

THE ARCHANGELS
Angelic Warfare
Angels and the Son of God

November 8, 2010
Revision C

GOSPEL: Luke 10:16-21
EPISTLE: Hebrews 2:2-10

INTRODUCTION: RANKS OF ANGELS

The word translated “angel” in Hebrew (*malak*) and Greek (*aggelos*) means messenger. Envoys and ambassadors from one country to another are thus called *malakim* (Isaiah 37:14, 18:2; Ezekiel 30:9, 23:40). However, the most extensive use of both *malak* and *aggelos* refers to the angels. They are described (Revelation 5:11) as numbering 10,000 times 10,000 (literally myriad’s of myriad’s, where “myriad” represented an inexact 10,000, and implied a very large number). Since people in the First Century did not work with very large numbers the way we do today (there was no Greek word to express “million”), myriad’s of myriad’s generally implies a countless number.

The bodiless powers of heaven (the angels) are the messengers of God. They are not the only messengers, however; on many occasions, the Son of God is referred to as The Angel of the Lord or The Messenger of the Lord as is the case in two of the readings for Vespers. Before proceeding, it would be helpful to get an overview of Scriptural references to different ranks of angels. From this, we can see that the ranks of angels are extensive, even from what little we know about them.

Cherubim

The Cherubim are referred to often in the Old Testament due to their presence in the Holy of Holies in the Tabernacle and the Temple. On top of the Ark of the Covenant were two cherubim made of pure gold facing each other. It was there between them that the Lord resided: “And there I will meet with you; and from above the mercy seat, from between the two cherubim which are upon the ark of the testimony, I will speak to you about all that I will give you in commandment for the sons of Israel” (Exodus 25:22). The Lord was also referred to as being “enthroned above the cherubim” (2 Samuel 6:2; 2 Kings 19:15; 1 Chronicles 13:6; Psalm 80:1, 99:1; Isaiah 37:16). In addition, cherubim were embroidered into the blue, purple and scarlet linen curtains of the Holy of Holies (Exodus 26:1, 31). Thus, cherubim were represented as surrounding the presence of God, with their wings spread upward (Exodus 37:7-9).

Solomon’s Temple had a similar presence of cherubim, only larger: 15 feet tall with 30

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feet wingspan (2 Chronicles 3:7-14, 1 Kings 6:23-27). The entrance to the Holy of Holies was made of olive wood with cherubim carved into the wood (1 Kings 7:32-35, Ezekiel 41:18-25).

Another place where the cherubim were prominent was at the East of the Garden of Eden after Adam was driven out, where the “flaming sword whirling about guarded the way to the Tree of Life” (Genesis 3:24). Since the Tree of Life would have enabled Adam to live forever (Genesis 3:22, Revelation 22:14), the cherubim were guarding the way into the Mysteries of God.

The cherubim are also probably the same as the “four living creatures” in John’s vision where one was like a lion, one like a calf, one like an eagle, and the fourth had the face of a man. (Revelation 4:6-11). This identification is based on Ezekiel’s vision where they are named as cherubim (Ezekiel 10:1) and in both John’s and Ezekiel’s visions: (1) there were four of them and (2) their appearance resembled the face of a man, a lion, a bull and an eagle (Ezekiel 10:1-12, 14, 21-22; 1:4-10). Ancient pagan cultures imitated the appearance of the cherubim by carving winged bulls, winged lions or griffins (a winged sphinx) to guard their temples (Unger, Bible Dictionary, pg. 192).

As a contrast to this, Satan was described as a fallen cherub: “The anointed cherub who overshadows or covers”. He was blameless until unrighteousness was found in him. He was lifted up and his wisdom was corrupted because of his beauty. He was filled with violence and was cast out as profane (Ezekiel 28:14-17). Satan was described by Ezekiel as having a position very similar to the cherubim over the Ark of the covenant surrounding the presence of God.

Seraphim

The Hebrew word *saraph* comes from the word meaning “to burn”. The only reference to seraphim in the Scriptures, however, is in Isaiah 6, where they are described as having six wings and are also present around the Throne of God. One of the seraphim touched Isaiah’s lips with a burning coal from the altar to forgive his sin.

Paul’s References to Celestial Beings

Paul had been granted the opportunity to be caught up to the third heaven where he heard inexpressible words which it is not lawful for a man to utter (2 Corinthians 12:2-4). Perhaps as a result of this experience, he referred to some ranks of celestial beings from time to time, for which we have little other descriptions. Paul referred to the following:

- Thrones (Greek: *thronos*, 2362)
- Lordships (Greek: *kuriotes*, 2963). This word comes from *kurios* meaning “Lord” as in Lord Jesus
- Authorities (Greek: *exousia*, 1849)
- Powers (Greek: *dunamis*, 1411). This word is also translated “miracles”
- Principalities (Greek: *arche*, 746) a kind of ruler

Paul's references are as follows:

- Ephesians 1:21: "Christ is seated above all Principality, Authority, Power and Lordship in this age and in the age to come".
- Ephesians 3:10: "The Wisdom of God is being made known to the Principalities and Authorities in the heavenly places".
- Colossians 1:16: "By Him all things were created that are in heaven and that are on earth, visible and invisible, whether Thrones, Lordships, Principalities, or Authorities".
- Colossians 2:10: "You are complete in Him who is the Head of all Principality and Authority".
- Romans 8:38: "Neither death nor life, nor angels nor Principalities, nor Powers...nor any other created thing shall be able to separate us from the love of God..."
- Ephesians 6:12: We do not wrestle against flesh and blood but against Principalities, against Authorities, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places".
- Colossians 2:15: "Having disarmed Principalities and Authorities, He made a public spectacle of them".
- 1 Corinthians 15:24: ..."When He puts an end to all Principality and all Authority and Power".

Some of these references are clearly referring to angelic or demonic beings of various ranks. An interesting treatise on trying to understand the relationship between these ranks is Dionysius, The Celestial Hierarchy. The author, Dionysius, was said to be the convert of the Apostle Paul in Athens (Acts 17:34), but the document was likely edited or revised by others later on, and therefore is called "Pseudo-Dionysius".

