

February 25, 2026 – Hebrews 1 & Matthew 26:47-56

Angels are a source of endless fascination and speculation in our world. Bookstores have entire sections devoted to them. We have whole TV shows and movies dedicated to stories about them. Even people who know nothing else about Christianity will still speak of “guardian angels” or “someone watching over me.”

So many aspects of Holy Scripture are dismissed in our society. Creation, miracles, the resurrection... written off as myth or legend. And yet angels remain strangely acceptable. In a secular, pluralistic culture, there is still room for winged messengers and heavenly protectors.

Of course, angels are not a mere invention of the human mind. They are biblical. They appear from the earliest pages of Scripture to the very last. In Genesis 3, after Adam and Eve are driven from the Garden, the Lord stations a cherubim with a flaming sword to guard the way to the Tree of Life.

Angels visit Abraham. They ascend and descend on the ladder in Jacob’s dream. They announce the births of John the Baptist and Jesus. They sing over the fields of Bethlehem. They strengthen our Lord after his temptation in the desert and as he prays in Gethsemane. They stand at the empty tomb. And they come with our Lord on the clouds of glory on the last day. They are present from beginning to end. Messengers, warriors, guardians, attendants at the throne of God.

But every discussion of God’s holy angels also requires us to speak of fallen angels. And, of course, the chief among those is Satan. His name means “accuser.” He stands in opposition to God’s purposes. He twists what God says. He slanders God’s character. He accuses God’s people day and night.

We heard about him in the Gospel reading last Sunday, in the temptation of our Lord in the wilderness. There he is again, just as he was in the Garden, questioning, deceiving, sowing doubt in God's Word. Just as the holy angels were present at so many moments in God's plan of salvation, so too have Satan and his demons lurked at the edges, seeking to undo what God has made.

So why didn’t God send an angel to oppose him? It was Michael, the archangel, who cast Satan out of heaven. Why not send him once again to crush the serpent’s head?

Hebrews chapter 1 gives us the answer. Because, from the context of these verses, it sounds like there were those in the earliest Christian church who thought exactly that. That Jesus was merely an angel. A powerful angel. Maybe Michael himself, come to earth.

Who could be more fitting? Who could be more powerful, more holy, more perfectly aligned with the will of God than one of His highest created servants? If angels delivered the Law at Sinai, if angels guarded and guided Israel, why not send the greatest of angels to overthrow Satan and restore the kingdom?

But He didn't. It might make some sense if he had. But Jesus was not an angel. As the hymn “O Love, How Deep,” our theme for this Lenten series, confesses in the second verse: “He sent no angel to our race, Of higher or of lower place, But wore the robe of human frame, And to this world Himself He came.” God didn't send a servant. He Himself came for us.

And that's exactly how the Epistle to the Hebrews opens. “*Long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets.*” Through angels and visions and dreams. Through fire and cloud and earthquake. “*But in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son.*” Not by another intermediary. Not by a created messenger. Not by an angel. But by His Son.

And who is this Son? He is “*the heir of all things.*” He is the One “*through whom also he created the world.*” Before there were angels, before there was light or sky or sea, there was the Son. The Father spoke, and the Son is that eternal Word. “*Let there be,*” and there was. The whole universe, visible and invisible, owes its existence to Him.

Hebrews goes further. The Son is “*the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature.*” Not a blurry reflection. Not a lesser copy. The exact imprint. If you want to know the Father, look at the Son. If you want to see the heart of God, listen to Christ. There's no other access. There's no higher revelation. As our Lord Himself says, “*Whoever has seen me has seen the Father.*”

“*He upholds the universe by the word of his power.*” The One who sustains galaxies, who keeps the stars in their courses, who holds together every atom by His will... He is the One who came down.

After making purification for sins, Hebrews says, “*he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high, having become as much superior to angels as the name he has inherited is more excellent than theirs.*” The Son is not one angel among many. He is worshiped by angels. “*Let all God's angels worship him,*” the Father declares.

