**I, An Angel of The Lord**

*(yes, I will speak tonight as if I am John, while there are some things we know for certain, what he might have to say and how he might speak to us is purely my own speculation.)*

I am an Angel of the Lord. My name is unimportant, God didn't deem it necessary to mention it in His Scripture, so neither will I mention it. I would rather bring glory to my God by remaining nameless, except that I serve Him and bring all glory to His name.

During Lent, you have had many people come and speak to you, voices that were present for the Passion of our Lord Jesus Christ. These voices gave you a perspective, as seen through their eyes, of the suffering and death of Him who was, Who is, and Who is to come – God almighty in human flesh, Jesus Christ.

I would like to tell you about the events of the Christ's life, and especially the last three days, as seen by one who views not only the earthly and material realm, but who also sees things in the spiritual realm – the realm of God, His holy angels, and those who rebelled against Him.

You have heard about those who saw the physical suffering, pain and anguish of the Son of God, Jesus Christ. You have heard how His life and death changed the lives of some people. You have also heard how others were callous and rejected the very Lord of Life – to their own judgement.

Not only did I see the effects of Christ's life, His miracles and teachings upon the people – I saw the effect it had upon all the angels, the good and the fallen. For example, do you remember the woman who came to Jesus to ask His mercy to help her demon-possessed daughter? Do you remember Jesus testing her? Do you remember His telling her it isn't good to give the children's bread to dogs? Do you remember her response? Do you remember Jesus praising her for her great faith? You heard Jesus' words to her, but you didn't hear all the hosts of heaven, myself included, as we rejoiced with loud song at her response to Him. Did you hear our shouts of joy when she confessed her great faith?

One thing that you did not hear about was Satan's work on that Samaritan woman that day. While Jesus spoke to her physically, Satan spoke in hushed whispers to her heart. He told her, "He won't help you, you are a Samaritan. You aren't worth His time, you are scum of the earth. Why should He bother with such as you? You are less than the dogs that eat of the crumbs under the table." He wanted her to turn away from Christ.

God's Holy Spirit was also at work in her through the Word that spoke to her. He brought to her mind the promises and prophecies she had heard about the Messiah. When she finally spoke, "Yes, Lord, yet even the dogs lick up the crumbs that fall from the master's table." The Holy Spirit had won, He had buoyed her faith and she had remained strong. We cheered! Satan and his demon horde of angels cursed Jesus.

Not always did it go this way. There was a rich young man who came to Jesus and asked Him what he needed to do to inherit the kingdom of heaven. Jesus told Him to keep the commandments. You didn't see Satan at work on this young man's heart, he whispered to him, "but you have kept them, from your youth!" That is how the young man responded to Jesus. Jesus said, "One thing you lack, go, sell all you have and give it to the poor, then come follow me."

Satan didn't need to do any more goading, instead he simply smiled. We had seen him working for a long time on this young man, he loved satisfying his flesh with riches. So, although the Holy Spirit struggled to bring the young man back around, but it was not to be. The love of money, his own riches, was more appealing than what Jesus had to offer. His own sinful flesh worked against him, and he walked away from Jesus, never to return.

On that day, Satan and his swarm of evil angels danced with glee and gloated before us, "We got another one, we got another one, nah-nee-nah-nee-nahahh." God's heavenly hosts wept, we cried that one had been lost, that one had rejected God's gift of eternal life in Jesus Christ.

Wherever Jesus went, this was the scene behind the scenes. Sometimes we rejoiced with singing and exultant joy. Other times we wept tears of sadness over another soul lost.

Where the Holy Spirit worked on hearts and won them over, Jesus' words brought life. Where the Word of Christ was rejected, we wept over souls that were lost by their own devices to eternal damnation. Three days ago, you celebrated the death of Jesus Christ, your Lord and Savior. It began in the upper room. Jesus broke bread and passed the cup, His body and blood of the New Covenant – He instituted His supper. We cheered, the demons groaned.

In the garden, Judas betrayed Him into the hands of evil men. The demons cheered, we looked on in silence. God the Father had told us to be quiet, to watch these next few days quietly. He told us that He had a plan and that we were to watch patiently and quietly. We were to keep our swords sheathed.

