

St. Michael and All Angels

Text: Hebrews 1:14

Are not all angels ministering spirit sent to serve those who will inherit salvation?

Theme: God's Ministering Spirits

Angels are mysterious creatures. There are times when the Bible describes choirs of them in heaven, which are singing praises to God. At other times they are doing battle against the devil and all of his angels. At first it might seem to be a little difficult to understand how these two things go together, but they are both instances of spiritual worship. The biblical words for "worship" mean to "serve God." The angels serve God both when they sing His praises and when they carry out His will. We serve God in the same ways. Today as we celebrate the festival of St. Michael and All Angels, I would like to look at God's ministering Spirits.

I. They serve God by praising Him in heaven.

There are many examples of this in the Bible. In Isaiah 6 the prophet was given a vision of God in heaven. Above Him stood the seraphim. They were singing, "*Holy, holy holy, is the Lord of hosts; the whole earth is full of His glory.*" When Jesus was born, the angels of heaven were singing, "*Glory to God in the highest, and peace on earth, good-will to men.*" (Lk 2:14) In the book of Revelation John sees many angels. They are often singing praise to God in heaven as in Rev 5:12, "*Worthy is the Lamb who was slain to receive power and wealth and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing.*" The angels in heaven serve God by praising His glory and by praising Him for the salvation that Christ has won for us.

When we worship God, we join the angels in this service of praise. The Old Testament worship was meant to be a representation on earth of the worship of God in heaven. Our New Testament worship of God is also a meager representation of heaven. We join in many of the songs of the angels, "Glory be to God on high.." "Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God.."

But we are not only joining the angels, we are also joining those who are with the Lord now. In Revelation 7 John sees a vision of all of the saints in heaven. These are all who have washed their robes in the blood of the Lamb and who have come out of the great tribulation. They have died in faith in Christ. It says that they joined in the angel's song, "*Blessing and glory and wisdom and thanksgiving and honor and power and might be to our God forever and ever. Amen.*" (Rev 7:12)

The angels, the saints who have gone before us, and Christians today, all serve God together as we praise Him for His glory and mercy to us in Christ.

II. The angels also serve God by carrying out His will on earth.

There are all kinds of examples of this in the Bible. There are famous stories, such when the angel shut the mouths of the lions, and Daniel was kept safe in the lion's den. In Acts 4 and angel of God opened the prison door for Peter and John and brought them out. There are also stories that aren't so well known. There is an interesting one in 2 Kings 6 in which the king of Aram surrounds the

prophet Elisha with his army including chariots and horsemen. Elisha's servant was afraid and asked what they should do. Elisha answered, *"Those who are with us are more than those who are with them."* Then he prayed, *"Oh Lord, open his eyes so he may see."* Then the servant saw the hills full of horses and chariots of fire all around Elisha. God had sent His legions of angels to protect His people. There are also the times when the angels ministered to Jesus after His temptation and while He was praying in Gethsemane.

Those same angels minister to all of our needs in this world. An angel brought the good news of the birth of the Savior to the Shepherds on Christmas morning. In Revelation preachers of the Gospel are called angels. The word "angel" means messenger. God has sent a messenger to each one of us, that we could hear that the Savior was born for us. We were lost in our sins, but God's messengers bring the good news that Christ died and rose for the forgiveness of our sins. The book of Revelation is full of accounts of angels that are proclaiming the salvation that we have in our Savior Jesus Christ.

Angels also protect us from all harm. There is a spiritual side to our existence that is hidden from our sight. Like Elisha's servant when we look at how things are in this world, we often wonder what we can do. It looks hopeless. Imagine if you were in the church that was attacked in Pakistan last weekend or how would you have answered the attackers on the mall in Kenya when they asked people if they were Muslim and set those people free. So often it seems as if the forces of hell itself are working overtime against us. Yet, Elisha's words still ring true today, *"Those who are with us are more than those who are with them."* God's angels are with us. They protect us. They defend us from all evil. They make sure that nothing will be able to separate us from the love of God.

Luther made that point several times. In His hymn "A Mighty Fortress" he wrote,

**Though devils all the world should fill,
All eager to devour us,
We tremble not, we fear no ill;
They shall not overpower 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.**

Both Luther's morning and evening prayer's end with the words, **"For into Your hands I commend myself, my body and soul, and all things. Let Your holy angel be with me, that the evil foe may have no power over me."** God's angels are always protecting us our entire lives long.

Even in eternity those angels continue to serve us. When we die, it is those same angels that have protected us, that will carry our souls to heaven. Jesus' parable of the rich man and Lazarus says, *"The beggar died and the angels carried him to Abraham's side."* (Lk 16:22) It is not the grim reaper who comes calling on the Christian when we die, but God sends His angels who carry our souls to heaven. They will protect us even from death itself. The angels will also have an active part on the day when Jesus returns. It says in Matthew 25, *"When the Son of Man comes in His glory, and all the angels with Him, He will sit on His throne in heavenly glory."* Satan will be defeated, and the angels will gather God's resurrected people, and we will live eternally in our Lord's glory with the

angels and all the heavenly hosts and serve and worship God with them.

God's angels are mysterious, but they are also a gift because they serve God by ministering to us. Today we thank God for this gift of His angels and we look forward to the day when we join them in the heavenly chorus to praise God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, who has redeemed us and given us an eternal inheritance in His glory.

Amen.

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