If a comparison of Ezekiel 10 with Revelation 4 suggests that the four living creatures are cherubim, then perhaps the 24 elders who sit on 24 thrones are the angelic rank of thrones (Revelation 4:4, 11:16). The 24 elders are also sometimes interpreted as representing the Twelve Patriarchs (sons of Jacob) plus the Twelve Apostles (see Matthew 19:28).

Archangels

The term archangel (Greek: *archaggelos*) is only used twice in the New Testament and is not used at all in the Septuagint). The word *archaggelos* is a combination of *arche* (translated "Principalities") and *aggelos* (translated "angel"). As such, the word implies a leader of angels.

One place where *archaggelos* is used is Jude 1:9 where the Archangel Michael was disputing with the devil (Satan) over the body of Moses. Moses had not been allowed to enter the Promised Land, but died in the land of Moab and was buried in the Valley of the land of Moab opposite Beth-peor (near Jericho). Yet no one knew his burial place (Deuteronomy 34:5-6). John Chrysostom (4th Century) said that this was so that Moses was not worshipped instead of God (Homily V on Matthew 1). But yet Moses appeared transfigured with the Lord and Elijah on the Mount of Transfiguration c.1400 years later. The dispute between Michael and Satan would seem to involve the bodily assumption of Moses; this was described in the Old Testament pseudepigraphal book "The Assumption of Moses", but the section describing this is missing from the only existing manuscript.

Another place *archaggelos* is used is 1 Thessalonians 4:16 where the Lord's return is announced by an archangel: "The Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a word of command, with a voice of an archangel, and with a trumpet of God".

The Book of Revelation describes "seven angels who stand before God, and to them were given seven trumpets" (Revelation 8:2). Each will sound his trumpet in succession (Revelation 8:7, 8, 10, 12; 9:1, 13; 11:15), where the seventh will be "the last trumpet" (1 Corinthians 15:52). These seven angels also will pour out seven bowls of the wrath of God on the earth (Revelation 16).

According to tradition, these seven angels are the archangels, and each of the seven has a different role. Michael (Hebrew "who is like God") is referred to as God's General and the leader of the armies of heaven. It was he and his angels who fought with Satan and cast Satan out of heaven (Revelation 12:7-9). He is also described as "the Great Prince who stands guard over the sons of your people Israel (Daniel 12:1). He also was described as directing the battle against other demons as another angel was bringing a message to Daniel in answer to Daniel's prayers (Daniel 10:13, 21). In the Old Testament Apocryphal book, The Ascension of Isaiah (9:19-23), Michael is said to be the scribe who records the deeds of all men in the books that are opened on Judgment Day (see Butler, Lives of the Saints, September 29).

Gabriel (Hebrew: "man of God") is also linked with the seven archangels. He was the one who announced the birth of John the Baptist to Zechariah (Luke 1:19) and the birth of Christ to the Virgin Mary (Luke 1:26). In his announcement to Zechariah, Gabriel said, "I am Gabriel, who stands in the Presence of God." Gabriel was also sent to the Prophet Daniel to give Daniel an understanding of some visions that came in response to his prayers (Daniel 8:16, 9:21).

According to tradition, it was also Gabriel who:

- Appeared to Joseph in a dream (Matthew 1:20, 2:13)
 - Announced the Lord's birth to the shepherds (Luke 2:9)
 - Strengthened Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane (Luke 22:43)
 - Appeared to the Myrrh-bearing Women at the tomb (Matthew 28:2, Mark 16:5)
- In addition, tradition also states that Gabriel appeared to Moses to instruct him in writing Genesis, to Anna and Joachim regarding the birth of the Virgin Mary, and to the Virgin Mary as a child in the Temple. Thus Gabriel's role has been to announce salvation to mankind.

Another of the seven archangels is Raphael (Hebrew: "Healing of God"). He is mentioned in the Book of Tobit (Septuagint), saying "I am Raphael, one of the seven holy angels, which present the prayers of the saints, and which go in and out before the glory of the Holy One" (Tobit 12:15 LXX). He also stated that God had sent him to heal Tobit and his daughter-in-law. According to tradition, it was Raphael who stirred up the waters of the Pool of Bethesda (John 5:4; Butler, Lives of the Saints, October 24). Thus, Raphael's role seems to center around healing and the prayers of the saints (Compare Revelation 8:3-4).

Uriel (Hebrew: "Flame of God") is also mentioned as being one of the seven archangels in the Old Testament Pseudepigraphal Book of Enoch. [The Apostle Jude quoted from the Book of Enoch in Jude 1:14-15; only fragments of the Book of Enoch exist today, however.] Uriel's role as described in the Book of Enoch is as the keeper of Hades and Tartarus, where some of the

angels who sinned against God are kept in Tartarus to await judgment (2 Peter 2:4, Jude 1:6; see also Revelation 9:1-4). Tartarus was regarded as the deepest or hottest part of Hades.

Much less is known about the remaining three archangels. According to tradition, their names are referred to in various places as:

- Selathiel (Hebrew: “Request of God”)
- Jegudiel (Hebrew:
- Berachiel (Hebrew: “Blessing of God”)
- Phanuel (Hebrew: “Face of God”)

Angels in General

Sometimes they appear in human form, as young men usually. Some examples are:

- The visit to Abraham (Genesis 18:1-6ff). The Lord and two angels visited Abraham and ate dinner with him. Abraham seemed to know who they were.
- The same two angels visited Lot (Genesis 19:1-8ff). Lot seemed to know who the angels were also. But the men of Sodom wanted to rape the two angels in the street. Lot offered to send out his two virgin daughters, but the men didn’t want them.
- People sometimes entertain angels (Hebrews 13:1-2, Tobit 12:15). We are sometimes unaware of who they are, thinking they are just strangers here for a visit.
- Guardian angels sometimes look like the person they guard (Acts 12:13-16). The people in the house of Mary, the mother of John Mark thought the person knocking on the door was Peter’s guardian angel, since Peter was in prison.
- Angels are very curious (1 Peter 1:10-12). They long to look into the working out of our salvation.
- In icons, angels are pictured in the human form that they took.
- Demons can take human form also. In Prochorus’ account of the Missionary Journeys of the Apostle John, this occurred often. (See Appendix A)