It was difficult to see the Author of life suffer ridicule and punishment. We bristled with excitement waiting for the call of our Lord and Master to go into battle and defend Him against those who abused Him. As one of God's angels, I had the power all by myself to defeat those who beat and abused Him, and there were legions of us to be called forth for battle, but the call never came. Instead, we watched as He silently allowed Himself to be whipped and beaten. We watched as the demons goaded their human slaves on to further and more despicable abuses of Him who brought all life into existence.

We cringed in horror at the curses they swore at Him. Our wings were held taunt as we kept ourselves and our anger in check only because the Father had so commanded us. Jesus knew we would come to His aid in a heartbeat, all He had to do was ask. He even told brave Peter to put up his sword, that He could call twelve legions of angels if He needed. That call never came. For the whole next day, we watched first the abuse of Satan's minions, the Sanhedrin. Then, Satan spoke to Pilate, telling him to do nothing. Although Pilate knew Jesus to be innocent, Satan tricked him, got him to wash His hands of the whole affair. Satan convinced Pilate that this action would make him innocent of the innocent Son of God's blood.

Some of those who have spoken to you these last few weeks told of the appearance of the weight of the whole world upon the shoulders of Jesus. We saw what the weight was. I observed the sins of your pastor, of Pauline, of Nicholas, Susan, of David, in fact the very sins of each and every one of you was what I saw there upon His shoulders. Upon the very Lord of Life were laid the iniquities of all mankind from every generation. Yes, He was bowed under the weight of the world – the weight of the sins of the whole world, the sins of all mankind. We could only watch Him suffer, we could not help. We were not even allowed to speak of it.

As the soldiers nailed Him to the tree, we began to understand God's plan. But, we needed to remain silent. You see, we remembered another tree. Long ago, it was with a tree, the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, by which Satan defeated Adam in the garden. It was by a tree and one man that sin came into the world. It was by a tree and one Man, the Son of God, Jesus Christ, that Satan and sin would be defeated for the whole world, and that tree was the cross.

We rejoiced and danced jubilantly when the murderer/thief some call Dismas repented and asked Jesus for mercy, “Lord, remember me when You came into Your kingdom.” We sang songs of joy when Jesus declared to Him that he, a sinner, would be with Him this very day in paradise. It was about then that the incredible happened. The Father turned His back on His Son. It was then that Jesus suffered the pains of hell – the pains of separation from His Father. He cried out, "Eli, eli, lama sabbachtani." I wanted to fly to His Father. I wanted to beg Him to allow me to go to His Son. I could not have borne the pain of having The Father turn His back on me, how could the eternal Son bear the pain of being abandoned by His Father.

We stifled the groans we felt. Satan and his angels danced around the cross proclaiming their victory. Our heads fell. Then Jesus spoke, "It is finished." Then He said, "Father, into Your hands I commit my spirit."

What an inglorious way for the very Giver of Life to die. Here was God, the Light of the World, the Word which spoken all things into being, and He died like a common criminal. When it happened, Satan danced, he and his demon angels gloated with glee. At that moment darkness covered the earth. In that instant, the temple veil was torn from top to bottom and the graves of those who had died in the faith were opened as an incredible earthquake shook the land as He who made the earth gave up His Spirit.

It was then, in that time between His death and this morning that some more things took place. Christ descended into hell He went to those who had been consigned to hell in earlier ages and proclaimed to them His victory. He proclaimed it to Satan and his demons as well.

It was then that we were allowed to sing. The cross and the death of Jesus was not a defeat, it was victory. Satan and death were defeated on the tree of the cross, for Christ had perfectly kept the law. His death as a common criminal is how He suffered for you and for all sinners. He died that you might never die. He died for your sins, the weight of the who world upon His shoulders.

Satan missed the significance and the power of the Cross. He did not realize that by His death, Jesus would free all men from death. Satan was fooled into thinking that the crucifixion of Jesus was his victory and not God's. I can also see today, that Satan wants you also to miss the significance of the victory Jesus won on the cross.

Today, you come into God's house. Today you come to hear of the resurrection of your Lord. I see Satan screaming and raging that you will hear this message I bring. I come to tell you about His victory for you. I come to tell you that Jesus died for your sins, that upon the cross He won the victory, I know because He also rose three days later. That empty tomb screams out that the sacrifice, the victory of Good Friday, is indeed a victory.

