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### Enhancing the Congregation's Appreciation for the Scriptural Doctrine of Angels

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ENHANCING THE CONGREGATION'S APPRECIATION  
FOR THE SCRIPTURAL DOCTRINE OF ANGELS

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1 MAY 1996

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**ENHANCING THE CONGREGATION'S APPRECIATION  
FOR THE SCRIPTURAL DOCTRINE OF ANGELS**

A MAJOR APPLIED PROJECT SUBMITTED TO  
THE FACULTY  
IN CANDIDACY FOR THE DEGREE OF  
DOCTOR OF MINISTRY

BY

MARK S. H. SMITH

SAINT LOUIS, MISSOURI

MAY 1996

This Major Applied Project  
is affectionately dedicated  
to Barbara and Paula who remind me  
of the angel directing Abraham's servant  
in his search for a God-pleasing wife;  
and to Drake, whose very name  
reminds me of my "Dragon Slayer,"  
JESUS CHRIST.

"...Let Thy holy angel be with me,  
that the wicked Foe may have no power over me."  
(Luther's Morning and Evening Prayers)

## ABSTRACT

The goal of this Major Applied Project is to present a year-long program of emphasis on the Doctrine of Angels for use in the local congregation that is both theologically consistent with the Lutheran Confessions, gives comfort to God's people and glory to Christ and His Gospel.

This program of emphasis was field tested at Prince of Peace Lutheran Church of Crestwood, Missouri. Its contents include Bible study and sermon outlines, theological essays, hymnody and liturgical suggestions, illustrations for worship leaflets, activities for children, newsletter articles and various other items.

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## INTRODUCTION

"Just when we thought the world was going to hell in a handbasket, help comes swooping out of nowhere." So wrote USA Today columnist Craig Wilson in October 1992 describing the phenomenal interest in angels that had begun building in the previous year.<sup>1</sup> Back in the mid 1980's, when the present writer first began collecting material on the subject of angels, there was relatively little to obtain. Billy Graham's book, Angels: God's Secret Agents, first published in 1975, was the only one on the subject that loomed large at all in the minds of most people. However, since the publication of Sophy Burnham's A Book of Angels in 1990, it has been hard to keep up with all the plethora of material produced on this runaway topic. At last count, there were at least fifty-seven angel books currently on the market read by an estimated sixty-nine percent of Americans who now claim to believe in angelic beings.<sup>2</sup>

This current fascination with angels is by no means limited to books. Boutique shops like "Angel Kisses" in suburban Chicago sell artifacts like angel calendars, diaries, dolls, pins, napkin rings, plates, thank-you notes, and even "Angel" perfume.<sup>3</sup> Supposed angel sightings have been recounted on many of America's talk shows in radio and television. In recent years there have been several weekly



television series featuring fictitious angel characters, as well as a number of full-length movies and plays on the subject. There are angel newsletters and seminars. Harvard Divinity School and Boston College both teach courses on angels.<sup>4</sup> Bookstores have had to establish whole sections devoted to the topic.

What is sad is that much of this current interest in angels is looking not to God's Word for answers as much as to traditional sentiments culled from the arts and literature as well as people's own subjective feelings. Even worse, there is also a great deal of New Age thinking connected with this "angel craze."

While writers of the New Age movement and, thankfully, a few in the Evangelical movement have picked up on the public's interest, much of orthodox Christianity and specifically our own Lutheran Church - Missouri Synod has been somewhat slow to respond. One cannot help but wonder if the church is not missing an opening here, not only among the greater American public, but among questioning members within and on the fringe of our own congregations as well. There is so little Lutheran material written by our own churchmen on the subject of angels. Is this simply because we view the doctrine of angels as not being fundamental to our salvation and therefore not worthy of greater note? Is there perhaps even some resentment that this nonfundamental

article of our Christian faith should become a centerpiece of today's consumerism?

The prophets and apostles certainly found angels worthy of mention. Luther and other dogmaticians that followed after him made copious references to these spiritual beings. Yet, how seldom do parish pastors today give attention to what Scripture says about these angelic beings in their daily ministries! It is the personal hunch of this present writer that too few Christian pastors today give the important and comforting doctrine of angels sufficient attention.

The purpose of this Major Applied Project, presented in its written form over the following pages, is to begin rectifying the present situation by striving to enhance the appreciation for the scriptural doctrine of angels in the local congregation. By the time this paper is presented, the project will have been implemented at Prince of Peace Lutheran Church in Crestwood, Missouri. It will be a year-long emphasis on scripture's doctrine of angels and, of course, also theologically consistent with the Lutheran Confessions. The project will instruct and comfort God's people while giving glory to Christ and His Gospel.

THE BIBLICAL BASIS FOR THE DOCTRINE OF ANGELS:  
A FIVE-SESSION BIBLE STUDY

Every year-long congregational emphasis should begin from its basis in God's Word. For this reason I have devoted this first section to a presentation of what Holy Scripture says about angels, presenting this scriptural doctrine in the practical form of a Bible study.

The Bible study is organized into five hour-long sessions with at least two subtopics each. This structure provides some flexibility in that, if time is limited, the class could choose to cover just one subtopic instead of two. While, for the most part I have chosen a straight-forward outline format, some sections could easily be reworked into matching exercises, multiple choice, or even fill-in-the-blank exercises to add variety and promote class participation. Another positive aspect of the outline format is that the instructor has a built-in session guide to distribute to class participants. He may want to reserve the fully fleshed-out outline for himself and provide them with a more skeletal outline encouraging them to take notes.

Bible references are spelled out, not abbreviated, in order to make the study more "user-friendly" for beginners.

Bible quotations are taken from either the New King James Version, or the New International Version.

Session One: The Importance of Angels;  
Their Creation and Rebellion

I. The Importance of Angels.

- A. Read Matthew 22:23-33 noting especially verse 30.
1. Note how Jesus silenced the Sadducees who did not believe in angels nor the resurrection.
  2. Many modern "sadducees" today. Dominican William Hill, former president of the Catholic Theological Society of America wrote in 1980: "Most theologians would be nervous if asked to affirm that there are singular personal beings called angels." Hill stated further that there could be angels, but more likely the Bible's references to angels "are a symbolic way in which the Semitic mind conveys the fact that the revelation received is in fact from God."<sup>5</sup>
- B. Read 1 Timothy 4:1-3 and Galatians 1:8 noting how Paul warns against heretical angelic spirits.
1. No longer the target of mockery and skepticism, angels are now "big business."
  2. Many of the books, movies, television, and other related angel products are "New Age," heretical, idolatrous, and just plain hoax.
- C. Are angels real and important? The Bible is our only reliable source for answers about angels. (Psalm 119:160; Romans 15:4). God has packed valuable news in the Bible about angels.
1. The Bible contains at least 275 and maybe more than 300 references to angels!
  2. Did you know that The Lutheran Hymnal has about 300 references to angels (good and evil) in its hymns!
  3. Yes, angels are real and the doctrine of angels is important as this study will show.

## II. The Creation of Angels.

- A. Misleading myth: that people become angels when they die and go to heaven.
- B. Scripture speaks of God creating the angels:
  - 1. Colossians 1:16 "For by him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things were created by him and for him."
  - 2. Psalm 148:5 When the Lord in his wisdom and power created "all things," angels were a part of that blessed work. He called them into being.
- C. Only God knows just when angels were created.
  - 1. Exodus 20:11 shows that it must have been some time during the first six creative days or in connection with creation. But when we look to God's detailed record of those six days in Genesis 1, no angels are mentioned.
  - 2. Genesis 1:16. Some have speculated that the angels might have been created on the fourth day because on that day God "made the stars," and in Job 38:7 angels are called "the morning stars". (See also Revelation 12:4).
    - a. God is not saying that angels are the same as the stars we see in the sky, but He is simply using the term to describe their brilliance and number.
    - b. Job 38:7 does make clear that angels were created early, before Adam and Eve. No human beings were present when God "laid the earth's foundation," but angels "sang ... and shouted for joy".
- D. God alone knows how many innumerable angels exist.
  - 1. Several Bible stories speak of many angels being in one place at one time.
    - a. Deuteronomy 33:2 When God came down on Sinai as Moses was leading Israel to that mountain, "myriads" ("ten thousands") of angels accompanied the Lord.

- b. Luke 2:13 The shepherds heard "a great company" of angels sing praise to God when Jesus was born.
  - c. Matthew 26:54 "Twelve legions of angels" (one legion was six thousand or more) at Christ's disposal.
  - d. Revelation 5:11 "Ten thousand times ten thousand and thousands of thousands."
2. Their number is not only great but constant.
- a. Matthew 22:30 Angels neither marry nor multiply.
  - b. Spiritual creatures without bodies, angels are actually sexless even though Scripture usually ascribes male gender to them (Acts 10:4; Revelation 10:1).
  - c. Never dying, their number remains fixed.
3. Not just numbers or impersonal forces, angels are real, personal, individual beings.
- a. They have names such as Gabriel (Luke 1:26) and Michael (Revelation 12:7).
  - b. They experience emotions like joy (Luke 15:10) and desire (1 Peter 1:12).
  - c. They see (Daniel 4:13 KJV), speak (Acts 27:23-24) and sing (Revelation 5:11,12).
- E. Normally invisible, they can take on visible form.
- 1. Although real, personal creatures of God, angels do not have physical bodies like us.
    - a. Hebrews 1:14 "ministering spirits".
    - b. Luke 24:39 "A spirit hath not flesh and bones."
  - 2. Although invisible and not occupying space, angels are not omnipresent as God is (Jeremiah 23:24). 2 Kings 6 shows how angels are at one specific place at any given time.
  - 3. Genesis 19 shows how angels sometimes assume

bodies looking like ordinary human beings even to the point of eating food, though they have no need for it (Genesis 18:1-15). (Psalm 78:25 "Bread of angels" refers to the manna delivered by angels to Israelites.)

4. At momentous events, instead of looking like ordinary people, angels have been known to take on a grand appearance reflecting a small part of God's glory.

- a. Luke 2:9 "glory of the Lord shone..."

- b. Matthew 28:3 The angel's "appearance was like lightning, and his clothes were as white as snow".

- F. God made His angels perfectly holy and perfectly suited for their work. "Angel" means "messenger".

### III. Satan's Rebellion.

- A. God gave the angels the same freedom of choice that He gave Adam and Eve.

1. They could choose to worship and serve the God who had created them and, in His presence, have fullness of joy and pleasures forever (Psalm 16:11).

2. Or choose to rebel and bring death and eternal misery upon themselves (Genesis 2:16,17).

- B. The tragedy and mystery of their fall.

1. A band of angels led by Satan, chose to revolt against the mighty God (Revelation 12).

2. In His wisdom, God has not given us a detailed description but only hints of this tragedy in order to warn us of temptation.

- a. Ezekiel 28:12-15 These words addressed to the wicked king of Tyre seem to allude also to Satan. It seems that Satan ("Lucifer") had been a special angel with extra wisdom and beauty.

- b. Isaiah 14:13,14 Satan was not satisfied with his exalted position, but his mind

became twisted with pride, conceit and lust to be equal to God (Proverbs 16:18)

- c. Revelation 12:3-9 The enormous red dragon is Satan. As he revolted against God, Satan tried to make himself look like he had all the power (ten horns) and divine authority (seven heads) and divine majesty (seven crowns). Satan's tail swept a third of the angels (stars) with him in his rebellion. But Satan's revolt ended in failure. God hurled him and his rebel angels out of heaven.
  - d. Jude 6; Revelation 12:9-12 Satan and his angels are now cut off forever from the Lord and His love, kept and chained in darkness until Judgement Day.
  - e. Revelation 20:14 When the unbelievers are thrown into the lake of fire, Satan and his angels will be eternally condemned with them.
- 3. When did they fall? (Genesis 1:31; 2:3)  
Sometime after the seventh day and before the fall of Adam and Eve. The important point is to be warned.
  - 4. Why no plan of redemption for the angels?  
We must wait until heaven for an answer.
- C. However, God has provided for our salvation through His Son Jesus Christ. Next session we learn how Christ has defeated death, the devil and all Satan's evil angels.

### Session Two: Our Enemies the Evil Angels and Their Defeat

Introduction: Ever since Satan and his angels were hurled out of heaven, there have been two very different kinds of angels: the holy angels of God and the evil angels of Satan. The goal of these evil angels is to destroy us body and soul -- forever! God's Word warns us about the devil and his angels in His Word.

- I. Our Enemies the Evil Angels.
  - A. Their names.



1. Isaiah 14:12 Some have guessed that Satan's original name was Lucifer ("Bright morning star" or "the light-bearer").
  2. Most common name, "Satan," means "enemy" and appears about fifty times in the Bible (Matthew 4:10; Romans 16:20). Ironically, Satan will try to make us think he is our friend (Genesis 3:5).
  3. Devil means "slanderer" or "accuser" (Matthew 4:11; Luke 4:2). See Genesis 3:4,5 and Revelation 12:10.
  4. Revelation 9:11 "Abaddon" and "Apollyon" meaning "the destroyer." Satan desires only to destroy God's plans and the soul of every person on earth.
  5. Matthew 12:27; Luke 11:18 "Baelzebub" meaning "lord of flies" or "prince of devils".
  6. 1 Peter 5:8 "your enemy".
  7. 2 Corinthians 6:15 "Belial," meaning "worthlessness as an evil force".
  8. John 8:44 "a murderer from the beginning" and the father of lies.
  9. Revelation 12 "dragon," "ancient serpent".
  10. John 12:31; 14:30 "the prince of this world".
  11. Ephesians 2:2 "ruler of the kingdom of the air," "the spirit who is working in the disobedient."
  12. Matthew 13:19 "the evil one."
  13. Matthew 4:3; 1 Thessalonians 3:5 "the tempter".
  14. "Demon" among the ancient pagans originally meant "a minor god" or "a spirit". Since there are no genuine "gods" other than the Lord, it was very suitable for Christians to use the term "demon" for evil angels.
- B. Their Deadly Intention: to murder us eternally (John 8:44).

1. Matthew 2:1-18; Revelation 12:1-5 The latter passage shows that it was actually Satan who masterminded Herod's plot, trying to destroy Christ before He could redeem us on Calvary.
2. 1 Peter 5:8; Matthew 25:41 Today Satan and his angels have intentions just as deadly as when Jesus was born. They want to bring us down into the eternal fire prepared for them (cf. Revelation 12:13-18).

C. Their Mighty Power and Shrewdness.

1. Ephesians 6:12 In our battle with Satan and his hosts, we are not up against a weak foe, but "against the ruler, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in heavenly realms."
2. 2 Thessalonians 2:9 The devil is even able to do things that look like miracles of God.
3. Matthew 24:5,24 The great counterfeit signs and wonders of Satan's prophets will be so spectacular that "they will deceive many". (Matthew 7:22,23)
4. Genesis 3:1 This very first reference to the devil tells us that the "ancient serpent" was more sly than any of the animals God made.
5. Ephesians 6:11; 2 Corinthians 2:11 The devil and his angels are constantly forming cunning schemes for attacking God's children. Never underestimate this crafty snake, for there is a real danger that he could outwit us.

D. Their Brutal and Fiendish Methods.

1. Luke 8:12 Satan may try to tear the word of God out of believers' hearts.
2. Job 3 The devil may torment Christians with the loss of possessions or loved ones, with sickness or loneliness. Job actually cursed his own birth.
3. From apostolic days to the present, Satan has frequently employed persecution to try to drive believers away from Christ (Revelation 12:17; Acts 13:8-10; 16:16-24).

4. Today Satan persuades some clergy and lay people to doubt the truth of Scripture and basic teachings of our faith. Revelation 8:10,11 describes Satan as "Wormwood" falling on the rivers and springs flowing with the water of life. "A third of the waters turned bitter, and many people died from the waters that had become bitter."
  5. Satan knows the weaknesses of each Christian and uses them to his advantage like with Judas (Matthew 14:16), David (2 Samuel 11) and Peter (Mark 14:27-31, 66-72).
  6. 2 Corinthians 4:4 Since the devil has already blinded the minds of unbelievers, he does not have to devote as much time to them. He occasionally sends his henchmen to keep them in their blindness, but Christians he attacks constantly.
- E. Demon Possession used extensively in Christ's time and may still be used occasionally today.
1. What it is: physical and spiritual demonical possession whereby one or more of Satan's angels actually enter a person to control his actions, his words and possibly his thoughts.
  2. At one time it was fashionable to deny it ever really existed and to explain it away as illness.
  3. But Scripture carefully distinguishes between demoniacs and people afflicted with illnesses (Mark 1:32; Matthew 17:14-18).
  4. Symptoms of demon-possession are much different from mental or physical illness.
    - a. Matthew 8:28 Sometimes the demon possessing someone would make him "so violent that no one could pass that way."
    - b. Occasionally, the demon would make a person mute (Matthew 9:32), blind (Matthew 12:22) or just terribly miserable (Matthew 15:22).
    - c. Mark 5:4,5 A demon might give a person such strength that virtually no one is

able to subdue him. Or the demon may cause the person to do strange things.

- d. Luke 4:41; Matthew 8:28-34; Mark 1:24; 5:7 Scripture also shows how, time after time, the demon within a person would acknowledge Jesus as the Son of God.
- 5. Luke 22:3; Acts 5:3 Here Scripture also mentions a spiritual possession in contrast to the physical possession we discussed.
- 6. Luke 10:17 Exorcism continued in the early history of the church. Even into the third century it was combined with baptism, but disappeared during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Revived somewhat in recent years due to movies like "The Exorcist".
- 7. While Jesus could discern demon possession because of His omniscience, we do not have such power and therefore need to be very cautious in diagnosing demon possession.
- 8. Colossians 2:15 Should an authentic case of demon possession actually occur today, one can drive the evil angel out only by fervent prayer in the name of Him who "disarmed the powers and authorities" of hell, triumphing over them by the cross.

## II. Defeating the Evil Angels.

### A. Christ has already won the battle against Satan.

- 1. 1 Peter 3:19 On Easter morning Christ showed His great victory to the defeated demons of hell as He descended there to preach to them.
- 2. 1 John 3:8 The very reason why Christ came to earth was to conquer Satan for us.
- 3. 1 Corinthians 15:57 By ourselves, we would have no hope of defeating the mighty Satan, but thanks be to God! He gives us the victory through Christ.

### B. Our Battle Continues.

- 1. Although defeated, Satan is still alive and carries his warfare against every Christian.

2. The power of Satan and his evil angels is great but limited and, praise God, we can overcome all their temptations by God's Word.
3. 1 Timothy 6:12 The Holy Spirit has brought us to faith. Now with His help we fight the good fight.
4. Matthew 26:41; 1 Peter 5:8 In danger of an attack by our enemy, it is urgent that we keep watch.

C. Jesus' Weapon is Ours.

1. Matthew 4:1-10 Jesus recognized the evil nature of Satan's temptations, and countered his attack by appealing to God's Word.
2. Ephesians 6:10-18 Paul urges us to be strong in the Lord and to take our stand against the devil's schemes, comparing the spiritual weaponry given us in God's Word to armor and weaponry of soldiers.

D. Onward to Battle! How to use the power God gives.

1. Begin each day with prayer: "Lord, keep me watchful. Help me to see and resist every temptation the hosts of hell hurl my way." (cf. Luther's Morning Prayer).
2. Fortify ourselves with private and public study of God's Word and Scripture-based sermons (2 Corinthians 10:4; 6:7).
3. Romans 8:37; James 4:7 We are "more than conquerors" through Christ. Satan must flee.
4. On the Last Day, our victory will be complete when the hosts of hell are condemned forever and we join the church triumphant in heaven. (Revelation 20:7-10; 21:1ff).

Session Three: The Faithful Angels and How They Serve God

Introduction: We have learned about Satan and the evil angels, but there are also countless thousands of good angels that remained faithful to God. These angels are not idle, but they are doing mighty works in heaven and on earth as God directs their actions. Let's look first at some of

the amazing characteristics that God has given these faithful angels. Then we will look at what God's angels do.

## I. Characteristics of God's Faithful Angels.

### A. Their Great Power.

1. Revelation 1:8; Matthew 19:26; Jeremiah 10:6  
Not even the mightiest angel is all-powerful like God.
2. But when God created the angels, He gave them power greater than man or any other creature.
  - a. Psalm 103:20 "mighty ones".
  - b. 2 Thessalonians 1:7 "powerful angels".
  - c. 2 Peter 2:11 "stronger than men".
3. Exodus 12:29; Psalm 78:49 The Passover plague wherein all the firstborn men and cattle of Egypt were slain overnight by a band of angels.
4. 2 Kings 19:35 In one night the Lord sent an angel who destroyed 185,000 Assyrian troops.
5. Revelation 7:1 John says he saw angels stopping the wind from blowing over the entire earth. It's clear that angels are so much more powerful than us, that we can hardly comprehend their strength.

### B. The Angels' Wisdom.

1. 1 John 3:20 Only God knows everything.
2. Like people, angels learn and grow in knowledge.
  - a. 1 Peter 1:12 Shows that the angels did not know all the details of God's plan and longed to look into these things.
  - b. Ephesians 3:10 Paul tells us that the angels are to learn the full, rich wisdom of God through the church.
3. Yet, the angels have wisdom and knowledge vastly superior to that of humans.

- a. 2 Samuel 14:17,20 A woman from Tekoa compared the king's intelligence to that of angels.
- b. Daniel 9:22 Gabriel came to Daniel to give him "insight and understanding".
- c. Daniel 10:14 At times, God even gives angels ability to see into the future.

C. The Angels Are Spirits.

- 1. Though personal beings, they are invisible and do not take up physical space.
- 2. Numbers 22:21-35 At times angels have assumed a physical appearance for a particular occasion like when one came to Balaam with a message from God.
- 3. Though not omnipresent, they can move very rapidly perhaps even instantaneously (Daniel 9:21). They are never too late to help us.

D. The Angels Are Immortal.

- 1. Unlike the angels who rebelled, God's angels are confirmed in holiness (Matthew 18:10).
  - a. Deuteronomy 33:3 "the holy ones".
  - b. Job 1:6; 2:1; 38:7 "sons of God".
  - c. 1 Timothy 5:21 God has chosen or elected the faithful angels to be His forever. Not even another angel, like Satan, can change this.
- 2. Romans 6:23 Confirmed in holiness, angels can never sin, nor will they ever die.
- 3. Luke 20:36 Jesus said also of His children in heaven, that "they can no longer die; for they are like the angels" (not equal to).

II. Faithful Angels Serve God.

- A. Hebrews 1:7 refers to the grand role God intended for the angels, to be His honored servants.
  - 1. "Servants" here does not refer to slavlike servants responsible for menial chores. In

the Greek New Testament it originally described an important government official who served the land.

2. Angels, too, are servants in the highest sense, fulfilling a stately role in God's plan of things.

#### B. The Angels Praise God.

1. Matthew 18:10 The faithful angels are forever blessed in heaven where they see God face to face.
2. Psalm 16:11 What David once said about being with the Lord is true for angels as well as believers.
3. Job 38:7 The angel choirs began their hymns of praise right after they were created. (See also Revelation 4:8-11; 5:11-14).
4. Isaiah 6:3 Isaiah was granted a vision of heaven wherein he saw angels singing antiphonal choruses.
5. Luke 2:13-14 Their heavenly hymns also accompanied Jesus' birth.
6. Revelation 7:12 The angels will continue to praise God forever. In heaven they raise their voices in never ending praise.

#### C. Angels are God's "messengers" ("mal'akh").

1. Angels brought a life-saving message to Lot.
2. Luke 1:11-20; 1:26-38 The angel Gabriel announced two important births to key people like Zechariah and Mary.
3. Matthew 1:18-25; 2:13,20 Angel(s) alerted Joseph of the Conception and of Herod's plot.
4. Matthew 28:5-7 Angels delivered the glorious news of Easter to the women at the tomb.
5. Acts 1:11 Two angels were present at the Ascension to tell the apostles that Jesus would return.



6. As messengers of God, angels delivered messages to Old Testament prophets: Elijah (2Kings 1:15), Daniel (Daniel 4:13-17; 8:19; 9:21-22) and Zechariah (Zechariah 1:9-11).
7. After the Ascension, God continued to send these angelic messengers to His apostles.
  - a. Acts 5:20 to direct and encourage them.
  - b. Acts 27:23,24 When Paul was on a storm-tossed ship, an angel assured him that all on the ship would be spared, and that his witness would continue in Rome.
  - c. Revelation 1:1 We have the Book of Revelation because God sent his angel to his servant John to show what must soon take place.
  - d. Acts 8:26 An angel directed Philip to meet the national treasurer of Ethiopia and share the Gospel with him. The man was converted and baptized that day.
  - e. Acts 10:3 An angel appeared to at least one Gentile, a Roman army officer named Cornelius. Cornelius was told to send for Peter. Through Peter, Cornelius and his family and friends were saved.
8. Because we have the Bible, the need for such angel messages is ended. But angels still serve us in other ways.

D. Angels accompany God.

1. 2 Chronicles 18:18 The prophet Micaiah spoke of the Lord as being on His throne with all the angel host on His right and on His left.
2. Daniel 7:10 "Thousands upon thousands attended Him; ten thousand times ten thousand stood before Him" (See also Revelation 5:11).
- 3: "The Lord of hosts" or "the God of hosts".
  - a. "Hosts" can mean something created in great number (Genesis 2:1; Isaiah 34:4) or it can mean simply "people" (Exodus 12:41) or "an army" (1 Samuel 14:50).

- b. For all practical purposes when we see "Lord of hosts" in the Old Testament (no occurrence in the New Testament), it means "Lord of many angels".
  - c. If angels are mightier than armies (2 Kings 19:35), and if God is the ruler over armies of countless such angels, then consider how magnificent God must be! This is what David means to convey in passages like Psalm 24:10.
  - d. The word "Sabaoth," often confused with "Sabbath," originates from Christians taking the sounds of the Hebrew word for "hosts" and putting the same sounds into English letters.
  - e. Unfortunately, the New International Version never speaks of God as the Lord of Hosts but "waters down" the original Hebrew to "Lord almighty" or "God almighty" and deprives the reader of the rich content of the expression.
4. Genesis 18 Two angels accompanied God in the form of regular men when God visited.
  5. Deuteronomy 33:2; Galatians 3:19 Myriads of angels so thoroughly served God at Sinai that Paul says the Law was ordained through angels
  6. Matthew 25:31 When our Lord comes again on the Last Day, not just a few or even thousands, but **all** of the angels of heaven will be with Him.
  7. 1 Thessalonians 4:16,17 Also on the Last Day, the great archangel Michael will call all God's people from their graves. All the angels will be busy serving God, doing all their appointed tasks on that great day.
- E. The faithful angels punish the wicked.
1. Matthew 25:31-33,41,46 One of the great tasks God's angels will have on the Last Day will be to help Christ in judging all people.
  2. Matthew 13:41,42,49,50 Christ will send out His angels and they will weed out of His kingdom everything that causes sin and all

who do evil. They will throw them into the furnace of fire, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

3. Revelation 15 tells us God will use angels to punish the wicked on Judgment Day. John was transported to the end of time where he saw "seven angels with the seven last plagues".
  4. As a preview of that dreadful day, God now, during the history of the world, at times uses angels to punish evil.
    - a. Genesis 19, especially verse 13 speak of the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah. Incidentally, there is no conflict between Genesis 19:13 and 19:24 since the angels serve and do the will of none other than the Lord.
    - b. Acts 12:19-25 An angel of the Lord struck down Herod who was eaten by worms and died. Sin is utterly offensive to God and at times He punishes it already in this life through His angels.
- F. God sent you and me a Savior from sin (John 3:16).

#### Session Four: Angelic Service and Their Ranks

Introduction: Psalm 91:9-13 In Bible times the Lord often used angels to rescue His people from harm and to serve them in other ways. For instance, we have studied how angels protected Elisha and his servant at Dothan and how destructive angels delivered the Israelites through the Passover plague. Scripture records many other incidents in which angels served believers, sometimes with a powerful rescue or sometimes with less spectacular but still very important help.

- I. Faithful angels serve Christians.
  - A. Genesis 24, especially verse 6. When Abraham sent his servant to far-off Aram Naharaim to obtain a suitable wife for son Isaac, the servant was understandably apprehensive about his mission. But Abraham assured the servant that God's angel would go before him to help him, which he did.

- B. 1 Kings 19:1-9 When God's prophet Elijah was discouraged and prayed to die, God sent an angel to give the prophet food and water, and to tell him to eat. Elijah went on his way strengthened.
- C. Daniel 6 In the story of Daniel in the lions' den we see how God sent an angel to defend a government official from harm when the official (Daniel) was wrongly accused because of his faithfulness.
- D. Angels protected the apostles.
  - 1. Acts 5:17-26 When the high priest and his associates had the apostles arrested and imprisoned, the very first night in prison an angel came and let them out. The angel then led them to the temple where crowds gathered around them to hear the Gospel.
  - 2. Acts 12:6,7 Similarly, on the night before Peter was to go before Herod, Peter was sleeping between two guards, bound with chains, and with sentries also guarding the door. Suddenly an angel appeared and told Peter to get up. The chains fell off Peter's wrists and the angel then led the apostle past the motionless guards and out the gate.
- E. Angels rescue the godly and punish the wicked.
  - 1. Genesis 19 The same angels that punished Sodom and Gomorrah also led Lot and his daughters safely out of the city.
  - 2. 2 Kings 18,19 In one great stroke, God used a mighty angel to punish a wicked, blasphemous king and free God's people from terror.
- F. 1 Chronicles 21:8-12 show us how God sometimes uses angels to chastise His people. In order to teach David and his nation an important lesson, God used an angel to bring death to seventy thousand Israelites. Even as the angel was crushing so many lives, he was serving God's people and making David a better king. They learned that trusting in earthly things is a deadly evil.
- G. Angels still aid Christians.
  - 1. Psalm 34:7 Every Christian can be confident that angels are right at hand and on guard.

Even when we are unaware of approaching danger, angels are watching out for us. When threats and hazards come near, the angels push them aside to save us.

