

Structure For: Angels Defend Us w/Christ's Victory -Revelation 12:7-11

Festival of St. Michael and All the Angels

Sunday September 28th, 2019

Text: Revelation 12:7-11

⁷ Now war arose in heaven, Michael and his angels fighting against the dragon. And the dragon and his angels fought back, ⁸ but he was defeated, and there was no longer any place for them in heaven. ⁹ 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. ¹⁰ 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. ¹¹ 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.

Exegetical Statement

In apocalyptic prophetic language the result of Jesus, death, resurrection, and ascension to the right hand of God is described for us. This event takes place in the presence of God in heaven and is something that we cannot completely understand. Satan used to stand before God and like a prosecutor accuse each and every human of their sinful disobedience, which he aided and abetted in, and that thus they deserved the sentence of eternal punishment. But Christ stands before the Father as the Divine Defense Attorney and presents as His evidence for our acquittal His death and resurrection, as well as the faith given by the Holy Spirit which removes our sin and declares us to be righteous-undeserving of the punishment Satan is called for. Because Christ has done this for each and every person Satan in his role as prosecutor/accuser no longer has any place before the divine court of God. God orders him to be banished. Satan in his pride does not want to go, but Michael and the angels operating by the authority and power of God Himself throw them out of the presence of God. Satan then comes to earth to continue his hateful wrathful scheme against God by spiritually attacking his most precious creation-mankind. He seeks to draw them into sin and thereby draw them away from their Creator God.

Focus Statement:

God's word to us describes Satan as a defeated foe. Christ has silenced all his accusations through His death and resurrection. In His ascension Jesus becomes our Divine defense attorney proclaiming that Satan has no right to us and his accusations have become unfounded because all our sin has been taken away. Jesus declares that by faith we are right with God. He sends His Spirit to us in Baptism to confirm this reality in our hearts and minds by faith in the Gospel which proclaims it

Function Statement:

Why it's important to know:

We can become comfortable in our Christian lives by forgetting the evil powers that work around us and seek access to us in order to draw us away from our faith in Christ. They seek to either make us see sin as no big deal and therefore diminish our need for and reliance on Jesus, or try to make us believe that our sins are so awful that God could never forgive us and that Jesus has given up on us-crushing our faith with guilt.

What the hearer should do as a result:

Regularly confess our sins, realizing that we are poor miserable sinners and therefore desperately need the application of Christ's work for us on the cross. Hold fast to the proof of the resurrection that we are forgiven, just as Jesus declares to us through His Word pronounced by the Pastor and as described in our text and readings. Realize that our sin is still a big deal, but in Christ all is forgiven. Hold fast to Christ while shutting our ears to the devil's lies.

Subject Sentence: Angels Defend through power of Christ Atonement

Introduction: Festival of St. Michael and All the Angels

This Sunday we celebrate the Festival of St. Michael and All the Angels. It's been historically celebrated on September 29th which this year happens to fall on a Sunday. It's been celebrated since the 12th century and joins the ranks of many other lesser known celebrations such as St. Stephen the Martyr on December 26th, St. Mary, Mother of Our Lord on August 15th, and St. Matthew, Apostle and Evangelist on September 21st. We normally let these go by even when they happen to fall on a Sunday, although they can be celebrated as a way to change things up from the normal liturgical readings we follow. But St. Michael and all the Angels is a Festival that is usually recognized when it falls on a Sunday. And the readings that are associated with it are worthy for our consideration

As the name of the festival implies, they deal with angels and what they do in the Kingdom of God and the world. I find that the subject of angels is fascinating to most people within and without the Church. A 2011 Associated Press poll 8 out of every 10 Americans were said to believe in the existence of angels. This is reflected in America's TV viewing with such popular TV Series as "Supernatural": which deals with two brothers who fight against monsters and demons with the help of an angel, and the show "Lucifer" which has the prince of darkness who leaves hell and teams up with a homicide detective to help him solve murders. Then of course there is the ever-popular demonic themed movies that make their appearance leading up to Halloween. This also means that many people hold false ideas and beliefs about angels and demons. Perhaps it would be good to have a little refresher course in what God's word has to say about the real good and bad angels that share creation with us. And in good Lutheran Catechism form we will do this with questions that have multiple choice answers for you to choose from

FAQ's About Angels and Demons

Question #1 "What does the word "Angel" mean?