At other times angels take on an awesome appearance. Some examples are:

- Elisha opened his servant’s eyes (2 Kings 6:15-17).
 - The city of Dothan was surrounded by the army of Aram.
 - Elisha calmly stated that “those who are with us are more than those who are with them”.
 - When Elisha prayed for his servant’s eyes to be opened, the servant saw the mountains above Dothan full of angels in chariots of fire.
 - The peak of the mountain range above Dothan was about 8 miles away. In order for Elisha’s servant (with 20/20 vision) to make out what was there on the mountain, the angels had to be at least 180 feet tall if he squinted to see them 8 miles away. The text makes no indication that he had trouble seeing them though, implying that they were much taller than 180 feet.
- Compare John’s vision of the Son of God to Daniel’s visit by an angel (Revelation 1:13-15, 2:18, Daniel 10:5-6). They both have similar appearances:
 - Face like lightning
 - Golden belt around chest
 - Eyes like a flame of fire
 - Feet glowing like molten brass

- Voice like a thundering waterfall
- John saw a strong angel that was very tall (Revelation 10:1-3). He stood with his right foot on the sea and his left foot on the land. His appearance was similar to the angel in Daniel's visit and he had to be at least 300 feet tall.
- Ezekiel's vision of the Cherubim and the Throne of God (Ezekiel 1, 10, 11). Wheels within wheels spinning, lightning, full of eyes, clothed in fire, huge and awesome, lights flashing back and forth.
- Cherubim outside Garden of Eden (Genesis 3:24). Whirling about itself was the sword of the flame to guard the way back to the Tree of Life.
- Human reaction to angels in their glory:
 - Prophet Daniel passed out (Daniel 10:7-9)
 - Apostle John's reaction to risen Christ on Patmos: passed out (Revelation 1:13-15)
 - Peter, James and John on the Mount of Transfiguration almost passed out when they saw Jesus, Moses and Elijah transfigured (Luke 9:32)
 - Soldiers at the tomb did too (Matthew 28:2-4)
 - When the Myrrh-bearing women saw the angels, the angels had taken human form (Mark 16:5, Luke 24:4). They have to do this so that their natural appearance (which reflects the Glory of God) doesn't blow us away.

When confronted with extreme fear, the human body often goes into an involuntary state like a catatonic shock. This is an understandable reaction to being suddenly confronted with a 300 foot tall creature who is clothed in fire and who speaks with a voice like a thundering waterfall.

In iconography, the Archangel Michael is "written" (Icons are written, not painted!) with a sword at his side. Yet angels are non-physical beings. The sword, then, is not representative of a piece of steel he carries, but of his execution of the Power of God. From this point of view, Michael's "sword" makes star wars weapons look like Tinker Toys!!

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GOSPEL LESSON - Luke 10:16-21

The context of the Gospel lesson is the return of the Seventy (lesser) Apostles from being sent out two by two to heal the sick (v.9). They had been sent out ahead of where the Lord was going to go (v.1) to announce that the Kingdom of God has come near to them (vv.9,11). Their method was very simple: they carried no provisions and stayed with whomever received them (vv.3-8). This occurred in late 29 AD, the year before the Crucifixion.

Messengers of the Word

Thus the Seventy were sent out as messengers, or “angels”, ahead of the Lord. There are a number of places where men are referred to as messengers or “angels” from God; some examples:

- King David: 1 Samuel 29:9, 2 Samuel 14:17-20, 19:27
- Prophet Haggai: Haggai 1:13
- The Prophets: 2 Chronicles 36:15, 16
- The Priests: Malachi 2:7
- John the Baptist: Malachi 3:1, Matthew 11:10, Mark 1:2, Luke 7:27
- Apostle Paul: Galatians 4:14
- Paul’s fellow Apostles: 2 Corinthians 8:23
- The Book of Malachi: “Malachi” means “My angel”

The Gospel lesson leads off with the statement: “He who hears you (the Seventy) hears Me, he who rejects you rejects Me, and he who rejects Me rejects Him who sent Me” (v.16). Cyril of Alexandria (4th - 5th Century) comments on this, “He entrusts to them His Words, that they may be condemned who in anything resist or venture to reject them. For when they are rejected, He assumes then that it is He who suffers this; and then again He shows that the guilt of this wickedness, as being committed against Him, mounts up to God the Father. See, therefore, with the eyes of the mind, to how vast a height He raises the sin committed by men in rejecting the saints! What a wall He builds around them! How great security He contrives for them! He makes them such as must be feared, and in every way plainly provides for their being uninjured (Homily 63 on Luke 10).

If such words apply to the Seventy (lesser) Apostles acting as messengers of God, how much more does it apply to angels and archangels! Yet Deacon Stephen accused the Sanhedrin of doing just that: “Which of the prophets did your fathers not persecute? And they killed those who foretold the coming of the Just One (i.e. Jesus), of whom you now have become the betrayers and murderers; you who have received the Law in ordinances of angels and have not

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kept it” (Acts 7:52, 53). Paul mentioned the same thing: “Why therefore the Law? It was added...until the Seed should come to Whom it has been promised, being ordained through angels by the hand of a mediator” (Galatians 3:19, see also Hebrews 2:2).

Basil the Great (4th Century) commenting on this, interpreted the mediator referred to here as Moses (from Exodus 20:19), since the people asked Moses to speak to God rather than have God speak directly with them (On the Spirit, chapter 14). This implies that the angelic involvement in the giving of the Law on Mt. Sinai was the very loud trumpet sound that grew louder and louder leading up to the voice of the Lord, speaking with thunder (Exodus 19:16-19). The lightning and some of the thunder may have also been the angels that surround the Lord wherever He goes. Thus, to set aside the Law, when it had been ordained by angels and given by God is a very serious matter.

Another very serious matter is alluded to in the Gospel lesson for Matins of this Feast Day (Matthew 18:10-20). In this passage, the Lord had just mentioned the angels’ role regarding children, using the illustration of a shepherd and concluding that He does not wish them to perish (vv.10-14). Then He went on to speak of a brother sinning against a brother, and instructing them to confirm every disagreement with two or three witnesses. If the brother who sinned refuses to hear them, the Church was to consider the sinning brother as a heathen and a tax collector. This will be bound in heaven as it was on earth (vv.15-18). While the Lord was talking here of human witnesses, there are also the angelic witnesses who will confirm everything in heaven. And the books in heaven that record the deeds of all men will record these also.