2. Matthew 18:10 Angels take a special interest in children, especially believing children. How else can we account for the high survival rate among children in spite of ever-present dangers such as sharp objects, poison chemicals, perilous falls!
3. Even though Christians alone have the promise of angelic protection (Psalm 34:7), it appears that, at times, God sends angels to serve unbelievers.
  - a. Mother and son, Hagar and Ishmael, were "aliens to the household of faith."<sup>7</sup> Even so, the Lord twice sent angels to serve them (Genesis 16:11,12; 21:9-21).
  - b. If God sent angels to guide and help this rebellious mother and son, should we be surprised if God still sends angels to protect at least some unbelievers? (Acts 17:27; 2 Peter 3:9).
  - c. Hebrews 1:14 "Those who will inherit salvation" include those elect of various ages who have not yet come to faith.
4. While we have no way of knowing for sure, angels have no doubt rescued us from potential catastrophes hundreds of times, possibly even several times a day (testimonies).
5. Matthew 4:11; 26:38; Luke 22:43 Here is recorded how the angels even ministered to Jesus in His human needs. What a comfort to know that God uses these same angels, who were great enough to serve Christ, to protect and minister to us!
6. Luke 16:22 Angels minister to us not only while we live. When we die, angels carry our souls to heaven, just as in Lazarus' case.
7. Mark 13:27 On the Last Day angels will be scouring the earth gathering all believers to hear the sweetest words ever spoken: "Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your

inheritance, the Kingdom prepared for you since the creation" (Matthew 25:34).

8. Matthew 13:43,49,50 What a sad day it will be for each unbeliever! But what a splendid day for Christians as we join the angels to be with our Savior forever. At God's command the angels will separate us from the wicked and gather us to be with Jesus.

## II. Ranks of angels.

- A. Scripture speaks of about nine distinct ranks or classes of angels and shows us several of them. Still, information is sketchy on the exact number of ranks, differences, and if some ranks are superior to others. Nevertheless, we can learn some things about the different ranks of angels and their duties.
- B. Archangel ("chief angel") - the only one this term is attributed to is Michael whose name means "Who is like God?" Some of the most important duties have been his.
  1. Daniel 12:1; 10:21 Michael was "the great prince who protects" the people of Judah.
  2. Jude 9 It was Michael who strove with Satan in a mysterious contention over Moses' body.
  3. Revelation 12:7-9 John saw Michael leading an army of angels against Satan and his hosts and hurl the great dragon down out of heaven.
  4. Matthew 25:31; 1 Thessalonians 4:16 Michael will be with that army of "all the angels" accompanying Christ at His return. The archangel's voice will be heard along with the trumpet of God.
  5. Daniel 10:13 While the Bible never speaks of "archangels" in the plural, Michael is called "one of the chief princes," indicating that there are others who enjoy nobility not greatly different from that of Michael.
- C. Cherubim (plural for cherub) first mentioned in Genesis 3:24 when God placed them to guard the way to the Tree of Life. He did this to prevent our first parents from eating of the tree and living forever in a state of sin.

1. Ezekiel 1:5-24 informs us that the cherubim he saw in a vision had quite an awesome appearance with four faces, four wings, a complexion like fire and "an expanse, sparkling like ice and awesome" above the heads of each one. As far as we know, there may be only four cherubim.
  2. Psalm 99:1; Isaiah 37:16 Unless sent elsewhere for specific tasks, the cherubim stand as an honor guard surrounding the throne of God.
  3. Revelation 4-6 Most likely, the cherubim and the "four living creatures" that John saw in his vision are one and the same. Ezekiel uses both names for the same angels (10:15). Although John's description (Revelation 4:6-8) is not identical to Ezekiel's, there are strong similarities. Both writers were struggling to capture heavenly visions in earthly language.
- D. Seraphs are mentioned only in Isaiah 6 where the prophet saw them flying above the Lord in heaven. They called to one another: "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord Almighty; the whole earth is full of his glory." They sang with such powerful voices that "the doorposts and thresholds shook" (6:3,4). These are possibly the same creatures referred to in Ezekiel and Revelation 4.
- E. Gabriel is the only good angel, other than Michael, that inspired Scripture mentions by name. Gabriel is in a class by himself appearing four times in the Biblical record. Twice to explain visions to Daniel (Daniel 8:16; 9:21), to Zechariah to tell him he would be the father of John the Baptist (Luke 1:5-22) and to Mary to announce that Jesus would be born to her (Luke 1:26-38).
- F. Thrones, powers, rulers and authorities, mighty angels - ranks referred to briefly in Scripture.
1. Colossians 1:16 "For by Him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things were created by him and for him." (See also Ephesians 6:12).

2. Revelation 10:1 In His vision, John saw a "mighty angel" of whom he says, "He was robed in a cloud, with a rainbow above his head; his face was like the sun, and his legs were like fiery pillars." (See also 18:21)

#### Session Five: The Angel of the Lord and Conclusion

Introduction: As majestic as angels are, some descriptions of them in the Old Testament seem just too grand to be real. A case in point is the angel of the Lord appearing in the burning bush of Exodus 3. As Moses went to see the radiant angel, God (the angel?) called to Moses: "Take off your sandals, for the place where you are standing is holy ground..."

Could an angel's presence make a place "holy ground"? Could an angel call himself "the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob"? But if no angel can claim to be God, then who was "the angel of the Lord" who appeared to Moses?

#### I. The Angel of the Lord.

##### A. The key to solving the question noted above:

1. The Hebrew word for angel ("mal'akh") actually means "messenger" (Haggai 1:13; Malachi 2:7).
2. The supreme "Messenger" from heaven to earth is Jesus Christ (John 1:1; Matthew 17:5). When He appears before His incarnation, in the Old Testament, He is often called "the Angel (Messenger) of the Lord," or the "Angel of the Covenant" (Malachi 3:1).

##### B. Some examples from the Old Testament.

1. Genesis 16: 7-13 Here the Angel of the Lord makes Hagar a promise no created angel could make (exceedingly great progeny). Had Hagar merely seen a created angel, she would not have been surprised to be alive afterward. She is astonished to have seen God and lived.
2. Genesis 21:17-18 In verse 17 the Angel seems to distinguish between himself and God whom He speaks of in the third person. But then in verse 18 He repeats the promise in the first person. The speaker seems to be God Himself, yet a person distinct from God: the second Person of the Trinity.



3. Genesis 22:11-18 Again, the Angel of the Lord speaks in the third, then the first person. Some might argue that verses 15-18 are just direct quotations transmitted by a created angel. But why would God communicate through one of his creatures to Abraham to whom He had already appeared personally before (12:1; 15:1; 17:1; 18:1)?
4. Genesis 31:11-13 Here the Angel of the Lord very clearly identifies Himself as the God of Bethel, to whom Jacob had made a vow.
5. Genesis 48: 15-16 Here Jacob, identifies the Angel "which redeemed me from all evil" with the God of his fathers.
6. Exodus 3:2-14 In verse 4 the Angel of the Lord is clearly identified with God who then introduces Himself as the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. He also gives His distinct name: "I AM THAT I AM."
7. Exodus 14:15-19 (Note especially verses 15 and 19.) Apparently the Angel of the Lord which went before the Hebrews made His presence perceptible by the pillar of cloud by day and the pillar of fire by night. Again, the Angel of the Lord is God Himself and not merely a created angel.
8. Joshua 5:13-15 The fact that this "captain of the Lord's host" accepted worship from Joshua, and that the place where He appeared to Joshua became holy by His very presence (cf. Exodus 3:5), is evidence that this is actually God Himself, the King of angels.
9. Judges 6:11 Only after the fire consumed the meat and the unleavened cakes does Gideon realize that this was God Himself. Indeed, Gideon says "Alas O Lord God! For because I have seen an angel of the Lord face to face (I must now die)." But the Lord assures him.
10. Judges 13:3-23 Although He was called by Manoah's wife "a man" and "a man of God," the Angel of the Lord accepted worship from them in the form of sacrifices. This clearly indicates that this is neither an ordinary man, nor a prophet, nor even an created angel, but God Himself, as Manoah and his wife concluded

11. Passages open to debate: Numbers 22:22-25; Judges 2:1-4; Isaiah 37:36.

C. Some guiding principals will help us determine which passages refer to the preincarnate Son of God, and which are referring to created angels.

1. Whenever and wherever the name "Yahweh" or a divine attribute or divine work or worship is accorded to an angel appearing to patriarchs and other believers, there not a created angel but the Son of God is to be understood (Genesis 22:11-23; Joshua 5:13-15).
2. If there is any doubt whether the "angel" in a particular passage refers to one of the Lord's mighty spirit servants, or the Son of God Himself, presume it is the created angel.
3. Only in the Old Testament is the Son of God ever called an angel, and usually in the first several books. He is never called an angel in the New Testament, and very rarely after the book of Judges (Zechariah 3; Malachi 3:1).
4. When the Son of God is called an angel, the term in the Bible usually appears as "the [or "an"] angel of the Lord". He is never called a seraph or cherub. And rarely is He simply called "angel".
5. Do not underestimate the power and authority of created angels. God has made them to be His mighty servants and given them tremendous capabilities. While they are not almighty, they are capable of doing amazing things.
6. Sometimes angels have accompanied God as He came to earth to speak with people (Genesis 18). Some otherwise confusing Bible stories might best be understood in this way.
7. Even though angels are God's ambassadors, their role is vastly superior to the relationship between sinful human ambassadors and the governments they represent. We should not limit what we expect angels can do by similar limitations placed on human ambassadors of countries. Rather, we should expect that holy angels represent God and speak for

Him far more magnificently and thoroughly than any human emissary ever could.

8. Most importantly, it is not crucial for us to know whether "the angel of the Lord" in every particular passage is the Son of God Himself or a created angel (cf. Revelation 10:1ff). Both Christ and His holy angels do only the will of the Triune God. Whether something was done by an angel or by God the Son directly, it is the Lord who has done the work and He who is being honored.

- C. While Bible believers may disagree as to whether "the angel of the Lord" in a certain chapter is Christ or a created angel, do not let this bother you. The Angel of the Burning Bush is most certainly God the Son, but there may be some difference of opinion, for instance, on the angel who visited Hagar (Genesis 16 and 21). This is not a divisive difference of doctrine. Only be careful that you neither rob Christ of glory or underestimate the authority God has given His angels.

## II. Conclusion to this Bible study on angels.

### A. Recognize the importance of angels.

1. God has shown us in His Word how important it is for each Christian to know about angels and to believe what the Bible says about them
2. It is vital to know about Satan and his angels so that we can be on guard against their attacks.
3. It is comforting to know that God's angels are nearby, watching over us. We have nothing to fear.

### B. Recognize the blessings of angels.

1. Because we rarely if ever see angels, we often fail to recognize all that they are doing for us: the many times they turn away danger and relieve our suffering; the many times they help us whatever our needs may be.
2. Because you now know some of the things angels do for you in God's name, look for evidence of their work in your life. Recognize the blessings God gives through angels.

C. Recognize the role model of angels.

1. How they lead the heavenly hosts (angels and saints) in praise and worship of God (Isaiah 1:1ff.; Revelation 4:8ff.).
2. How they join in our heavenly worship of God and Christ (Revelation 4-5).

C. Praise God for angels!

1. Because the faithful angels do such extraordinary things for us, should we Christians be moved to praise them in gratitude for their loving care? Never! We worship God alone (Exodus 20:3; Revelation 22:8,9).
2. But we will regularly thank God for all He does for us through His angels. He has created them to be His mighty servants. He sends them to be near us and protect us. He sends us many and varied blessings through them. To God alone be glory!

## ANGELS AND LUTHERAN THEOLOGY

It is time to draw some implications from what we have learned thus far on the doctrine of angels from Holy Scripture before we proceed further in our presentation. It is obvious that all of Holy Scripture and particularly the Gospel accounts have a great deal to say about angels. The prophets and apostles wax long and eloquently about the important part angels played throughout history and especially in God's redemptive plan culminating in the person and work of His Son Jesus Christ. To ignore these many references to angels altogether, or to pay little attention to this doctrine in our ministry would be to shut the eyes and ears of our parishioners to a large amount of comfort and assurance which God wants His people to have (Mt 28: 20).

### **Angels and the Lutheran Confessions**

In the confessional writings of the Lutheran Church we find no article in which the doctrine of angels is specifically considered. We find only occasional references made to them here and there. But this by no means indicates that the doctrine of angels is unimportant or unnecessary. It only means that, at the time the Lutheran Confessions were written, there was no particular error concerning this

doctrine that was agitating Christendom. For this reason the confessional writers deemed it unnecessary to include a special paragraph or article in the Confessions on the doctrine of angels.

However, there are at least a few confessional references to angels worth mentioning. For instance, in Article XXI of the Apology of the Augsburg Confession, its writer Melanchthon makes the point "that the angels pray for us." He cites Zechariah 1:12 where an angel prays, "O Lord of hosts, how long wilt thou have no mercy on Jerusalem?"<sup>8</sup> Luther concurs with this statement in the Second Part, Article II, of the Smalcald Articles.<sup>9</sup> But he also warns against an abuse of this teaching:

...it does not follow that we should invoke angels and saints, pray to them, keep fasts and festivals for them, say masses and offer sacrifices to them, establish churches, altars, and services for them, serve them in still other ways, regard them as helpers in time of need, and attribute all sorts of help to them, assigning to each of them a special function, as the papists teach and practice. This is idolatry. Such honor belongs to God alone.<sup>10</sup>

In the same article Luther makes the point that the Word of God alone and "no one else, not even an angel" shall establish articles of faith.<sup>11</sup> He blames some of the abuses of the Mass and other idolatries on evil angels who have appeared as spirits of the departed (reported by Gregory the Great and Peter Damiani) who "with unspeakable lies and cunning, demanded masses, vigils, pilgrimages, and other alms."<sup>12</sup>

There is a considerable number of references to the chief evil angel in the Confessions. The Augsburg Confession calls the devil a liar and a murderer,<sup>13</sup> God's enemy,<sup>14</sup> and the cause of sin.<sup>15</sup> The Large Catechism says the devil hinders God's Word and work,<sup>16</sup> hinders spiritual and earthly government,<sup>17</sup> and is after our very lives.<sup>18</sup> The Apology points out how history shows what power the devil has and that all men are subjected to him.<sup>19</sup> But the Formula of Concord assures us that God's foreknowledge sets the devil's limits and that his kingdom will finally be destroyed.<sup>20</sup>

By God's grace, the Confessions not only provide us with the wherewithal to battle the devil, but they also tell us how to use it. Stressing Christian education, the Large Catechism urges pastors to "teach the devil to death."<sup>21</sup> What better opportunity do we have to impart the precious truths of our faith, such as the presence of good and bad angels in our lives, than in the educational nurture of our people. In the young this can take place primarily during confirmation instruction. Other ages need to be reminded of these truths whenever we have occasion to practice Christian admonition, counsel, preach, or teach Bible class.

The new synodical Small Catechism with Explanation (1991 edition), like the 1943 edition, has a significant section on angels under the First Article of the Apostles' Creed.<sup>22</sup> The good angels are again referred to in other

places such as the section on Christ's Second Coming<sup>23</sup> and in the section on the Resurrection of the Body.<sup>24</sup> The evil angels are also mentioned briefly in connection with the Second Commandment (not to use satanic arts).<sup>25</sup> People, particularly youngsters of confirmation age, are naturally interested in the subject of angels, good as well as evil. With the occult on the rise, as well as with a growing amount of public interest in things like satanism, witchcraft and demon possession, pastors would do well to fortify their catechumens with the "whole armor of God." Having done so, these youngsters will be able to stand, in Christ, against the wiles of the devil (Eph. 6). They need to be instructed as to how to use their shield of faith to quench all the fiery darts of the evil one. They need to be taught to pray as Luther prayed: "Let Your holy angel be with me, that the evil foe may have no power over me."<sup>26</sup>

God's Word actually routs the devil,<sup>27</sup> as does God's name<sup>28</sup> and prayer.<sup>29</sup> That saving Word comes to us signed in the sacraments as well as written and spoken. The Large Catechism specifically says that Baptism snatches us from the clutches of the devil.<sup>30</sup> It would follow that the Lord's Supper keeps us from the same as it, too, contains the whole Gospel.<sup>31</sup>

Again, it is true that the Confessions, compared with Holy Scripture, do not say near as much about angels in general and, in fact, warn against distortions and abuses of



this doctrine. But this is not to say that the Confessions place little importance on what God's Word says about angels. To the contrary, the Confessions regard all of Holy Scripture to be worthy of our study and reflection. In the Solid Declaration of the Formula of Concord, Article XI, it says:

...one must not by-pass or reject a teaching of the divine Word because some people misuse or misunderstand it; on the contrary, precisely in order to avert such misuse and misunderstanding, we must set forth the correct meaning on the basis of Scripture .... All Scripture, inspired by God, should minister not to security and impenitence but "to reproof, correction, and improvement" (II Tim. 3:16). Furthermore, everything in the Word of God is written down for us, not for the purpose of thereby driving us to despair but in order that "by steadfastness, by the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope" (Rom. 15:4).<sup>32</sup>

The Confessions in numerous instances refer to the chief evil angel, the devil, and show how Christ alone has conquered him and how God's Word, baptism, and prayer continue to put Satan to flight. This indicates what emphasis the confessional writers actually do place on the existence of angels, their power and importance.

However, there are still a number of issues raised by the foregoing study that bear further discussion. Do angels still influence things in our world today and, if so, to what extent? Does the Lord still send messages by means of angels? Do we each have a guardian angel and are children really guarded more particularly than others? Also, how do we combat the devil and his evil angels today? Should demon

possession still be a concern for us today and, if so, what are its signs? What about the need for exorcism? Is there a place for it in pastoral care?

We will now turn to some of the Lutheran dogmaticians to see what insights they have deduced from the Scriptures that may shed light on these issues.

### **Angels and the Lutheran Dogmaticians**

I have already mentioned some of the tenets of Martin Luther regarding angels in my comments on his Large Catechism and the Smalcald Articles. Angels, whether good or evil, were very real to Luther. He was convinced that, on the basis of Holy Scripture, we must concede them a great influence on human life and affairs. Not only are the good angels "waiting for our coming into our future fatherland but also that they are truly around us in this life, providing for and guiding our affairs, if we would only believe it."<sup>33</sup> Speaking of the evil angels, Luther says that whatever happens comes to a far greater extent from them than from adversaries that we can see with our eyes.<sup>34</sup> Luther believed that the good and evil angels are constantly contending for us; the latter to harm, the former to protect us.<sup>35</sup>

This is true particularly so far as the helpless little children are concerned, said Luther.<sup>36</sup> He believed that such little ones, above all, have need of the protection of

the good angels. In a sermon on Matthew 18:1-11, delivered on St. Michael's Day in 1533, Luther writes:

If it were not for the protection of the dear angels, no child would grow to full age, even if the parents took all possible care. That is why God has set and ordained not only parents but also emperors, kings, princes, and finally, His exalted, great spirits, the holy angels, to guard and protect children that no evil may befall them. It is good to impress this truth on children.<sup>37</sup>

Luther not only believed it to be perfectly Scriptural to ascribe escape from some accident to a good angel's protection, he also often expressed the view that angels, good and bad, are active in the area of public affairs, in national and international matters.<sup>38</sup> Fortunately for mankind, says Luther, the good angels are stronger than the bad. Preaching during the critical days of the Diet of Augsburg in 1530, Luther said:

That the entire world is not a mass of flames, that all towns and villages are not lying in a heap of ruins, we owe to the working and doing of the good angels. They are far more sensible and wise than the evil angels, because they have a mirror into which they look, a mirror the devil does not have. It is called the "facies Patris," the face of our Lord God. This is why one good angel is far wiser than all the devils put together. The good angels are much mightier too; for they stand in the presence of Him whose name is "Omnipotens," the Almighty.<sup>39</sup>

Good angels not only accompany us throughout the day and stand about our bed at night, says Luther, but they also stay with us in death. In fact, good angels will no doubt be with us as we pass through death into life eternal.<sup>40</sup>

As with Luther, C.F.W. Walther attributed much of the evil that befalls Christians to the devil and to his evil angels. Note where Walther places the blame for stolen money in a letter to a pastor arriving in San Francisco:

That on this trip you lost a sum of money to a thief is such a small misfortune that it is hardly worth mentioning, and certainly not worth any grieving. Don't by any means do the devil the favor of grieving over it. This evil spirit, who guided the hand of the thief, has no other objective but to make you lose heart thereby, since he notices that you are coming in faith, with the weapon of the Word of God to capture his palace. Therefore just laugh at him and show him that you have not placed your confidence on the god mammon but in the God whom Satan nailed to the cross but who on the third day arose victorious from the dead.<sup>41</sup>

Like Luther, Walther was an expert on battling the devil with the power of Christ. In a sermon on Matthew 4: 1-11, Walther says that two things are necessary: first, that one know the treachery of Satan and, secondly that one know how to conquer him. We learn both from the temptations of our Savior in the wilderness:

Satan either tries to make the Christian despair through poverty, want, trouble, misery, disgrace, mockery, and all kinds of misfortune; or he tries to move him through falsifying God's Word to all sorts of dangerous errors, heresies, and doubts concerning God's Word; or he tries to entangle his poor heart in his hellish nets again by painting pictures of good days, riches, honor, and the joy of the world ... but Satan appears to Christians most often under the form of money, false doctrine, and honor and worldly joy. ... Therefore see, dear Christian, let this be your weapon in all temptations. Learn from your Savior to answer all the attacks of Satan only with: "It is written."<sup>42</sup>

While the Lutheran Dogmaticians acknowledge that they have no definite answer to the question, whether everyone has his or her own so-called guardian angel, Johann Baier offers this opinion: While the guardianship of any person is not assigned to a particular angel in such a way that he is deprived of the aid of the rest, it is still probable that at least one angel is appointed for the protection of each godly person.<sup>43</sup> Baier adds that, in extraordinary cases, many angels might be sent to the help of single individuals.<sup>44</sup>

What do the Lutheran church fathers say about demoniac manifestations and possessions? Luther tells of an interesting case where a young child died and the father, having ceased to believe in purgatory, did not pay for any masses for the dead:

One night at eight o'clock the members of the family heard the sound of a crying child in the bedroom, and this sound was repeated every evening at the same hour. The priests heard of it and exclaimed, "The poor little soul! There you can see what happens when one neglects having masses said." Luther advised the father to treat the devil, who was imitating the crying of the child, with contempt and indifference. Thereupon the crying ceased. Instead there was a great racket and commotion. Objects were tossed about and the bed covers were snatched from people who had retired. On one occasion it frightened a guest nearly out of his wits. Finally, when the spook began to cause a rumpus in an adjoining room, a brave woman exposed her fundament, broke wind, and said, "Look devil, use that for a walking cane and make a pilgrimage to Rome and your false god, the pope, and get an indulgence from him." After that the devil and his intolerable racket were no longer heard. "For he is a proud spirit and cannot stomach contempt."<sup>45</sup>

Johann Quenstedt gives the following signs of demoniac possession:

One: sudden knowledge of foreign languages or of accomplishments and skills which the possessed has not acquired by study and practice and which he does not remember when restored to a sane condition. Two: knowledge of hidden articles or of coming events. Three: unnatural and superhuman physical strength. Four: the ability of reproducing the cries of birds and beasts exactly, without their vocal organs. Five: foul speech. Six: course gestures. Seven: bellowing voice. Eight: blasphemy and gross slander. Nine: savage cruelty against one's body or against others.<sup>46</sup>

However, Quenstedt also urges that we be careful in each individual case not to say that those who are suffering merely from a serious illness are necessarily afflicted by the devil.<sup>47</sup>

Richard Jahn, speaking to a district convention of our Lutheran Church - Missouri Synod (1954-55), deals with the question: "Is it correct to say that all temporal ills and adversities in this world are the work of the devil?" Citing Jeremiah 11:11 and Amos 3:6, Jahn begins by saying that nothing is done without the will of God:

In everything that happens God is either personally active, or He permits it to happen. If He wants some evil to befall individuals or groups of people, He permits the devil to have power temporarily to bring about this evil. When such terrible calamities happen, we must think of God as the One who willed it thus, and the devil as the one who is the instrument to carry it out. We must not, however, assume that in every individual case where some calamity or plague comes upon mankind, the devil is always the author. God Himself sometimes punishes people directly. We may establish it as a rule that the devil is an instrument of God to bring about punishment, but we cannot differentiate too exactly. There are some natural

phenomena, such as storms, earthquakes, and similar things, by which God punishes mankind, and we must always remember that God has all things in His hand and that all punishment, all plagues, are occurring only because He permits them to occur.<sup>49</sup>

We have examined the doctrine of angels in light of God's Word. We have also seen how this scriptural doctrine has been set forth in the Lutheran Confessions. Now we have studied how some of the Lutheran dogmaticians have used their God-given deductive reasoning, clear passages of Scripture, and solid statements of the Confessions to formulate comments on difficult questions regarding angels for which the Scriptures do not always give direct answers. It is now time for us to turn to yet another specific topic concerning angels, namely, the Angel of the Lord.

### **The Angel of the Lord**

There are many passages in the Old Testament which refer to an "Angel of the Lord" and which seem to indicate not a creature, but rather a divine Being, in other words, God Himself. The expressions used are "mal'akh YHWH," "mak'akh 'elohim," and "mal'akh ha'elohim" in Genesis, Exodus, Joshua, and Judges, besides occasional references such as "his angel" ("mal'akho," Ge 24:7,40), "the angel which redeemed me" ("hammal'akh haggio'el 'othi," Ge 48:16), and either "an angel" or "mine angel" ("mal'akh" or "mal'akhi," Ex 23:20,23; 32:34; 33:2; Nu 20:16).

Some have regarded all these passages as referring to created angels. They believe that God might have used created angels as a medium for manifesting Himself to people. Others, however, see evidence in at least some of these passages that the "Angel of the Lord" is none other than a person of the Godhead. The fact that has disturbed some is that sometimes the Angel of the Lord is differentiated from God, and at other times he seems to be identified with God. But because of this, many believe that the Angel of the Lord is none other than the preincarnate Christ, the second person of the Godhead, who is indeed identical with God (Col 2:9), yet can be distinguished as a person distinct from God the Father.

The idea that all of these passages refer to created angels is as old as St. Augustine, with whom St. Jerome and Gregory the Great agree. This might explain the traditional position of Roman Catholicism on this matter which is consistent with its custom of venerating the holy angels. The Armenians and Rationalists also share this view.

However, the greater number of the church fathers such as Irenaeus, Cyprian, Chrysostom, Eusebius, Hilary, Clement of Alexandria, and Theodoret, as well as most orthodox Lutheran dogmaticians like Abraham Calov, Johann Gerhard, and Johann Quenstedt understand the Angel of the Lord in the Old Testament to be identical with the Logos of the New Testament. In other words, they believed the Angel of the



Lord to be a manifestation of the second person of the Trinity before His incarnation.

The only safe way to reach a conclusion on passages of this type is to examine the pertinent passages in their immediate and wider context, and to determine in this way whether the "Angel of the Lord" in each case is a created angel sent by God or the pre-incarnate Christ. This is the method Johann Quenstedt used in approaching the question, Whether the Angel of the Lord who appeared to the patriarchs in the Old Testament, and who sometimes is Himself described as God, was a created or an uncreated angel, that is, the Son of God? His thesis is:

Whenever and wherever the name Jehovah or a divine attribute or work or divine worship is accorded to an angel appearing to the patriarchs and other believers, there not a created but the uncreated Angel, namely the Son of God, the Captain of the heavenly host, the Lord of all the angels, is to be understood. By an ineffable condescension He appeared to the patriarchs in human form and thus gave them, as it were, a preview of His future incarnation.<sup>49</sup>

The meaning of "mal'akh" is "one who is sent," or "a messenger." "Angel of the Lord" or "angel of God" then means "one who is sent by God," or "messenger of God." In every Old Testament passage where the expression "Angel of the Lord" or "Angel of God" occurs, it designates someone who is sent as an emissary of God. Obviously this expression can convey several different meanings depending upon the individual who is sent. For example in Haggai 1:13 the

prophet calls himself a "mal'akh YHWH," "the Lord's messenger," which is exactly what the prophets were. They were sent as messengers of God to proclaim God's Word to men. In Malachi 2:7 the priest is called the "messenger of the Lord of hosts (mal'akh YHWH-tsebha'oth)," because he is sent to teach God's law to God's people. Malachi 3:1 predicts the coming of John the Baptist saying: "Behold, I will send my messenger (mal'akhi), and he shall prepare the way before me." John was sent to God's people before Jesus Himself taught publicly, to prepare the way into men's hearts for the message Jesus would bring them. In this sense John was the messenger of God. So was Jesus, for it continues to read in the same verse: "And the Lord whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to his temple, even the messenger of the covenant, whom ye delight in, behold, he shall come saith the Lord of hosts." So, here we have a passage in which both the Lord's forerunner, and Jesus Himself are called messengers of God. Both were messengers in a slightly different way having different tasks to perform, but both were alike in that they served as messengers of God to men and are therefore designated as "mal'akhi" and "mal'akhi habberith" respectively.

In Genesis, Job, and Psalms there are thirteen instances of the word "angel" ("mal'akh") in the plural.<sup>50</sup> There are also a few times that "mal'akh" is used to describe some angelic quality to a human being (1Sa 29:9;

2Sa 14:17). None of these passages come into consideration for the purpose of this study.

However, besides these passages, there are quite a number that do not necessarily refer to a created angel, or in many instances cannot refer to a created angel for one reason or another. In consulting dogmaticians like Quenstedt, Gerhard and Philippi, there is no exact agreement on all of these passages. But for the most part there is a very definite number of passages that have characteristics which enable us to determine who the Angel of the Lord is in each case.

The first of these is the appearance of the Angel of the Lord to Hagar in the wilderness as recorded in Genesis 16. Here the Angel of the Lord makes Hagar a promise that no created angel could make. He promises to give her an exceedingly great progeny. This appears to be a divine attribute by which Hagar "called the name of the Lord (YHWH) that spake to her, Thou God seest me; for she said, Have I also here looked after him that seeth me?" Had Hagar merely seen a created angel, she would not have been surprised to survive the vision. But in fact she **does** seem surprised that she had seen God and yet still lived. Is it not apparent, therefore, that the Angel of the Lord in this instance was no mere creature, but God Himself?

The second such occurrence is recorded in Genesis 21 when the Angel of God appeared to Hagar in the wilderness of

Beersheba after Abraham had sent Hagar and Ishmael away. Fearing that her son Ishmael would die, Hagar had withdrawn a short distance from him so as not to see the death of the child, and she wept. But in verse 17 and 18 the Angel of God called out to Hagar assuring her that he would make of her son a great nation. In verse 17 the Angel of God seems to distinguish between himself and God, of whom he speaks in the third person: "God hath heard the voice of the lad." But then he continues in the first person the promise he had made before: "I will make of him a great nation." The speaker here is God himself, yet a person distinct from God, an apparent contradiction that might disturb some exegetes. But when we keep in mind that God was revealed also in the Old Testament as being triune, then we see here merely added evidence of the three persons in the one Godhead. The Angel of God is apparently the second person of the Trinity referring to the first person as "God."