Today you come into God's house to hear the good news, and it is my joy to be here today to tell it to you. Because Jesus lives, you too will live. I was personally selected, of all the hosts of heaven, and given the glorious task of sitting in the empty tomb that first morning. I was assigned there to declare good news to those who came seeking to anoint Jesus in His death. I was there to tell them that death could not hold Him. I was to tell them that Jesus had risen and was not there. The Lord of Life had defeated death and will give that same life, life eternal, to you.

At your baptism, you saw water and heard the Word. At your baptism I heard God call you by name. I heard Him call you His dear child. I saw Him take the blood Jesus shed upon the cross and sprinkle you clean with it, uniting you to His death. And I saw Him put upon you His own robe of righteousness, uniting you to a resurrection like His. For as He lives, you will live also.

I also watched Satan pull out his hair and cringe, his vile angels screamed and covered their ears as God called you His own. I have seen some however who have turned away from their baptism. Satan whispers to them that it is not necessary to come into God's house. He tells them, “you need only go to church occasionally, and then, only to fulfill your Christian duty and keep God happy with you.” “You don’t need to go to church, it is full of hypocrites anyway.” He further goads you by saying, “Remember that nice day by the quiet stream with the birds singing in the meadow, remember how I made you feel as if you were close to God? God does not mind you worshiping there, in His creation, you do not need to be in His house.”

Many people listen to Satan’s lies and deceptions. Satan seduces them into thinking that true faith only needs to be fed once in a while. Satan’s forces are at work all over, they have people in the palm of their hand when they get them to believe that worship need only be a twice a year thing, on the big days, Christmas and Easter.

That is not faith, however? It is a sometime thing, if that. It is something that some people pull out only when there is great need. That faith, however, is not really faith. It is Satan's delusions, and he grins when people think they can get by with minimal exposure to God's Word. Now that he can look back at the day Jesus died, and as he can see His death as the power to free you from your sins, Satan wants you to skip Good Friday and go straight to Easter. He wants you to forget the most important day in the Christian calendar.

I am here to tell you that Christ not only won the victory on Good Friday, but it is Christ who comes to His children and keeps them in the faith which He gave to them in baptism. Christ does it here, in His house, as He comes to you. That is why Satan screams and hollers when you come here. It is why he whispers to you when the alarm clock goes off, "Isn't this pillow comfortable? You work so hard, God will understand if you skip today."

Today, in this place, you think that you only hear words from a man. I see God the Son speaking to you through the words you hear. God comes in those words. He is here today, present in your midst. He forgives your sins. The Holy Spirit is at work as the Word of God is preached – at work in your heart, and yours, and yours – I see Him there. I see Satan and his cronies seething and raging about your presence here, in this place.

Christ comes to you as well in His Supper. He is both the meal and the Host serving. He comes with Himself and gives you forgiveness of sins, eternal life and salvation. As you kneel before the table, what do you see? You see a man giving you bread and wine. I see that man! I also see Christ. I see hidden in the bread the very body of Him who died upon that cursed tree. In the wine, I see hidden the very blood of Him who shed it when His side was pierced. Satan likes it that you cannot see what he can see, for he sees the body and blood of Christ too. He sees it strengthening God's grip on your heart. He'd rather you leave, or not commune today. In fact, Satan would love it if you only communed once a month. Satan definitely doesn’t want you to receive such a powerful gift from God on a weekly basis, that would strengthen you and weaken his grip even more.

And while you kneel here at this table, I see God's throne mingled with your banquet feast. Seated around the throne are all the angels, archangels, and all those who have gone before you in the faith. They are there at the eternal banquet feast of the Lamb, supping upon holy food. It is like there is one big banquet hall, and you are together with them.

Do you see the things I see? Do you see yourself being fed the things that will build your faith? Do you see the Spirit working on your hearts in the Word that you hear? Do you see Christ present in your midst working marvelous things? He is here. He came forth from the empty tomb and comes to you today to bring you out of your tomb and death – to bring you into life eternal with Him.

In the empty tomb that day, I told the women, "Go, tell His disciples-and Peter-that He is going before you into Galilee; there you will see Him, as He said to you." Today I tell you, "Go tell all that He has died and defeated death. More than that, He has risen and comes to you in His Word and in His sacraments. There you will see, hear and taste of Him, just as He has told you. As He comes to you in those words and promises, you will be given His victorious gifts unto life eternal. As He has risen and lives and reigns to all eternity, so He gives you life eternal in His name. Come often to this His house to be given these eternal gifts and make Satan rage. The victory is yours because Christ is risen! Amen.