The Word Goes Out

As the Seventy went about their mission, angelic activity accompanied them. They had been given the power to heal the sick (Luke 10:9), which included casting out demons (v.17). Since all sickness has something to do with demons, they encountered demonic activity everywhere they went. [For more discussion on the relation between demons and sickness, see the Gospel lesson for the 6th Sunday of Luke.] They returned with joy that the demons were subject to them in Christ’s Name (v.7). The Lord responded, “I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven” (v.18).

Paul referred to Satan as “the prince of the power of the air” (Ephesians 2:2). For Satan to fall from “heaven” does not necessarily mean that he fell from the abode of God. The First Century concept of heaven placed God in the “third heaven” (2 Corinthians 12:2), where the atmosphere, clouds, sun, etc., represent the first and second heaven. For example “the heaven gave rain” (James 5:18), refers to the first or second heaven. In our Gospel lesson, Satan fell from the first or second heaven, not from the third heaven.

As the Seventy returned with joy and told the Lord that the demons were subject to them, He responded that He was not unaware of that. He then summarized their mission by saying that He had given them “the authority to trample on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy” (v.19). Cyril commented that He said this in order that they might not be carried away with the ignorance of the Jewish leaders who, not understanding the mystery of the incarnation, approached Him as a mere man (Homily 64 on Luke 10).

Cyril confirmed that for Satan to fall like lightning “means that he was cast down from on high to earth; from overwhelming pride to humiliation; from glory to contempt; from great power to utter weakness. Before the coming of the Savior, he possessed the world; all was subject to him, and there was no man able to escape the meshes of his overwhelming might; he was worshipped by everyone; everywhere he had temples and altars for sacrifice, and an innumerable multitude of worshippers. But because the Only-Begotten Word of God has come down from heaven, he has fallen like lightning. For he who of old was bold and haughty, and who vied with the glory of Deity; he who had as worshippers all that were in error, is put under the feet of those that worshipped him. He has suffered a great and terrible overthrow”(Ibid).

The angels of God also have a hand in this overthrow. David had said, “Bless the Lord, you His angels, mighty in strength, who perform His word, obeying the Voice of His Word! Bless the Lord, all you His hosts, you who serve Him, doing His will” (Psalm 103:20). “He makes winds (or spirits) His angels; flaming fire His ministers” (Psalm 104:4). The word translated “ministers” (Hebrew: *sharath* = to serve in the Temple) implies a liturgical worship. Paul had elaborated on this also in Hebrews, quoting both Psalm 103 and Psalm 110: “But to which of the angels has He ever said, ‘sit at My Right Hand till I make Your enemies Your footstool’? Are they not all ministering spirits sent forth for service for those who will inherit salvation?” (Hebrews 1:13, 14). The word “ministering” (Greek: *leitourgikos* = to serve in the Temple) also implies a liturgical worship.

The angels see themselves as our fellow servants. After the Apostle John had seen a series of incredible visions, his inclination was to fall down and worship the angel who had shown him all these things. The angel (perhaps Gabriel) corrected him saying, “See that you do not do that. For I am your fellow servant, and of your brethren the prophets, and of those who keep the words of this book. Worship God” (Revelation 22:9, 19:10).

The angels are constantly involved in the battle as the Word goes out. Some are involved in disputes with Satan (Jude 1:9). Others have the duty of the care and oversight of children. The Matins Gospel for the Feast Day of the Archangels is Matthew 18:10-20, quoted earlier. In v.10, Jesus said, “Take heed that you do not despise one of these little ones; for I say to you that in heaven their angels always see the face of My Father Who is in heaven” (Matthew 18:10). Anyone disrupting the Word being planted in a child would be better off if a millstone were hung around his neck and he were drowned in the depth of the sea (Matthew 18:6). In v.14, He said that “it is not the Will of your Father who is in heaven that one of these little ones should perish”. Thus, the angels have a job to do to encourage each person to seek the Lord.

Mixed in with the statement of angels guarding children, the Lord used an illustration in this passage that describes the angels’ role well: that of a shepherd. “What do you think? If a man has a hundred sheep and one of them goes astray, does he not leave the ninety nine and go to the mountains to seek the one that is straying? And if he should find it, assuredly I say to you, he rejoices more over that one sheep than over the ninety nine that did not go astray” (Matthew 18:12-13, Luke 15:3-7). Jesus referred to Himself as the Good Shepherd (John 10:1-15). In the battle for men’s souls, the angels have a significant role to play in following the Good Shepherd’s orders to see to it that we are not tempted beyond what we are able to resist, and with the temptation, also making a way of escape (1 Corinthians 10:13).

Courage

Because the angels see God all the time, they have an advantage over us. Because they see, it is easy for them to believe and obey. For us, it is more difficult because we are asked to believe without having seen. This is why Jesus gave His famous admonition: “Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed” (John 20:29). When the Seventy returned with joy at having the demons subject to them, it was easy to believe. What required faith for them was to take up their crosses as the Lord took up His.