In Genesis 22 we read where God told Abraham to sacrifice his son Isaac in the land of Moriah. But when Abraham arrived with his son at the site on the third day and was about to slay his son, the Angel of the Lord called out from heaven staying Abraham's hand. Again in verses 11 and 12 the Angel of the Lord distinguishes between himself and God while at the same time identifying himself with God. We are compelled as before to conclude that this is another person of the Godhead other than God the Father. Some might

argue that verses 15-18 should be understood as being a direct quotation transmitted by a created angel. But why would God use this means of communicating with Abraham when He had already appeared to him several times before in person (Ge 12:1; 15:1; 17:1; 18:1)? It would seem strange that, after such direct communication with Abraham, God would at such a crucial time choose to speak to him through the mediation of a creature, albeit a heavenly one.

Jacob, too, had an encounter with the Angel of the Lord in a dream which he related to Rachel and Leah in Genesis 31:11-13. Here the Angel of God clearly identifies himself as the God of Bethel, whom Jacob had encountered on his way to Mesopotamia, and to whom he had made a vow. This passage, perhaps more clearly than any other, reveals the true identity of the Angel of God, namely, God Himself. There is also another reference to Jacob's encounter with this Angel of the Lord in the blessing aged Jacob bestowed on Joseph and his sons (Ge 48:15-16). Here, too, the patriarch makes the identification of "the Angel which redeemed me from all evil" with the God of his fathers."

In the book of Exodus (3:2) the Angel of the Lord appeared to Moses in a flame of fire out of the midst of a bush. In verses 4-6 the Angel of the Lord is clearly identified with God who then introduces Himself as "the God of thy father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob." Later in verse 14 God reveals to Moses his

distinctive name, I AM THAT I AM, and it is again obvious that this Angel of the Lord was no creature, but God in person.

During the actual Exodus from Egypt the Lord explained that He would lead the Israelites on dry ground through the midst of the sea (Ex 14:15ff). Then in verse 19 we read, "And the Angel of God, which went before the camp of Israel, removed and went behind them." From this it is apparent that the Angel of God which went before the Israelites made his presence perceptible by the pillar of cloud by day and the pillar of fire by night. In this way, He led them through the wilderness and on this occasion protected them from the pursuing Egyptians. Again the Angel of God is seen to be God Himself, and not merely a created angel.

In Exodus 33:2-15 Moses makes a sharp distinction between "an angel" who would be a created being whom God offered to send with him and "thy presence" which would have been God in person. Here is a passage with reference to an angel not to be identified with, but rather **contrasted** with the person of God Himself. However, in Numbers 20:16 Moses tells the king of Edom, "When we cried unto the Lord, he heard our voice, and sent an angel, and hath brought us forth out of Egypt." According to Exodus 33:14-15 this "angel" or messenger was none other than God's presence in person. Here we have a good example of how the word "angel" is used various ways in the Old Testament. Sometimes it is

a common noun referring to creatures of God. Sometimes it is a proper noun referring to God Himself. Only the context can reveal in each instance which is the case. Yet in all these passages the basic meaning of the word "mal'akh" is always "messenger," a messenger sent by God to men. No doubt these passages also hold the key to understanding the cryptic expression in Isaiah 63:9, "In all their affliction he was afflicted, and the angel of his presence saved them."

There is another noteworthy incident recorded in Joshua 5: 13-15 that is strongly suggestive of the Angel of the Lord although the expression itself is not used here. Instead, it is the "captain of the Lord's host" who here accepts worship from Joshua. Moreover, he designates the place whereon he appeared to Joshua as having become holy by his very presence (cf. Ex 3:5). Could this be evidence that this was none other than God Himself appearing, this time not as the Angel of the Lord, but as the captain of the Lord's host? Might this also be the same Prince of Angels who had twelve legions of angels at His immediate disposal in Gethsemane (Mt 26:53)?

In Judges 6:11 we read about the Angel of the Lord appearing to Gideon to commission him for saving Israel from the Midianites. When Gideon presented him with a kid and unleavened cakes of bread, the Angel told Gideon to place these offerings on a rock. Then the Angel of the Lord touched the meat and the bread with end of his staff, and

fire rose up out of the rock consuming the meat and the bread. Only then did Gideon seem to realize that this Angel of the Lord was actually God Himself. Indeed, he even fears that he must now die because he has seen an angel of the Lord face to face. It was the Lord Himself who then assured Gideon that he would not die.

Judges 13 records another similar occurrence when the Angel of the Lord appears first the wife of Manoah the Danite, and later to Manoah himself, to announce the impending birth of their son Samson. Like Gideon, Manoah prepared a meat offering and offered it upon a rock. But when the flame went up toward heaven from off the altar, the Angel of the Lord ascended in the flame (v.20). Like Gideon, Manoah also feared that the two of them would die because they had seen God (v.22). The Angel of the Lord, although he was at first called "a man" and "a man of God" by Manoah's wife, accepted worship from them in the form of sacrifices. This makes it clear that this was neither an ordinary man or prophet, nor a created angel, but God Himself, as both Manoah and his wife finally concluded.

In light of the passages we have considered above, it is obvious that in the days of the patriarchs and up into the days of the Judges, God occasionally used a unique method of communicating with His Old Testament believers. He sent His special messenger, the Angel of the Lord to Hagar, Abraham, Jacob, Moses, Joshua, Gideon, Manoah and the



latter's wife in order to bring them special messages important for the unfolding of God's salvation plan for mankind. This Angel of the Lord is obviously one of the persons of the Trinity. In several of the passages He is identified as God, He performs divine acts, accepts divine worship, and displays divine attributes. If He cannot be God the Father because the Father is the One who sends the Angel of the Lord, then there are only two remaining possibilities. He is either the Second person of the Trinity, God the Son, or the third person, namely God the Holy Spirit. The latter possibility seems very unlikely because there are many very direct Old Testament references to the Holy Spirit which are easily recognizable, designating Him simply as "the Spirit of God." This leaves us with only one conclusion.

H.C. Leupold makes the following points in reference to Genesis 16:7:

But the angel of the Lord ("mal'akh Yahweh"), who was He? We believe Hengstenberg and Keil demonstrated adequately both that He was divine and that He is to be regarded as a kind of pre-incarnation of the Messiah -- using the term "pre-incarnation" as indeed open to criticism if pressed too closely. For our passage His identity with Yahweh is fully established by verse 13. For the present we offer Whitelaw's five arguments (condensed) for this position. The Angel of the Lord is not a created being but the Divine Being Himself; for

1. He explicitly identifies Himself with Yahweh on various occasions.
2. Those to whom He makes His presence known recognize Him as divine.
3. The Biblical writers call Him Yahweh.
4. The doctrine here implied of a plurality

of persons in the Godhead is in complete accordance with earlier foreshadowing.

5. The organic unity of Scripture would be broken if it could be proved that the central point in the Old Testament revelation was a created angel, while that of the New is the incarnation of the God-Man.<sup>51</sup>

In these points Leupold agrees exactly with Johann Gerhard, who says, "When either the name Jehovah or divine works are divine worship is attributed in Scripture to an angel, then this Angel must be understood to be the Son of God."<sup>52</sup> Francis Pieper quotes with approval F.A. Philippi, who in his Kirchliche Glaubenslehre, after enumerating the passages in which "the Angel of the Lord is different from Jehovah in regard to His Person, and yet one with Him in essence," says,

In their native sense these passages teach that the Angel of the Lord is the uncreated angel, identical with Jehovah, to whom divine attributes, works, names, and worship are ascribed. If we found in these passages only Oriental hyperbolism, then we would sacrifice the solid basis for Scripture interpretation, and, following such a course consistently, would with the rationalist dissolve and cancel even the firmest and most indestructible revelation.<sup>53</sup>

Of course, there are some who do not share these views. They like to regard the Angel of the Lord always as a created angel, who indeed on occasion may represent God in His contacts with human beings and may even quote Him directly. But they insist that this messenger must always be understood to be a mere creature, an emissary of God to transmit God's word to mortal man, much in the same way the prophets did in subsequent centuries.

Those who insist on him always being a mere creature do so with two lines of argument. According to one, the frequent occurrence of an angel of the Lord in the New Testament is always to be understood as a created angel. They then rationalize that, since in New Testament Greek "aggelos kyriou" always designates a created angel, therefore its counterpart expression in the Old Testament must also always designate such a creature. But this first argument is a non sequitur.

Others will deny the identification of the Angel of the Lord with the pre-incarnate Christ on the grounds that Jesus is, in their opinion, merely a human being who has no pre-existence in the Old Testament. Therefore the Angel of the Lord, according to their thinking, must be a created angel if he is anything at all. But obviously this is a conclusion based on unbelief and contrary to Scripture.

Besides the passages we have examined there are many others in the Old Testament in most of which it is at once evident that they are references to created angels carrying out the will of God. There are also a few passages in the Old Testament where the angel mentioned may well have been the Angel of the Lord, the pre-incarnate Christ, but the reference does not contain enough evidence to make the identification positively. Such passages would be, for instance, the one in Numbers 22:22-35 where the angel of the Lord appeared to Balaam, or Judges 2: 1-4 where an angel of

the Lord appeared to Joshua to warn him not to make any alliance with the Canaanites, or Isaiah 37:36 where the angel of the Lord killed 185,000 Assyrians. Whether these passages allude to other appearances of the pre-incarnate Christ, or to created angels, may have to remain an open question. In either case, God's will was being carried out by a messenger He had sent. We are just unable to identify the messenger exactly.

In the New Testament Christ is fully revealed to all men by His incarnation. Through the process of His conception and birth He became one of us, lived and walked among us, talked with us, taught us, and finally redeemed us from eternal death by His own self-sacrifice for us. Our point here is that, long before His incarnation for the purpose of carrying out this work of salvation, our Savior was already participating in the process of making God's plan of salvation known to Old Testament believers and doing what was necessary to bring about its orderly development and eventual success. In this sense the pre-incarnate Christ was a very special emissary of God, a very special messenger of God the Father, a very special Angel of the Lord.

## ANGELS IN HOMILETICS

Probably the one aspect of parish ministry where the pastor has the greatest opportunity to minister to the most people on a regular basis is through preaching. It follows then, that a year-long emphasis on a Biblical article of faith like the doctrine of angels will rightly have some emphasis in the preaching that year, even if such reference is only secondary. Indeed, the primary aim of all faithful preaching will always be to preach Jesus Christ and Him crucified (1Co 2:2).

For that reason, even during our year-long emphasis, I resolved to confine most of my Sunday preaching to the regularly assigned texts of the Three-Year series. This has long been my practice lest I tend to preach too much on "pet doctrines" or even worse, lest I appear to have a particular "axe to grind" on a given Sunday. Aside from this, preaching according to the lectionary is simply a good practice because it encourages us to preach the whole counsel of God to our people.

Where I decided to give some homiletic emphasis to the doctrine of angels was during Wednesday Advent and Lenten services as well as on other festival days when appropriate. Even then, this emphasis on angels was only secondary.

Throughout all my preaching I am always determined to let the text speak for itself and, above all, to let the Gospel of Jesus Christ predominate. Even so, there are so many references to angels in the scriptural accounts leading up to and including Christmas and Easter, that it is hard to imagine how some preachers can merely mention angels in passing if not ignore them altogether.

What follows is a collection of some twenty sermons evenly divided between the Advent/Christmas cycle and the Lenten/Easter cycle as well as including sermons for festivals like Epiphany, Ascension, Trinity Sunday, Saint Michael's and All Angels Day. Obviously, page limitations for this project prohibit the inclusion of full manuscripts for these twenty sermons. Instead, I have presented these sermons in the form of detailed outlines including introductory and closing paragraphs. I had considered presenting just a sampling of these sermons in their complete form. But I wanted to show the reader how this emphasis was carried out over an entire year of preaching in order to expedite and not to compromise the message of the Gospel.

One unexpected surprise of this year-long discipline was the discovery of just how many references to angels there are in the assigned Scripture readings throughout the church year. The number grows even larger when we include those readings referring to Satan, his evil spirits, and the Angel of the Lord. There really is no excuse for the

"sadducean" pastor who rarely if ever mentions angels from the pulpit, for their references are almost everywhere in the yearly lectionary, let alone the entire Bible.

Virtually all of these sermons were actually preached at Prince of Peace Lutheran Church on the days designated beneath each title. The only exception to this is the funeral sermon which may be used at some appropriate time in the future. I am especially excited about the Lenten series of sermons, "Angels of the Savior's Passion." I am currently considering offering this series for publication through Concordia Publishing House in hopes that the church at large might benefit from them. Soli Deo Gloria!

"When Jesus Comes With All His Angels"

A Sermon for the First Sunday in Advent

Text: 1 Thessalonians 3:13 "May he strengthen your hearts so that you will be blameless and holy in the presence of our God and Father when our Lord Jesus comes with all his holy ones."

Introduction:

People of all ages and backgrounds today are turning to the occult, to spiritism, to the so-called New Age religion and to the Eastern religions to solve the questions of life. They are searching for answers to puzzles that seem to have no explanation.

Of course, Christians know Jesus Christ to be the only real Answer. He has given us everything we need to know for our salvation in His Holy Word. The Bible also tells us other important things that are helpful and comforting for us to know. For instance, it teaches us that God created all things, visible and invisible. It tells us about the existence of angels, good as well as evil.

- I. There is a tragic and widespread ignorance of what Scripture says about angels.
  - A. Even though there is a great interest in angels on the part of the general public (books, movies, TV)
  - B. The average person has a distorted picture of what angels are and do (pagan superstitions, New Age distortions).
- II. The Bible has a great deal to say about angels, mentioning them more than three hundred times.
  - A. It speaks about God's holy angels and their various ranks.
  - B. It warns us about the evil angels led by Satan.
    1. Satan was originally created good, but rebelled and was cast out (Eze 28:14-16).
    2. Satan and his evil angels try to wreak havoc and chaos everywhere.
    3. Billions of people today unknowingly belong to Satan instead of to the Holy Trinity.
  - C. Although much about angels is enshrouded in mystery, we are told some things about them.



1. They are usually, but not always invisible.
2. They normally abide in heaven, but much of their ministry is among us on earth.
3. They are always subservient to Christ, our Savior and ultimate source of comfort.
4. Yet angels do play a very vital role in the Gospel account.
5. Angels were created by God in the beginning, but the exact time is uncertain (Job 38:7).
6. The number of angels remains fixed, probably in the countless millions (Da 7:10; Rev 5:11)
7. While the many angels in God's "heavenly host" may differ in rank and duty, they all have some characteristics in common.
  - a. They are holy, sinless beings (Lk 9:26).
  - b. While not omniscient and almighty, like God, they are very powerful (2Pe 2:11).
8. What a comfort to know that, even now, our Lord has assigned His angels to watch over, and protect all who believe in Him (Ps 34:7).
  - a. If not for God's angelic protection, we would surely fall prey to Satan.
  - b. The Lord of Hosts is with us just as He was with Lot and his family in Sodom, and with Daniel in the lions' den.
9. What a comfort to know that these unseen guards are watching our children day and night (Mt 18:10)!
10. At the end of our earthly life (or at the end of the world) God's angels will carry us into His presence (Lk 16:22).
11. Even as God's angels are always with us, so also Satan's evil angels are never far away.

III. Two thousand years ago at Christmas, God cut through this demonic dominion to make us blameless and holy.

- A. Angels announced the Savior's approaching birth to Zechariah, Mary and Joseph.
- B. He came accompanied by a host of angels singing over the hills around Bethlehem.
- C. Although His angels were always at His disposal, Jesus hardly ever availed Himself of their help even unto His death on the cross.
- D. His angels were there at the empty tomb on Easter morning to announce the Savior's triumph over Satan, a triumph making us blameless and holy.
- E. Angels were present at His ascension to assure His disciples that He would come again in the same manner that they had seen Him go into heaven.
- F. Angels will be with Christ, too, when He returns.
  - 1. Whether it be the Last Day or our own individual hour of death, this will be Satan's one last opportunity to attack us who believe.
  - 2. But our Lord himself will be there to protect us and His angels will bear us safely home.
    - a. What an experience it would have been for dear old Lazarus to have been carried by angels to heaven (Lk 16)!
    - b. No wonder Scripture says "Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of His saints" (Ps 116:15)!
    - c. No wonder David professed in his Shepherd's Psalm: "Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil."

Conclusion:

Suddenly our Lord will call you unto Himself. One moment you might be suffering and in the next, you will be transformed. All the glories, beauties, splendor and grandeur of heaven will suddenly, fully and finally be yours. Surrounding you, too, will be these heavenly messengers, sent by our Lord Jesus Himself, to bring you home. "May [the Lord] strengthen your hearts so that you will be blameless and holy in the presence of our God and Father when our Lord Jesus comes with all His holy ones."

"Gabriel's Message Strikes Zechariah Speechless"

A Sermon for the First Wednesday of Advent

Text: Luke 1: 5-25

Introduction:

To help us get ready for our Savior's coming we will be reflecting on three angelic messages of Advent. Tonight, for instance, we will meditate on a message delivered by the angel Gabriel to a priest named Zechariah. But first I want us all to realize that getting ready for Jesus Christ does not begin with men or with angels. It always begins with God. It begins with God confronting man with his sinfulness and with His Promise. Indeed, the coming of Christ into our world two thousand years ago required a whole series of such divine confrontations by means of God's holy angels.

- I. The first of these interventions took place, as Luke says, "in the days of Herod the King".
  - A. Documentation on Herod the Great helps us place Jesus' birth at no later than 3 or 4 B.C.
    1. Herod reigned over Judea for some 33 years.
    2. That Herod was an Idumean, a descendant of Esau, made this king an offense to most Jews.
    3. Although Herod claimed to be a Jew, he was a pagan "monster," who would stop at nothing.
    4. Imagine being a Jew under the domination of Herod and Rome, longing for the Savior!
  - B. This was the precise time that God chose to send His angel Gabriel with the first message of Advent
    1. Gabriel appeared to a priest named Zechariah while he was performing a priestly function in the Holy Place of the Temple.
      - a. The angel said: "Your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son to be named John".
        - i. John will be filled with the Holy Spirit even from birth.
        - ii. He will go before the Lord in the spirit and power of Elijah ... to make ready a people prepared for the Lord (Lk 1:16,17).

- b. Although Zechariah and Elizabeth were a pious religious couple, both of the priestly tribe of Aaron, this announcement of a son this late in their life was too much to believe.
  - i. The Greek text suggests that Zechariah could no longer sire a child.
  - ii. Elizabeth was beyond child-bearing.
- 2. "I am Gabriel," the angel said, "I stand in the presence of God, and I have been sent to speak to you and to tell you this good news. And now you will be silent and not able to speak until the day this happens because you did not believe my words which will come true at their proper time" (Lk 1:19,20).
  - a. It was disbelief of the angel's message on Zechariah's part that moved Gabriel to strike him speechless.
  - b. For months Zechariah would not have the joy of being able to speak this good news to his relatives and friends.
- C. But God's good news through the angel came through in spite of Zechariah's disbelief and doubt.
  - 1. God used an old "dried up" couple to conceive and bear the future John the Baptist.
  - 2. Even more important, John would be the forerunner preparing people for the Messiah!
    - a. Thirty years later we find John in the wilderness preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins.
    - b. John first had to make the people see their sin and its effects on their relationship with God.
    - c. Then John pointed them to the promised Savior, Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God who would take away the world's sin.

II. We need this same type of preparation again today.

- A. Mankind in general is in no way prepared to meet our Savior when He comes again.

- B. Even we Christians are tempted to drift away from God's grace and fall deeper into sin and unbelief which brings on eternal death.
- C. John the Baptist took an apathetic, discouraged people like us and turned them back to God.
- D. Advent is a time for people today to hear God's message, repent, and believe His saving Gospel.
  - 1. Unless you and I repent of our many sins and trust fully in Jesus Christ, our sins will condemn us.
  - 2. God sent not only an angel, not only a fore-runner, He sent us His own Son, our Savior.
    - a. Jesus was conceived by the Holy Ghost, born of the virgin Mary, suffered under Pilate, crucified, dead and buried.
    - b. He rose on the third day to prove to you and me and the whole world that we were fully redeemed by His cross.
      - i. Death, the devil and all the powers of hell could not keep Jesus buried
      - ii. Nor will they keep you or me buried in the dust when Jesus returns with Gabriel and all His angels.
    - c. What a beautiful, comforting story! Gabriel's message to Zechariah is the prelude to our own redemption!

Conclusion:

No matter what, where or how we have sinned, God can and will restore us to Himself for Jesus' sake. God would never reject even the most brazen sinner who truly repents and turns to Christ in faith for salvation. Tell that to your friends and neighbors this Advent. Indeed, let us tell it to all the world, this message of the angel, the Law and Gospel of John the Baptist: "Repent, for the Kingdom of God is near".

God has sent His angel messengers, God has performed His mighty miracles, He has poured out His Spirit through His Gospel so that we could come to faith and know our Savior, so that we shall be saved purely by His grace, bought by His blood, cleansed by His baptism. May His Good News and Holy Spirit move you now to do on earth our Father's will, as angels do above.

"Gabriel Gives Great News to Mary"

A Sermon for the Second Wednesday of Advent

Text: Luke 1:28-38

Introduction:

A week ago we heard how the angel Gabriel intervened on God's behalf and visited Zechariah with the good news that he and his wife Elizabeth would have a son in their old age. This son would turn out to be John the Baptist, the forerunner God would use to prepare His people to receive the promised Christ. Tonight in our text we hear about that same angel Gabriel bringing even greater news to a young Galilean woman named Mary.

- I. In the sixth month, God sent the angel Gabriel to Nazareth to a virgin betrothed to a man named Joseph of David's line with great news to announce.
  - A. "Rejoice, highly favored one . . .," news that would dramatically change young Mary's life, and the lives of all people.
  - B. Up to this time, probably the main thing on this young girl's mind was her impending marriage feast
    1. Much more than engagement today, betrothal in that day was the formal, ceremonial exchange of vows that made the couple husband and wife
    2. However even the betrothed couple would not live together until after the marriage feast which normally took place months later.
  - C. Here you had Mary and Joseph, a pious, law-abiding Jewish couple awaiting the proper time to consummate their marriage when God's angel intervenes.
    1. "Hail, Mary, full of grace."
      - a. Some people have misunderstood Gabriel's greeting to refer to Mary's own merit.
      - b. While Mary was indeed a faithful woman, the grace to which Gabriel refers is none other than the grace of God.
        - i. God graciously chose Mary out of this world of lost sinners bestowing upon her this great privilege.

- ii. In the same way God has chosen you and me, purely by His grace without any merit or worthiness in us.
2. When Mary saw the angel, she was "troubled" at his saying and wondered what manner of greeting this might be.
    - a. If you or I were approached by an angel this way, we might react the same way.
    - b. Mary probably sensed that something very unusual or big was about to happen and, understandably, the maiden was afraid.
  3. "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God."
    - a. God had chosen her of all women to bear His Son.
    - b. She shall call His name Jesus ("Savior") and He is the promised Messiah, the Son of the Most High whose kingdom would have no end.
  4. Mary believed Gabriel's message but did not understand how it could happen to a virgin.
    - a. "The Holy Spirit will come upon you and the power of the Most High will overshadow you."
      - i. Mary would be with child by a supernatural act of God, conceived by the Holy Spirit.
      - ii. This holy One born by her would be the very Son of God!
    - b. Gabriel also informed Mary of her cousin Elizabeth's miraculous pregnancy: "For with God nothing shall be impossible."
  5. What is remarkable is Mary's submissive, child-like faith.
    - a. No arguments or "What will the neighbors think?" but simple, humble submission.
    - b. Although we don't worship angels nor pray to Mary, we learn from her example.

6. Gabriel departed from the agreeable Mary, leaving her with the greatest news the world had ever known.
  - a. The long-awaited Savior, the very Son of God was about to take on human flesh!
  - b. Nine months from Gabriel's announcement the Savior Jesus Christ would be born!

II. This was great news in spite of the difficulties ahead.

- A. There would be rumors whispered around Nazareth when Mary's pregnancy began to show.
- B. There would be questions in Joseph's mind with which God and His angel would have to deal.
- C. There would be the difficult trip to Bethlehem only to find there was no room in the inn.
- D. After childbirth in rude surroundings there would be a journey to Egypt to escape murderous Herod.
- E. There would be anxious days looking for the boy Jesus only to find Him at His Father's business.
- F. Finally there was that one sharp "sword" which as aged Simeon said, would cut Mary to the heart.
  1. She would one day see this Son, now cradled in her arms, nailed and speared to a cross.
  2. But what great joy in seeing Him alive again forevermore, of hearing of His ascension with angels promising His return!

Conclusion:

All of this, in a sense, was left with Mary when the angel Gabriel departed: the assurance of a Savior soon to be born, the immanent arrival of Immanuel -- "God with us" - - our Lord of lords and King of kings, the infant Messiah who would come to suffer, to die, and then to rise again for you and for me! Mary would possess this gift physically, first in the recesses of her womb, and then for a short time cradled in her arms.

You and I have this Gift in a very real sense, too. For now, we have it by faith every time we hear God's Word or partake of His Sacrament. But someday we will behold this Gift in all His fullness. We will look right into the loving face of our Savior, when His angels have come to take us home, or when our Lord himself comes to judge the living and the dead.



"God's Angel Assures Joseph in a Dream"

A Sermon for the Third Wednesday of Advent

Text:       Matthew 1: 18-24

Introduction:

We are not told whether or not Mary immediately shared Gabriel's announcement with Joseph or with her mother or with anyone else. However, we are told that "in those days" Mary hurried out to visit her cousin Elizabeth who lived with her husband Zechariah in the hill country of Judea. You remember Zechariah and Elizabeth. They were the older couple whom the angel Gabriel said would give birth to John the Baptist.

Mary stayed with Elizabeth about three months, probably helping her cousin and possibly sharing with each other the details of their angelic visits as well as their joys and anxieties about these two miraculous births. Of course, by the time Mary returned to Nazareth three months later, she was already several months pregnant and perhaps even beginning to show. But what about Joseph?

- I. Try to imagine how Joseph might have felt.
  - A. He was a pious, Jewish male honorably awaiting the consummation of marriage to his betrothed wife.
  - B. One day his betrothed hurries away to visit some relatives for three months and, by the time she returns, she is pregnant.
    1. The text says Mary "was found to be with child by the Holy Spirit".
    2. God himself knew circumstances of the pregnancy; so did the angel and so did Mary.
    3. But had Joseph yet been told that this conception was by the Holy Spirit?
      - a. Had he finally been told by Mary about the angel's announcement and if so, would he have believed it?
      - b. Or had Joseph just found out about Mary's pregnancy on his own, (by rumor)?
    4. Whatever the case, it must have been difficult for Joseph to accept. Possibly equally upset, was poor Mary to think that her betrothed husband doubted her story.

- a. In Jewish society of that day, a woman thought to be maritally unfaithful could be publicly shamed, even stoned to death
  - b. Having no way to prove her innocence, Mary must have had some doubts and fears
  - c. Joseph must have felt stunned, crushed.
  - d. Being a just man, he could not bring himself to continue the marriage under these circumstances. But neither could he bring himself to make Mary a public example, because he still loved her.
- C. Joseph resolved to divorce Mary quietly.
1. Jewish men had the power to do that in those days and they often did so selfishly.
  2. Joseph, however, was minded to do this to spare Mary from even greater public shame.
- II. "But while he thought about these things, behold an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream."
- A. Whether he had misjudged Mary or not, Joseph no doubt felt the sting of disappointment or betrayal that all of us have felt at one time or another.
1. God does not cushion every blow in life.
  2. But every single trial or tragedy of His children God works out for our good (Ro 8:28)
- B. "Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take to you Mary your wife, for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit."
1. The angel reminds Joseph of God's Messianic promise ("Son of David").
  2. Do not be afraid, for Mary is not the unchaste woman she might appear to be, but the chosen vessel of the Lord.
    - a. Her pregnancy was the gracious result of the Holy Spirit.
    - b. "Mary will bring forth a Son, and you shall call His name Jesus, for He will save His people from their sins."

- C. Never had Joseph in his wildest dreams guessed that he and his betrothed would be asked to play such an important role in God's salvation plan.
1. Certainly he had heard of the promised Savior even from his youth.
    - a. The woman's promised Seed (Ge 3:15) who would descend from Adam, through Noah, Abraham, and finally from David's line.
    - b. The Suffering Servant foretold by Isaiah
  2. But had Joseph ever dreamed that this Savior would enter into his own life and lifetime?
- D. This message of the angel was not just a dream but reality, God's promise of a Savior fulfilled!
1. Some thirty years later, by the time this Son Jesus would be nailed to the cross for mankind's sin, Joseph himself would be dead.
  2. But even that fact would not rob Joseph of his hope: "He that has the Son, has life".

III. The Holy Spirit will not let you lose the precious Gift that Joseph almost lost!

- A. This was not just any child or deliverer, but Immanuel -- God himself actually with us!
1. The only one who could save mankind from his sin would be no one less than God Himself.
  2. God Himself was leaving glory for grime to save the whole human race.
- B. Roused from sleep, Joseph did just as the angel told him to do.
1. He went ahead and took Mary as his wife.
  2. But he had no relations with her until this holy birth was complete.

Conclusion:

O Holy Spirit don't let us substitute the passing gimmicks and treasures of this life for the eternal joys and pleasures Christ won for us on the cross! Like Joseph, may God move us to heed the words of the angel and accept with humble awe the great gift that God gives: His coming to save us from our sins!

## "Angels Remind Us Of Our Savior"

### A Children's Message for the Advent Season

#### Introduction:

Did you know that each candle on the Advent Wreath stands for something? First there's the "Prophecy Candle" that reminds us of more than three hundred promises of God that came true in Jesus. The "Bethlehem Candle" reminds us of where it was promised that Jesus would be born. The "Shepherd's Candle" stands for those humble shepherds who were among the first to hear the Good News of the Savior's birth. And fourthly, the "Angel Candle" reminds us of who told those shepherds that wonderful news.

- I. The Bible tells us how angels sometimes appear at very important times.
  - A. The Angel Gabriel told Mary that she would have a special Baby, the sinless Son of God, our Savior!
  - B. Again, angels sang on the night of our Savior Jesus' birth, above the fields of Bethlehem.
  - C. Later after Jesus had grown older, He was tempted by the devil out in the wilderness.
    1. Jesus stood up to the devil and, simply by reciting God's Word, He made the devil flee.
    2. After Satan left, angels ministered to Jesus.
  - D. In Gethsemane Jesus was beginning to feel the sins of the whole world weighing on Him. Again, an angel appeared to strengthen Him.
- II. What is amazing is that, at any time, Jesus could have used His angels to protect Him from being crucified.
  - A. Jesus told Peter that He had more than sixty thousand angels ready to help Him at any time.
  - B. But if Jesus had used His angels to rescue Himself, then how would He have kept His promise to save us?