- a) A person that does good deeds
- b) Someone who has a halo attached to their head
- c) A messenger

Angels are non-human messengers in the service of God:

C is the correct answer. Angel is an English word derived from the Greek word that means messenger. So in that sense an Old Testament prophets and New Testament Apostles fulfilled the role of messenger of God's Law and Gospel to the people. But normally in Scripture the word "angel" describes a non-human messenger sent directly by God.

Question #2 “What exactly are angels?”

- a) Saints who have gone before us
- b) What our loved ones become when they die
- c) Spirit beings created by God during the 6 days of creation

Spirit beings who sometimes are granted human form to accomplish God’s will:

Once again C is the correct choice. Human beings are not angels nor will they ever become one. Many find comfort in the idea that their loved one who has passed on hovers over them fulfilling the role of guardian angel, but that is not what the Bible teaches. Our loved ones are with Jesus and have no idea what is occurring here on earth. If they did, they would certainly not be resting in peace. Angels are beings that do not have a body per se so they are spirit creatures. At times the LORD grants them a physical form in order for them to accomplish His will and plan here on earth, but these are not permanent gifts. The only person from heaven that has permanently been granted a physical body is God the Son who was born of the virgin Mary and was named Jesus. He came to earth to fulfill the role that God had assigned Him which was to be the Messiah- the Savior of God’s people.

Question #3: “How powerful are angels?”

- a) They are faster than a locomotive and can leap tall buildings in a single bound
- b) They know when you are sleeping, they know when you are awake, they know when you’ve been bad or good
- c) They have the power to see into the future and know what will happen tomorrow
- d) They are mighty beings who have great strength, intelligence, and a will

Powerful & intelligent but they do not have the power/knowledge authority of God:

While A and B are somewhat true, C is definitely not. The correct answer is D. **Psalm 103:20 “Bless the LORD, O you his angels, you mighty ones who do his word, obeying the voice of his word!”** Powerful beings that obey God’s word always. **Psalm 91:11-12 ¹¹ For he will command his angels concerning you to guard you in all your ways. ¹² On their hands they will bear you up, lest you strike your foot against a stone.** They serve God by protecting His Church, those who believe in Jesus. While they are intelligent and powerful, they are not all powerful, or all knowing. As 1 Kings 8:39b tells us: **“for you (the LORD), you only, know the hearts of all the children of mankind.”** The LORD who created the angels is far more powerful than all of them combined. Only He knows our hearts, only He knows what the future holds since the future is what He declares best for His Church as we are told in **Romans 8:28 “And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose.”**

Question #4 “What are demons and where did they come from?”

- a) They are mythical creatures used by primitive cultures to explain the existence of evil
- b) They are the residual force of evil people that continues to haunt and trouble the living
- c) They are the political leaders in both parties
- d) They are angels who turned away from God in willful disobedience

Demons and Satan are angels who fell into sin and are condemned to hell forever:

The correct answer is D. If you believe in angels that serve the LORD, you should also believe in the devil and demons. While all angels were created good sometime during the 6-days of creation, at some point after the 6th day one of the leading angels- Lucifer turned against God. In the sin of arrogance and pride he demanded that God’s creatures, especially God’s most beloved creation of all-mankind, worship him as a god. He turned away from obedience to God, he and a portion of the angels. Once this happened there was no turning back. Lucifer, or as the Bible calls him The Devil (The one who accuses mankind before God) and Satan (The adversary) and those angels that followed him had but one eternal future ahead: The Lake of Eternal Fire where they will suffer forever. They continue to this day to oppose the work and will of God here on earth, especially targeting members of His Church. They hate God and want nothing more than to take His precious creation to eternal hell with them.

Question #5: “Are demons as powerful as the good angels?”

- a) Yes
- b) No
- c) Depends on the number on either side

Demons are more powerful and crafty than us, but angels have w/ God’s power:

The correct answer is B. Demons are powerful, more powerful, intelligent, and crafty than any human being. But they no longer operate with the blessing or authority of God. The angels of the LORD receive their authority and power from He who commissions them to be His servant in the world among His Church

Question #6: Do the good angels and demons battle? If so what kind of weapons do they use?