Basil the Great wrote about how the angels are very much like us as pertains to free will. “The powers of heaven are not holy by nature; were it so, there would in this respect be no difference between them and the Holy Spirit. It is in proportion to their relative excellence that they have their gift of holiness from the Spirit. Their substance is an aerial spirit, or an immaterial fire, as it is written, ‘Who maketh his angels spirits and his ministers a flame of fire’ (Psalm 104:4). Wherefore they exist in space and become visible, and appear in their proper bodily form to those that are worthy. But their sanctification, being external to their substance, superinduces their perfection through the communion of the Spirit. They keep their rank by their abiding in the good and true, and while they retain their freedom of will, never fall away from their patient attendance on Him who is truly good. It results that, if you do away with the Spirit, the hosts of the angels are disbanded, the dominions of archangels are destroyed, all is thrown into confusion, and their life loses law, order, and distinctness. For how are angels to cry ‘Glory to God in the highest’ (Luke 2:14) without being empowered by the Spirit? For ‘No man can say that Jesus is the Lord but by the Holy Ghost, and no man speaking by the Spirit of God calleth Jesus accursed’ (1 Corinthians 12:3); as might be said by wicked and hostile spirits, whose fall establishes our statement of the freedom of the will of the invisible powers. I indeed maintain that even Gabriel (Luke 1:11-20) in no other way foretells events to come than by the foreknowledge of the Spirit, by reason of the fact that one of the blessings distributed by the Spirit is prophecy. And whence did he who was ordained to announce the mysteries of the vision to derive the wisdom whereby he was enabled to teach hidden things, if not from the Holy Spirit? The revelation of mysteries is indeed the peculiar function of the Spirit, as it is written, ‘God hath revealed them unto us by His Spirit’ (1 Corinthians 2:10). And how could ‘thrones, dominions, principalities and powers’ (Colossians 1:16) live their blessed life, if they did not ‘behold the face of the Father which is in heaven’? (Matthew 18:10). To behold it is impossible without the Spirit!” (On the Spirit, chapter 16).

As a consequence, the angels exhibit a great deal of courage. Likewise the Seventy and the Twelve did, so long as they maintained their faith. At the time of the Crucifixion, they lost it and were scattered as sheep without a Shepherd as was predicted by Zechariah (Zechariah 13:7, Mark 14:27). But they regained their senses after the Resurrection. We note especially the Lord’s prayers for His disciples, that their faith should not fail, and when they had returned to Him, that they would strengthen their brethren (Luke 22:32). Having had the experience of trampling on demons (serpents and scorpions - Luke 10:19), courage was easier to come by. Cyril quoted David’s experience to describe this: “They shall walk, O Lord, in the light of Thy Countenance. And in Thy Name shall they rejoice all the day; and in Thy righteousness shall they be exalted (Psalm 89:15-16LXX).

The Lord put all this in perspective by saying, “Nevertheless do not rejoice in this, that the spirits are subject to you, but rather rejoice because your names are written in heaven” (v.20). The real glory is having one’s name written in the Book of Life (Revelation 20:12, Psalm 69:28).

Other books exist that record the deeds or works of all men (Revelation 20:12, Daniel 7:10). If each child (Matthew 18:10) and each adult (Peter in Acts 12:14-16) have their own guardian angel, then there is a witness to everyone's deeds spanning his entire life.

Not everyone who was allowed to work miracles has their name written in heaven, however. The Lord said, "Many will say to Me in that day, 'Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your Name, cast out demons in Your Name, and done many wonders in Your Name?' and then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!'" (Matthew 7:22-23).

Cyril gives some perspective on this: "To rejoice solely in the fact that they were able to work miracles, and crush the heads of demons, was likely to produce in them possibly the desire also of vainglory - and the neighbor, so to speak, and kinsfellow of this passion constantly is pride. Most usefully, therefore, does the Savior rebuke the first boasting, and quickly cuts away the root that had sprung up in them of the base love of glory. Thus He imitates a good sower who, immediately when he sees a thorn springing up in his garden, tears it up with the mattock before it strikes its root deep" (Ibid).

Humility

The Gospel lesson concludes with Jesus' words to His Father, "In that hour, Jesus rejoiced in the Spirit and said, 'I thank You, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that You have hidden these things from the wise and prudent and revealed them to babes. Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in Your sight'" (v.21).

By rejoicing in the Holy Spirit, Jesus was rejoicing in the works and miracles that were performed by means of the Holy Spirit. Cyril said of this, "Knowing that those who had been sent by Him had benefited a great deal, and that above all others, they had themselves learned by experience His glory, He was full of joy, or rather of exultation. For being good and loving unto man, and wishing that all should be saved, He found the cause of His rejoicing in the conversion of those that were in error, in the enlightenment of those that were in darkness, and in the answer of the understanding to the acknowledgment of His Glory for those who had been without knowledge and without instruction" (Homily 65 on Luke 10).

When the Lord said that the Father had revealed these things to babes, He did not mean to imply that the Seventy were infants, but, in Cyril's words, they were "of an innocent and guileless mind and simple as a child regarding wickedness" (Ibid).

Paul said that "He made known to us the mystery of His will according to His good pleasure" (Ephesians 1:9). He said this was "the unsearchable riches of Christ which from the beginning of the ages has been hidden in God who created all things through Jesus Christ" (Ephesians 3:8, 9). "This mystery which has been hidden from ages and from generations has now been revealed to His saints, where the mystery is Christ in us, the hope of glory" (Colossians 1:26, 27).

This is foolishness to the wise of this world (1 Corinthians 1:18-21) because the recipients of the mystery take up their crosses and die like their Master did. For more discussion

on taking up one's cross, see the Feast Day of the Exaltation of the Cross and the Sundays before and after.

To the angels, all this is fascinating, and they are always desiring to look into human affairs (1 Peter 1:12). There is joy among the angels when one sinner repents (Luke 15:10). Paul wrote to the Hebrews, "Do not forget to entertain strangers, for by so doing, some have unwittingly entertained angels" (Hebrews 13:2). This statement does not fit very well with the story of the Lord's visit to Abraham, where the Lord and two others (angels) ate dinner with Abraham (Genesis 18). However, it describes the visit of the Archangel Raphael to Tobit and Tobias quite well (Tobit 3:16 - 12:22LXX).

Yet the angels are not completely informed of the Lord's plans. While they carry the souls of the righteous to Paradise (Luke 16:22) and they will gather together the elect from the four winds, from the farthest part of earth to the farthest part of heaven (Mark 13:27), yet they don't know the day or the hour when they will need to do so (Matthew 24:36). Even Satan, with all his wisdom, did not understand the wisdom of God in a mystery; if he had understood, he wouldn't have crucified the Lord of Glory (1 Corinthians 2:7, 8).

Angels and the Son of God

November 8, 2010
Revision C

EPISTLE LESSON: Hebrews 2:2-10

The Epistle lesson begins with: “For if the Word spoken through angels proved steadfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just reward, how shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation?” (v.2). “Transgression”, “disobedience”, “just reward” sound like aspects of the Mosaic Law, and “spoken through angels” refers to the giving of the Law on Mt. Sinai and the counseling of Moses by Gabriel regarding the Law.