#### Conclusion:

That's how much Jesus loved you and me, that He denied Himself the help of His holy angels so that He could die for us on the cross and rise from the grave. Remember what the angel said on Easter: "Jesus is risen!" Think of how much Jesus loved us when you see pictures of angels at Christmas.

"The Angels' Christmas Carol"

A Sermon for Christmas Eve

Text: Luke 2:13, 14 (KJV) "And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying: `Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men!'"

Introduction:

This was not the first time that the angels sang, nor would it be the last. However, it was the first and only recorded time that angels came down to earth to sing to sinful man. The book of Job tells us that, at the creation of the world, "the morning stars [angels] sang together and all the sons of God shouted for joy" (Job 38:7). Then the apostle John in his book of Revelation tells us about the song of the angels in the very presence of God as they are gathered around His throne: "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power and riches and wisdom and strength and honor and glory and blessing!" So, it would seem that the angels are continually involved in praising God.

However, perhaps none of their songs can ever compare with this song that fell on the ears of those shepherds on that first Christmas night, and that has re-echoed ever since throughout the world. Even though the glory of creation was great indeed, Bethlehem's manger now revealed a far greater glory. If the song of those myriads of angels surrounding the Lamb's throne is magnificent, it is only because those same angels were first privileged to sing of the Lamb's birth above the hills of Judea.

- I. "Glory to God in the highest!" -- Why do these heavenly angels open their Christmas carol with these words?
  - A. Because greater than all of the wonder of God's creation, providence and protection, here the real glory of God is made flesh when He gives His only begotten Son into the world, that all the world may live through Him.
    1. What divine wisdom is shown in this great plan of redemption!
    2. What divine love and power is shown in bringing this divine Son from heaven to a manger!
    3. What faithfulness to all those ancient prophecies and promises!

4. What divine grace and justice, that with the body and blood of this same little Babe, the price of our sins would be finally paid!
- B. For the first time in all history God the Son had become true man as well as true God. He will continue to be the same Savior throughout eternity.
1. All the divine attributes of God were now focused and veiled in that little Child.
    - a. Like the whole sun concentrated to a single point, yet so softly revealed it could be studied by sensitive eyes!
    - b. The God who holds the whole universe is now brought down for weak and sinful man to behold (Gal 4:4,5)!
    - c. Heir of all things cradled in a manger!
- C. If anyone was in a position to appreciate God's glory, it was His own holy angels.
1. They had been with God since Creation.
  2. For aeons of time they had beheld God in all His divine brilliance (the beatific vision).
    - a. In fact, God's brightness had made the seraphim cover their faces around the throne of God (Isa 6:2).
    - b. "Holy, holy holy is the Lord of hosts; the whole earth is full of His glory" (Isa 6:3).
  3. Perhaps the angels had thought they had seen all of God's glory, until they saw "Him who sits upon the throne" now lying in a manger, and in the shadow of the cross.
    - a. The angels understood the relationship between the Manger and the Cross.
      - i. They knew that this Baby on the straw was to die for these mortals,
      - ii. For mortal men that had rebelled against Him, even for men who hated Him, refusing to honor Him as God.

- b. Seeing their Lord in this humble state, the angels must have whispered in a hush to each other, as if to say:
    - i. "Look at our God in this form of a child! How marvelous! He has never revealed Himself like this before!"
    - ii. "Come, we must sing our infant Lord the best song we ever sang!"
  - c. The hills around Bethlehem echoed with the words "Glory to God in the highest!"
- II. What about "Peace on earth and good will toward men"?
- A. "Good will" is what God feels toward mankind.
  - B. "Peace" is what now exists between God and man because of Christ.
    - 1. This is what the Christ Child came to do, to restore peace between God and mankind through the Cross.
    - 2. His peace is not a mere human relationship, but a reconciliation, a subduing of that enmity that had come between God and man when man first fell into sin.
    - 3. That little Lord Jesus is the Prince of Peace
      - a. He gives us peace for our troubled conscience through faith in Him as Savior.
      - b. He gives us power by His Holy Spirit to live in love with our fellowmen.
      - c. His peace, through the power of the Gospel, can change hearts everywhere.

Conclusion:

This is what the angels meant when they sang their Christmas carol. Could there have been any greater theme than theirs? Could there have been any greater occasion than this to make them descend to earth and sing this song to those shepherds?

Joyful, all ye nations, rise,  
 Join the triumph of the skies;  
 With the angelic hosts proclaim,  
 "Christ is born in Bethlehem."  
 Hark! the herald angels sing,  
 "Glory to the newborn King."

"The Wonderful Names Given the Son of Mary  
By the Angel of Bethlehem"

A Sermon for Christmas Day

Text: Luke 2:11 "For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, which is Christ the Lord.

Introduction:

The angels evidently considered the birth of this Child to be not just any event, but ~~the~~ the event. Of course, they were absolutely right. The birth of this Child turned out to be the central event of all time, the pivotal point of all history.

In our text for today we find a short, simple list of names given the Baby Jesus by the angel who announced His birth to the shepherds. In these few names we have a summary of all that Jesus is, and all that He has done for us. Let's take a few moments this Christmas morning to reflect on the wonderful names given the Son of Mary by the angel of Bethlehem.

- I. The angel called the little Baby, lying in a manger of poverty and humble circumstances, "the Lord".
  - A. The word "lord" in Greek and Hebrew could be used much the same way as it has been used in English.
    1. It could be used to address a respected male human being, usually one who had some kind of authority over people.
    2. Or, "Lord" could be used as a name for God.
  - B. However, the people of Israel also used the word "Lord" in a very special way in place of the sacred name used only for the true God.
    1. We are not absolutely certain as to just how this sacred name was pronounced because Jews late in the Old Testament never spoke it.
    2. All we know are the Hebrew consonants which would be like JHVH in our own English.
  - C. In the chapters of Luke leading up to our text, the word "Lord" is used twenty times, and always as a name for God.
    1. Several times "Lord" is used clearly as a substitute for that other sacred name that was never pronounced.



2. In the first eleven verses of chapter two, right up to the point of our text, the word "Lord" is used three times.
    - a. The first two times it is very clearly a name for God.
    - b. The third time "Lord" is used for a little Baby who, from a human perspective, seems to have no authority at all.
  3. Clearly, against that background, the angel is obviously speaking of that Baby as being God Himself.
- II. The angel also called the Baby the Greek name "Christ", which in Hebrew is "the Messiah" or "the anointed One".
- A. Anointing or pouring oil on a person's head was an Old Testament ritual by which a person was installed into an office, like that of a prophet, priest or king.
  - B. When the angel called this little Babe "Christ," he was clearly indicating that the Child held at least one of those offices.
  - C. The Old Testament prophecies foretold that the promised Messiah would hold all three offices.
    1. Prophecies that He would "preach the good news of salvation," and "preach deliverance to the captives" clearly indicate that the Christ would be a prophet. (cf. Dt 18:15)
    2. Prophecies also said that the Christ would perform the priestly duty of bringing a sacrifice for the sins of the world. ("Himself the Victim and Himself the Priest")
    3. Another of the Old Testament prophets said that the Messiah or Christ would be a priest upon His **throne** (Ge 49:10), a king who would finally conquer all His enemies and deliver His people from all those who oppressed them.
  - D. The angel's statement that this Child is the Christ really summarizes all that Christ the Lord had come to earth to do.

1. He was not only born a Prophet and Priest, but would also serve as the Sacrifice for the sins of the world.
  2. As Lord of lords and King of kings, His earthly throne was nothing more than a cross where He would reign and conquer sin, death and Satan, saving us from our worst enemies.
- III. The last name given by the angel, though it adds very little to what the first names have already said, is perhaps the most beautiful name of all: "Savior".
- A. "Savior" reminds us of all that this Baby Jesus is, and all that He has done for our benefit.
  - B. "Savior" is a familiar name to us, but we must beware lest we take this name for granted.
    1. Names like "Savior" and "Jesus" fill us with gratitude.
      - a. They remind us of our sin and our need for salvation.
      - b. They remind us that the primary purpose of His birth is to take away the sins that threaten to destroy us forever.
    2. In that little Baby in the manger, the angels saw our God become a man so that ...
      - a. As our Prophet, Jesus would see that we would get to know the way to heaven through the preaching of the Gospel.
      - b. As our King, and yet our Brother sitting at God's right hand, He will guide the whole history of the world in such a way that we will finally come to experience His full glory in heaven.

Conclusion:

All of this is summed up for us by the angel in that precious name "Savior." Everything that He ever did, or yet will do, is done so that you and I will be saved from sin, death and the devil. So rejoice with me and with those angels that hovered in wonder long ago over that Babe of Bethlehem. For unto you was born that day in the city of David a Savior, which is Christ the Lord.

"Heed the Word of the Angels -- Don't Look Back!"

A Sermon for New Year's Day

Text: Genesis 19:12-26

Introduction:

The judgment of almighty God was sudden and severe. The Bible says that fire and brimstone literally rained down upon the sinful cities of Sodom and Gomorrah. God completely destroyed them because the citizens of these cities of sodomy and every conceivable form of immorality had repeatedly defied Him. They thumbed their noses at His warnings, refusing His mercy and rejecting His grace. Instead of repenting and resolving to live lives of decency, the people of Sodom and Gomorrah became even more obstinate, worldly and immoral.

However, out of this cesspool of sin, God in His grace offered to save the family of Abraham's nephew whose name was Lot. Just before the terrible judgment of fire and brimstone was to be unleashed, God sent two of His angels to warn Lot who had been living with his family in Sodom.

- I. The angels deliver God's Word of salvation in the midst of impending doom.
  - A. "Get your family out of this place, for the Lord will destroy the city."
    1. Lot shared this news with his sons-in-law.
    2. The sons-in-law thought that Lot was only joking and would not leave.
    3. Lot himself hesitated so that the angels had to actually take Lot and his family by the hands to lead them out of the doomed city.
  - B. One of the angels warned them to escape to the mountains not look back or they would be destroyed
    1. The Lord rained on Sodom and Gomorrah fire and brimstone destroying all the inhabitants of the whole area as well as all vegetation.
    2. Lot's wife made a tragic mistake and turned back to look upon what they had left behind and she became nothing but a pillar of salt.
  - C. This is not just a sobering story, but also an actual, historical event. Bible scholars think that whatever is left of these ancient cities is

now covered by the Dead Sea, the lowest spot on the whole earth.

- II. The warning of God's angels at ancient Sodom reminds us that, although God judges sin, He even offers us His grace in the midst of wickedness and impending doom.
  - A. As we look toward the new year, God is speaking to us through the word of the Christmas angels.
    - 1. He urges us to turn our backs on the lusts, temptations and sinful pleasures of this wicked world.
    - 2. With the Good News of His angels, "Peace on earth and good will to men," He is urging us
      - a. ..to forget those sins and mistakes that lie behind and "to press toward the goal for the prize of the high calling in Christ Jesus."
      - b. ..to look ahead in faith and not to look back again at those sins and lusts that tempted and entangled us in the past.
  - B. That is not to say that we cannot look back and learn from the past.
    - 1. Indeed, we can learn a great deal by looking back and seeing where we've been.
    - 2. But just be careful that you do not become overwhelmed by the sins of your past, that you do not forget about the Gospel and where you are headed with the Savior.
      - a. As you and I reflect on our past lives, where we have stumbled and fallen, this can become terribly discouraging.
      - b. Do not let such reflections cause you to lose your eternal perspective and deter you from your glorious future in Christ.
  - C. God's Gospel gives certain hope for you in 1995.
    - 1. Even in the midst of wickedness and impending doom you can be rescued, indeed, you are rescued, you who believe in Christ and are baptized.

2. But, mind you, this rescue will never be achieved by your own efforts of self-improvement or religiosity.
  3. You and I have been saved only by God's undeserved grace and mercy in our Savior.
- D. We need that Good News of forgiveness because our sins are just as damning as the sins of Sodom.
- III. Listen again to the saving news of the Christmas angels: "For unto you is born... a Savior which is Christ the Lord."
- A. There is an escape from this doomed wicked world: a Savior lying in a manger -- for you!
  - B. The crucifixion of that little Lord Jesus thirty years later laid the foundation for your life in 1995.
    1. When Jesus was put to death on the altar of the cross, His innocent death paid the full price for all of your sins and past failures.
    2. When Christ cried "It is finished", He broke the grim grip of death and the devil for all of us, so that we can live with courage and conviction.
  - C. With the same Spirit-fed confidence that moved Lot and his daughters to leave their past behind, so God is urging us to leave our sinful past behind.

Conclusion:

Just as God's angels took Lot and his family by the hands, so will our gracious God give His angels charge over you to keep you in all your ways. Just keep looking ahead, not longingly behind. Keep your faith focused on the prize of your high calling in Christ Jesus. You may not have very much in this world. Lot and his daughters left the grandeur of Sodom to dwell in a cave. But they were just glad to be alive, and so are we. We may not live like kings now on this earth, but we will live and feast with the King of kings in heaven for all eternity. Even now, God will surely take care of us in this life since we are bought with the precious blood of His Son.

"Peace on earth and good will to men!" O Lord, may this gracious good news declared by your angels be made known to all people in 1995. And may the mercy of your forgiveness lift up every repentant heart listening to your holy Gospel this hour.

"Angels Directing Our Paths"

A Sermon For the Epiphany Season

Text: Matthew 2:13-23

Introduction:

No holiday season is without its share of tragedies. Yet, whenever tragedies do happen this time of year, someone is sure to say: "It's too bad such things have to happen around the holidays."

Yet, it is just for such a world as this, a world with problems and difficulties, with uncertainty and weeping, with sickness and death, that Christmas and the Christian faith are so very important.

Even that very first Christmas which heard the angels sing of glad tidings of great joy, was followed by sorrow and pain. A week went by and the Christ Child was circumcised, shedding the first drops of His precious, innocent blood for us. A few more weeks went by, and wise men came from the east to offer gifts of love and devotion. But again, even that happy occasion was followed by the evil event mentioned in our text.

- I. Even the King of kings, our little Lord Jesus, had to flee the hatred of a petty king who ruled a territory smaller than the state of Missouri.
  - A. Yes, the ancient world was a wicked world too.
    1. It was a world that hated the Son of God.
    2. It was a world where little babies had to hide in order to escape murder under a cruel and godless king.
  - B. As we return to the grim realities of our own world after Christmas and the holidays, we find great comfort in learning how God, through His holy angels, will protect and direct our paths throughout the new year.
  - C. Having been warned by God in a dream, perhaps through the words of an angel, the wise men returned without telling where the Child was.
  - D. After the visit of the Magi, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream and warned him that they should immediately pack and leave for Egypt.
    1. It must have been a real trial for Joseph to heed those words of the angel.

- a. He knew that this Child was the son of God (Mt 1:20; Lk 2:29,30, Mt 2:11).
  - b. Might Joseph have been inclined to think: "If this Child is indeed the Son of God, why should we flee from Herod"?
2. Whatever Joseph thought, He and Mary immediately left with the Child for Egypt.
- a. Here was an indication of what life would be like for them and for Jesus.
  - b. We might have expected the holy family to get royal treatment, not trouble.
  - c. Even so, Mary and Joseph surely knew what a privilege was theirs.
  - d. So also we, too, who have found joy in the Savior's birth, can still expect many trials.
- II. Bethlehem, where the angels had just sung tidings of joy, was soon to become a place of bitter tears.
- A. Enraged by no further word from the wise men, Herod had all the male babies in Bethlehem murdered.
  - B. The same hearts where Christ has made His manger bed, will sooner or later be broken by grief.
  - C. Even so, we can still face the future with confidence because, in spite of any grim appearances, our Savior Jesus still reigns supreme.
    - 1. All of Christ's enemies, including death and the devil, would ultimately be conquered.
    - 2. Jesus is Lord of lords and King of kings, even as He and his parents were fleeing Herod
- III. Herod and hell are no match for Christ and His angels.
- A. Though Herod had his scribes and his henchmen, God has His Word which would be fulfilled, as well as His powerful angels.
    - 1. God's promise of a Savior would be fulfilled even if Herod and hell tried to snuff it out.

2. Before Herod could make a move, God had already warned the wise men and Joseph to take different paths.

B. We, too, can be sure that God will send His holy angels to direct us throughout 1995 and always.

1. This world's prince may have his soldiers, gestapo, henchmen, demons and other thugs.

2. But the child of God (you and me) has legions of the Lord's own heavenly angels to protect him (Heb 1:14; Ps 91:11,12; Ps 34:7).

C. Mary and Joseph (like you and me) had known nothing of Herod's evil plans, but God and His angels knew.



1. He knows what needs to be done to insure our safety and salvation.

2. He knows what lies before us in the new year and beyond.

#### Conclusion:

For us, the devil is much like that Herodian beast depicted in the illustration of our worship leaflet today. He may lash out and bare his ugly teeth at us, but the angel holds his jaws open. They will never close to chew up the holy family. Instead, the incarnate Angel of the Lord, Christ Jesus Himself, will twist off the beast's snout. Indeed, Christ will finally crush Satan's head altogether through His own death and resurrection. Yes, the Baby Jesus would escape and live to die another day, to die an atoning death, not merely a martyr's death.

We have the assurance, given to us in God's Word, that all the sorrows that came to the Christ-child, came to Him because He was born to bear our sins. These sufferings that came to Him already in infancy, were the sufferings that we deserved for our transgressions. In the love that prompted Him to do all this for us, we find our hope for this life and our comfort in time of sorrow. Just as Jesus fled to a place of safety in Egypt, so we have a place of refuge in God's great love for us. We may not always understand why things have to be the way they are, but we do know that God loves us with an everlasting love. Just as Christ came back from Egypt to His native land, so He will also finally bring us out of the "Egypt" of this world to our heavenly home.



"The Angel Whose Head Would be Crushed"

A Sermon for Ash Wednesday

Text: Genesis 3:15 "I will put enmity between you and the woman, between your offspring and hers. He shall crush your head and you will strike His heel."

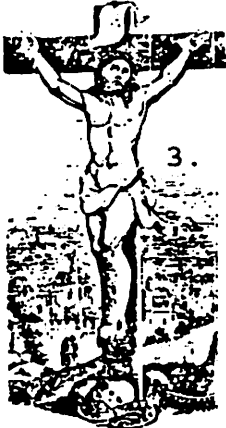
Introduction:

Welcome to the first of our Wednesday night Lenten services. Our over-arching theme for this years Lenten services is ANGELS OF OUR SAVIOR'S PASSION. Of course, Christ Crucified will continue to be the primary focus for all our preaching here at Prince of Peace, for Christ Jesus is our only way to heaven. But, having said that, I would also say that the Biblical topic of angels, too, is worthy of our reflection. This is true not only because angels form a comforting topic, but also because angels (good as well as evil) play a fairly prominent role in the account of our Savior's Passion. We are particularly made aware of their presence in the Garden of Gethsemane, and again at the empty tomb on Easter morning.

Of course, there will always be some Bible doubters, like the Sadducees in Jesus' day, who will try to belittle all the many times that the Bible talks about angels. Some will also remind us that you don't have to believe in angels in order to be saved. While it is true that the Biblical doctrine of angels is not a fundamental article of our faith, and that one can be completely ignorant about angels and still have saving faith, there is at least one angel in particular that every Christian had better believe in, and that is the chief evil angel, the devil.

- I. Contrary to the opinion today voiced by the general public, the Bible not only teaches that the devil exists, but that he is our greatest enemy.
  - A. Genesis teaches how Satan in the form of a serpent tempted mankind into sin in the Garden of Eden.
    1. Many people today wrongly think that this is just a fictitious story and not significant.
    2. But the day Satan tempted Adam and Eve into sin was to Satan a monumental triumph.
      - a. In fact, Satan has tried to repeat this success millions of times over the ages.
      - b. Many of us have heard the Devil's same old lying question in our own lives.

- B. The Bible tells how the devil's temptations are extremely powerful.
    - 1. Without Jesus Christ, no person regardless of how strong or smart, can withstand Satan. (Saul, David, Solomon).
    - 2. St. Peter describes the devil as being like a lion roaming about seeking someone to devour.
    - 3. Left alone, even the most confident individuals can be driven by Satan to destruction.
  - C. But when God's Spirit moves us to put our trust in Jesus Christ, in His baptism and Gospel, the tables are turned.
- II. Jesus Christ has crushed the head of this old evil angel, even though Satan struck His heel by getting Jesus nailed to the cross.
- A. Immediately after the Fall, God got right to the plan for deliverance (Gen. 3:15).
    - 1. In Genesis 3:15, God wasn't just talking of a general repugnance between women and snakes.
    - 2. He was talking about a much deeper struggle between God's children and forces of Satan.
    - 3. He was speaking of an age-long struggle that would reach its climax at the Cross.
  - B. The Crucifixion was both cataclysmic and climactic
    - 1. The earth shook, the sky darkened, boulders split open, graves spewed forth their dead.
    - 2. But the most crucial event of all took place in Christ's words: "It is finished."
      - a. The "woman's Seed" announced that His mission of mercy had been accomplished.
      - b. All of mankind had been redeemed from sin, freed from death and the devil.



3. Refer to a picture of the crucifixion.
    - a. Directly under the Savior's pierced feet, are depicted a skull and serpent.
    - b. The very name of "Golgotha" ("skull") is prophetic that Christ's own dying would crush Satan and death under His feet.
- III. We can expect the devil to continue harassing us as long as we are in this world, but we don't have to live in his icy grip of deception, despair and death.
- A. We don't dispute that the occurrence of evil deeds may sometime stem from mental illness as well as a real and personal devil (the Jonestown tragedy).
  - B. Even such tragedy as sickness and death have their ultimate origin in Satan and sin.
  - C. But in Jesus Christ we who believe are not only delivered from Satan's dominion, but empowered for new life free from Satan's control.
    1. By the power of God's Holy Spirit, we now live in forgiveness, faith and hope.
    2. Teenagers, turn your back on the prince of this world; live your life in Christ who has crushed the head of the evil angel Satan.
    3. Business people, live now knowing that you don't have to "dance with the devil."
    4. Parents, live with daily forgiveness toward your spouse, with love and patience for your children, and with complete confidence in Christ Crucified.

Conclusion:

The battle is over, the victory has been won by Jesus, the promised Seed of the woman. On this side of heaven the devil will always be around to haunt and harass us, to challenge and hurt us. But his grip of eternal death was shattered on the cross. From the crucifixion tree Christ cried out "It is finished!" And this victory cry was the signal that the head of the old serpent was crushed. You have been redeemed by Christ the crucified! Even though the devil can still harass you many times in your life, he need never have you nor control you any more.

"The Angel Who Saved the Day: The Angel of the Lord"

A Sermon for the Second Wednesday of Lent

Text: Genesis 22: 11-18)

Introduction:

The account of Abraham about to sacrifice his son Isaac is clearly a foreshadowing or type that pointed ahead to the sacrificial death of our Lord Jesus Christ some two thousand years later. Just look at some of the parallels between these two events. Like Jesus, Isaac was a long-awaited son having arrived by miraculous birth. Neither of these two sons had done anything deserving of death, yet both went to their place of sacrifice without complaint. Both "sacrifices" carried their own wood. Both were to be sacrificed on mountain tops in the same general vicinity. In both accounts there is the time element of three days. Yes, just about everywhere you look, this story of Abraham sacrificing Isaac is also a story pointing to our Savior's Passion.

However, there is one crucial Figure in this story that is especially worthy of our reflection because He really turns out to be the Hero of both stories. To father Abraham, it was the Angel of the Lord who really saved the day for him and his son. So let's take some time this evening to reflect on this Angel of the Lord, looking at what He did, what He said, and who He actually is.

I. What did the Angel of the Lord do?

- A. Just as Abraham stretched out his hand and took the knife to slay his son, the Angel of the Lord stopped him calling emphatically from heaven:
  1. "Abraham! Abraham! ... Do not lay a hand on the boy. Do not do anything to him. Now I know that you fear God, because you have not withheld from me your son, your only son.
  2. What a reprieve for poor young Isaac, and what a relief for poor old Abraham!
    - a. Imagine yourself in the surgical waiting room of a hospital awaiting news of your child who was involved in an accident.
    - b. Suddenly you hear: "Your child is going to be all right." What a relief and reprieve! This illustration helps us appreciate what a blessed rescue this was by this Angel of the Lord.

- B. In gratitude to God for this rescue by the Angel of the Lord, Abraham instead sacrificed a ram that he found caught in a nearby thicket.
  - 1. Abram named the place, "The-Lord-Will-Provide"
  - 2. The ram was not the real sacrifice, but only pointed ahead to the sacrificial Lamb that God Himself would someday provide.
    - a. Jesus Christ would be sacrificed on Calvary for the sins of the whole world.
    - b. From the time of Abraham, God's people held to the promise that, "In the Mount of the Lord it shall be provided."

II. What did the Angel of the Lord say? (Gen. 22: 15-18)

- A. He swears that Abraham's descendants would be as numerous as the stars and the sand on the shore, and possess the cities of their enemies.
  - 1. Even Israel according to the flesh has become a numerous people.
    - a. The God of Israel brought nations like Egypt and Jericho "to their knees."
    - b. Even today, Israel according to the flesh is a gifted and numerous people, an influential people in countries around the globe.
  - 2. But even at its height, the number of Israel according to the flesh would never approach the number of Israel according to the Spirit.
    - a. By just three centuries after the Ascension, Christianity would overtake pagan Rome.
    - b. Many times, the children of Abraham according to his faith, have taken possession of the cities of their enemies, not by the power of the sword, but by the Sword of the Spirit.
- B. The Angel of the Lord also promises Abraham "through your offspring all nations of the earth will be blessed."

1. There is only one Offspring of whom the Angel of the Lord could be speaking, namely, Jesus (Jn 3:16; 12:32; Mt 28:19).
2. The Angel of the Lord was giving a promise, not of earthly gain for Abraham and his descendants according to the flesh, but a promise of heaven ... to all Abraham's children in the one true faith.

### III. Who is this "Angel of the Lord"?

- A. His own words show that He cannot be just one of God's angels among many.
  1. Look at His words: "Now I know that you fear God, because you have not withheld from me your son..."
  2. No one less than God himself could speak thus
    - a. This is actually God the Son appearing in the Old Testament (pre-incarnate).
    - b. Whenever and wherever the name "Yaweh" or a divine attribute or work or divine worship is accorded to an angel appearing to the patriarchs and other believers, this is the Son of God (Ge 16:7-13; 23:17-19; Ex 3:11).
- B. This Angel of the Lord was our pre-incarnate Lord himself, saving Isaac and Abraham from this death on Moriah, so that He could one day die for all of us on Calvary.

### Conclusion:

Let's now skip across the centuries, some two thousand years later, to that other hill in this same vicinity. On Mount Calvary there would be no angel waiting in the wings to call a halt to this bloody business. No, this time it was the Son of God, our Lord himself, who had carried the wood up to the place of sacrifice. This time there was no ram in the thicket nearby to take His place. This time the Lamb of God himself, Jesus Christ, took His place upon that altar of the cross. He did this not just for Abraham and Isaac, but for you and me, for the sins of the whole world.

The Angel of the Lord -- on Mount Moriah He saved the day, by sparing Abraham and Isaac from making a terrible sacrifice. But on Calvary the same person, the Son of God, not only saved the day, He saved the whole world.

"The Angels Who Destroyed In Order To Deliver:  
The Angels of the Passover Plague"

A Sermon for the Third Wednesday of Lent

Text: Psalm 78:49-51 "He unleashed against them His hot anger, His wrath, indignation and hostility -- a band of destroying angels. He prepared a path for His anger; He did not spare them from death but gave them over to the plague. He struck down all the firstborn of Egypt.

Introduction:

You remember the first Passover, that tenth and final plague that God brought upon the Egyptians in order to get Pharaoh and Egypt to let His people go. It was a memorable night for the ancient Hebrews when, as God said, "I will pass through Egypt and strike down every firstborn, men and animals, and bring judgment on all the gods of Egypt (Ex 12:12).

Exodus 12, where it talks about the Passover, never specifically mentions an angel per se. It always seems to speak of God himself as passing through Egypt. But then we get to verse 23 when it says: "When the Lord goes through the land to strike down the Egyptians, He will see the blood on the top and sides of the door frame and will pass over that doorway, and He will not permit the destroyer to enter your houses and strike you down.

Then we turn to Psalm 78 which talks about the Exodus and we find in verse 49 where it explains that God actually used "a band of destroying angels" to carry out this final plague against Pharaoh and the Egyptians.

- I. God does not take joy in using His angels to destroy, but He does this only to deliver His people from evil.
  - A. In His infinite love, God does not want to destroy anyone; He would have all people be saved.
  - B. But in His infinite wisdom, God knows that sometimes such destructive force is necessary...
    1. To chasten His children (2Sa 24:15-16).
    2. To set His children free from their enemies, as in this instance of these Passover angels.
      - a. Their purpose was to destroy, but only in order to deliver.
      - b. These Passover angels also point centuries ahead to the one great "Passover", our deliverance by Jesus Christ.

- C. The people of Israel needed deliverance.
  - 1. For generations they had been bound in a terrible bondage of slavery in Egypt.
  - 2. God had sent His prophet Moses to appeal to Pharaoh to let God's people go.
    - a. In conjunction with Moses, God sent nine plagues upon Pharaoh and the Egyptians.
    - b. But each time Pharaoh would renege on his word and harden his heart even more.
  - 3. God carried out one last terrible plague.
    - a. The Israelites were told to prepare for what would be the first Passover.
    - b. That night as the Hebrews dined on the lamb, safe in their homes, God with His destructive angels passed through Egypt.
      - i. In every family of Egypt, men and cattle, the firstborn was killed.
      - ii. But whenever these destructive angels came upon the lamb's blood, they would pass over harming no one

II. Some fifteen centuries later, God would intervene again to save His people from a bondage far more severe, the bondage of sin and death.

- A. But this time God would not use His angels as much as His own begotten Son.
- B. In addition to sin, Satan and death, there were also many human factors arrayed against Jesus.
  - 1. His enemies forever tried to entrap and accuse Him. Finally they arrested, condemned and crucified Him.
  - 2. His own friends and followers denied and deserted Him, as we often fail Him today.
  - 3. Instead of striking down just the firstborn of His enemies, Christ had every right to strike down the whole, sinful lot of us.