- a) They push and shove each other like elementary school children
- b) The demons are like gangsters and the angels always need to be on guard with flaming swords and fireballs
- c) They wage spiritual warfare that does not involve the kind of weapons we can imagine

As our reading from Daniel indicates demons and angels fight spiritual battles:

C is the correct answer. We have a reference to this spiritual battle in our Old Testament Lesson from **Daniel 10:13** **“The prince of the kingdom of Persia withstood me twenty-one days, but Michael, one of the chief princes, came to help me, for I was left there with the kings of Persia”** Angels do not engage in battle against humans but with demons in the name of the LORD. Here this angel refers to a spiritual battle against a demon who was controlling the leader of the Persian Empire. So angels wage spiritual warfare against demons that try to control humans and make them do harm and work against Christ’s Church and His plan and will for it.

Spiritual Warfare and the Victory Christ Won for us

Spiritual warfare happens when Satan tries to steal us back from God’s kingdom:

But what is meant by “spiritual warfare”? Once again, we are talking about a reality that is beyond our comprehension and understanding. We are tempted to see such battles in the same manner as earthly kings and nations waging war with each other using conventional weapons. Our text today from Revelation Chapter 12 sheds some insight into what a spiritual battle is like. **Revelation 12:7-8** **“7 Now war arose in heaven, Michael and his angels fighting against the dragon. And the dragon and his angels fought back, 8 but he was defeated, and there was no longer any place for them in heaven”** The Dragon is the symbolic picture for the ancient serpent that appeared to Eve in the Garden of Eden. His mission was steal God’s precious creatures away from Him by encouraging them to fall into disobedience just as he had. He lied telling them they could be just like God if they gained the knowledge of good and evil. But they already were like God. And when they listened to Satan’s sly argument that contained a bit truth filled with a ton of lies they fell away from their Creator and became fallen creatures, now aligned with the Devil. He had successfully stolen them, and they were now a part of his kingdom. He ruled over them as fallen creatures and his eternal fate was now theirs.

Satan before God is like the prosecutor accusing and presenting our sins in court:

What was Satan doing before the throne of God anyway? He was being who he is: The Slanderer- the Devil. He tempts mankind to fall into sin and then accuses us before God. The best way to look at spiritual warfare is in the symbolic context of a court room drama. The Slandering accusing devil is the prosecutor. The person on trail is you. The evidence is your thoughts expressed in your words and actions throughout your entire lifetime. “Exhibits A through infinity show that this person is unworthy to be called your child or be a part of your precious and perfect kingdom O great God on high. And as you have declared in your precious word ‘The wages of sin is death.’ This man/this woman deserves and must receive the punishment of eternal suffering in hell as your own law proscribes!” By ourselves we have no defense to make. Anything we say would only implicate us further.

Jesus as our divine defender declares us to be forgiven and in right standing:

But then our defendant stands up. He is a man just like you and I. But He is not just a man. He is God the Son who became man. He turns to the Devil and declares in a voice full of power and authority: "You are wrong!" I declare that this person has been made right with the Father. All these exhibits you bring of sin must be thrown out of court because the price that God calls to be paid for committing them has been paid already. Time has been served for each and every one. I know because I served that time on the cross. My suffering and death happened because I took upon myself all the sinful disobedience that this person has ever committed. And I took upon myself in my body God's wrath and punishment for those sins. Justice has been served. There is nothing left for this person to suffer. Instead as my gift I give to this person what my perfect life on earth has earned: right standing with God the Father. I can do this for them because I'm a human just like them. I can do it for all humans because I am God. I declare by my divine authority, and the Father and the Spirit concur, that this person is to be set free immediately and welcomed into my kingdom where they will live with me now and will dwell forever in eternal bliss with me." Jesus has declared this same thing for you; for each and every one of you who hold fast to Him as your Lord and Savior by faith. Each and every case of sin that you have committed or will commit has been purged from your record. There is nothing left to convict you of. Instead when the Father looks at you, He sees you clothed in Christ's righteousness. He sees not your sin, He sees the works of His precious Son and loves you just the same. Jesus has done this very thing for you, for me, and for all.