The contrast couldn't be sharper. Angels are ministering spirits, sent out to serve for the sake of those who are to inherit salvation. They serve. He reigns. They are flames of fire. He is the eternal Son. They are created. He is begotten, not made.

And yet, this eternal Son, superior to angels, worshiped by angels, through whom angels themselves were made, became for a little while lower than the angels. Why? Because angels can't redeem what they haven't assumed.

An early pastor of the Church, Gregory of Nazianzus, put it this way: “That which he did not assume, he cannot redeem.” If the Son had come only in appearance, He couldn't save our real flesh. If He had come as an angelic spirit, He couldn't redeem our human bodies. If He had stood at a distance, issuing commands from heaven, He couldn't heal what was broken within us.

So the Son assumed our humanity. Not by converting His divinity into flesh, as though He stopped being God. And not by mixing divinity and humanity into some third thing. But by taking our humanity into His divine person. As we confess in the Athanasian Creed: He is one Christ, not by confusion of substance, but by unity of person. Fully God. Fully man. One Lord Jesus Christ.

The problem in Eden wasn't angelic. It was human. A man and a woman rebelled. Through one man sin entered the world, and death through sin. The disease is in our flesh. The guilt is in our bloodline. We're not merely oppressed by the devil. We're fallen creature. Separated from God through our own original sin.

So a true man had to stand where Adam fell. A true man had to resist where Israel failed. A true man had to obey where we disobey. And yet no mere man could bear the weight of the world's sin or withstand the wrath of God against it. Only the God-man could do that.

That's why the Son became a child in the womb of the Virgin Mary. Not as a sentimental story for winter nights. But as the decisive act of war against sin, death, and the devil. He entered the battlefield in our own flesh.

When Satan tempted Him in the wilderness, he wasn't facing an angel in blazing glory. He was facing a hungry human being. A man who had fasted forty days. A man who felt weakness in His body. And yet, because this man is the eternal Son, He answers the devil's temptations not with displays of raw power, but with the Word. “*It is written.*” The second Adam stands firm.

Throughout His ministry, angels attend Him. They minister to Him after the temptation. They stand ready at His command. We hear him say in the Gospel lesson that He could call twelve legions of angels to protect him. And yet He doesn't. He refuses angelic rescue. He walks the path of suffering.

In Gethsemane, an angel strengthens Him. But the angel doesn't drink the cup of suffering that Jesus drinks. In the courtyard of the high priest, angels don't strike down the mockers. On the cross, angels don't descend to take Him down. Why? Because angels can't make purification for sin. Only the Son of God can.

He who upholds the universe by the word of His power allows Himself to be upheld by nails. He who is worshiped by angels is spat upon by men. He who sits at the right hand of Majesty hangs between thieves. He becomes lower than the angels so that you might be raised.

And when He cries out, "It is finished," the purification is complete. The accuser is silenced. The serpent's head is crushed. Not by a flaming, angelic sword, but by pierced human feet.

Your Savior isn't distant from your weakness. He doesn't merely observe your suffering from heaven. He doesn't simply "understand" in a detached sense. He's lived it. He's carried it. He's taken it into Himself. You're tempted. So was He. You're weary. So was He. You suffer betrayal. So did He. You face death. So did He.

And because He is both true God and true man, His obedience counts for you. His death atones for you. His resurrection is your resurrection. The One whom angels worship calls you brother. The One before whom angels hide their faces gives you His body and blood.

This is why it matters that God sent no angel to our race. If He had, Satan might be destroyed, but so would the whole human race. Satan's accusations would stand. The accuser would lose, but he would still destroy that which God loves most. Which would probably be a win in his mind.

No, by becoming man, the Son of God destroyed the serpent and saved all of us. And all it took was his own precious blood and his innocent suffering and death. He wore the robe of human frame, that we might be robed in his own righteousness. Amen.