- D. Instead, Jesus himself became the great Passover Lamb who would die to save not just the Jews, not just His disciples, but people of the whole world.
1. Christ, the Lamb without blemish, took upon Himself the full fury of God's wrath for us "while we were still sinners" (Ro 5:28).
  2. Every single sin that has been or will be committed, was atoned by His blood. However..
    - a. As in the Passover, only those were saved who had the blood applied to their door frame...
    - b. ...only those will finally be saved who "washed their robes and make them white in the blood of the Lamb" (Rev 7:14).
      - i. Whenever you hear and believe the Gospel whenever you partake of the Lord's Supper, whenever you have your little one baptized, you are like those Hebrews resting safe behind the Lamb's blood.
      - ii. Anyone who rejects what Jesus offers by His blood, will be damned

III. The work of that band of destructive angels brought a night of death followed by a dawn of deliverance.

- A. All the firstborn of Egypt were dead; Egypt actually urged Israel to leave; the Exodus had begun.
- B. On Good Friday the Firstborn of creation was dead.
  1. The sun hid its face; the earth shook; disciples hid in fear.
  2. But again, that night of weeping would give way to a dawn of deliverance and joy.

Conclusion:

Satan, death and hell would be vanquished, conquered by the Lamb of God risen from the dead. Because He is risen, you and I know that our bondage to sin and death is ended. Our sins are forgiven; our fellowship with God is restored. Because Christ is risen, you and I as well as our loved ones who died in the faith will live again. Indeed, we will keep on living (Jn 11:26). The path to the promised land of heaven is now open. Our way to eternal life with God is assured. Christ is our real Passover and only true Savior.

"The Angel Who Strengthened Our Savior In Gethsemane"

A Sermon for the Fourth Wednesday of Lent

Text: Luke 22:39 "An angel from heaven appeared to Him and strengthened Him.

Introduction:

Our theme for these Lenten services has been "Angels of our Savior's Passion." Up to this point we have been reflecting on various angels in the Old Testament that foreshadowed or pointed thousands of years ahead to the suffering, death and resurrection of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Beginning tonight, however, we want to reflect upon references to angels that were not only contemporary with, but in some cases actually played integral parts in our Savior's Passion.

Tonight our angelic appearance takes us to a setting somewhat like that of the first angel we dealt with, that is, the chief evil angel Satan in the Garden of Eden. However, the angel we want to consider tonight is a good one, one of our Lord's own accompanying angels. And the garden is not Eden but Gethsemane.

- I. The circumstances surrounding this angel appearance.
  - A. Gethsemane ("oil press") was a grove of olive trees on the Mount of Olives containing an ancient olive press. It was here that the Son of God, too, was to be squeezed and pressed under the heavy weight of the world's sin.
  - B. Only Peter, James and John entered with Jesus when He went in the Garden to pray. The rest of the disciples were left at the gate.
    1. Just as they alone had witnessed His transfigured glory, so they were now to witness His deep anguish and humiliation.
    2. Although He himself was untainted by sin, He was now burdened by the combined weight of the guilt of all men's sins.
    3. It was Jesus' decision that no other human would share this conflict which engaged Him.
    4. For what does Jesus pray?
      - a. Trembling and obedient, He makes a fervent plea for relief from suffering.

- i. **Not** that He be relieved from doing the Father's will, but that some other way be found without His passing through this anguish.
      - ii. Nevertheless, whatever the Father willed was also Jesus' will.
    - C. Receiving no support from the three sleeping disciples, Jesus three times throws Himself into prayer at His Father's feet.
      - 1. So severe was His anguish and struggle that His sweat was like great drops of blood falling to the ground.
        - a. The night was chilly (remember Peter warmed himself by a charcoal fire).
        - b. Medical history records very rare instances of bloody sweat, but only under the most severe distress.
      - 2. Hearing the prayers of His beloved Son and understanding His anguish, the Father sends Jesus an angel to strengthen Him.
- II. What does it mean that an angel should appear to Jesus from heaven to strengthen Him?
- A. It shows that Jesus had not been relying on His own divine power to weather this terrible anguish.
    - 1. Throughout His state of humiliation, Jesus never ceased to have at His disposal all of His divine, almighty, all-knowing power.
    - 2. Except for those occasional miracles, He rarely used His divine power.
    - 3. The only times He used His power in Gethsemane were to protect His disciples (Jn 18:6-8) and to heal one of His captors (Lk 22:50).
    - 4. Jesus would suffer like any mortal man, only infinitely more so because He suffered the punishment of hell that all the world deserved for the sins of all time.
  - B. It means that the terrible anguish that Jesus was already feeling in Gethsemane, must have come perilously close to killing Him.

1. "I am exceeding sorrowful **"even unto death."**
  2. The bloody sweat indicated a dangerous level of distress.
- C. Marvel at this: one of His own angelic creatures is appointed to strengthen the Creator of all! So deep His humility for you and me! (He 2: 6-9)
- D. The angel probably strengthened Jesus physically as well as spiritually. His worn and tired body was in need of strengthening to help it withstand the ordeal of the cross.
- E. Might the angel have held before Him a picture of all people past, present and future, who would be redeemed by His cross on the morrow?
- III. The angel did **not** come in order to deliver our Lord from His current anguish and future suffering, but only to strengthen Him so that He could continue His redemptive mission.
- A. Whenever He wanted, legions of angels could have swooped down and rescued Jesus, but then how would the world be redeemed!
- B. But mankind needed a Savior.
1. Jesus knew that we cannot save ourselves.
  2. Jesus knew, as did His heavenly Father, that there was no one in the whole universe that could redeem the world except Him.

Conclusion:

Our courageous Lord was not about to let anyone or anything deter Him from His primary mission to save this world of lost sinners. After His strengthening visit with an angel, His voice takes a revitalized tone, a tone of resolve, perception and strength: "It is enough; the hour has come. Behold! the Son of Man is betrayed into the hands of sinners. Rise up, let us go. Lo, he that betrayeth Me is at hand" (Mk 14:41,42).

Our Lord knew every grim detail of what was to take place later that night and on the next day. Yet, He went resolutely forth, determined to do whatever it took. He went forth determined to pour out His life blood, determined to sacrifice His body and life on Calvary's ugly tree. He didn't do all this just for His heavenly Father. He didn't do it for Himself nor for His angels. He did it for you and for me.

"The Angel Whose Hour Had Come"

A Sermon for the Fifth Wednesday of Lent

Text: Luke 22: 52-53 "Then Jesus said to the chief priests, captains of the temple, and the elders who had come to Him, "Have you come out, as against a robber, with swords and clubs? When I was with you daily in the temple, you did not try to seize Me. But this is your hour, and the power of darkness.

Introduction:

Peter and the other disciples, when they saw what was about to happen -- that Jesus was going to be arrested and turned over to His enemies -- called out to their Master, "Lord, shall we strike out with the sword?" And without waiting for the Savior's reply, Peter impulsively lashed out at one of the men in the mob cutting off his right ear. But Jesus quickly calls a halt to any resistance: "Enough of this!" "Let them have their way." And with that He touched the man's ear and healed him.

Now that their Captive seemed secured, some of the leaders behind this rabble finally show their faces at the head of the pack: the chief priests, captains of the temple, and the elders. Jesus chided these cowards and concluded with the words of our text: "... But this is your hour, and the power of darkness."

- I. We need to understand these words as spoken not just to the leaders of the rabble, but to Satan and his powers.
  - A. Remember what God had told the first angel discussed in this Lenten series (Satan, Ge 3:15).
    1. We have already said how Satan would have His head crushed by woman's Seed, Jesus Christ.
    2. But the other bittersweet truth of that first promise was that the hour would come some day for the Savior's heel to be bruised. (Cross)
  - B. From the moment of Christ's earthly arrival, Satan tried many times prematurely to usurp power and bruise Christ's heel.
    1. Already in Jesus' infancy Satan had tried to murder Christ through Herod and his henchmen.
    2. At the outset of His ministry, Satan relentlessly tempted Christ during the forty wilderness days.

3. Satan tried to get Jesus thrown off a cliff when He preached in His home town of Nazareth
  4. On many occasions the scribes and pharisees would try to entrap Jesus (accuse Him of heresy, associating with sinners, and healing on the Sabbath).
  5. Sometimes the sadducees would test Jesus by poking fun at the truth of the resurrection.
  6. Even His own disciple Peter once became a mouthpiece for Satan (Mt 16:23).
- C. Behind all these ploys was the devil himself who longed to have his appointed hour.
1. The promised Savior had invaded Satan's territory and was wreaking havoc on the devil's dominion. (healing the sick, raising the dead, casting out demons, remitting sins)
  2. But regardless of how many times Satan had tried, his appointed hour had not yet come.
- II. Although Satan's hour had finally come in Gethsemane, God was in complete control of His redemptive plan.
- A. This hour was long ago determined in the eternal counsels of the Trinity as the time when Satan and His powers would loose their fury upon the Savior.
- B. The Jewish leaders had placed themselves in Satan's service.
1. They were now being used only to be tossed aside later, as they also were using Judas.
  2. Their deeds were fit only for darkness, for they sprang from sin-darkened hearts.
- C. We must not lose sight of the fact that it was God who relegated this hour to Satan and his powers.
1. Even though His own begotten Son is about to be beaten and murdered by His own creatures,
  2. God still had complete and ultimate control.
- D. We must also remember this when Satan and his forces seem to hold sway in the world around us.

1. God is always in control regardless of what loss, death or tragedy.
2. God permitted Satan to test Job, not to punish but to strengthen him (Job 19:25-27). Even so, Satan could never go further than what God allowed.
3. So also with Jesus, Satan's forces could do only what our Lord permitted (Jn 18:4-9).

III. Satan and his forces thought they had triumphed, but it was Christ who actually triumphed -- for us!

- A. Satan and his allies deluded themselves into thinking that they were in control of everything.
  1. Pilate: "Don't you realize that I have the power to release or crucify you?" (Jn 19:10)
  2. Jesus: "You would have no power at all against Me unless it were given you from above" (Jn 19:11).
- B. Yes, God Himself is the One who had given this hour to Satan and powers toward their own undoing.
  1. God gave Satan a few short hours to nail His Son to a cross, so that the hammer blows would end up falling on Satan's own head.
  2. God permitted a limited time and amount of free reign for darkness, so that the light of God's Love and Truth would prevail on Easter.

Conclusion:

Fellow redeemed, you and I are the ones that really benefitted from all this. Our sins are all forgiven; death, Satan and hell are vanquished; our eternal life in heaven is assured. And all of this is without any doing at all on our part, but purely out of the abundant, free grace and mercy of our Savior. Look how God so marvelously twisted and turned around Satan's dastardly plan for our own ultimate salvation! Think of what a mess you and I would make of things if we thought it all depended on our own doing and, like Peter in Gethsemane, tried to take matters in our own hands!

Thank God that He had the wisdom and foresight to know how Satan would use these critical hours of darkness. Thank our Lord Jesus that He had the courage and love for us to let the devil and the powers of darkness have their way with Him for a time, so that you and I might be safe, secure, and in bliss with Him for all eternity!

"Legions of Angels Standing By"

A Sermon for the Sixth Wednesday of Lent

Text: Matthew 26:53-54 "Or do you think that I cannot now pray to My Father, and He will provide Me with more than twelve legions of angels? How then could the Scriptures be fulfilled, that it must happen thus?"

Introduction:

When Jesus first came to this earth, the most powerful emperor in the world was moved by God to call a census so that the Baby Jesus would be born in Bethlehem and the scripture be fulfilled (Mic 5:2). When He was born, a whole multitude of angels sounded out the news over the hills around Bethlehem. This almighty, divine control over all people, things and events is apparent even in our Savior's deepest state of humiliation, like in Gethsemane. However, to Peter and the other disciples in the garden, things seemed to have gotten out of their Master's control. One of their own group had betrayed Him. His enemies seemed to have surprised and surrounded them. The only way they could see of restoring control to their Leader was by taking the law into their own hands and resorting to force. "Lord, shall we strike out with the sword?" they called out for their Master's direction. And as they did, impulsive and impetuous Peter lashes out with his sword and cuts off one man's ear. Jesus tells Peter to put away the sword, for He had His own forces to use if He needed to rely on that sort of help.

- I. How difficult it must have been for Jesus to refrain from using the angels at His disposal!
  - A. How many holy angels does God have in all? Large numbers, but no exact figure given.
    1. The prophet Daniel speaks in terms of hundreds of millions (Da 7:10).
    2. John describes the number of angels around God's throne as being "ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands" (Rev 5).
  - B. Jesus in Gethsemane says that He has more than twelve legions of angels standing by ready to rescue Him.
    1. According to Roman military standards, twelve legions would have been more than 72,000 men.
    2. Remembering how just one angel slew 185,000



Assyrians in one night (2Ki 19:35), twelve legions of these mighty creatures would have been more than enough to rescue Jesus.

C. Think of what a temptation that alone must have been for Jesus in the midst of trial and suffering

1. Any time that abuse got too brutal and the pain too severe, He could have immediately called on these angels to turn the tables.
2. In a moment, Jesus could have been whisked away back to heaven on a bed of ease.

D. But if Jesus had resorted to using His angels in this way, how would the scriptures be fulfilled and God's redemptive plan be accomplished?

1. The Scriptures had made very explicit prophecies as to how man's salvation would be won (Psalm 22; Isaiah 53).
2. Jesus suggests to Peter that these and many other passages were to be fulfilled in Him.

E. Just like a dutiful soldier, Jesus would hold steadfast to the last.

1. Even though He had every excuse and ability to shirk His mission of mercy...
2. ...His love for lost sinners (you and me) compelled Him to "give His back to the smiters", His cheeks to "those who plucked out the beard"; and "not hide His face from shame and spitting" (Is 50:6).

II. Imagine how difficult it must have been for all those legions of angels not to interfere unless told to do so

A. Imagine having sung at the birth of this Prince of Peace, having guarded and watched over Him all along life's hard way, only to see Him now betrayed, deserted and denied by His own kind and turned over to brutes.

B. Oh, how those heavenly guardians held all their power in check as they looked down to see our Lord pushed, tugged, and spat upon by Caiaphas' brutes!

C. Wouldn't they have seethed with righteous anger as the Roman soldiers brutalized and mocked Jesus

while Pilate hypocritically washed hands of the whole bloody affair?

1. Angels are not just impersonal beings.
  2. If they feel joy (Lk 15:10; Job 38:7) and other emotions, must they not also feel righteous anger?
- D. Whatever the emotion showing on the angel faces, it must have turned to wonder and awe as they beheld the innocent Lamb of God offering up His life on the cross.
1. What limitless love the Son of God had for these miserable mortals, to let them abuse Him this way!
  2. To think that He would beseech His heavenly Father to forgive the very sinners that pierced His hands and feet (Lk 23:34)!
  3. Even to those who had rejected and derided Him, He reaches out in love to the very end: "This day you will be with Me in paradise."
    - a. Even though you are stripped bare and have nothing to offer Him in these last dying moments...
    - b. ...Jesus has also stripped away your sins and had them nailed with Him to the tree, never to keep you from God again.

#### Conclusion:

What a comfort it is to know why those heavenly legions withheld all their righteous anger and destruction from those hateful faces in the crowd, those faces that railed against our Lord and called out for His crucifixion! If you look closely, in repentance and faith at the faces crowding around that cross, you will see faces like yours and mine. You and I with our sins also drove those nails into our Savior's hands and feet. You and I with our sins drove that final spear into the Master's side.

Yet, it was His love and forgiveness that compelled our Savior to "dig in His heels" and take His stand for us upon that cross. It was His love and forgiveness for you, me, and all the world that held back those legions of angels standing by.

"The Angel's Easter Sermon"

A Sermon for Easter Sunday

Text: Matthew 28:5-7 "The angel said to the women, 'Do not be afraid, for I know that you are looking for Jesus, who was crucified. He is not here; He has risen, just as He said. Come and see the place where He lay. Then go quickly and tell His disciples: "He has risen from the dead and is going ahead of you into Galilee. There you will see Him." Now I have told you.'"

Introduction:

During the past season of Lent we have reflected on how intimately angels were involved in our Savior's earthly ministry, particularly during His Passion. Remember back to the beginning of His public ministry, after the chief evil angel Satan had treacherously tempted Jesus during those forty days in the wilderness, we are told how angels then drew near to minister to Him. Then again, as His ministry approached its close in the midst of great anguish in Gethsemane, an angel appeared and strengthened Him. Then, soon after that, you remember how Jesus himself informed His disciples that He had more than twelve legions of angels at His disposal any time He needed them.

We are not surprised, therefore, that when our Savior's redeeming work was done and His triumph over sin and death complete, we hear of angels once again. Since we heard an angel preach the Good News when the Savior was born from Mary's womb, how appropriate that we hear an angel preach again when Jesus is brought to life from Joseph's tomb.

- I. The first part of the angel's message makes clear the Savior's resurrection: "He is risen, as He said."
  - A. We are not just celebrating some pagan festival of spring like so much of the secular world.
    1. Easter is not just another excuse to buy new clothes or to go on spring break, not just the resurgence of life in nature.
    3. Easter is the celebration of our Lord's crowning miracle: the physical resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead!
  - B. May God's own Holy Spirit write that unassailable truth indelibly on your heart.
    1. We are not interested in painfully contrived denials and transparent sophistries of people who fear and hate a risen Lord.

2. Consider all the witnesses that declare the reality of our Savior's rising.
    - a. The angels at the sepulcher; the terror-stricken guards running back into the city; the priests who bribed them to tell a different story.
    - b. Mary Magdalene and the other women finding the tomb empty and meeting the Lord; the disciples who repeatedly walked, talked and ate with the risen Lord.
    - c. The more than five hundred followers who gathered with Him in Galilee; Saul on the Damascus road who saw Him in glory.
  3. Jesus' teachings are proved by His rising, indeed, He made His claims dependant upon it. "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up" (Jn 2:18-19; Lk 18:33).
  4. Because this greatest assertion (the resurrection) is true, all the rest, including our justification is well substantiated.
    - a. Jesus is indeed the Son of God (Ro 1:3)
    - b. The Father has accepted His sacrifice for our justification (Ro 4:25).
    - c. The empty tomb also opens the way to heaven; God and man are now reconciled. Cherubim used to guard Eden's gate. "...The angel guards the gate no more To God our thanks we pay" (TLH, 105).
- II. The second part of the angel's Easter sermon was "Go quickly and tell Jesus' disciples that He is risen..."
- A. Take the message of victory to those still sorrowing over a dead Master, and despairing of sin.
    1. Consider that the disciples' release from gloom to joy and peace depended on the faithfulness of those few women who heard these angelic words.
    2. These women could not hold in the joy of Easter; the Good News compelled them to tell.

- B. The Good News was not for these disciples alone, but they in turn would begin taking it to the whole world (Lk 24:47; Mt 28:19,20).
  - 1. Imaginary conversation between Gabriel and the ascended Lord: "Gabriel, I haven't made any other plans to spread the Gospel. I'm counting on them."
  - 2. We must bring to a dying world the life-giving news of the angel: The tomb is empty!

### III. The third point of this angel: "Ye shall see Him."

- A. The angel told the women to tell the disciples that Jesus was going ahead of them into Galilee and that they would see Him there.
- B. In the familiar homeland surroundings Jesus would appear to them several times in the next 40 days.
- C. Even with His ascension and departure of His visible presence, He would not really be gone from them.
  - 1. Sending them His Holy Spirit, Christ would continue to move among and through them according to His kingdom of power and grace.
  - 2. As the apostles told others of the Savior's love, they would keep their hopes focused on their eternal homeland where they would again see their Savior face to face.
- D. By God's Word and Sacrament, the Holy Spirit has let us see our risen Lord with eyes of faith now.
  - 1. After Holy Communion: "...for mine eyes have seen Thy salvation which Thou hast prepared before the face of all people..."
  - 2. Jesus also promises us an eternal meeting as well (Jn 14:3,19; 2Ti 2:11; 1Jn 3:2).

### Conclusion:

As God's messengers continue to announce: "He is risen! He lives," and as God's Holy Spirit continues to send His Word of grace and peace to the ends of the earth, may its joy fill and overflow our hearts and move us to share the certainty it gives -- that you and I live in Him and through Him. Blessing and peace be ours indeed, for our Lord has risen as the angel said. He is risen indeed.

"Angels Preach at Jesus' Ascension"

A Sermon for Ascension Day

Text: Acts 1:10-11 "And while they looked steadfastly toward heaven as He went up, behold two men stood by them in white apparel, who also said, 'Men of Galilee, why do you stand gazing up into heaven? This same Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will so come in like manner as you saw Him go into heaven.'"

Introduction:

At Christmas we heard an angel preaching to shepherds over the fields of Bethlehem. Then on Easter morning we heard an angel preach again, this time at the entrance to an empty tomb, in a garden, just outside Jerusalem.

Today we hear two angels preaching once again, this time on the slope of the Mount of Olives near Bethany. Here the angels deliver a message to the eleven remaining disciples of Jesus present at our Lord's ascension into heaven.

- I. Jesus is still with you, even closer than He was before He ascended.
  - A. Those disciples stood there like little children watching their Friend leave for the last time.
    1. If any vestige of doubt remained as to who Jesus was and whence He had come, such doubt must have completely left with the ascension.
    2. For perhaps three years these men had followed Jesus, growing to depend on His leadership and resourcefulness.
      - a. They had witnessed His mighty miracles and heard His moving messages.
      - b. His word of instruction had wended its way into their hearts, binding them ever closer to each other and to Him.
    3. Having already lost their Leader once before through death and the grave, it seemed that now they would lose Him once again for good.
  - B. We are reminded of a scene from our own lives when we said goodbye to a dear friend for the last time.
    1. A five-year-old boy prepares with his family to leave the old neighborhood for a new home.

He looks out the car's rear window to see his boyhood pal waving sadly after him. They watch each other sadly until the car turns a corner and they pass from each other's sight.

2. That is just the kind of earnest longing and sadness that those two angels mean to melt away from the minds and hearts of these men.
- C. Don't you realize that Jesus is still with you?
1. Now that He has ascended to fill all space, even according to His manhood, the God-Man is now everywhere at once according to His human nature as well as His divine nature.
  2. There is nowhere in this vast universe that anyone or anything can ever take you to separate you from Jesus' presence, protection and love (Heb 13:5; Is 43:2; Ro 8:38-39).
  3. Jesus is everywhere even though the wicked unbeliever doesn't want Him anywhere near Him
    - a. Sometimes an unbeliever will order his body cremated and ashes scattered, hoping to evade God's judgment "just in case He does exist."
    - b. But there is no escaping the righteous Judge; and who of His children would wish to do so?
  4. For us Christians He is especially present, not only according to His kingdom of power, but also according to His kingdom of grace
    - a. In this respect, Jesus is with you especially when you come to worship, or perhaps to have your children baptized.
    - b. He is with you even when you cannot come to church, when you study His Word on your own, or share it with a friend.
    - c. He is here right now, forgiving your sins through the Absolution this morning and through the preaching of His Gospel.
    - d. If you believe that Jesus died and rose again to save you from your sins, then His own Holy Spirit is dwelling in you.

- e. In an even more special way yet, Jesus Christ is really present in the Sacrament of the Altar in that He gives us His own body and blood, under the bread and wine, for the forgiveness of sins.
- II. This same ascended Jesus will also come again in like manner as you saw Him go; you will see Jesus again!
- A. Whenever a Christian dies, He will look upon His Savior in paradise that very day (Lk 23:43).
    - 1. What a comfort for the dying Christian, to know he will actually see Jesus shortly.
    - 2. When we die, the angels carry us home to Him.
  - B. Those still alive when Jesus returns on the Last Day will see Him coming as Judge.
    - 1. For us who believe it will be a day of rescue, resurrection and rejoicing.
      - a. Our struggle with the flesh is over.
      - b. Satan and the church's enemies destroyed  
Death itself squashed under Jesus' feet.
    - 2. For the wicked who have rejected Jesus, it will be day of great terror and retribution.
  - C. We know He's coming soon, though we don't know when.
    - 1. We need to prepare by letting Jesus stay close to us through His Word and Sacrament.
    - 2. We need to help prepare others by getting the Gospel out to those who don't yet know Jesus.

Conclusion:

This Ascension Day sermon by the angels is a message of great comfort. But it's also an urgent reminder of Christian stewardship, evangelism and missions. Yes, our ascended Lord is still with us protecting and helping us wherever we go. Through His blessed Word and Sacrament, He is closer than we ever dreamed He would be, ruling the whole universe in our favor, keeping us in the faith for all eternity. Finally, He is also coming again to take us home to heaven. What a marvelous ascension sermon we have from these angels! Thanks be to our ascended Lord!



"The Three 'Holies' of the Seraphim"

A Sermon for Trinity Sunday

Text: Isaiah 6:1-8

Introduction:

While it is true that the word "Trinity" itself is not found in the Bible, the doctrine of the Trinity is all throughout the Scriptures. Already in the second verse of the Old Testament we find clear evidence of the third person of the Trinity when we read how "the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters." Later on in that same first chapter of Genesis we hear the persons of the Holy Trinity resolving together: "Let Us make man in Our own image, according to Our likeness" (Ge 1:26) (cf. Nu 6:22-27).

The point is that God the Son as well as God the Holy Spirit were both there with God the Father from the beginning. Yes, and it is the same Triune God whom Isaiah saw as recorded in his sixth chapter. God's throne, says Isaiah, is high and lifted up; His train, or the border of His garment, fills the temple and hides from the eyes of sinful man the divine glory that he could not bear to behold. Even the seraphim, holy angels of God, have to take two of their six wings and cover their faces to hide them from the overwhelming glory of God. And what is their cry to each other? Three "holies": Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts; the whole earth is full of His glory."

- I. We would join the seraphim in joyful praise of God's glory.
  - A. Our own hymns of like praise: "Gloria in Excelsis," "Te Deum," "Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God Almighty," "Isaiah, Mighty Seer, In Days of Old."
  - B. We should sing these hymns even more joyously than the Old Testament prophets, because we in the New Testament are in some ways privileged to view God's glory more than the prophets did.
    1. We view God's creative glory through the lenses of microscope and telescope.
    2. We see His glory in the long history of the rise and fall of numerous nations.
    3. But it is in the Holy Christian Church that we see the glory of the Trinity most clearly.
      - a. Here we hear the love of God the Father who gave us His only begotten Son.

- b. Here we behold the grace of God the Son who gave His life, rose from the dead, ascended to God's right hand in order to rule all for the benefit of His bride, the Church, for whom He shall return.
  - c. Here we learn of the power of God the Holy Spirit who calls us through the Gospel, enlightens us with His gifts, sanctifies and keeps us in the faith.
  - d. Here we hear the Gospel preached and we see how the Church is built and spread to all nations, how God defends it from all foes and fills it with blessings.
  - e. Here sermons and hymns lift our souls toward heaven and we are instructed, warned, counseled and strengthened unto eternal life.
  - f. Here we see the Holy Trinity, as did Isaiah, "high and lifted up," yet stoop low enough to enter the heart of an infant in Baptism.
- II. But we sinners must first be cleansed before we can join the seraphim in their hymn to the Holy Trinity.
- A. Whereas God's glory is the first reason, His holiness the second reason why we would join these angels in their three "holies" (Rev 15:4).
  - B. But sinful creatures like us cannot yet behold God's Holy face (Ex 33:20; Jdg 13:22).
  - C. Isaiah, too, would have liked to have joined the seraphim in their hymn of praise, but...
    - 1. The prophet felt that his own lips were defiled by sin and unfit for praising God.
    - 2. Moreover, Isaiah knew that he lived among people with unclean lips and this added to his guilt.
  - D. We, too, are people of unclean lips, living among people with unclean lips.
    - 1. We have broken one and all of the Ten Commandments by not fearing, loving and trusting God above all.

2. We cannot really claim innocence of the sins of community, because we are guilty by our own sinful tolerance, negligence or other sins of omission.
  3. Like the seraphim who cover their faces, we, too, with Isaiah must bow in humble confession when we think of all God has done for us, and how little we do for Him.
- E. After Isaiah confesses his own unworthiness, one of the angels touches and cleanses the prophet's lips with a live coal from the heavenly altar.
1. "Your iniquity is taken away, and your sin forgiven."
  2. Forgiven and cleansed, Isaiah would proceed to prophesy how this cleansing would be accomplished some 700 years later in Jesus Christ (Is 7:14; Is 9:1-7; Is 53)!
  3. This same Gospel of forgiveness comes to us today through God's Word and Sacrament, as pictured in the live coal from God's altar.
- III. Hearing the three holies of the seraphim and the solemn vow of Isaiah, we, too, offer our praise and resolve
- A. "Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?" "Here am I; send me."
  - B. The same spirit of our young ministers leaving the seminary for their first parish (What more appropriate time for ordination and installation than this season of the Holy Trinity!)

Conclusion:

Trinity Sunday concludes the first half of the church year that covers the life of our Lord. Now we turn to the second half that lays some stress on the life God gives His Church. We do so, like the seraphim and Isaiah, with our own "thrice holy" of joyful praise, humble confession and sincere resolve, offering these "three holies" to our Triune God on high.

Believing that our own sins, too, are forgiven, may God's Holy Spirit move us ever more to do His will, to spread His Gospel, until, as the seraphim say, "the whole earth is full of His glory."

"God's Invisible Ministers"

A Sermon for St. Michael and All Angels

Text: Hebrews 1:14: "Are they not all ministering spirits sent forth to minister for those who will inherit salvation?"

Introduction:

Fixed in the church calendar for the 29th day of September is the Festival of St. Michael and All Angels. So much is said about these heavenly beings, and such great things are attributed to them, that it has induced the Church to designate a day for special reflection upon them. Therefore, today our aim is to bring together some of these many passages in Holy Scripture that tell us about some of the characteristics of God's holy angels, what they are involved in doing, and how the existence and activity of these invisible ministers affects us.

- I. Some of the characteristics of God's angels.
  - A. All creatures in this whole universe were created by God, called forth into existence by His Word.
  - B. Probably the first if not the highest and brightest are those creatures we call angels (Job 38:7).
  - C. Various traits of angels are given in God's Word.
    1. They excel in strength (Ps 103:20).
      - a. Isaiah 6:4 tells how posts of the temple doors shake at the sound of one's voice
      - b. Revelation shows one angel hurling a burning mountain into the sea (Rev 8:8).
      - c. On Easter an angel broke the seal of the sepulcher and rolled away the stone and immobilized the Roman guards with fear.
    2. Angels excel in knowledge (2Sa 14:20). Their intellect is not impaired by sin, and they have thousands of years of experience. But they are not omniscient like God is.
    3. They excel in numbers.
      - a. "Thousands of thousands ministering unto Him and ten thousand times ten thousand standing before Him" (Da 7:10).