Nothing left to accuse us of so God uses angels to banishes Satan from His presence:

Then Jesus turns to Satan and declares; "Your position as accuser of mankind is finished. There is no longer any place for you or your slanderous accusations and lies in God's heavenly court. Get out now. **Revelation 12:9 "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."** Satan and his demons did not want to leave. He loved his position and the authority he claimed over us and over God's creation. But Michael and the angels, operating under the power and authority of the LORD God Himself showed the devil and his demons the door. They were cast out by the power and authority of God's Word and command working through His angelic servants. And so we here declared in heaven **Revelation 12:10 "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."** This text describes the reality of Jesus Christ's death, resurrection, and ascension to the right hand of God the Father. He stands there as your Lord and Savior and my Lord and Savior and because He does the devil can no longer accuse us or put His mark upon us. **Galatians 3:27 "For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ."** You no longer belong to Satan, you belong to Jesus.

Word of Warning for All

Satan and demons have come to earth with the aim of stealing us back:

But Revelation has a word of warning for believers and unbelievers alike: **Revelation 12:12b** “**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!**” The devil and his demons are at work among us. They have access to the unbelieving world as a resource against us, the Church. We once belonged to the devil’s kingdom. And in his wrath against God and against us he is at work to reclaim us. He wages spiritual battles against us. They don’t have to force us to sin, we sin on our own since our hearts desire is always contrary to God’s laws. They work to encourage us to sin in more and greater ways. Now the devil knows that for the believer all sin is forgiven. So he must do more than encourage us to sin. He has at least two different attacks that he uses on us.

Attack #1: your sin is no big deal since all sin is forgiven-obedience is optional:

One is the lie that sin no longer matters because the law no longer matters for the Christian. He whispers that since all sin is forgiven why worry about it? Why beat yourself up over it. You’re a pretty good person. And all those laws are so hard to keep. Surely God didn’t really say that you have to obey all of them did He?” But the truth is He did. And when sin is no longer a big deal then grace is no longer a big deal. And then the Savior who earned that grace for us is no longer a big deal. And faith just fades away in our hearts and lives.

Attack #2: you are such a terrible sinner that Christ is done forgiving you:

The other plan of attack he uses is happens when we are dealing with the guilt over our sin. Especially if he can encourage us to commit a sin that our fellow man sees as really grievous such as stealing from a loved one or being caught stealing on the job, or to be discovered having an affair. As the weight of guilt presses down on us they whisper in our ear: “You’ve gone too far now. None of your friends will ever want to have anything to do with you. And what’s more, God doesn’t want to have anything to do with you. Jesus is tired of you dragging Him through the foulness of your sin.” The result these demons are after is that you give up and walk away from your faith.

Angels restrict the demons access to us while encouraging us to hear God's Word:

But God's angels work to restrict demonic access from each one of us. They block the lies of Satan so that we by faith can hold fast to the truth of God's Word that they help point to.

Revelation 12:11 "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." The blood of the Lamb shed on the cross declares you forgiven of all sin. The love of Christ that we have in the testimony of His witnesses, the Apostles, declares that you can never sin so grievously that He cannot forgive you. **John 3:16** "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life." Jesus very words testify to your forgiveness. And in those words of testimony His Spirit continues to point to your sin, not to crush you, but that you would turn by faith and cling to the One who gave His all to save you. God hates sin, but God loves you and desires that know for certain that your sins have been forgiven through faith in Christ. And He sends His angels to watch over you and to work to keep you safe and sound in His kingdom.

Conclusion

Michael and the angels are wonderful gifts from God. The Bible indicates that we have angels watching over us throughout our lives, guarding us by the power and authority of Christ Himself. Angels are present with us this day as we worship. They are a wonderful gift of love and care from our Heavenly Father, from Jesus Christ our Savior, and from the Holy Spirit who directs their work to protect our faith. We thank God for them, but we do not worship them. We worship the One whose powerful work on the cross and in His resurrection has made you and I (1Peter 2:9) "**a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light.**" Despite the turmoil in the world around us and in our own lives as we deal daily with sin, we can live in the peace God gives us knowing we are secured by Baptism in our faith. And so as Martin Luther taught, we will conclude our prayer today by saying "Let your holy angel be with me, that the evil foe may have no power over me. Amen." And we can know for certain that our Savior will do even more than we ask. Amen.