

***St. Michael and All Angels – September 29<sup>th</sup>, 2024***  
***THE UNSEEN WORLD***

***Prayer***

Abba, open our eyes to the unseen world around us and open our ears to the reality of your promises of the forgiveness of our sin and the hope of eternal life with you.

AMEN

***Wisdom***

Last week's sermon was on wisdom, both from God and from this world – and it's prince, Satan. This week, I want to focus on all of the angels, both the good and the evil.

***The Unseen World***

Many of the people we meet in the world today believe only in what can be seen, tasted, heard, touched, or measured – is short, what is material. One skeptic of the spiritual realm put it this way in a Psychology Today article<sup>i</sup>

"If the idea of a spiritual realm and a mind that outlives the brain turned out to be true and materialism turned out to be false, then this discovery would not just add new insights to science the way that the revolutionary theories of relativity

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and quantum mechanics did, it would contradict science in its entirety."

The author is, of course, wrong in his conclusion, since God created both the material world and the spiritual realm.

Outside of acknowledging that God is spiritual, many of those who know and trust Him don't give two-cents about the rest of the spiritual realm – angels – both uncorrupted and fallen. We know that the angels were created before the earth because in his rebuke of Job, God makes mention of them in describing His work at creation (Job38:6-7)

*On what were its bases sunk, or who laid its cornerstone,  
when the **morning stars sang together**, and all the sons of  
God shouted for joy?*

While we don't want to go back to the days of the early 1600's when theological discussion included topics like this one from William Sclater:

*whether angels "did occupy a place; and so, whether many might be in one place at one time; and how many might sit on a Needles point; and six hundred such like needless points."*

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We would do well to recognize that we are not alone in this world and that their activities take place around us and can't be directly experienced though our senses (although their consequence may be).

### ***Bad Guys***

Starting with the bad guys, the chief among them is Satan. What do we know about him?

He is called the god of this world by Paul (2 Cor 4:4)

*In their case the **god of this world** has blinded the minds of the unbelievers, to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.*

and his actions are in opposition to the God whom we worship.

Satan was created as a good angel and then fell out of favor, because he rebelled against his creator (he wanted to be like God). This fall is described symbolically by Isaiah (14:12-14)

"How you are fallen from heaven, O Day Star, son of Dawn!  
How you are cut down to the ground, you who laid the nations low!  
You said in your heart, 'I will ascend to heaven; above

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the stars of God I will set my throne on high; I will sit on the mount of assembly in the far reaches of the north; will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will make **myself like the Most High.**'

We know from Matthew that he is a leader and that many angels sided with him in this pre-creation fight (Matt 25:41)

*"Then he will say to those on his left, 'Depart from me, you cursed, into the **eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels.***

As a side note, realize that Hell wasn't created for man – it was created for those spiritual beings that took part in Satan's rebellion. Knowing where he was headed, the Deveil wanted company.

Satan used his standard playbook – twisting God's word and suggesting that others be like God – to entice Adam and Eve to take that first bite of the forbidden fruit and thereby corrupt all of God's good creation.

Scripture calls those angels who joined the rebellion demons. Those of you who have read or studied The Screwtape Letters, who recognize

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Uncle Screwtape, his nephew Wormwood, and the faithful scribe Toadpipe, know that these fallen creatures do indeed tempt men to follow the devil into Hell. Paul wrote to the church at Ephesus (Eph 2:1-3)

*And you were dead in the trespasses and sins in which you once walked, **following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience** — among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind.*

We also know from scripture that demons can take possession of people. In fact, did you realize that baptismal service includes an exorcism?

*We would be lost forever unless delivered from sin, death, and everlasting condemnation. But the Father of all mercy and grace has sent His Son Jesus Christ, who atoned for the sin of the whole world, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life. Therefore, depart, you unclean*

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*spirit, and make room for the Holy Spirit in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.*

***Good Guys***

Shifting our focus, God uses his faithful angels in several ways.

First, as a messenger, such as when angels appeared to Mary, as recorded by Luke (Luke 1:30-33)

*But the angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary; you have found favor with God. You will conceive and give birth to a son, and you are to call him Jesus. He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his father David, and he will reign over Jacob's descendants forever; his kingdom will never end."*

Jesus took on our flesh, lived under the law in order to abolish the law, and he took upon himself your sins and my sins, paid the penalty of death for them, and, in exchange, the Most High now sees you and I as pure & blameless, recognizing us citizens of Christ's eternal kingdom.

Second, as ministers, according to the writer of Hebrews (1:14)

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*Are they not all ministering spirits sent out to serve for the sake of those who are to inherit salvation?*

Just as surely as angels ministered to Jesus after His temptation in the wilderness, they will minister to you and I, who are in Christ according to the will of the Father, whose sins have been forgiven, and who are the adopted children of God that will surely inherit salvation.

Third, they are guardians. According to the Psalmist (Ps 91:11-12)

*For he will command his angels concerning you to guard you in all your ways. On their hands they will bear you up, lest you strike your foot against a stone.*

And why does God want to guard us? Luther's explanation of the First Article of the Apostle Creed summarized the answer nicely:

*He richly and daily provides me with all that I need to support this body and life. He defends me against all danger and guards and protects me from all evil. All this He does only out of fatherly, divine goodness and mercy, without any merit or worthiness in me.*

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Indeed, we can call God abba, daddy, because He has reached out to us through water and the word, we have felt cleansing flood and heard the word of forgiveness. We can be confident that it has created faith in us, just as God promised it would do. Because He is our father, we come to Him with our prayers of adoration, confession, thanks, and supplication. In turn, He invites us to partake of the foretaste of the feast to come, where we again hear the words of forgiveness and taste, and see that the Lord is indeed good.

AMEN

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<sup>i</sup> <https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/finding-purpose/201907/is-there-life-after-death-the-mind-body-problem>