- b. Jesus had at least twelve legions of angels at His disposal (Mt 26:53).
- II. How do the holy angels make use of their marvelous faculties and powers?
- A. We are not told everything they do, probably because we could not understand everything.
  - B. God's "ministers" ministering in two-fold manner.
    - 1. Executing judgments upon God's enemies.
      - a. A band of destructive angels carry out the Passover Plague on Egypt (Ps 78:49)
      - b. One angel slew 185,000 of the Assyrian army (2Ki 19:35).
      - c. Two angels visited Sodom and Gomorrah with fire and brimstone (Ge 19).
    - 2. More preeminently, carrying out God's protection and mercy toward His friends.
      - a. Cherubim guarded the Tree of Life after the Fall so that man would not partake while in his state of sin.
      - b. Leading Lot and his daughters to safety.
      - c. Bringing sustenance to Elijah (1Ki 19).
      - d. Protecting Daniel in the lions' den.
      - e. Gabriel announced births of John the Baptist and Jesus to Zacharias and Mary.
      - f. Angels sang the first Christmas carols to shepherds and warned Joseph to take his family to Egypt.
      - g. Angels ministered to our Lord after His Temptation and in Gethsemane.
      - h. Angels guarded the empty tomb on Easter and stood by the disciples at Ascension.
      - j. Angels directed Philip to the Ethiopian eunuch, told Cornelius to send for Peter, freed Peter from prison and saved Paul and his shipmates from a storm.

- h. God's angels are still spirits ministering to us even today (Note the "are" in our text).
  - i. They are present right here in worship (1Co 11:10; 1Ti 5:21f.).
  - ii. Not just one guardian angel, but a number of them (Ps 91:11-13).
  - iii. Invisible body-guards ever ready (Luther's morning/evening prayer).
  - iv. They bear us home to Jesus at death (Lk 16:22) and gather our resurrected bodies on the Last Day.

### III. What effect ought this to have upon us?

- A. It invites our gratitude to God for having given us the constant assistance and protection of these ministering spirits.
  - 1. What a comfort to know that, whenever we are lonely or tempted or suffering, we have these mighty, invisible helpers with us!
  - 2. May the assurance of their presence and protection also be an inspiration for us.
  - 3. Too little do we people of God avail ourselves of this comforting doctrine of angels.
- B. It invites us to think of these angels for our own exhortation and imitation.

### Conclusion:

God so loved the world that He sent His only-begotten Son into it, who, enduring the agonies of Gethsemane and Golgotha, He obtained eternal salvation for all. So also, in His infinite wisdom and love, He has appointed these ministering spirits, that the work of His Son might be furthered by their continual ministry.

"There is joy in the presence of the angels over one sinner that repents". That is the one great goal of God's thoughts, of all His plans and purposes, and to this the ministry of His holy angels is directed. "Where their anthems they ceaselessly pour, may we with the angels bow and adore."

"On the Wings of an Angel"

A Funeral Sermon for a Christian Mother

Text: Psalm 91:9-12 "Because thou hast made the Lord, which is my refuge, even the most High, thy habitation; There shall no evil befall thee, neither shall any plague come nigh thy dwelling. For He shall give His angels charge over thee, to keep thee in all thy ways. They shall bear thee up in their hands, lest thou dash thy foot against a stone.

Introduction:

This psalm was a favorite of your wife and mother. It is also very fitting for this occasion since it holds a promise for her and also for you who are left behind.

- I. The promise is to all believers.
  - A. Unbelievers have no such promise.
    1. See for instance verse 7 and 8.
    2. Psalm 37:35,36; Psalm 1:4,5.
  - B. The promise is for all who believe in Christ (v.9)
    1. Believers know their helpless condition.
      - a. Isaiah 53:6a.
      - b. John 15:6.
    2. Christ is their Refuge and Help.
      - a. John 3:16; 1 John 2:2.
      - b. Galatians 3:13; Romans 8:33.
    3. Believers are confident Christ will help.
      - a. "Rock of Ages," (TLH 376)
      - b. Psalm 91:2.
- II. The promise is that no evil shall ever befall you.
  - A. Note how broad that statement is.
  - B. Note also verse 4: As a mother hen protects her chicks under her wings, so the Lord looks after the Christian.

- C. The promise applies to the present situation.
1. It relates to your wife and mother. She died, yes. But no evil for her.
    - a. John 11:25,26.
    - b. Psalm 16:11.
  2. It relates to you who are bereaved. There will be added responsibilities, loneliness. But God's power will meet every need.
    - a. Isaiah 41:10-13.
    - b. Isaiah 43:1b,2.

III. The promise is that God's own holy angels will help you.

- A. The angels have great power and do a wonderful work.
1. Hebrews 1:14.
  2. 2 Kings 6:15-17.
- B. They will be with you in life. Your children are without a mother, but not without care.
- C. They were present in death.
1. Note "They shall bear thee up in their hands."
  2. Lazarus "was carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom" (Lk 16:22).
  3. That's what angels did for your mother last Saturday morning.

Conclusion:

Your hearts are heavy in parting. It's not a sin to weep (Jn 11:35). But you still know that all is well because of God's promise: "Because thou hast made the Lord, which is my refuge, even the most High, thy habitation; There shall no evil befall thee, neither shall any plague come nigh thy dwelling. For he shall give his angels charge over thee, to keep thee in all thy ways. They shall bear thee up in their hands, lest thou dash thy foot against a stone."



## ANGELS IN HYMNODY AND LITURGY

**Angels in Hymnody**

One aspect of our year-long emphasis on the doctrine of angels is in regard to hymnody. Most Christians would be surprised to know how many of our hymns specifically mention "angels," let alone numerous others which contain terms like "seraphim," "Satan," and even "morning stars." In order to enhance our congregation's awareness in this regard, I took up the year-long endeavor of using one or more different "angel hymns" for every single service of worship, without repeating. The only exceptions made were when family wishes at weddings and funerals precluded this practice.

In setting out on this endeavor, I decided to limit my selections primarily to hymns of The Lutheran Hymnal (TLH). This decision was necessitated by the fact that TLH is the primary hymnal used by Prince of Peace congregation. While some of the selections, particularly with regard to Christmas hymns and carols, can also or only be found in Lutheran Worship (LW) and other sources, the listings in this section will focus primarily on angel references in TLH. Exceptions will be noted when possible.

Many users of TLH realize that there is a section of four hymns (numbers 254, 255, 256 and 257) that are

designated for "St. Michael and All Angels," and that deal specifically with the doctrine of angels.<sup>54</sup> The Handbook to the Lutheran Hymnal will also offer considerable help in finding additional hymns with references to angels and other related topics.

However, the most valuable resource in locating angel references in hymns is The Concordance to the Lutheran Hymnal. Not only does this latter work list, in chronological order, the numbers of the hymns containing a given word, but it also provides the phrase and verse number wherein the word is contained. This resource is immensely helpful in locating hymns with words like "angel," "cherub," "devil," "Sabaoth," "Satan," "seraph," "Tempter," and their derivatives.

In addition to these words noted above which nearly always refer to angels, good or bad, there are also a number of hymnic references to related terms which may or may not denote angels specifically. In order to determine whether these terms refer exclusively (or even inclusively) to angelic beings, each reference has to be considered in its context. Even then, with terms like "host(s)" it is not always perfectly clear whether a given hymn is speaking of angels, saints, or both. In listing just a few examples of such references below, I have tried to list only those references which clearly refer to angels:

dominions - 98:3, 475:1.<sup>55</sup>

- Enemy ('s) - 272:3.<sup>56</sup>
- Foe ('s) - 90:4, 192:2, 198:2, 226:7, 231:4, 233:5,  
254:4&7, 257:2, 262:1, 263:1, 266:3, 276:3,  
311:1, 332:1; 387:7&8, 410:2, 413:1, 444:1,  
446:1, 472:1, 494:1, 549:2, 555:4, 590:1,  
658:1.<sup>57</sup>
- host - 38:4, 40:4, 132:5, 199:4, 252:1, 332:6,  
367:3, 493:4, 536:6, 558:6, 644:1, 619:8,  
640:4.<sup>58</sup>
- hosts - 3:3, 4:2&3, 29:4, 34:4, 132:3, 198:1&2,  
208:1, 214:1, 220:4, 241:4, 337:3, 351:3,  
408:2, 413:4, 450:2, 466:2, 472:1, 554:6,  
561:9, 566:1, 580:2, 633:1, 646:2.<sup>59</sup>
- powers - 90:5, 98:3, 103:5, 116:5, 164:1, 174:2,  
201:4, 220:4, 450:5, 475:1, 520:5, 558:5,  
590:2.<sup>60</sup>
- prince - (of hell; this world's) 192:4, 262:3, 402:3  
470:1.<sup>61</sup>
- princedom - 475:1.<sup>62</sup>
- sons - (of light) - 132:2.<sup>63</sup>
- spirits - 292:6, 546:3.<sup>64</sup>
- stars - (morning) 255:1, 647:2.<sup>65</sup>
- thrones - 475:1.<sup>66</sup>

All told, this gives us well over three hundred such references to angels in The Lutheran Hymnal alone. It is not surprising that many of our Christmas and Easter hymns mention the angels connected with these pivotal events. The reader will undoubtedly be amazed at how many references there are to Satan in our hymnody, a bold witness in the face of those who would deny his existence. It might also be surprising to some as to how many of the Ascension hymns give reference to angels. Even more interesting, all three

of the TLH hymns designated for Palm Sunday refer to angels, even though Scripture nowhere specifically mentions angels in that context. There are also a surprising number of Thanksgiving/Harvest hymns as well as New Year's hymns that contain references to angels. There is also a considerable number of comforting references to angels in burial hymns which, sadly, are seldom if ever used.

Given this vast array of "angel hymns" in our hymnal, our congregational practice of using one or more such hymns without repetition, for every worship service over an entire year, was carried out according to the following plan. As with previous listings, both the hymn number and verse are provided except for those hymns that have references to angels in every verse.

First S. Advent	- 7:4, 574:3&4.
First W. Advent	- 40:4, 136:1, 560:3.
Second S. Advent	- 67:5.
Second W. Advent	- 76:2&3, 341:3, 654:6.
Third S. Advent	- 64:4.
Third W. Advent	- 114:2, 561:4.
Fourth S. Advent	- 645:3, 647:2.
Youth Christmas	- 102:3, 109, 646:2, 647:2&4.
Christmas Eve	- 85, 94, 103:1&5, <u>LW61</u> :1.
Christmas Day	- 79, 98:3, 105:4&8, <u>LW55</u> :1&3.
New Year's Day	- 90:2,5&8; 116:5&6, 128:2.
First S. Epiphany	- 50:3, 125:6, 134:3.
Second S. Epiphany	- 132, 344:1.
Third S. Epiphany	- 492:1.
Fourth S. Epiphany	- 496:2.
Fifth S. Epiphany	- 249.
Sixth S. Epiphany	- 30:6.
Seventh S. Epiphany	- 279:3.
Transfiguration	- 657:3.
Ash Wednesday	- 262:3, 561:4&9.
First S. Lent	- 4:2&3.
Second W. Lent	- 556:2, 565:2.
Second S. Lent	- 502:3.
Third W. Lent	- 158:5, 563:2&4.

Third S. Lent	- 390:4.
Fourth W. Lent	- 148:10&11, 548:4.
Fourth S. Lent	- 412:1.
Fifth W. Lent	- 413:1&4, 444:1, 472:1.
Fifth S. Lent	- 511:6.
Sixth W. Lent	- 339:1, 533:3, 554:6.
Palm Sunday	- 160:2, 161:2, 162:3.
Maundy Thursday	- 164:1, 306:2, 558:6.
Good Friday	- 174:2, 178:5, 341:1.
Easter Sunday	- 190:1, 198:1,2&3; 199:3&4.
Second S. Easter	- 188:2&6, 192:4, 208:1&3.
Confirmation Sunday	- 332:6, 337:3&4.
Fourth S. Easter	- 193:1, 201:4, 648:3.
Fifth S. Easter	- 613:2.
Sixth S. Easter	- 641:1&3.
S. after Ascension	- 212:3, 214:1&2, 218:1.
Pentecost Sunday	- 221:2, 231:4, 315:10&15.
Trinity Sunday	- 238:6, 246:2.
Second S. Pentecost	- 38:4&5, 240:2, 244:3&4.
Third S. Pentecost	- 250:2.
Fourth S. Pentecost	- 3:3, 580:2, 582:1, 584:1.
Fifth S. Pentecost	- 17:6, 29:4.
Sixth S. Pentecost	- 34:4, 346:1.
Seventh S. Pentecost	- 241:4, 356:4.
Eighth S. Pentecost	- 351:3, 372:3.
Ninth S. Pentecost	- 450:2&5, 454:4.
Tenth S. Pentecost	- 466:2, 490:2.
Eleventh S. Pentecost	- 252:2, 547:2.
Twelfth S. Pentecost	- 367:3&4, 658:4.
Thirteenth S. Pentecost	- 493:4, 652:4.
Fourteenth S. Pentecost	- 536:6.
Fifteenth S. Pentecost	- 546:3.
St. Michael & All Angels	- 254, 255, 256, 257, 475:1&2.
Seventeenth S. Pentecost	- 455:2&4.
Eighteenth S. Pentecost	- 14:5.
Nineteenth S. Pentecost	- 23:4.
Twentieth S. Pentecost	- 26:6.
Reformation Sunday	- 402:3, 408:2, 470:1.
All Saints Sunday	- 441:4, 548:4, 656:1.
Third Last Sunday	- 282:3, 609:3.
Second Last Sunday	- 610:3, 640:4.
Last S. Church Year	- 292:6, 429:3, 618:3, 619:3&8

### **Angels in the Liturgy and Official Acts**

The Divine Service invariably begins with the Trinitarian Invocation, and the Invocation should in turn

remind every worship participant of their baptism. We can hardly think of baptism without also thinking of the divine protection God has afforded us through His holy angels. The reader will recall how our Lord's victorious battle with the evil Tempter in the wilderness took place directly after His baptism by John in the Jordan River. Recall, too, how after the devil departed, "angels came and ministered unto Him" (Mt 4:11). We have already noted how Luther in the Large Catechism says that baptism snatches us from the devil. Therefore, it would seem that much comfort could be derived from these truths as we prepare parents, sponsors, older children and adult converts for the Rite of Holy Baptism. Great solace can also be received by our people as we remind them of the additional angelic protection and care with which our heavenly Father takes care of His baptized ones.

It is for such comfort that Luther retained the exorcism in his Orders of Baptism (1523 and 1526).<sup>67</sup> This is also the reason why, according to the Lutheran Worship Agenda, we still include the question, "Do you renounce the devil and all his works and all his ways?"<sup>68</sup>

Whatever protection from the devil, the world and our own sinful flesh that we have by virtue of our baptism, we also have the same made doubly sure by God's grace through the Lord's Supper. Our communion liturgy conveys the comfort of our having fellowship with all the heavenly host in the Preface: "Therefore with angels and archangels and

with all the company of heaven we laud and magnify your glorious name, evermore praising you and saying..."<sup>69</sup> The liturgy reminds the communicant that, just as our baptism is a very real link with God and eternity, so is the Lord's Supper our very real foretaste of the heavenly banquet that we will endlessly enjoy with our Lord, His angels and the entire company of saints.

In the Service of Holy Communion, the Sanctus speaks of the "Lord God of Sabaoth."<sup>70</sup> Sabaoth means "hosts", "armies", or "many angels". The expression "Lord God of Sabaoth" reminds the believer and particularly the communicant that "The Lord of hosts is with us" the God of many angels is our refuge (Ps 46:11). If each angel is vastly more powerful, than the strongest earthly army, and if God is the Ruler over armies of such countless angels, then how very secure our position with Him must be! When Luther wrote his famous battle hymn of the Reformation, he understood the immovable comfort the expression "Lord of Sabaoth" ("der Herr Zebaoth") conveyed:

With might of ours can naught be done,  
 Soon were our loss effected;  
 But for us fights the Valiant One,  
 Whom God himself elected.  
 Ask ye, Who is this?  
 Jesus Christ it is, of Sabaoth Lord,  
 And there's none other God:  
 He holds the field forever.<sup>71</sup>

Luther also understood what a great and powerful weapon the Gospel is in the face of the devil and all his demons:

Though devils all the world should fill,

All eager to devour us,  
 We tremble not, we fear no ill,  
 They shall not over-power us.  
 This world's prince may still  
 Scowl fierce as he will,  
 He can harm us none,  
 He's judged; the deed is done;  
 One little word can fell him.<sup>72</sup>

At a time when the "old evil foe" is striking at the very heart of the church and its ministry by leading some to play down the importance of the Word and Sacrament, the church and its pastors need to stress to our people the crucial importance of the external means of grace. Not only strong gospel preaching, but also baptism, holy communion, confession and absolution all need to have emphasis in our ministries. The devil would have us throw out the church's liturgy and eliminate the corporate confession and absolution as an unnecessary intrusions on "meaningful worship." In the face of this onslaught, the Christian pastor needs to hold aloft the liturgy and other true expressions of the Gospel because it is the only word that can fell "this world's prince".

There are other parts of the liturgy which give due emphasis to the doctrine of angels. For instance the Introit for the Festival of St. Michael and All Angels is based on Psalm 103, verses 1, 20-22. The Gradual for that day combines the first verse of Psalm 103 with the eleventh verse of Psalm 91. Also worth noting is the corresponding Collect of the Day:



O everlasting God, whose wise planning has ordained and constituted the ministry of men and angels in a wonderful order, mercifully grant that, as your holy angels always serve you in heaven, so by your appointment they may also help and defend us here on earth; through Jesus Christ, your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.<sup>73</sup>

In addition to the collect just given there is also, in the Lutheran Worship Agenda, a very helpful index of prayers that categorizes all the prayers of the Agenda by topic, including the topic of Angels.<sup>74</sup> Among some of the prayers listed are petitions "For Home and Family,"<sup>75</sup> "Prayer at the Close of Day,"<sup>76</sup> as well as variations on Luther's morning and evening prayers. Of particular interest is the prayer for the "Dedication of a Dwelling," which calls upon the Lord to "Drive far from it the evil one and let your holy angel descend to dwell here."<sup>77</sup> In the prayer for the "Dedication of an Organ" the presiding minister acclaims how the Lord "dwells in the heavens surrounded by angels and archangels and all the company of heaven as they offer their worship and say: Holy, holy, holy, Lord, God of Sabaoth."<sup>78</sup>

Perhaps nowhere in all the facets of the pastoral ministry are there more applications of the doctrine of angels than in the area of Christian burial, particularly in the Lutheran Worship Agenda under the section entitled "Commendation of the Dying." Three of the four suggested Scripture portions give specific references to angels (Mk 16:1-8; Jn 20:1-18; Rev 7:9-12).<sup>79</sup> The suggested canticle, the Te Deum, makes references to "angels," "cherubim and

seraphim," and "Lord God of Sabaoth!"<sup>80</sup> The blessing which the pastor is directed to say "as he lays his hand on the dying Christian" speaks of God receiving him "into the company of saints and angels to live in the light of his glory forevermore":

Then let at last your angels come,  
To Abram's bosom bear me home  
That I may die unfearing.<sup>81</sup>

It would seem that the thought of mighty angels bearing the soul of a believer home to His Lord in paradise would lend a great deal of comfort to the survivors, particularly at the death of a child. And what about the assurance, if not even a little positive excitement and curiosity, that might be given the dying himself in his dying hours as he looks forward to being born up by angels! The person who watches while his own body, or the body of a loved one, wastes away might derive great courage from hearing how, on the Last Day, "the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God, and the dead in Christ shall rise first ... so shall we ever be with the Lord" (1Th 4:16,17).

EVALUATION, PERSONAL TESTIMONIES AND CONCLUSION

**Evaluation**

In the closing month of our "Year of the Lord's Angels", we asked members of the congregation to evaluate our year-long emphasis on the doctrine of angels by completing the following evaluation form:

EVALUATION OF OUR  
"YEAR OF THE LORD'S ANGELS"

Did you enjoy our year-long emphasis on the Biblical doctrine of angels? (Circle one)

Yes      No

Which aspect of our angel emphasis did you enjoy the most?  
(Check one or more)

- Advent/Christmas sermons on angels  
 Lent/Easter sermons on angels  
 Bible study on angels  
 Emphasis on angels in hymnody and worship  
 Worship leaflet art  
 Children arts and crafts on angels  
 Other (specify) \_\_\_\_\_

Do you feel that our year-long emphasis enhanced your appreciation of scripture's doctrine of angels? (Circle one)

Yes      No

Please feel free to take a few lines to share an instance from your own life when you think that God was especially protecting or helping you with His holy angels.

Other comments:

Name: (optional) \_\_\_\_\_ Please return this form to Pastor by September 30th

The overall response through this evaluation was very positive. One hundred percent of those who responded indicated that they enjoyed the year-long emphasis on the doctrine of angels, and that they felt the emphasis enhanced their appreciation of this article of our faith. Positive responses were quite evenly distributed over the various aspects of this emphasis. Most everybody especially enjoyed the angel emphasis in the Advent and Christmas sermons, but the Lenten/Easter series also received significant approval.

A number of the people indicated that they enjoyed the Bible Study on angels, especially the session which dealt with the Angel of the Lord. I really sensed that the concept of the Angel of the Lord being the preincarnate Son of God was something new for many of the people and that they appreciated learning about it. I have a hunch that this aspect of our Christology gets overlooked in many of our parishes, possibly because some of our pastors are not as well studied in this Old Testament expression as they should be.

Many of the people seemed to enjoy the illustrations of angels used in the art work adorning our worship leaflets. And, admittedly, these angel scenes did prove to be a nice change from the "Poinsettia and Candle" still lifes that are so stereotypical of the Advent and Christmas seasons. But people also responded favorably to the

emphasis on angels in hymnody and worship. I think we were all much amazed to learn that there are well over three hundred references to angels in the Lutheran Hymnal, and that there are so many of these "angel hymns" that one or more could be used for every worship service of the church year without ever repeating them. Responses also indicated an appreciation for exposure to angelic references in the liturgy such as the Gloria in Excelsis and the explanation of words like "Sabaoth" and "hosts."

#### **Personal Testimonies**

There was another purpose behind the use of this evaluation form and that was to give the people an opportunity to share some of their own thoughts about the reality of angelic presence and protection in their own lives. Most of the respondents left this section of the evaluation blank, but there were a number of individuals who did share some interesting experiences from their lives about which they were inclined to think that angels might well have been involved.

A couple of these experiences were said to have occurred while the persons relating them lay in hospital beds. "People" (usually women) dressed in white were said to offer assurance and great comfort that "everything would be all right". In some cases these figures in white seemed

to have vanished as quickly and mysteriously as they had appeared.

One member told about her close brush with death during a blinding blizzard when a car almost struck her from behind. The woman who related this incident is an educated, career professional. To this day, she cannot understand how the driver of the car could have seen her in enough time to have avoided hitting her. She is convinced that an angel must have intervened.

Another adult male told the story of how he and his sister, on one afternoon during their high school years were spared serious harm on a busy freeway when she was driving them both home from school. A sudden blowout caused the car to swerve wildly from one lane to another without colliding into anything. Finally, the car ended up skidding safely to a stop on the side of the road headed in the opposite direction! Both youngsters immediately bowed their heads in prayer, convinced that God had been protecting them. The boy, now middle-aged, is convinced one or more angels were with them that day.

One particularly interesting story was told by a Vietnam War veteran whom we will call "Bill." Bill remembered a time during that conflict while he and his platoon were preparing to go out on patrol when another "G.I." whom he had never seen before came up and informed Bill that he had received "an important message from home."

He was told to skip patrol that day and immediately report to his commanding officer. Upon doing so, Bill found that there was, in fact, no word from home at all. In the meantime, Bill's platoon on patrol had come under attack and some of the men were killed. Bill says that, although the military command tried to track down the mysterious "G.I." who had told Bill of the message, they were never able to locate him. Bill wonders to this day if he was perhaps an angel bearing a message from his heavenly home that had kept Bill out of harm's way.

These are just a few samples of some of the personal testimonies received from members of our congregation. All of them were offered in a spirit of humility and none of the people providing these testimonies seem to have any delusions as to why angels might have been protecting them. In fact, in almost all these cases the people admit the possibility of other explanations. Still, at any rate, the people of our congregation readily profess that, not only do angels exist, but they are continually present protecting and guiding us in more ways than we can ever realize. Thanks be to God!

### **Conclusion**

The reader may remember that in the introduction to this project, I proposed that, by being slow to respond to the current interest in angels, we in The Lutheran Church -

Missouri Synod might be missing an opening in the greater American public. It is for that reason that three items connected with our angel emphasis had to do primarily with the general public.

One of these items was a Christmas presentation I delivered to a local Kiwanis club entitled "What's Behind the Current Angel Craze?" In it I dealt briefly with some theories set forth by Timothy Jones of Christianity Today (April 5, 1993)<sup>92</sup> as well as some of my own. Then, after a short review of what the Bible says about angels, I used this topic as a springboard into a presentation of the Christmas story and the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

The other two items consisted of two hour-long radio "call-in" shows hosted by myself on a local radio station. The first show dealt with the subject of angels in general and the second show discussed the more complex topic of the Angel of the Lord. Again, each of these public presentations were used as prime opportunities to proclaim the Gospel of Jesus Christ to the general public.

It would seem that we in The Lutheran Church - Missouri Synod might want to try this angle of approach on a broad scale, what with our avenues of mass communication through the Lutheran Hour and Lutheran Television. As any commercial marketer will attest, angels continue to be a very hot item with the American public. While we need to beware of the New Age and other dangers behind this



phenomenal interest in angels, we can hardly afford to ignore it. To the contrary, with our rich Christological theology, we Lutherans might want take advantage of the public's interest and, by means of books and films on angels, lead people to the King of angels, Jesus Christ.

If the members of my congregation learned a great deal about angels during this past year of emphasis, I learned even more. I learned what a wealth of references to these heavenly creatures there are in the Scriptures and in our lectionary series (especially the three-year series). I was encouraged to read the unabashed testimonies regarding the reality of angels, good and evil, coming from our Lutheran confessors and dogmaticians like Luther, Melancthon, Baier, Quenstedt and Walther. I was simply amazed at how many references there are to the doctrine of angels in our hymnody and liturgy and this made me appreciate what an appropriate outgrowth of our theology we have represented in our Lutheran hymnals and in the Divine Service (*Lex orandi lex credendi*). While we may not always have given the doctrine of angels appropriate emphasis in our preaching and teaching, the emphasis has always been evident in the worship forms of the church.

I have grown in my own personal grasp of this doctrine of angels and how to pastorally apply it both as a warning (1Pe 5:8) as well as a comfort (Ps 91:11). Hardly ever do I now say a prayer for the sick and shut-in without praying

for angel guards and protection. But I think that I have also grown in my understanding of Christology, especially as it relates to Christ's appearances as the "Angel of the Lord." Previous to my study of this Old Testament expression, I always felt a little uneasy when explaining this term to my parishioners. However, now I feel much more adept at understanding what we can or cannot say with certainty about the use of this term, "Angel of the Lord."

If the evaluation forms previously discussed are any indication, I would conclude that the members of our congregation also grew in their appreciation of the doctrine of angels during this year-long emphasis. The reticence on the part of most members to share any experience of an angelic encounter does not betray a lack of belief in angels nor an ignorance of their service. It merely indicates that known sightings of these normally invisible creatures rarely if ever happen in our own individual lives.

It has also been an underlying aim of this paper to show how the doctrine of angels, though it is a nonfundamental article of our faith, is still a doctrine that not only has solid basis in Scripture, but is heartily affirmed by the Lutheran Confessions and dogmaticians. Although ignorance of this doctrine may not place the Christian's faith in jeopardy, to deny what Scripture says about angels is to do serious damage to the Gospel account, so instru-

mental is God's use of angels in His redemptive plan. The pastor who ignores or makes light of the doctrine of angels in his ministry may be depriving his people of some very necessary knowledge about our great adversary the devil. He is most certainly denying them some very comforting and enriching truths concerning how God helps and protects sinful man. What is worse is that he is denying them these truths at a time in the life of the world when mankind may need them most.

## END NOTES

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<sup>2</sup>Tom Brokaw, "NBC Evening News," 14 November 1994.

<sup>3</sup>Kenneth Woodward, "Angels: Hark! America's Latest Search for Spiritual Meaning Has a Halo Effect," Newsweek, 27 December 1993, 54.

<sup>4</sup>Nancy Gibbs, "Angels Among Us," Time, 27 December 1993, 56.

<sup>5</sup>James Breig, "Angels: Have Winged Spirits Been Grounded?" U.S. Catholic, vol. 45, September 1980, 6.

<sup>6</sup>Billy Graham, Angels: God's Secret Agents, (New York: Doubleday and Co., 1975, reference from the Pocket Book Edition of 1977), 73.

<sup>7</sup>Werner Franzmann, Bible History Commentary--Old Testament (Board for Parish Education, Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod, 1980), 128.

<sup>8</sup>Theodore G. Tappert, ed., The Book of Concord (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1959), 230.

<sup>9</sup>Ibid., 297.

<sup>10</sup>Ibid.

<sup>11</sup>Ibid., 295.

<sup>12</sup>Ibid.

<sup>13</sup>Ibid., 40.

<sup>14</sup>Ibid., 44.

<sup>15</sup>Ibid., 40.

<sup>16</sup>Ibid., 434.

<sup>17</sup>Ibid., 431.

<sup>18</sup>Ibid., 435.

<sup>19</sup>Ibid., 106.

<sup>20</sup>Ibid., 617.

<sup>21</sup>Ibid., 361.

<sup>22</sup>Luther's Small Catechism with Explanation (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1991), 107-109.

<sup>23</sup>Ibid., 139-140.

<sup>24</sup>Ibid., 164-166.

<sup>25</sup>Ibid., 64.

<sup>26</sup>Ibid., 31.

<sup>27</sup>Tappert, 359.

<sup>28</sup>Ibid., 374.

<sup>29</sup>Ibid., 435.

<sup>30</sup>Ibid., 348.

<sup>31</sup>Ibid., 450.

<sup>32</sup>Ibid., 618.

<sup>33</sup>Ewald M. Plass, ed., What Luther Says: An Anthology, 3 Vols. (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1959), 1:23.

<sup>34</sup>Ibid., 1:24.

<sup>35</sup>Ibid.

<sup>36</sup>Ibid.

<sup>37</sup>Ibid.

<sup>38</sup>Ibid., 1:25.

<sup>39</sup>Ibid.

<sup>40</sup>Ibid., 1:26.

<sup>41</sup>C. F. W. Walther, Selected Letters, trans. Roy A. Suelflow, Selected Writings of C. F. W. Walther, ed. Aug. R. Suelflow (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1981), 70.

