

ST. JOHN'S LUTHERAN CHURCH

Red Bud, Illinois

Adult Bible Study

“Angels, Angels Everywhere”

XII. Angels at the Time of Death and Judgment

Stories of angelic visitation at the time of a person's death abound. Many people who have been unconscious and comatose have been reported as opening their eyes, smiling, and saying things like, “don't you see him (them)” immediately before their death. Even at the time of our death God's angels continue to serve His people. Angels are also servants of our Lord Jesus Christ. When He returns at the end of the world, His angels will be with Him to announce His coming and gather all people before His throne.

Have you been with a person at the time of his/her death? What was it like? _____

A. *Angels at the Time of Death*

What is the role of the angels in Jesus' story of the rich man and Lazarus in Luke 16:22? _____

Martin Luther on the role of angels at our death (from a sermon for St. Michael's Day on September 29, 1531): “You should be certain that angels are protecting you when you go to sleep, yea, that they are protecting you also in all your business, whether you enter your home or leave your home... Therefore even when you come to die, you should say that Christ will be with you and will have an unnumbered multitude of holy angels with Him. You should know that angels are at your side not only in this life but also in death.”

Luther on the role of angels guiding us into eternal life (from the same sermon): “At death I know not whither I am to go; but my guides, the holy angels, know it well. When I go to sleep, I say, ‘God, my Lord and Father, I commit myself to Thee, as to the supreme Keeper. Let Thy holy angels and keepers protect me, etc.’ At death I begin to tremble, for I feel my sin. But it is not right to tremble. I should learn confidently to believe at that time and to say: It is written, ‘He shall give His angels charge over thee, to keep thee in all thy ways’ (Psalm 91:11). This promise excludes no way, whether you go out into life or death, whether you go into the house or out of the house. Rather you have the strong assurance here that you shall surely be secure on all your ways. As good and reliable as your guard is when you go to bed or enter your home, so good and reliable your guard will be when you are to die.”

**Lord, let at last Thine angels come, To Abr'ham's bosom bear me home, That I may die unfearing;
And in its narrow chamber keep My body safe in peaceful sleep Until Thy reappearing.**

(Lutheran Service Book, #708 “Lord, Thee I Love with All My Heart,” stanza 3)

B. *Angels as Part of Christ's Return for Judgment*

Angels are not simply cute and cuddly spirits to bring all people happiness. They have a serious role to play in the judgment of the world at the end time. This includes punishment upon unbelievers as well as gathering believers for their eternal blessings.

How are the angels described in God's plagues upon Egypt before the Exodus? _____

Psalm 78:49 He unleashed against them His hot anger, His wrath, indignation and hostility—a band of destroying angels.

Do the angels know about Christ's second coming? _____ Do they know when this will be? _____

Acts 1:11 “Men of Galilee,” they said, “why do you stand here looking into the sky? The same Jesus, who has been taken from you into heaven, will come back in the same way you have seen Him go into heaven.”

Matthew 24:36 (Jesus said) “No one knows about that day or hour, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father.”

What will the angels do when Jesus returns at the end of time? _____

Matthew 24:30-31 (Jesus said) “At that time the sign of the Son of Man will appear in the sky, and all the nations of the earth will mourn. They will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of the sky, with power and great glory. And He will send His angels with a loud trumpet call, and they will gather His elect from the four winds, from one end of the heavens to the other.”

1 Thessalonians 4:16-17 For the Lord Himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God, and the dead in Christ will be raised first. After that, we who are still alive and are left will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air.
What next job will the angels have to do when Jesus returns? _____

Matthew 25:31-33 (Jesus said) "When the Son of Man comes in His glory, and all the angels with Him, He will sit on His throne in heavenly glory. 32All the nations will be gathered before Him, and He will separate the people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. 33He will put the sheep on His right and the goats on his left."

In separating the righteous from the unrighteous, that is, the faithful from the unbelievers, the angels will exercise Christ's judgment upon all people.

What is the angels' job in these passages? _____

Matthew 13:40-42, 47-50 (Jesus said) "As the weeds are pulled up and burned in the fire, so it will be at the end of the age. 41The Son of Man will send out His angels, and they will weed out of His kingdom everything that causes sin and all who do evil. 42They will throw them into the fiery furnace, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. ...Once again, the kingdom of heaven is like a net that was let down into the lake and caught all kinds of fish. 48When it was full, the fishermen pulled it up on the shore. Then they sat down and collected the good fish in baskets, but threw the bad away. 49This is how it will be at the end of the age. The angels will come and separate the wicked from the righteous 50and throw them into the fiery furnace, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth."

Luke 9:26 (Jesus said) "If anyone is ashamed of Me and My words, the Son of Man will be ashamed of him when He comes in His glory and the glory of the Father and of the holy angels."

Luke 12:8-9 (Jesus said) "I tell you, whoever acknowledges Me before men, the Son of Man will also acknowledge him before the angels of God. 9But he who disowns Me before men will be disowned before the angels of God."

In eternity we will be with the angels, joining them in the praise of God gathered around His throne as we see so often in the book of Revelation. While we will share with the angels in their eternity and in their worship of Christ, we will not be angels. Instead we will be like Christ with resurrected, spiritual bodies.

Luke 20:34-36 Jesus replied, "The people of this age marry and are given in marriage. 35But those who are considered worthy of taking part in that age and in the resurrection from the dead will neither marry nor be given in marriage, 36and they can no longer die; for they are like the angels. They are God's children, since they are children of the resurrection."

1 Corinthians 15:47-49 The first man was of the dust of the earth, the second man from heaven. 48As was the earthly man, so are those who are of the earth; and as is the man from heaven, so also are those who are of heaven. 49And just as we have borne the likeness of the earthly man, so shall we bear the likeness of the man from heaven.

1 John 3:1-3 How great is the love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! And that is what we are! The reason the world does not know us is that it did not know Him. 2Dear friends, now we are children of God, and what we will be has not yet been made known. But we know that when He appears, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is. 3Everyone who has this hope in Him purifies himself, just as He is pure.

"God Himself is present: Hear the harps resounding; See the hosts the throne surrounding. 'Holy, holy, holy!' Hear the hymn ascending, Songs of saints and angels blending. Bow your ear To us here: Hear, O Christ, the praises That Your Church now raises" (*Lutheran Service Book #907 "God Himself Is Present," stanza 2*)

Luther's Morning Prayer: I thank You, my heavenly Father, through Jesus Christ, Your dear Son, that You have kept me this night from all harm and danger; and I pray that You would keep me this day also from sin and every evil, that all my doings and life may please You. 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. Amen.