

St Michael's and All Angels 9/29/24 SJ, SM

Revelation 12:7–12 - Then war broke out in heaven. Michael and his angels fought against the dragon, and the dragon and his angels fought back. ⁸But he was not strong enough, and they lost their place in heaven. ⁹The great dragon was hurled down—that ancient serpent called the devil, or Satan, who leads the whole world astray. He was hurled to the earth, and his angels with him. ¹⁰Then I heard a loud voice in heaven say: “Now have come the salvation and the power and the kingdom of our God, and the authority of his Messiah. For the accuser of our brothers and sisters, who accuses them before our God day and night, has been hurled down. ¹¹They triumphed over him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony; they did not love their lives so much as to shrink from death. ¹²Therefore rejoice, you heavens and you who dwell in them! But woe to the earth and the sea, because the devil has gone down to you! He is filled with fury, because he knows that his time is short.”

In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, dear fellow redeemed:

In Hebrew, they are called the malakim (מַלְאָכִים), God's holy messengers or ambassadors. They are the “ones who are sent” by God in some of his dealings with the people of this world, sometimes to protect, to guide, to comfort and to help his people. God sent an angel to guard the entrance to the Garden of Eden, so that man would not eat from the tree of life and live forever in this sinful world. He sent an angel to Hagar to reassure her and to send her back when she ran away.

Sometimes God sends out his messengers to deal out divine punishment. Two angels destroyed the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah at God's command, and the angel of death slew nearly 200,000 Assyrians in a single night.

Isaiah saw a vast group of angels flying around the throne of God in heaven, singing his praise, "**Holy, holy, holy is the LORD Almighty; the whole earth is full of his glory.**" (Is 6:3)

In the New Testament these heavenly beings are the ἄγγελος, the angels of God. They announce the births both of Christ and John the Baptist. They minister to our Savior after his 40 days of temptation and in the Garden of Gethsemane. They roll back the stone on Easter morning, so that his mother and the apostles may discover that they are looking for the living among the dead. **He is not here, he has risen.** They appear again at the Ascension to tell us that in the same way Jesus left this world, he will return again.

Today Scripture teaches about the good angels in heaven, these holy servants of the Lord our God, as it teaches us that:

The Christian Church Is At War

1. Our enemies are devilish
2. Our allies are heavenly
3. Our victory is assured

1. Our enemies are devilish (7b, 9, 10b, 12b)

Our text tells us **Michael and his angels fought against the dragon, and the dragon and his angels fought back ... The great dragon was hurled down--that ancient serpent called the devil, or Satan, who leads the whole world astray ... The accuser of our brothers, who accuses them before our God day and night, has been hurled down ... Woe to the earth and the sea, because the devil has gone down to you! He is filled with fury, because he knows that his time is short.**"

Who is our #1 enemy today? Is it Al Qaeda? Climate change? Ignorance? Abortion? Drug use? Broken families? The destruction of the nuclear family? The sluggish economy? We are involved with a far more insidious enemy, one who is literally quite devilish and evil in his intent. The greatest enemy we face is an angel. Not a holy angel, but a fallen angel. Yet often in cartoons the devil is pictured as a silly looking person in a red suit, with a silly looking tail and holding a pitchfork. He looks like a ridiculous and ludicrous character out of a Batman or Superman comic book. He certainly doesn't look fearsome or dangerous.

But there is nothing cartoonish, silly or ridiculous about Satan. He is described by Scripture as a dragon – fearsome, powerful, extremely intelligent and dangerous, and deadly to those who fall into his power.

He is not some harmless old man dressed in a silly costume. He is the Prince of Darkness and **the Father of Lies**. Satan is **a murderer from the beginning**, the enemy of God **who leads the whole world astray**. (v. 9). Peter describes him as **a roaring lion looking for someone to devour**. (1Pe 5:8) He deceives the people of this world with **all kinds of counterfeit miracles, signs and wonders, and in every sort of evil that deceives those who are perishing**. (2Th 2:9-10)

2. Our allies are heavenly (vv. 7-8, 10)

Satan and the evil are angels and are indeed very devilish enemies, but we are blessed to have heavenly allies fighting for us and on our side. Even though the Prince of Darkness fights his unholy and wicked war against God and against his Church – against us, and he seeks only our harm, we need not fear, because Scripture tells us that in this war, God’s angels **fought against the dragon**. The holy angels are led by the Archangel Michael, the head angel.

Even though **the dragon and his angels fought back**, they were not powerful enough, they could not win against God and his holy angels, because Satan and his allies were **not strong enough**. Because of this, the devil and those angels that he convinced to follow him in his evil ways, they all **lost their place in heaven**. They have been **hurled down**.

But the holy angels are not our only ally. In fact, by themselves, even with all their great power, they could not overcome the devil. Michael and his fellow angels are victorious in casting Satan out of heaven only because of **the salvation and the power and the kingdom of our God, and the authority of his Christ**.

3. Our victory is assured

Satan is angry because he understands that he is already defeated. Christ defeated him by his death and resurrection, but now he is like a wild, cornered animal. While there may be no possible escape and no hope of victory, but that only means that **he is filled with fury, because he knows that his time is short**.

The devil knows that our victory was assured by Christ’s death on the cross for us, and it makes him angry and upset. He wants all mankind, every human being who has ever lived, to join him for eternity in the fires of hell, but he knows that will not happen, cannot happen, because God’s perfect son shed his holy precious blood shed for us.

Martin Luther said about angels: "We Christians should have sure knowledge that the princes of heaven are with us, not only one or two, but a large number of them. And if we were without this custody, and God did not in this way check the fury of Satan, we would not live for one moment. The good angels are busy with the task of keeping this cruel enemy from harming us."

Who are the holy angels? They are God’s faithful servants who know and do his will, who fight daily against the plans and schemes of the devil and his evil followers. By God’s plan and purpose, they guard and keep us. Like us, they know that although the battle wages, the outcome is already certain, since Christ has won the victory for us by his death and resurrection.

The hymn *A Mighty Fortress* reminds us of words that should comfort us and reassure us, because our victory is assured and the devil is defeated, and he knows it:

Though devils all the world should fill, All eager to devour us,
We tremble not, we fear no ill; They shall not over pow’r us.
This world’s prince may still Scowl fierce as he will,
He can harm us none. He’s judged, the deed is done.

Satan cannot harm us. The victory is ours in Christ Jesus our Savior. Amen.