But this is not the only time angels brought the Word of God to man. One of the readings for Vespers of this Feast Day describes another visit of angels to man delivering the Word of God:

Daniel’s Visit by Michael and His Angels: Daniel 10.

The Prophet Daniel had been brought to Babylon during Nebuchadnezzar’s conquest and was raised for serving in the king’s court. However, he and his three friends Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego maintained an Orthodox fast for their entire life in Babylon. [A strict Orthodox fast today is a vegetarian diet with no meat, fish, dairy products, oil or wine.] Under this fast, they were healthier than the other captives that ate the king’s choice food (Daniel 1:8-16).

At this time, Nebuchadnezzar had a disturbing dream and his wise men, (magicians, conjurers, sorcerers and Chaldeans) could not help him. He asked them first to tell him what he dreamed - so that he knew that they were genuine - and then interpret what the dream meant (Daniel 2:5). They replied that there is no one who could do that except the gods (2:11). So the king gave orders to execute all the wise men (2:11). When Daniel found out about this, he and his three friends asked for an audience with the king, told him his dream and then interpreted it. The king was so impressed that he bowed down to Daniel - which kings never do to anyone (2:15-46).

Daniel and his three friends went on from there to survive the blazing furnace (Daniel 3), the lions’ den (Daniel 6), and changes in kings to Belshazzar and then to Darius. Darius was so impressed with Daniel that he made Judaism the state religion (Daniel 6:26). Meanwhile, Daniel kept having visions from the Lord. The archangel Gabriel was sent to help Daniel understand the visions on at least two separate occasions (Daniel 8:16, 9:21).

In the reading for Vespers, Daniel was involved in one of his customary fasts for three weeks waiting for an answer to his prayers (Daniel 10:2, 3). As he was by the bank of the Tigris River, he suddenly saw a man clothed in fire who spoke with the voice of a roaring multitude.

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Everyone with Daniel ran away to hide (vv.4-7). The man Daniel saw was one of the angels that was standing against the kingdom of Persia (and its demons) and the Archangel Michael had come to help him out (vv.13, 21).

The appearance of this angel exhibited noteworthy similarities to the appearance of the Risen Christ in His appearance to the Apostle John:

ANGEL IN DANIEL 10:5-6	CHRIST IN REVELATION 1:13-16
-----	hair & head white as snow
eyes like flaming torches	eyes like flame of fire
face like lightning	face like noonday sun
voice like roaring multitude	voice like sound of many waters
dressed in linen	dressed in foot-length garment
golden belt	golden belt
feet & arms like polished bronze	feet like polished bronze

In addition to the above, Daniel described the body of the angel as like one of the twelve gem stones worn on the breast piece of the high priest (Exodus 28:20, 39:13). It is uncertain which gem stone the Hebrew word *tarshish* refers to however. Obviously the angel's close association with the Son of God caused him to take on a similar appearance to the Son of God.

The angel referred to Daniel as “a man greatly beloved” (v.11). The Apostle John similarly referred to himself as “the disciple Jesus loved” (John 13:23, 19:26, 20:2, 21:7, 20). Yet both Daniel and John had difficulty maintaining consciousness (they both passed out!) and had to be helped. In both Daniel 10 and Revelation 1, the Word of God came to men in a very special way showing them what the future would bring, but yet they were overpowered by the awesome presence of the messenger.

The Son of God as The Angel of God

On a number of occasions, the Son of God is referred to as the Angel of God. Two of these occasions are read for Vespers of the Feast Day of the Archangels.

Joshua Meets the Captain of the Lord's Host: Joshua 5:13-15 After crossing the Jordan into the Promised Land, but before getting to Jericho, Joshua met a man standing opposite him with a drawn sword in His hand. Not recognizing the man, Joshua asked if He were for them or against them. The Man replied “No, rather I indeed come now as Captain of the host of the Lord” (v.14). Joshua fell on his face and bowed down and said, “What has My Lord to say to His servant?” The Captain of the Lord's host said, “Remove your sandals from your feet for the place where you are standing is holy. And Joshua did so.”

Some might say that the Captain of the Lord's host is the archangel Michael, since Michael is “the great prince who stands guard over the sons of your people Israel” (Daniel 12:1). But yet the archangels don't ask to be worshipped; and even go out of their way to prevent people from worshipping them, as did the angel who revealed Revelation to the Apostle John (Revelation 19:10, 22:9). There John fell down to worship the angel, but the angel said “see that you do not do that. For I am your fellow servant and of your brethren the prophets... Worship

God”. Early Christian writers also taught that this account in Joshua 5 refers to the Son of God and not an angel; for example Justin Martyr (Dialog with Trypho, Lxii), Cyprian (Treatises, xii, II, 19), etc.

Gideon Commissioned as a Judge: Judges 6:2, 7, 11-24 The previous reading from Joshua does not actually call the Son of God “the Angel of the Lord”. In this reading the text does refer to Him as such. When the Angel of the Lord appeared to Gideon, He told Gideon that “the Lord is with you” (v.12) and “Go in this your strength and deliver Israel from the hand of Midian” (v.14). Gideon was uncertain about this since his family was the least among the tribe of Manassah and he was the youngest in the family (v.15). As a sign that this was really the Lord speaking to him, Gideon asked that he be allowed to present his offering to Him. The Angel of the Lord waited while Gideon prepared a kid (young goat), unleavened bread and broth. When Gideon had finished, the Angel of the Lord told Gideon to place the meat and the unleavened bread on a rock, and to pour the broth out on top. The Angel of the Lord then touched the meat and bread with the end of His staff and fire sprang up from the rock and consumed them. Then the Angel of the Lord disappeared.

To interpret this account as referring to anyone other than the Son of God would imply that it is okay to offer sacrifices to angels, which is not the case. In fact, the worship of angels was part of a First Century Gnostic heresy that the Apostle Paul denounced (Colossians 2:18).