<sup>42</sup>C. F. W. Walther, Selected Sermons, trans. Henry J. Eggold, Selected Writings of C. F. W. Walther, ed. Aug. R. Suelflow (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1981), 49f.

<sup>43</sup>Heinrich Schmid, The Doctrinal Theology of the Evangelical Lutheran Church, trans. Charles Hay and Henry Jacobs (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1899), 212.

<sup>44</sup>Ibid.

<sup>45</sup>Richard C. Jahn, "The Doctrine of Angels," The Abiding Word, An Anthology of Doctrinal Essays, 3 Vols., ed. Theodore Laetsch (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1960), 3:210.

<sup>46</sup>Ibid., 3:213.

<sup>47</sup>Ibid.

<sup>48</sup>Ibid., 3:214.

<sup>49</sup>Ibid., 3:193.

<sup>50</sup>Genesis 19:1,15; 28:12; 32:1; Job 4:18; Psalm 8:5; 68:17; 78:25,49; 91:11; 103:20; 104:4; 148:2.

<sup>51</sup>H. C. Leupold, Exposition of Genesis, 2 Vols. (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1942), 1:500-501.

<sup>52</sup>Johann Gerhard, Loci Theologici, Loc. V "De Creatione et Angelis," par. 37, p. 6.

<sup>53</sup>Francis Pieper, Christian Dogmatics, 4 Vols. (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1953), 1:397.

<sup>54</sup>The Lutheran Hymnal, authorized by the Evangelical Lutheran Synodical Conference of North America, (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1941), 837.

<sup>55</sup>E. V. Hazerodt, ed. Concordance to the Lutheran Hymnal, (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1956), 136.

<sup>56</sup>Ibid., 154.

<sup>57</sup>Ibid., 192-193.

<sup>58</sup>Ibid., 299-300.

<sup>59</sup>Ibid., 300.

<sup>60</sup>Ibid., 457.

<sup>61</sup>Ibid., 469.

<sup>62</sup>Ibid., 470.

<sup>63</sup>Ibid., 564.

<sup>64</sup>Ibid., 577.

<sup>65</sup>Ibid., 582.

<sup>66</sup>Ibid., 616.

<sup>67</sup>Martin Luther, "The Order of Baptism [1523 and 1526]," trans. Paul Zeller Strodach, revised by Ulrich S. Leupold, Luther's Works 55 Vols. (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1965), 53:96,108.

<sup>68</sup>Lutheran Worship Agenda, (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1981), 94.

<sup>69</sup>The Lutheran Hymnal, 25.

<sup>70</sup>Ibid., 26.

<sup>71</sup>Ibid., Hymn 262.

<sup>72</sup>Ibid.

<sup>73</sup>Lutheran Worship, (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1982), 114.

<sup>74</sup>Lutheran Worship Agenda, 380.

<sup>75</sup>Lutheran Worship, 129.

<sup>76</sup>Ibid., 267.

<sup>77</sup>Lutheran Worship Agenda, 339.

<sup>78</sup>Ibid., 317.

<sup>79</sup>Ibid., 166-167.

<sup>80</sup>The Lutheran Hymnal, 35.

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<sup>82</sup>Timothy Jones, "Rumor of Angels," Christianity Today, 5 April 1993, 18-22.

## APPENDIX A

## ANGELS IN ART

The general conception that most people, including Christians, have about angels is due in a large part to how these spiritual beings have been depicted in works of art over the centuries. Just as good, sacred music can enhance our worship experience, so also can appropriate works of art emphasize and contribute to the theme of a particular divine service. Even when the listener's mind may wander during the sermon, the truths of the Gospel depicted on a stained glass window or on a worship leaflet will give even the simplest mind precious treasures to ponder.

It is for these reasons that I have made an sustained effort to convey our year-long emphasis on angels also through the use of appropriate art, particularly illustrations of angels, to adorn our worship leaflets. What follows is a collection of twenty or more illustrations that were used for various worship leaflets throughout this year of emphasis. A number of these leaflet illustrations are from the Cicely Mary Barker Collection and are readily available from the Hermitage Art Company of Chicago. Others were obtained through the Every Sunday Bulletin program offered by Concordia Publishing House. Still others had to be culled from various works like Angels: An Endangered Species by Malcom Godwin (Simon and Schuster, New York 1990) and Celebration of Angels by Timothy Jones (Thomas Nelson Publishers, Nashville 1994).



## ILLUSTRATION CREDITS

- Figure 1, page 139. Photo by Robert Cushman Hayes, Every Sunday Bulletins (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1992).
- Figure 2, page 139. Artwork by Elizabeth Conrad La Velle, (Cedar Falls, IA: Woolverton Printing Co., 1993).
- Figure 3, page 140. Artwork by Elizabeth Conrad La Velle, (Cedar Falls, IA: Woolverton Printing Co., 1993).
- Figure 4, page 140. (Chicago: Hermitage Art Co.).
- Figure 5, page 141. Artwork by Elizabeth Conrad La Velle, (Cedar Falls, IA: Woolverton Printing Co., 1993).
- Figure 6, page 141. Photo by CPH, Every Sunday Bulletins (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1994).
- Figure 7, page 142. Artwork by Elizabeth Conrad La Velle, (Cedar Falls, IA: Woolverton Printing Co., 1993).
- Figure 8, page 142. Artwork by Cicely M. Barker, (Chicago: Hermitage Art Co., 1992).
- Figure 9, page 143. (Chicago: Hermitage Art Co.).
- Figure 10, page 144. Artwork by Elizabeth Conrad La Velle, (Cedar Falls, IA: Woolverton Printing Co., 1993).
- Figure 11, page 144. Artwork by Elizabeth Conrad La Velle, (Cedar Falls, IA: Woolverton Printing Co., 1993).
- Figure 12, page 145. (Chicago: Hermitage Art Co.).
- Figure 13, page 145. (Source unknown).
- Figure 14, page 146. Artwork by Gustave Dore, The Dore Bible Illustrations (Mineola, New York: Dover, 1974).
- Figure 15, page 146. Artwork by Don Kueker, Every Sunday Bulletins (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1995).
- Figure 16, page 147. The Crucial Hours (Milwaukee: Northwestern Publishing House, 1977) 27.
- Figure 17, page 147. Artwork by Gustave Dore, The Dore Bible Illustrations (Mineola, New York: Dover, 1974).
- Figure 18, page 148. The New Testament: A Pictorial Archive From Nineteenth-Century Sources, Don Rice, ed. (Mineola, New York: Dover, 1986).
- Figure 19, page 148. Photo by Ron Benedict, (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1994).
- Figure 20, page 149. Artwork by Carl Bloch, (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1994).
- Figure 21, page 150. Artwork by Cicely M. Barker, (Chicago: Hermitage Art Co., 1992).
- Figure 22, page 150. Artwork by Melozzo da Forli, (Chicago: Hermitage Art Co., 1994).

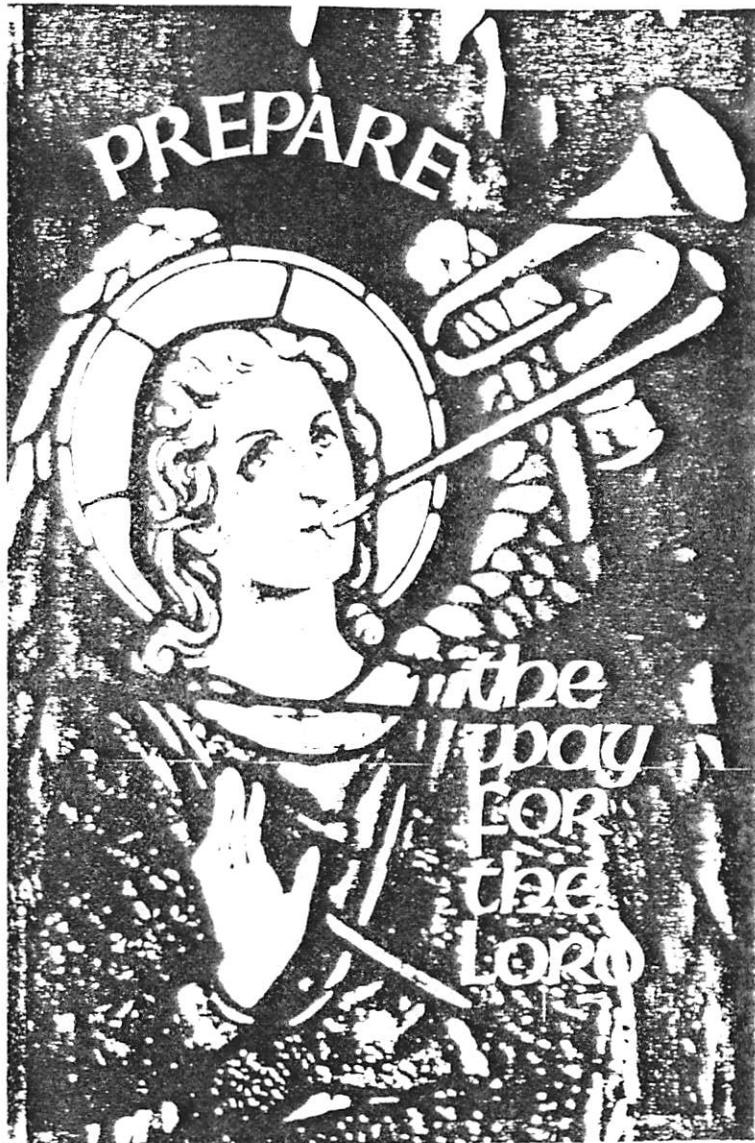


Fig. 1. THE FIRST SUNDAY IN ADVENT



(Luke 1:11-19)

Fig. 2. THE FIRST WEDNESDAY OF ADVENT



(11.11.1.26-33)  
Fig. 3. THE SECOND WEDNESDAY OF ADVENT



Fig. 4. THE SECOND SUNDAY IN ADVENT



Fig. 5. THE THIRD WEDNESDAY OF ADVENT



Fig. 6. THE THIRD SUNDAY IN ADVENT

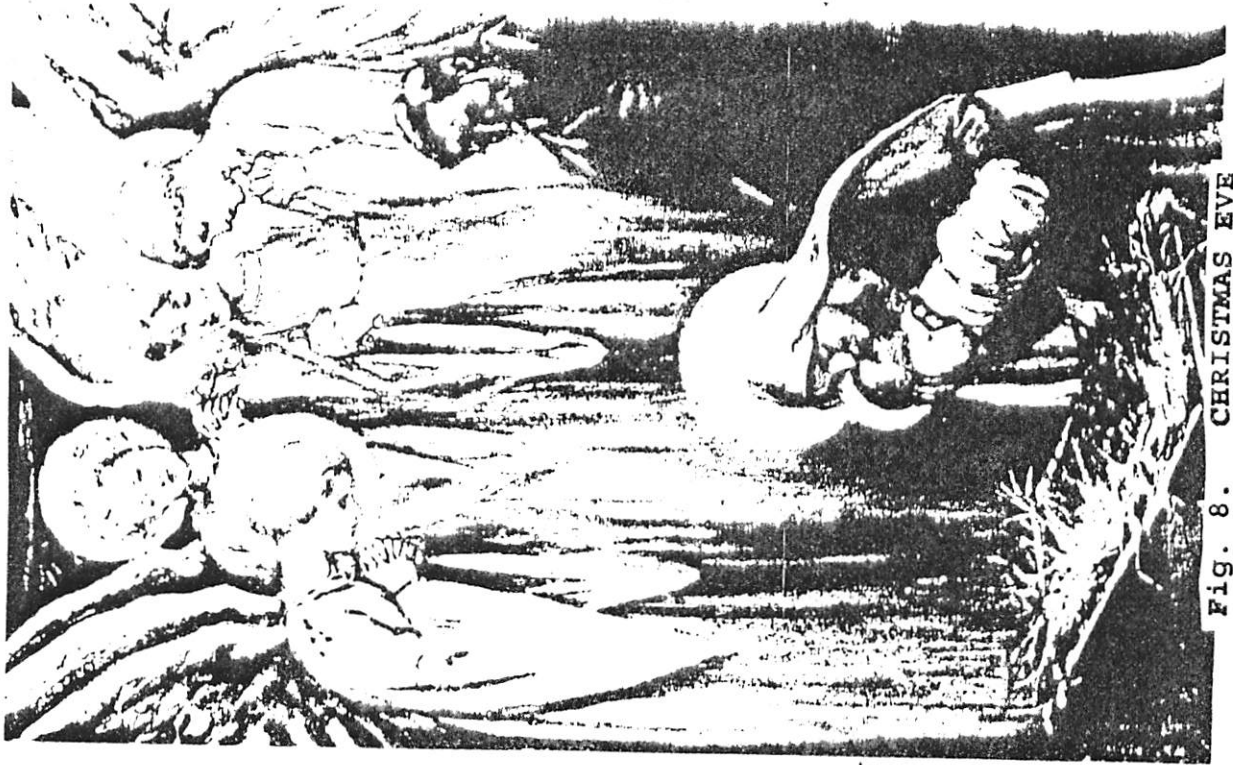


Fig. 8. CHRISTMAS EVE

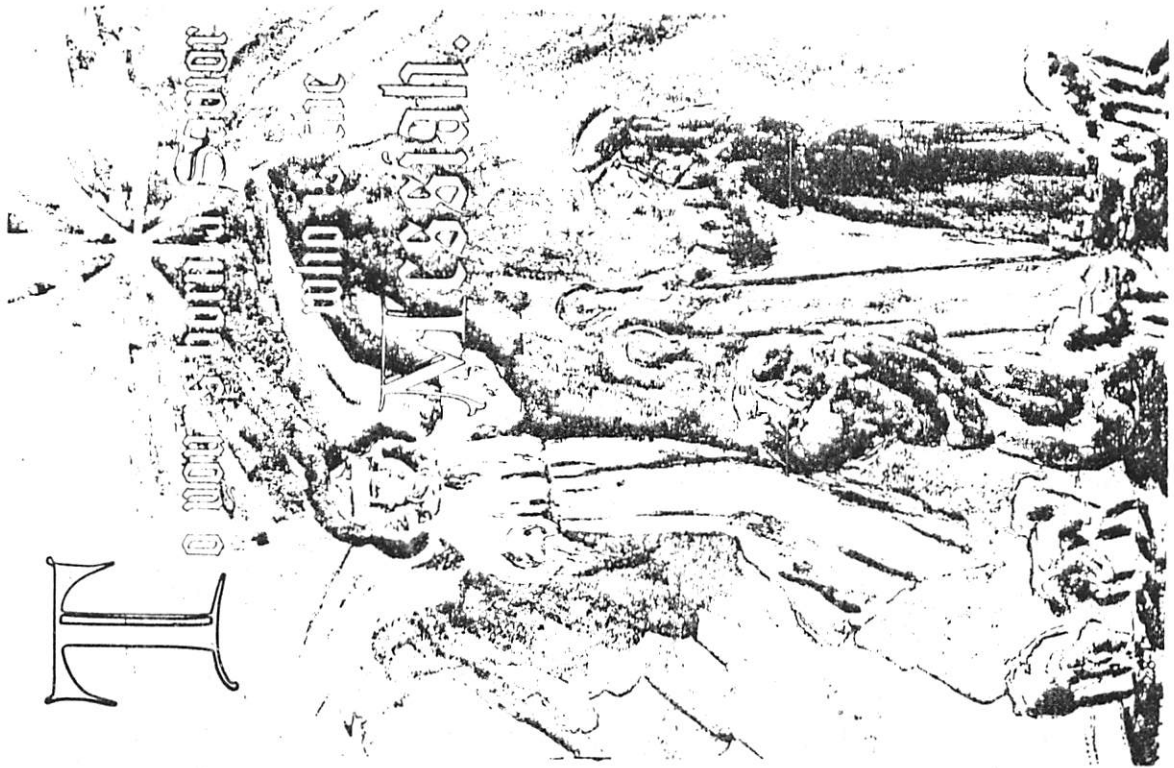
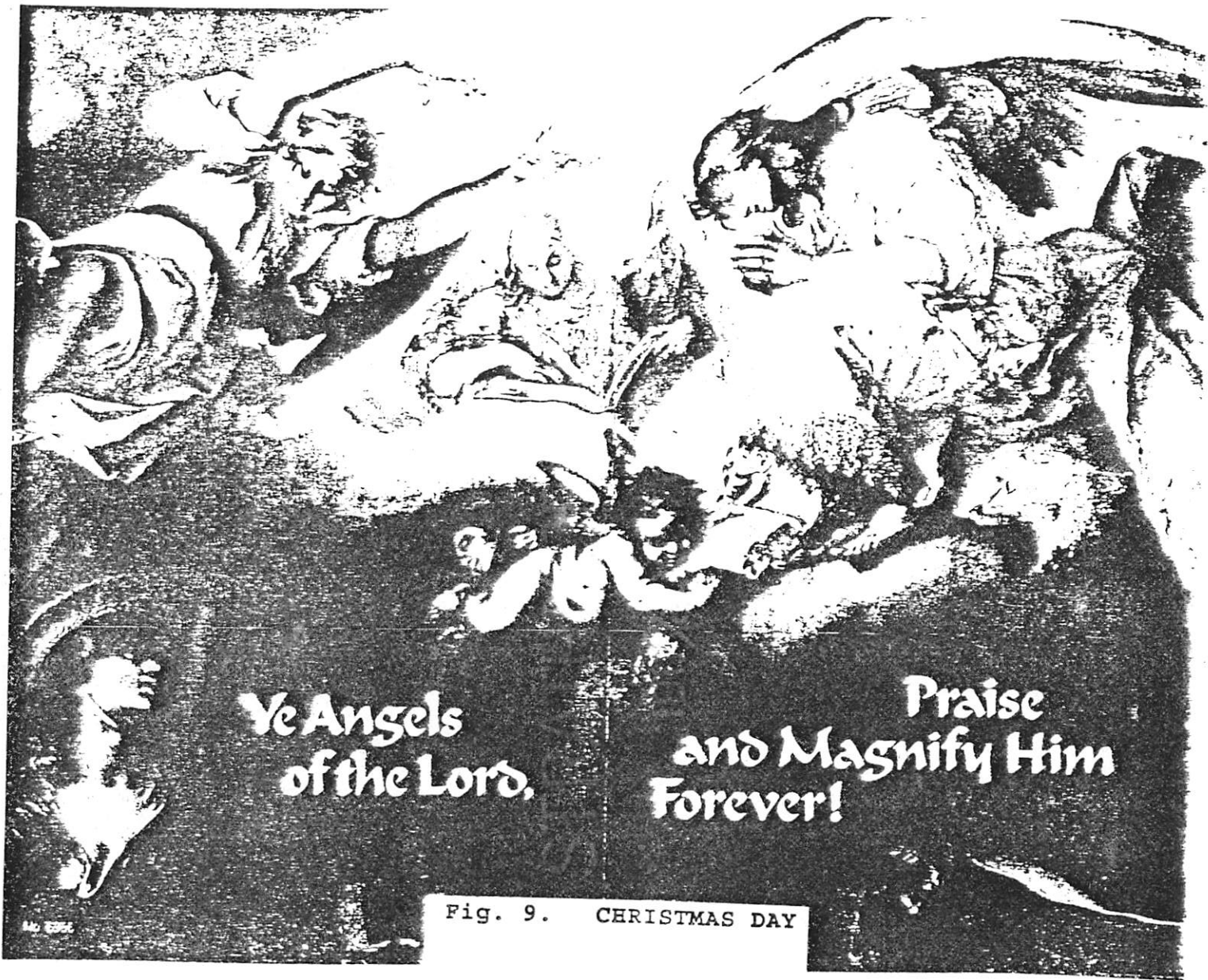


Fig. 7. THE FOURTH SUNDAY IN ADVENT



Ye Angels  
of the Lord,

Praise  
and Magnify Him  
Forever!

Fig. 9. CHRISTMAS DAY



Glory  
to God in the  
highest heaven  
and on earth **Peace**

(Luke 2:13-14)

Fig. 10. NEW YEAR'S DAY



Having  
been  
warned,  
they left by  
another  
road.

(Matthew 2:12)

Fig. 11. THE EPIPHANY



Fig. 12. ASH WEDNESDAY



Fig. 13. THE SECOND WEDNESDAY OF LENT



*"ANGELS OF OUR SAVIOR'S PASSION"*



*"The Angels Who Destroyed in Order to Deliver:  
The Passover Angels"*

**Fig. 14. THE THIRD WEDNESDAY OF LENT**



**Fig. 15. THE THIRD SUNDAY IN LENT**



Fig. 16. THE FOURTH WEDNESDAY OF LENT

*ANGELS OF OUR SAVIOR'S PASSION*



*"The Angels Standing By:  
Twelve Legions at our Savior's Disposal"*

Fig. 17. THE FIFTH WEDNESDAY OF LENT

ANGEL'S OF OUR SAVIOR'S PASSION



*"The Angel Whose Hour Had Come:  
Satan and the Power of Darkness"*

Fig. 18. THE SIXTH WEDNESDAY OF LENT

He is  
not here,  
but has  
risen.



Fig. 19. EASTER SUNDAY



Fig. 20. THE SECOND SUNDAY OF EASTER



Fig. 21. THE ASCENSION OF OUR LORD



Fig. 22. SAINT MICHAEL AND ALL ANGELS

## APPENDIX B

## ANGELS FOR THE CHILDREN

No year-long congregational emphasis would be complete without something for the children of the congregation. During our emphasis on the doctrine of angels we tried to enhance the children's appreciation for these spiritual beings in a number of different ways. The following pages will exhibit only a sampling of some of the activities we tried.

The coloring pictures were obtained from The Bible Coloring Book published by Waldman Publishing Corporation (1991) and reprinted in reduced form here by permission. The crossword puzzles were devised by our Sunday school teachers themselves, and the fill-in-the-blank hymn puzzles are based on hymn and canticle verses from The Lutheran Hymnal.

## ANGEL SONGS

(Look up the hymn number in The Lutheran Hymnal and fill in the blank.)

- Hymn 94: Hark! the herald angels sing...
- Hymn 77: Sweetest angel voices, "Christ is born," their choirs are singing.
- Hymn 188: Praise Him in a nobler song, cherubim of heavenly birth
- Hymn 136: Angels from the realms of glory ....
- Hymn 646: heavenly hosts sing, Alleluia.
- Hymn 208: Ye sons and daughters of the King, Whom heavenly hosts in glory sing.
- Hymn 198: Break forth hosts of heaven in jubilant song.
- Hymn 193: "Christ the Lord is risen today," sons of men and angels say.
- Page 35: (The Te Deum Laudamus): To thee cherubim and seraphim continually do cry...



**Angels That Destroy**

**Across**

1. Psalm 78:49 tells how, during the Passover plague, the firstborn of Egypt were killed by a band of \_\_\_\_\_ angels.
2. Matthew 25:41 speaks of an eternal fire prepared for the \_\_\_\_\_ and all his evil angels.
3. Satan and his demons will no longer disturb us here.

**Down**

1. According to 2 Corinthians 11:14, who sometimes transforms himself into an angel of light.
2. 2 Peter 2:4 says that the angels which sinned were cast down to this place.
3. The archangel Michael cast this old serpent, the great \_\_\_\_\_, Satan, out of heaven (Revelation 12:9).

													<sup>3</sup> D	
					<sup>1</sup> S								R	
			<sup>2</sup> H		A								A	
		<sup>1</sup> D	E	S	T	R	O	Y	I	N	G			
			L		A								O	
		<sup>2</sup> D	E	V	I	L							<sup>3</sup> H	
									<sup>3</sup> H	E	A	V	E	N

**Angels and the Savior's Birth**

**Across**

1. Luke 2 tells how an angel told the wonderful news to \_\_\_\_\_ abiding in the fields.
2. A multitude of the heavenly host sang " \_\_\_\_\_ to God in the highest!"
3. The name of the angel that had earlier told Zechariah of this marvelous birth (Luke 1:18,19).

**Down**

1. Luke 1:26,27 tells us that the angel Gabriel also went to announce the Savior's coming birth to \_\_\_\_\_.
2. After Jesus was born, Joseph was warned by an angel in a \_\_\_\_\_ to take the Child and his mother to Egypt. (Matthew 2:13).
3. Matthew 2:19,20 tells that, at a later time, an angel appeared to Joseph in a dream to inform him of the death of an evil king.

		<sup>3</sup> H														
<sup>1</sup> S	H	E	P	H	E	R	<sup>2</sup> D	S								
		R					R						<sup>1</sup> M			
							E						A			
<sup>2</sup> G	L	O	R	Y												
		D								<sup>3</sup> G	A	B	R	I	E	L
									M				Y			



**Angels and Jesus**

**Across**

1. The Book of M tells us how angels ministered to Jesus after Satan tempted Him in the wilderness.
2. Unlike Satan's angels, which are evil, Jesus' angels are h.
3. Matthew 26:53 says that God the Father could have sent \_\_\_\_\_ legions of angels to help Jesus at any time.

**Down**

1. John 20:12 tells us that two \_\_\_\_\_ were at the empty tomb on Easter morning.
2. The same verse (John 20:12) also tells us that they were wearing what color?
3. How many angels, according to Acts 1:10, were at the Savior's Ascension?

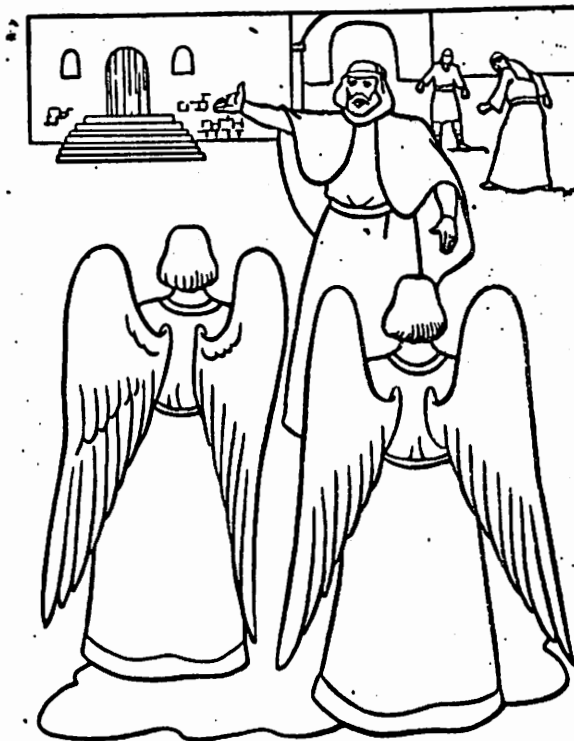
		<sup>1</sup> M	<sup>1</sup> A	T	T	H	E	<sup>2</sup> W				
			N					<sup>2</sup> H	O	L	Y	
			G					I				
<sup>3</sup> T	W	E	L	V	E							
W		L					T					
O		S					E					



Two angels reached Sodom that night and ...



... approached Lot, who was sitting near the front gate of the city.



Lot invited the angels to dinner.



The angels told Lot that they had been sent by the Lord to destroy the sinful citizens of Sodom and Gomorrah.



The angels helped pull Lot to safety.



When Lot was safely inside, the angels struck the evil men with a bright light to keep them away from the house.



When Abraham and his wife Sarah were very, very old, three angels visited them and said, "God will grant you a son."



Abraham had promised to obey all commands of God! To test Abraham's faith, God then commanded him to sacrifice his ...



... only son, Isaac. Filled with grief, Abraham obeyed. At the last moment, God's angel substituted a ram for Isaac.



Jacob, on his way to his Uncle Laban's house, stopped to rest for the night. While asleep, he dreamed of a ladder that reached up to heaven.



Angels were climbing up and down. Jacob heard God's voice saying, "The land on which you lie, I shall give to you and your descendants."



Before Jacob reached Canaan, he wrestled with an angel of God. Because Jacob's spirit did not fail, God named him Israel, which means "The Reliable One."



Many, many years later, God appeared to Moses as a flame of fire, in a bush that did not burn.



The tenth plague caused the deliverance of the Israelites. An angel of God was sent to destroy every first-born in Egypt, men and beast alike.

The blood of a perfect lamb appearing upon the doorposts of the Israelites, as commanded by Moses, caused the angel of God to pass over their homes.



They were thrown into a fiery furnace, but did not burn.  
God's angel was with them and protected them.



Before Mary married Joseph, God's angel visited her and said, "Holy spirit will come upon you, and you will bear the child Jesus, the Son of God."



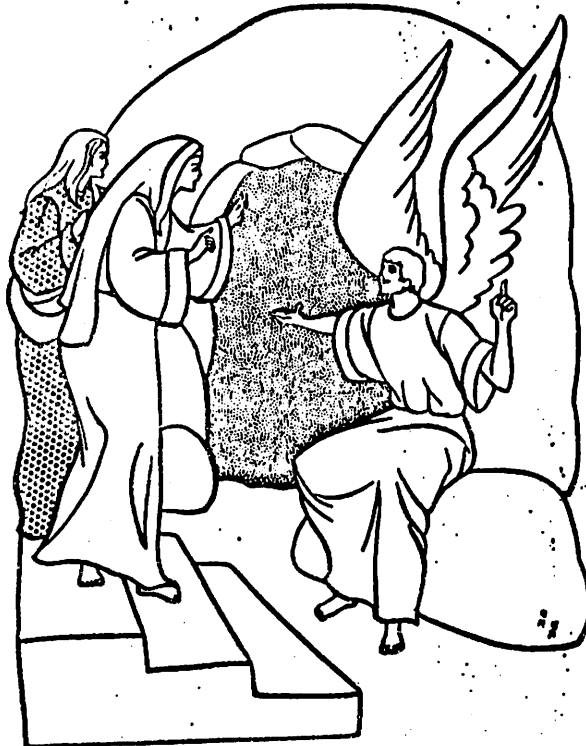
Three shepherds were told by the angel of God to be present when their Saviour, Christ the Lord, was born.



Warned by an angel in a dream, Joseph took Mary and Jesus to Egypt for safety from the wicked King Herod.



Jesus, in the wilderness fasting and praying, was tempted by the devil. Three times He turned from temptation.



An angel of God said to the women, "I know you are looking for Jesus, but he is not here for he was raised up."

APPENDIX C  
MISCELLANEOUS ITEMS

Included in this section are a number of items used to promote and communicate our emphasis on angels to the congregation as well as to the surrounding community of Crestwood. These items consist of three newsletter articles, two publicity brochures, a collection of weekly bulletin articles and a Christmas table prayer.

Many of the weekly bulletin articles ("ANSWERS ON ANGELS") were based on excerpts taken from Richard C. Jahn's time-tested essay on "The Doctrine of Angels" in The Abiding Word, Volume III. Two of the longer articles were taken from the very timely Contemporary Faith series of bulletin inserts provided quarterly through Concordia Publishing House.





