you really think you are a Christian? No you're not! If you were a real Christian, things would be going better for you.
- If you were a real Christian, how come you sin so much? I know your sins and I'm going to remind you of them every day. And what are you going to say in defense? Nothing!
- You may think God has forgiven you but he hasn't. He is going to hold you accountable for every one of your sins. And, mark my words, you will fail the final exam.
- You are not God's child, you're mine. Just look at your track record. God wants holy and righteous people who can resist temptations. But you just give in without a fight. You've been mine all along.

So says Satan. But we must remember that we claim no righteousness of our own. We trust in Christ alone for our righteousness, don't we? Of course we do! And that changes the whole ball game. So tell Satan to take his case against you to Jesus. The devil knows better than to do that!

You see, through faith in Christ, God credits Christ's righteousness to your account. At your baptism God clothed you with the pure, white robe of Christ's sinlessness which you are still wearing. When you kneel at the altar, God forgives your sins and strengthens your faith. You are children of the heavenly Father.

Let's turn our attention to God's good angels. They work on our behalf. Regarding angels, we read in Hebrews 1:14, "Are they not all ministering spirits sent out to serve for the sake of those who are to inherit salvation?"

Shortly after Pat and I were married, I went with my father-in-law to a backwoods pub. We were there to drink some beer and play some pool. But once we got there, there was only one topic of conversation among the patrons. The night before, a few miles away, a pickup was about to cross a bridge. But the driver saw a man who was swinging a bright lantern back and forth.

The driver slowed down. He got out of the truck to talk to the man. But the man was no longer there. Neither was the lantern. Peering off into the darkness he saw something that shook him to the core. The old, wooden bridge he was about to cross had fallen into the swift river below. "How is this possible," the man said to himself. "Somebody was trying to warn me of the disaster that lay ahead."

The people in the pub couldn't stop talking about it. Had God dispatched an angel that night? Probably so, for there was no other explanation. Yes, angels are real. And they come to the aid of God's people more often than we know.

My friends, as I was writing this sermon, I thought about how infrequently I asked God to send his holy angels to protect me and guide me. Yet, I'm certain that a lot of would-be accidents never happened because an angel was watching over me.

The 10th verse of our text is magnificent. It tells us of Christ's victory over sin and the binding of Satan. We read:

And I heard a loud voice in heaven, saying, “Now the salvation and the power and the kingdom of our God and the authority of his Christ have come, for the accuser of our brothers (Satan) has been thrown down, who accuses them day and night before our God.”

Beloved, God made his holy angels to serve us. May we ask God for their help. In the saving name of Jesus: Ἀμήν.

**Soli Deo Gloria!**

## Endnotes

<sup>1</sup>Adapted. Graham, Billy, *Angels: God's Secret Agents* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1995) pp. 3-4

<sup>2</sup>See Hebrews 1:14.

<sup>3</sup>See Genesis 18:1-2 and 19:1. In Genesis 18, all three men appear in human form. One of them was the pre-incarnate Christ. The other two were angels (Gen. 19:1).

<sup>4</sup>See Hebrews 13:2, ESV.

<sup>5</sup>Jude 1:6. In 2 Peter 2:4, St. Peter says, “... God did not spare angels when they sinned, but cast them into hell and committed them to chains of gloomy darkness to be kept until the judgment ...”

<sup>6</sup>In the King James version, demons are called devils.

<sup>7</sup>See Revelation 12:4, ESV.

<sup>8</sup>See Matthew 2:2.