Other examples where the Son of God is referred to as “the Angel of the Lord” are:

- Seeking out Hagar (Genesis 16:7-13, 21:17-19)
- Abraham offering Isaac (Genesis 22:11-15)
- Jacob’s dream about speckled sheep (Genesis 31:11)
- Moses at the burning bush (Exodus 3:2)
- Leading Israel out of Egypt (Exodus 14:19)
- Restraining Balaam’s donkey (Numbers 22:22-35)
- Speaking to the people of Israel (Judges 2:1-4)
- Announcing the birth of Samson (Judges 13:3-21)

All these references are clearly referring to the Son of God either because He said He was God or because people worshipped Him.

But why, one might ask, should the Son of God be referred to as a messenger? Referring to His coming in the flesh, Paul said He “made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bond servant, and coming in the likeness of men”; and this even though He was equal with God (Philippians 2:6, 7). The Lord Himself, speaking to the Father, said, “I have finished the work which You have given Me to do” (John 17:4). I have manifested Your Name to the men whom You have given Me out of the world” (v.6). “I have given to them the Words which You have given Me” (v.8). From this perspective, one of the purposes of the Son of God becoming Incarnate was as a messenger from the Father. (This was not His only purpose as we will see later). Therefore, one should not find it strange for Him to be called a messenger (angel) in the Old Testament.

The Son of God Compared to Angels

The worship of angels was fairly common among First Century Gnostic heretics (Colossians 2:18), and one of the themes of the Epistle to the Hebrews was to show the superiority of Christ over the angels.

Hebrews begins with Paul stating that the Son

- Was appointed heir of all things (Hebrews 1:2)
- Was the One through whom the world was made (v.2)
- Is the brightness of the Father's Glory (v.3)
- Is the express image of His Person (v.3)
- Upholds all things by the Word of His power (v.3)
- Sits at the Right Hand of the Majesty on High (v.3).

Thus He has "become so much better than the angels, as He has by inheritance obtained a more excellent Name than they" (v.4).

John Chrysostom argues that the Name Son declares a true relationship (with the Father). For if He were not a true Son, and were a son only by Grace (as some heretics claimed), then He is not only not 'more excellent than the angels' but is even less than they. Because righteous men also were called sons (Homily ii on Hebrews 1).

Paul went on to point out some differences between creatures and their maker: "For to which of the angels did He ever say:

'You are My Son, today I have begotten You' (Psalm 2:7)

And again:

'I will be to Him a Father, and He shall be to Me a Son' (2 Samuel 7:14)

But when He again brings the Firstborn into the world He says:

'Let all the angels of God worship Him' (Deuteronomy 32:43 LXX)

And of the angels, He says:

'Who makes His angels spirits and His ministers a flame of fire' (Psalm 104:4)

But to the Son He says:

'Your throne, O God, is forever and ever' (Psalm 45:6)

And

'You, Lord, in the beginning laid the foundation of the earth, and the heavens are the work of Your hands. They will perish, but You remains; and they will all grow old like a garment; like a cloak You will fold them up, and they will be changed. But You are the same and Your years will not fail' (Psalm 102:25-27 LXX).

But to which of the angels has He ever said:

'Sit at My Right Hand, till I make Your enemies Your footstool' (Psalm 110:1 LXX).

Are they not all ministering spirits sent forth to minister for those who will inherit salvation?" (vv.5-14).

John Chrysostom stated that the "today I have begotten You" and the "I will be to Him a Father" refer to the Son of God taking on flesh and not to His Deity (Ibid). This is the "bringing the Firstborn into the world" (v.6). We note that Paul's quote from 2 Samuel 7:14 was directed

there at Solomon as the son of the king who would build the Lord's house, but it prophesied also concerning Christ, who would also build the Lord's house.

The quote from Deuteronomy 32:43 is lifted verbatim from the Septuagint, but is missing from the Hebrew text that exists today; in fact all of these quotes are lifted word for word from the Septuagint.

The contrast here is that while "He makes His angels" (that is, He creates them), the Son does the creating. In the quote from Psalm 45, the Father was speaking to the Son about the Son's throne being forever. Similarly in Psalm 102, the Father was speaking to the Son "You, Lord, in the beginning laid the foundation of the earth". The angels are the created beings; the Son is eternally begotten; and they are not the same at all.

Chrysostom pointed out that in the quote from Psalm 102, the Psalmist and Paul have applied to the Son the things which relate to the Father since they are of one nature. And they have also addressed another thing, greater even than this; that is, the transfiguration of the world: "They will be changed like a garment". Thus the Son created it the first time; and then He's going to do it again!

How does this relate to us? Paul builds his case with these Old Testament quotes and then concludes with the statement that the angels, who are above us in this service, are assigned to us on our behalf. Chrysostom said it this way, "For this purpose He employs them; this is the office of angels: to minister to God for our salvation. So that it is an angelic work to do all for the salvation of the brethren; or rather it is the work of Christ Himself, for He indeed saves as Lord, but they as servants. They are servants of the Son of God, and are sent many ways for our sakes, and so they are partners in service with us" (Homily iii on Hebrews 1).

Neglect is a Serious Matter

The Epistle text begins with: "For if the Word spoken through angels proved steadfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just reward, how shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation?" (vv.2-3). Chrysostom noted that he said "the Word spoken through angels" and not just the Law. Stephen had testified that "the Law had been received at the direction of angels" (Acts 7:53); Paul testified that the Law was appointed through angels by the hand of a mediator (Galatians 3:19). Both of these references refer to the giving of the Law on Mt. Sinai accompanied by the angelic trumpets, thunder, lightning, etc. (Exodus 19:16-19). There was probably some contact afterward between Moses and various angels as they explained the meaning of the Law and clarified its details. There was probably also some angelic assistance given to Betsalel and Aholiav as they fabricated the furnishings of the Tabernacle to the exact specifications given to Moses. (Compare Exodus 31:1-11; 35:30-35; 36:1-4; 25:9, 40; 26:30; Numbers 8:4).