## Glorify to God in the highest heaven, and on earth PEACE

Dear Members,

Have you happened to notice the overwhelming interest in angels on the part of the general public these days? Books on angels, angel cards and calendars are floating out of bookstores at amazing rates. Angels have become a multi-million dollar business with over a hundred "angel" shops nation-wide. Alleged angel sightings are recounted on television shows. There was even a recent Disney film entitled, "Angels in the Outfield."

The sad thing is that much of this recent interest is based not on what God's Word says about angels, as much as on traditional sentiments and a person's own subjective feelings. There is even an insidious connection with the so-called New Age religion that we have to watch with regard to this current "angel craze".

Even so, it is at least somewhat encouraging that people in this scientific age still long to know more about the supernatural. Not only is there an opportunity for us to share what God's Word says about these heavenly beings, we can also use this opportunity to proclaim what we know about the King of Angels, Jesus Christ.

With the approval of our Board of Elders, we have designated the new church (liturgical) year as the "Year of the Lord's Angels". Of course, Jesus Christ our Prince of Peace will continue to remain our central emphasis and focus. But, for the next ten months, there will also be a secondary emphasis on Scripture's doctrine of angels. Here is a list of angel emphases that I have in mind:

- | Year long emphasis of angels in our liturgy and hymnody.
- | Angelic themes of worship and preaching throughout our Advent and Lenten seasons.
- | A summer sermon series on "Angelic Appearances in the Old Testament."
- | A six to eight week Bible study on Angels to begin in late spring or early summer.
- | Opportunities for members to reflect and offer testimony as to angelic protection in their own lives.
- | Craft projects for the Sunday school kids on angel themes.
- | Artistic renderings of angels on bulletin covers.

We begin this year-long emphasis on Sunday, November 27th -- The First Sunday in Advent -- with a special service of Holy Communion. Becky and Tony Dean have donated a new banner for this occasion. There is also a blue brochure included with this newsletter further describing the themes of our Advent and holiday services.

May this "Year of the Lord's Angels" give all glory to our Triune God, as well as great comfort to God's people.

*Pastor Smith*



# He Shall Reign Forever

Dear Members,

As you may already know, the holy season of Lent begins with Ash Wednesday on March 1. In keeping with our year-long emphasis on the biblical doctrine of angels, our Lenten theme is entitled **ANGELS OF OUR SAVIOR'S PASSION.**

Usually we think of angels in connection with Advent and the Christmas story. I don't know if we ever pause to reflect on the prominent roles that angels (including the chief evil angel, Satan) played in the events foreshadowing or leading up to Good Friday and Easter. This is what we will attempt to do with our Lenten services this year. Of course, Christ crucified will continue to remain the chief focus of all our preaching. But here is a listing of some subordinate themes that will serve our preaching of the Gospel:

- |                                |   |
|--------------------------------|---|
| March 1                        | "The Angel Whose Head Would be Crushed: Satan"                    |
| (Ash Wednesday Holy Communion) | (Genesis 3:15)  |
| March 8                        | "The Angel Who Saved the Day: The Angel of the Lord"              |
|                                | (Genesis 22: 11-13)   |
| March 15                       | "The Angel Who Destroyed in order to Deliver: the Passover Angel" |
|                                | (Numbers 20:16)   |
| March 22                       | "The Angel Who Strengthened our Savior: the Angel in Gethsemane"  |
|                                | (Luke 22:43)  |
| March 29                       | "The Angel Whose Hour Had Come: Satan and the Powers of Darkness" |
|                                | (Luke 22:53)  |
| April 5                        | "The Angels Standing By: Twelve Legions at our Savior's Disposal" |
|                                | (Matthew 26:53-54)  |
| April 16                       | "The Angels at the Empty Tomb: 'He is Risen'"                     |
| (Easter Holy Communion)        | (Luke 24:2-7)   |

We have included a pocket-sized leaflet conveying these themes which you can either keep as a reminder for yourself or share with a friend. As you may know, angels continue to be a hot topic these days. Maybe we can use this curiosity about angels on the part of the general public as an opportunity to tell others about the King of angels, Jesus Christ.

Again, may this "Year of the Lord's Angels" and specifically this series of Lenten services, give all glory to our Triune God as well as great comfort to God's people.

*Pastor Smith*

XXXIII

SEPTEMBER 1995

NO 09

### STANDING WITH THE ANGELS

The Lord gathers His church together to His worship service to receive His gifts, and He stations Himself among us in His true Body and Blood. As we are anticipating the receiving of this holy gift, we pray words which place us in the company of the holy angels:

**Therefore with angels and archangels  
and with all the company of heaven  
we laud and magnify Thy glorious name,  
evermore praising Thee and saying:  
Holy, holy, holy, Lord God of Sabaoth, ...**

*(From the Proper Preface and The Sanctus of the Holy Communion Service)*

How strang it must seem that a bunch of sinners would dare to place themselves in the company of angels!

The "Lord God of Sabaoth" means, "The Lord God of *the heavenly hosts of angels*" (the word "Sabaoth" means, literally, *hosts*, or *armies*, or *legions* of heavenly angels.)

How can this be, that we sing out *with* the angels?

The angels are gathered around the throne of the Lord, hearing the words of His mouth, and witnessing His actions of salvation both in heaven and on earth. When the angels see the Lord God saving the sinner, when they see Him showing mercy even on those whose sinfulness placed Him on the cross, the holy angels join in chorus and shout out:

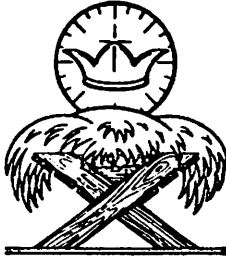
***Holy, Holy, Holy, is the Lord God of hosts,  
The whole earth is full of His glory!***

*(Isaiah 6:3 -- the song of the Seraphim angels)*

Now the Lord gathers His church to Himself. Even as the angels are stationed around the throne in heaven, our Lord stations us around His presence, calling us to the gift of His own Body and Blood. At His worship service, at the table of the living Blood, we witness the saving action of our Lord Jesus here on earth--even as the angels witness His salvation being sent forth from heaven. With His Blood given into the mouths of sinners, there is now "Glory on earth" (as the angels sing in Isaiah 6:3). And, by the gift of His holy Blood, we are declared holy! thus, being gathered around His Blood of Holy Communion, we are given forgiveness and life, and along with all the angels and archangels the church sings out to her Lord:

**we laud and magnify Thy glorious name,  
evermore praising Thee and saying:  
Holy, holy, holy, Lord God of Sabaoth;  
Heaven and earth are full of Thy glory ...**

We will soon be drawing our year-long emphasis on angels to a close, but not before a vie-session Bible study on angels this month and appropriate sermons on St Michael's and All Angels Sunday, September 24th and Reformation Sunday, October 19th. I would also like to get your feedback regarding this "Year of Our Lord's Angels." You may respond by using this evaluation form included in this issue of the newsletter.



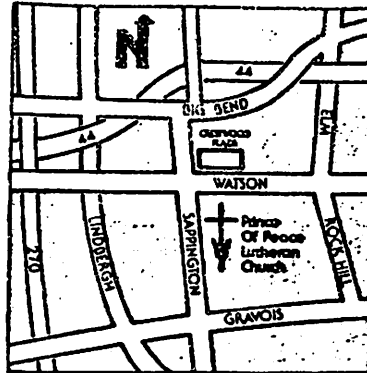
Sunday, Dec 18th - 6:30 PM  
 Children's Program:  
 "Our Own 'Little Angels' Tell  
 the Wondrous Story"

Saturday, Dec 24th - 6:30 PM  
 Candlelight Service  
 "God's Angels Proclaim the  
 Savior's Birth"

Sunday, Dec 25th - 9:30 AM  
 "God's Angels Hovering  
 Over the Manger"

Sunday, Jan 1st - 8:15 & 10:15 AM  
 "God's Angels With Us Throughout  
 the New Year"

Sunday, Jan 8th - 8:15 & 10:15 AM  
 "God's Angels Directing Our Path"



**Accessibility For The Disabled:**

- Wheelchair accessible.
- Earphones available.
- Large print hymnals available.

**A Season of Angels**



Prince of Peace Lutheran Church  
 8646 New Sappington Road  
 Crestwood, Missouri

- 843.8448 -

Pastor Mark S. H. Smith



Prince of Peace Lutheran Church wishes to extend a special invitation to you to join us in A Season of Angels. This focus begins on the first Wednesday in Advent, November 30th, at 7 PM. With the recent interest on the subject of Angels our pastor felt this to be the perfect time of year to speak further about these heavenly messenger's from God.



"...you will bear a son, and you will name him Jesus."  
 Luke 1:31



**Nov 30th**

7 PM

"Gabriel's Message Strikes Zechariah Speechless" (Luke 1:5-25)

-Angel Gabriel speaks to Zechariah.

-Zechariah's wife, Elizabeth will bear a son, even though she is beyond child-bearing years.

-Their son, John will be the forerunner for the Savior.

-Angel testifies to the truth by striking Zechariah speechless.

**Dec 7th**

7 PM

"Gabriel Gives Great News to Mary" (Luke 1:26-28)

-Angel appears to the virgin Mary

-Gabriel tells Mary that, like her cousin Elizabeth, she too will bear a son by miraculous birth.

-The Holy Spirit comes upon Mary and the Power of the Most High would overshadow her.



**Dec 14th**

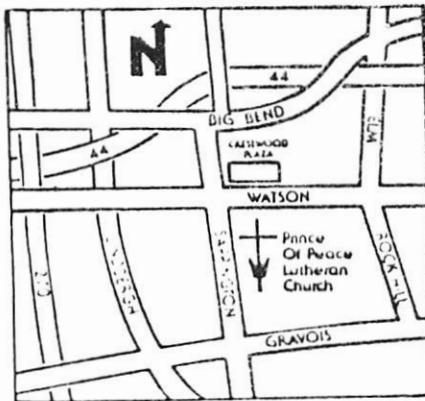
7 PM

"God's Angel Assures Joseph in a Dream" (Matt 1:18-24)

-When Mary was found to be with child, her betrothed resolved to spare her public disgrace and divorce her quietly.

-An Angel appears to Joseph.

-This Son, Jesus will save His people from their sins. He is Immanuel - "God with Us"!

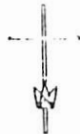


#### Accessibility For The Disabled:

- Wheelchair accessible
- Earphones available
- Large print hymnals available.

Sunday Worship Services  
8:15 a.m. and 10:45 a.m.  
Sunday School and Bible Classes  
9:30 a.m.

Pastor Mark S. H. Smith



No. 7301



### ANGELS OF OUR SAVIOR'S PASSION

- March 1st -  
Ash Wednesday, 7 PM  
"The Angel whose Head  
would be Crushed"

- March 8th -  
Wednesday, 7 PM  
"The Angel who Saved the Day"

- March 15th -  
Wednesday, 7 PM  
"The Angel who was both  
a Destroyer as well as a Deliverer:  
The Passover Angel"

- March 22nd -  
Wednesday, 7 PM  
"The Angel who Strengthened  
our Savior:  
The Angel in Gethsemane"

- March 29th -  
Wednesday, 7 PM  
"The Angel whose  
Hour had Come:  
Satan and the  
Power of Darkness"

- April 5th -  
Wednesday, 7 PM  
"The Angels Standing By:  
Twelve Legions at our  
Savior's Disposal"

- April 16th -  
Easter Service  
7 AM & 9:30 AM  
"The Angels at the Empty Tomb:  
'He is not Here - He is Risen'"

Easter Sunday our church will serve  
breakfast immediately following early  
service. Everyone is welcome.

## Angels Today

For much of the 20th century, belief in the existence of angels—like belief in a Divine creator and in the existence of heaven and hell—seemed to be fading from American thought. Now, however, that appears to be changing.

Angels have become a big business, literally and figuratively. If you would like to read about the subject, you will probably be able to choose from an ample selection of titles on angels at a nearby bookstore. You can keep up to date by subscribing to newsletters devoted to angels. With a little effort you can travel to an angel seminar or shop in a store specializing in angel merchandise.

The growing American fascination with angels has not been lost on the news media. In December 1993, both *Time* and *Newsweek* ran stories on angels and their impact on American lives. The story in *Time* reported results of a survey: Sixty-nine percent answered "Yes" to the question "Do you believe in the existence of angels?" Forty-six percent said "Yes" when asked "Do you believe you have your own guardian angel?" Thirty-two percent said that they had "personally felt an angelic presence" in their lives.

However, the angels that have been capturing the imagination of many Americans often bear only a passing resemblance to the angels described in the Bible. While the angels portrayed in books, newsletters and the like are usually spiritual creatures and messengers of God, the focus has often been on matters such as stories of encounters with angels, ways to learn to listen to their messages, and the personal benefits that one can find through the aid of these spiritual creatures. The emphasis tends to be on what angels can do to help and comfort people in times of distress and on how they can serve as guides to wisdom and knowledge about spiritual matters.

To be sure, the Bible does teach that angels exist, and it describes them as God's messengers, as creatures whom He sends to protect and help His people. They are not personal guides and aides for the human race. But this is what some are saying and what many people apparently would like to believe.

With this in mind, it may be fitting to review a few facts about angels. Angels are creatures. Spiritual creatures, but creatures all the same. They are not gods or the spirits of the dead. As spirits they cannot be seen, nor do they occupy space, although on a number of occasions the Bible reports that they assumed human bodies, visited people, and even ate food.

There are both good and evil angels. All angels were created good, but some fell away, including Satan. Both good and evil angels are very powerful and their numbers are very large. With their power, Satan and the other evil angels seek to deceive and harm people, while God sends His angels to oppose evil and to protect His people.

Although God's angels are spirits and although their service is always directed to God and His will, they are not indifferent to mankind and our need for salvation. In fact, their presence is closely linked to the chief events of God's work of salvation: the angel Gabriel announced the conception of Jesus; angels proclaimed the birth of the Savior to the shepherds; angels were present at the empty tomb and after the ascension; angels will accompany Christ when He returns in glory to judge the living and the dead; and, as Jesus himself said, "there is rejoicing in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents" (Luke 15:10).

Scripture quotations: NEW INTERNATIONAL VERSION © 1973, 1978, 1984 by the International Bible Society. Used by permission of Zondervan.

## Angels Aware

What a variety of ideas there are about angels! In the movie, "It's a Wonderful Life," an angel shows the main character, George Bailey, what life would have been like if he had not lived. The angel is a caring figure who wants the best for George and does all in his limited power to make sure that George wants to live.

The angel played by the deceased Michael Landon in the old TV show "Highway to Heaven" is similar, but much more aggressive. This angel is human-like, deeply caring about people and the trouble they face. The angel works hard, sometimes even doing sinful things, so that everything will turn out all right for people in the end.

Such angelic figures are very attractive to Americans who live in a seemingly arbitrary and uncaring world. A very young spouse dies of cancer. After 20 years, a person loses her job without previous warning. A fire destroys a home. To many Americans, violence and tragedy seem only a moment away. In the face of unpredictable suffering and loss, a powerful angel who cares and does everything for your good may seem too good to be true. Yet, Christians know such creatures do exist, and on September 29, on St. Michael and All Angels Day, we celebrate the fact that there are good angels.

The angels described in the Bible are quite different from those of television and the movies. Biblical angels, like TV and movie angels, are caring and concerned about what happens to us, but most important about what happens to us in our relationship to Christ. The writer of Hebrews asks, "Are not all angels ministering spirits sent to serve those who will inherit salvation?" (Heb. 1:14). In other words, angels serve us so that we continue to trust in Christ and remain in our baptismal relationship with Christ.

Angels also protect Christians in their everyday

life. God promises this: "He will command his angels concerning you to guard you in all your ways" (Ps. 91:11). Angels work to prevent us from suffering physical and emotional harm, so that Christians may live out their lives to the glory of God.

Angels can also be aggressive on behalf of Christians. They fight against a power stronger than any human. They battle on behalf of Christians against the devil and his evil angels. They strive to prevent the devil from throwing temptations in our path. They work against the devil's evil influences in society.

Ultimately, as angels work to guard our relationship to Christ, they care for us even in death. They are a reminder that nothing can separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord (Rom. 8:39).

While some ridicule those who believe in angels, many find the awareness of angels to be comforting. Even non-Christians who doubt the existence of angels find comfort and hope in the possibility of angels when faced with tragedy, sorrow, and the unpredictability of the world.

St. Michael and All Angels Day is an important reminder for Christians to give thanks for the angels who always watch over them. When others face tragedy, a reminder to them that angels are watching over them may open the door to share with them the Lord of the angels and what great love and care He has shown by His suffering, death, and resurrection in our behalf.

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ANSWERS ON ANGELS: ARTICLES FOR THE WEEKLY BULLETIN

**ANSWERS ON ANGELS - Do angels pray for us?** Zechariah 1:12 tells us about the angel of the Lord praying, "Lord Almighty, how long will you withhold mercy from Jerusalem?" Therefore, we Lutherans confess in the Book of Concord that the angels in heaven do indeed pray for us. (Tappert, page 230) But this does not mean that we should invoke or pray to the angels. For instance, when the apostle John fell down to worship at the feet of an angel, the angel forbade him and urged John to worship the Lord alone (Revelation 22:8-9). (Tappert, page 230)

**ANSWERS ON ANGELS - What will God's holy angels be responsible for doing on the Last Day?** One of our hymns this morning gives somewhat of a cryptic answer. See if you can find it: ("Where angels soon shall gather their sheaves of golden grain.") We are plainly told in Matthew 25, Mark 13 and 1 Thessalonians 4 that the angels will play an important role in assisting with the Resurrection. Accompanying our Lord in His return as Judge, they will announce His arrival with the sound of trumpets. Then they will gather the living and the dead from all parts of the globe separating the believers from the unbelievers. The angels will place the believers at the right hand of Christ, taking them up to meet our Lord in the air. But the unbelievers will be placed by the angels at the left hand of Christ. After Christ judges them, the angels will quickly cast the wicked unbelievers into Hell! "So shall we ever be with the Lord!"

**ANSWERS ABOUT ANGELS - What are the seraphim?** Seraphim or seraphs are a class of angels that are mentioned in the Bible only in Isaiah 6 (our Old Testament reading for today). The prophet, Isaiah saw them flying above the Lord in heaven and calling to one another: "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord Almighty; the whole earth is full of His glory." They sang with such powerful voices that the door posts and thresholds shook. Each seraph is said to have six wings. Although they appear to be of high rank in that they guard God's throne, not even the seraphim seem to be able to fully endure the sight of the essential holiness of God. With two wings they cover their faces and with two more wings they cover their feet, while the two remaining wings they use for flying. We sing about these angelic creatures in Hymn 249.



**ANSWERS ON ANGELS - Do angels really sing?** Strange question, you might say. Of course, we usually think of angels as singing at Christmas and even our hymnody often reflects this general consensus (see hymns 30, 35 and 136). But you may be interested to know that the Bible never really uses the words "sing" or "sang" in connection with angels. Look again carefully at those passages that you think speak of angels as singing. You may be surprised. Even the Proper Preface in our communion liturgy seems to carefully address this question (see the last two lines and especially the last word on the bottom of page 25 in The Lutheran Hymnal). At any rate, don't be too upset by any of this. After all, if angels have voices to speak, what really would prevent these marvelous creatures from singing, as well?

**ANSWERS ABOUT ANGELS - When did Satan and his evil angels first rebel against God?** It must have been some time before Adam and Eve fell into sin, because Satan was the one who tempted them. Some scholars have noted that the second day of creation is the only day that God does not call "good" and they have therefore suggested that this might have been the day of Satan's rebellion. God blessed the seventh day and made it Holy (Genesis 2:3). So it seems unlikely that Satan's revolt would have taken place on that day.

How long Adam and Eve were in the Garden of Eden before Satan fell and tempted them we do not know for sure. The important thing is not to know the exact time, but for us to see the danger of vain pride, conceit and a lust for greater things than God has given us. (The Abiding Word, Volume III, page 195)

**ANSWERS ON ANGELS - The Angel of the Lord, or the Angel of the Covenant, is mentioned frequently in Scripture, especially in the Old Testament.** This is none other than our Lord Christ. He appeared to the patriarchs and to the chosen people at critical moments of their history to confirm the promise of the Messiah to them. To determine when a given passage speaks of a created angel or the Lord Himself, the Lutheran Scholar, Quenstedt suggests this rule: "Whenever and wherever the name Jehovah or a divine attribute or work or divine worship is accorded to an angel appearing to the patriarchs and other believers, they are not created, but the uncreated Angel, namely, the Son of God is to be understood." (The Abiding Word, Volume III, page 193)

**ANSWERS ON ANGELS** - Most of us have heard of guardian angels, but did you know that the Bible also speaks of recording angels? (Ecclesiastes 5:4-6 and Ecclesiastes 10:20). This last reference says: "Curse not the king, no, not in thy thought; and curse not the rich in thy bed chamber; for a bird of the air shall carry the voice, and that which hath wings shall tell the matter." By strange and unaccountable ways, what the wicked say in the privacy of their homes will be revealed on Judgement Day. Since birds obviously cannot be the bearers of such tales, we may consider this a reference to winged recording angels, who expose wrong-doing as punishment. (The Abiding Word, Volume III, pages 231-232)

**ANSWERS ON ANGELS** - "The Angel Armies of the Sky." This past Wednesday evening, we reflected on the twelve legions of angels standing by throughout our Savior's Passion. They were ever ready to rescue our Lord; any time Jesus could have called for help. Yet, our selfless Savior refrained from calling upon them in order that the Scripture be fulfilled (Matthew 26:53, 54). Find the hymn verse in today's service which speaks of these angels standing watch over our Savior's suffering.

**ANSWERS ON ANGELS** - How many angels were at the Easter Tomb? Bible doubters are quick to point out that Matthew and Mark say that only one angel was present while Luke and John tell us that two were there. This, they say, is an evident discrepancy. But do Matthew and Mark really say that only one angel was at the tomb? The careful reader will note that the word "only" is missing from their accounts. While their reports do not mention the presence of several angels, but merely "an angel," they do not deny that more may have been there and were seen by the women. There is no discrepancy between the Gospel accounts. They compliment each other -- not contradict. (W Arndt Does the Bible Contradict Itself, page 82)

**ANSWERS ON ANGELS** - How many angels are mentioned by name in Holy Scripture? Only two good angels are mentioned by name in Holy Scripture - Gabriel and Michael. Lucifer was the name given Satan before he fell.

The apocryphal books of Esdras and Tobit and the Jewish Talmud are not part of God's inspired Word, but they do mention other angels by name: Uriel (Angel of Light); Phanuel; Yophiel; Nabel (Angel of Poverty); Jeremiel; Raphael (Angel of Healing); Yophyophyel; Liolahel (Angel of Dreams); Azrael (Angel of Death). Obviously, all of these latter angels and their names are questionable because of their apocryphal source. (The Abiding Word, Volume III, page 228)

**ANSWERS ON ANGELS - What are the Cherubim?** Theodoret, a bishop of the fifth century, Andreas Musculus, a contemporary of Luther, and others used to think that cherubim were horrible monsters placed before the gates of Paradise to frighten people away. But nowhere in Holy Scripture is a cherub described as an ugly apparition or as an evil angel. It is true that cherubim are described in various ways in Scripture so it's difficult to form a firm mental picture of them. God ordered that golden images of two cherubim be placed on the "mercy seat" (the lid of the Ark of the Covenant). Here they're described as having only one face and two wings. Ezekiel describes a vision of cherubim by the river Chebar in Babylon. But these had four faces and four wings each -- the face of a man, a lion, an ox, and an eagle. John, in his Book of Revelation, describes similar four-faced "living creatures" (Revelation 4:6, 8) and mentions them again in today's Epistle lesson. Some scholars think that there were only four cherubim. (The Abiding Word, Volume III, page 221)

**ANSWERS ON ANGELS - What do we know about the angel Gabriel?** Gabriel's name means "Power of God" or "Hero of God". He was God's messenger to Daniel in the Old Testament (Daniel 8:16; 9:21) and to Zacharias and the virgin Mary in the New Testament (Luke 1). According to Jewish legends, it was Gabriel who destroyed Sodom. The legends also say that he struck the servant of the Egyptian princess because she tried to keep her mistress from taking Moses out of the water, and that Gabriel struck baby Moses so that he would cry and arouse pity! Perhaps more believable, Gabriel is said to have been the angel who delivered Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego from the fiery furnace. He is also, according to legend, the angel who slew 185,000 soldiers of Sennacherib's army in one night. Legends say Gabriel is made of fire and that one of his duties is to bring fruit to maturity. (The Abiding Word, Volume III, page 228)

**ANSWERS ON ANGELS - Can angels be changed or destroyed?** Angels are immutable, "that is, they are not subject to change. They don't grow older like we humans do. They are timeless and immortal. This applies even to the evil angels who are condemned to suffer an eternal fire" (Luke 20:36). However, having been created by God, angels could be destroyed by God or changed. However, they are in themselves incorruptible because they contain no element of decay nor anything that could destroy them, and hence they are of endless existence. Angels are not eternal like God is (without beginning or end). Instead, angels are "sempiternal" (meaning with a beginning, but without end). By the way, "sempiternity" is an attribute that also applies to man. (The Abiding Word, Volume III, page 190)

**ANSWERS ON ANGELS - What do we know about the angel Michael?** "Michael" means "Who is like God?" We're told about him in Daniel 10:13; 12:1; Jude 9 and that his modesty prevented him from personally condemning Satan. The reference to Michael and his angels in Revelation 12:7, 8 may actually apply to the Angel of the Lord, Jesus Christ. The Jews attributed great wisdom to the angel Michael. He was considered to be Israel's guardian angel. The Jews also believed Michael to be the principal of the three angels who visited Abraham with the news of Issac's birth. (We have always taken it to be the Lord, Himself with two accompanying angels). According to Jewish legend, Michael and Gabriel were groomsmen at Adam's wedding, and Michael prepared Moses' bier at his death. Again, according to Jewish legend, Michael can supposedly fly eight times faster than the angel of death, in order to warn people and give them time for repentance. Whereas Gabriel is made of fire, Michael is supposed to be made of snow. Yet, he and Gabriel are nearly always together without causing each other harm. (The Abiding Word, Volume III, page 228)

**ANSWERS ON ANGELS - How quickly can angels move about?** Angels are highly mobile. From Daniel 9:21, we find that angels can move very swiftly to carry out the commands of God. Daniel says: "While I was speaking in prayer, even the man Gabriel... being caused to fly out swiftly, touched me about the time of the evening oblation! And he informed me... 'At the beginning of thy supplications the commandment came forth, and I have come to show thee, for thou art greatly beloved.'" In other words, God had actually given the angel, Gabriel the command to bring an answer to Daniel, and Gabriel was there with the answer before Daniel had even finished his prayer! (The Abiding Word, Volume III, page 190)

**ANSWERS ON ANGELS - Whereas the Bible usually uses the pronoun "he" or "him" in reference to angels, artists often depict angels as looking like youthful women. What gender are angels?** Jesus says that angels neither marry nor are given in marriage (Matthew 22:30). It is true that the masculine pronoun is invariably used when reference is made to an angel. It is also true that angels have been known to take on the form of men. (Genesis 18:1, 5; Luke 24:4) However, angels are spiritual beings and normally do not have bodies. Therefore, they are by nature genderless. Being immortal, their number never decreases. Being sexless, they have no power to propagate their species; and so they never increase.

**ANSWERS ON ANGELS - What about the various ranks and orders among angels?** On the basis of Isaiah 6:2, 3; Hebrews 9:5; Colossians 1:16; Ephesians 1:21; 1 Thessalonians 4:16; Jude 9 and other texts, we do believe that there are various ranks and orders among the angels. But what they are and how they differ from one another we do not know, nor can we. There is no proof that some have a natural superiority over others. Apparently, the reference is to the dignity which the various offices and services impart to them. Incidentally, there are also degrees of rank and "dignity" and power in the evil angels as well. (The Abiding Word, Volume III, page 192)

**ANSWERS ON ANGELS - For the next several Sundays, we will answer the question: What important part will angels play on the Day of Resurrection?** Number one, the angels will sound the trumpets of God. Matthew 24:31. The Son of Man ... "shall send His angels with a great sound of a trumpet." 1 Corinthians 15:51, 52: "We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet; for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible and we shall be changed." 1 Thessalonians 4:16: "The Lord Himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trumpet of God, and the dead in Christ shall rise." By the way, nothing in scripture supports the traditional belief that the archangel Gabriel will blow the trumpet. (The Abiding Word, Volume III, page 239)

**ANSWERS ON ANGELS - In 1 Corinthians 6:3, St Paul tells us: "Don't you know that we shall judge angels? How much more, things that pertain to this life?"** Evidently, on the Last Day -- the Day of Judgment -- you, me, and all the saints (believers in Christ) will intelligently and cordially approve and endorse the sentence pronounced by Christ on wicked men and evil angels. It appears that sentence will be pronounced not only by our Lord Jesus upon man, but by people themselves redeemed from their own sins, upon those who have chosen eternal death rather than eternal life. Yes, the redeemed will also pronounce judgment upon those mighty powers of evil, the devil and his angels, who have seduced people, but from whose grasp the saints have been saved. Incidentally, there is no hint that the good angels need to submit to such a judgment. It apparently applies only to the evil angels. (Revelation 19:1-3) (The Abiding Word, Volume III, page 240)

**ANSWERS ON ANGELS** - Last Sunday we learned how, on the Day of Judgement, the angels will sound the trumpets of God. What else will the angels then do? They will gather the resurrected people. Mark 13:27 says: "Then shall He send His angels, and shall gather together His elect from the four winds, from the utter most part of the earth to the uttermost part of heaven." Psalm 50:3-6 affirms that "Our God shall come, and ... He shall call to the heavens (angels) from above, and to the earth (saints), that He may judge His people: Gather My saints together unto Me ... For God is Judge Himself." (The Abiding Word, Volume III, page 239)

CHRISTMAS TABLE PRAYER

COME, LORD JESUS, BE OUR GUEST;  
LET THIS FOOD TO US BE BLEST,  
FOR YOUR PRESENCE, GRACIOUS LORD,  
OUR GREAT THANKS TO YOU OUTPOURED.  
FOR THE GIFT OF JESUS' BIRTH,  
FOR THE PEACE WE KNOW ON EARTH,  
FOR OUR HOMES SO DRY AND WARM,  
ANGELS KEEPING US FROM HARM,  
FOR ALL LOVED ONES FAR AND NEAR,  
WE PRAY, O LORD GOD, TO BE NEAR.

(TUNE: HARK THE HERALD ANGELS SING)

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