But all of the above, including the Tabernacle and its furnishings, were part of the Mosaic Law. The Word spoken through angels also includes:

- Understanding for Daniel (Daniel 8:16; 9:21, 22; 10:11)
- Protection during the Exodus and Conquest (Exodus 23:20-23, 32:34)
- Discipline for David (2 Samuel 24:15-17)
- Feeding of Elijah (1 Kings 19:5-7)

- Understanding for Zechariah (Zechariah 1:9ff)
- Deliverance for Lot (Genesis 19:1-15)
- Meeting with Jacob (Genesis 32:1)

After all this angelic effort throughout the ages, if we fall away and neglect all that the Lord has done through the ministry of the angels (and Himself), we have no hope of escaping judgment.

Paul brought this topic up again later in the Epistle: “Therefore leaving the discussion of the elementary principles of Christ, let us go on to perfection, not laying again the foundation of

- Repentance from dead works
- Faith toward God
- Teaching of baptism
- Laying on of hands
- Resurrection of the dead
- Eternal judgment

For if it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted the heavenly gift and have become partakers of the Holy Spirit, and have tasted the good Word of God and the powers of the age to come, if they fall away, to renew them again to repentance, since they crucify again for themselves the Son of God and put Him to open shame” (Hebrews 6:1-6). By lapsing back into Judaism, the Hebrews were truly neglecting so great a salvation.

In this context, John Chrysostom defined “the heavenly gift” as forgiveness, “tasting the good Word of God” as receiving Apostolic teaching and “the powers of the age to come” as the working of miracles and the down payment of the Spirit from 2 Corinthians 1:22 (Homily ix on Hebrews 6). Paul mentioned these things also in the Epistle text (vv.3-4): At the first these things were spoken by the Lord; then:

- They were confirmed by those who heard Him (the Apostles)
- God bore witness with signs, wonders and miracles
- He distributed the Holy Spirit (the down payment).

The crucifying again of the Son of God refers to a second baptism. For if “our old man was crucified with Him” (Romans 6:6) and “we have been united in His death,” (Romans 6:5) and “we were buried through baptism into death” (Romans 6:4), and “death no longer has dominion over Him” (Romans 6:9), what does a second baptism mean? It means Christ’s death was purposeless, and is a fable and a mockery, which puts Him to open shame.

Man and Angels in the Age to Come

After going into a lot of reasons why we should not neglect so great a salvation, Paul then goes into some reasons why we should be motivated to pay close attention. “For He has not put the world to come, of which we speak, in subjection to angels” (v.5).

Following this statement, he again quotes word for word from the Septuagint:

“What is man that You are mindful of him, or the son of man that You take care of him? You have made him a little lower than the angels; you have crowned him with glory and honor, and set him over the works of Your hands. You have put all things in subjection under his feet” (Psalm 8:4-6).

From the context of Psalm 8, this would seem to be speaking of men in general. For example, Psalm 8:7 lists some of the “all things in subjection”: sheep, oxen, birds and fish. Yet Paul uses this quote from Psalm 8 to refer to Christ. He calls the man Jesus Christ the Captain of our salvation, Who is in the process of bringing many sons to glory (Hebrews 2:10).

So then, Psalm 8 **does** refer to men in general, but specifically those men who are related by the second birth to their Older Brother. He is the Firstborn of many brethren (Romans 8:29) and He is not ashamed to call us His brothers (Hebrews 2:11).

Paul then brought in a little reality check: “But now we do not yet see all things put under Him” (v.8). Instead we see Christ, made (in His flesh) a little lower than the angels and suffering death that He might taste death for everyone. As a result He was crowned with glory and honor (v.9) and sits at the Right Hand of God (Hebrews 10:12, Mark 14:62, Luke 22:69). When He returns, God the Father will put all things in subjection under Him and leave nothing that is not put under Him (v.8). It was the Father’s plan that all things are for Christ and all things are by Christ (v.10). And as He has been exalted and glorified, so shall we be when He returns. Thus, just as Christ was made a little lower than the angels in His humanity, so we are now. But by being united with Him in the Body of Christ, just as He was exalted to His previous glory (prior to the Incarnation), and ruling over the angels, so shall we be as He “brings many sons to glory”.

This does not necessarily imply that we will rule angels as He does. The Lord said that, in the Resurrection, we will be equal to angels (Luke 20:36). We will judge angels, i.e. those that had fallen (1 Corinthians 6:3), as the Twelve will judge the Twelve tribes of Israel (Matthew 19:28). But the angels refer to themselves as our fellow servants (Revelation 19:10, 22:9), and they are referred to as “sons of God” also (compare Job 1:6, 2:1, 38:7; Luke 20:36; Romans 8:14). “Equal to angels” however, does not imply being identical to angels, since they are non-physical beings.

Paul mentioned this again in Hebrews 2:16: “For indeed, He does not latch onto (or grasp) angels, but He does latch onto (or grasp) the seed of Abraham”. Chrysostom stated, “He did not take on an angel’s nature, but a man’s. He did not grasp that nature which belongs to angels, but ours. This expression “grasp”, or “latch onto” (Greek *epilambano*) is derived from the figure of persons pursuing those who turn away from them, and doing everything to overtake them as they flee, and to take hold of them as they are bounding away. For when human nature was fleeing from Him, and fleeing far away (Ephesians 2:13), He pursued after and overtook us. For it is a great and wonderful thing, and full of amazement, that our flesh should sit on high and be adored by angels and archangels, by Cherubim and Seraphim. For God has great zeal on behalf of our nature.”

“Moreover, he said not simply ‘of men He latches onto’ but of the ‘seed of Abraham’ (v.16) thus showing that their race is great and honorable. Therefore in all things, He had to be made like His brethren’ (v.17). This goes both ways also. Just as He was made like us in the Incarnation, so we will be made like Him in the Resurrection. He did not lose His deity in taking on humanity; just so, we will not lose our humanity when we take on immortality. But “the righteous will shine forth like the sun in the Kingdom of their Father” (Matthew 13:43, Daniel 12:3). Moses and Elijah have already tasted of this in the Transfiguration; we will join them at the Resurrection. This is a great salvation that is foolish to neglect by drifting away. Instead, it

is something worth paying attention to every minute of every day. As Chrysostom said, “If He who is worshipped by angels, for our sake endured to have a little less than the angels, much more ought we, who are inferior to angels, to bear everything for His sake” (Homily iv on Hebrews 2).