**St Michael and All Angels Sunday**

OLD TESTAMENT – Daniel 10:10-14. 12:1-3

**10 A hand touched me and set me trembling on my hands and knees.  11 He said, “Daniel, you who are highly esteemed, consider carefully the words I am about to speak to you, and stand up, for I have now been sent to you.” And when he said this to me, I stood up trembling. 12 Then he continued, “Do not be afraid, Daniel. Since the first day that you set your mind to gain understanding and to humble yourself before your God, your words were heard, and I have come in response to them.  13 But the prince of the Persian kingdom resisted me twenty-one days. Then Michael, one of the chief princes, came to help me, because I was detained there with the king of Persia.  14 Now I have come to explain to you what will happen to your people in the future, for the vision concerns a time yet to come.”**

**10:10-11** As in previous visions, Daniel is touched, strengthened, and given the ability to understand by the one speaking with him (8:18; 9:21–22). Daniel is also specifically identified as the one to whom this man was sent. The reason that he but not the others saw the vision is hinted at in the title “highly prized” (10:11). God chose Daniel as his prophet, and this faithful believer was cherished and valued by God, as are all his believers (cf. Ps 72:14; 116:15; 2 Cor 4:7; 1 Pet 1:7; 3:4). (CC)

**10:10** *hand touched me*. Daniel may have been met by a number of heavenly beings (cf vv 5, 10, 16, 18). This could have been either the hand of the messenger (v 5) or another divine being who had been sent (v 11). (TLSB)

**10:11** *man greatly loved*. Daniel was held in high esteem. (TLSB)

**10:12** Daniel’s prayers were heard (v 2), but the answer was delayed. (TLSB)

DO NOT BE AFRAID – The divine man’s greeting, “do not be afraid” (10:12), serves as a comforting benediction and absolution that was often spoken by God and his angels to believers (Gen 15:1; 26:24; Judg 6:23; Lk 1:13, 30; Acts 27:24). Christ spoke the equivalent of אַל־תִּירָ֣א, “do not be afraid,” when he appeared in a very similar form to John (Rev 1:17), and he uttered the same words on other occasions. The holy divine power that accompanies God and his angels is so overpowering that this reassurance was designed to calm the fear that would naturally come over a sinful human being on these occasions. (CC)

 SET YOUR MIND TO GAIN UNDERSTANDING – The man’s words in Dan 10:12 show that Daniel’s fasting and seeking to understand God’s Word was accompanied by prayer, as is often the case in the OT. The humbling of oneself is often connected with fasting and the offering of prayers and sacrifice (Lev 16:29, 31; 23:27, 32; Ps 35:13; Ezra 8:21). Daniel’s prayer was heard and answered from the very first day he began praying, although three weeks elapsed before Daniel received the audible answer from the man. This shows the need for perseverance in prayer with confidence that God is hearing and answering even though we may not be aware of his response (cf. Lk 18:1–8; 1 Thess 5:17). (CC)

**10:13** *prince of the Persian kingdom.*† A demonically inspired attempt to use the kingdom of Persia to thwart God’s plan for his people ended in failure when Michael came to the help of the angel clothed in linen (v. 5). (CSB)

Spiritual being, perhaps a fallen angel, who contended for Persia. (TLSB)

 *withstood me twenty-one days.* God’s messenger was held up for three weeks (v 2) before coming to Daniel. (TLSB)

There was a delay in the arrival of the divine man for the twenty-one days of Daniel’s fast (Dan 10:13). The delay was caused by the divine man’s battle against “the prince of the kingdom of Persia.” The phrase “the prince of the kingdom” (שַׂר מַלְכוּת) is unique in the OT. It expresses that a fallen angel, a demon (see the first textual note on 10:13) had taken a special interest in thwarting God’s salvific purposes, which God would accomplish partly through using the pagan kingdom of Persia. This particular demon took up his position over Persia to attempt to foil God’s plans involving this nation. (CC)

The NT describes the demonic possession of certain individuals, and declares that worship of pagan gods and idols really is demon worship (1 Cor 10:20–21), but this passage shows that a demon can gain a position of influence over an entire pagan nation or people. This is also one of the clearest portrayals in Scripture of opposition by the devil and his evil angels to God, his holy angels, and his salvific purpose, which ultimately is to redeem all people through his Son, Jesus Christ. (CC)

Heavenly warfare involving Christ as the commander of his angels is mentioned throughout the Scriptures, though in less detail than here. Already in Exodus, God had promised that his angel would go before Israel into the land of Canaan to fight for them (Ex 32:34; 33:2). This was fulfilled in Joshua’s day, as confirmed by the appearance of the preincarnate Christ to Joshua in the form of “the Prince of the army of Yahweh” (Josh 5:14). The battle of Barak against Sisera was also fought in heaven (Judg 5:19–20, where “stars” likely refers to angels, as in Job 38:7; Rev 1:20; 12:4). The demonic army that opposes God will be punished at the final judgment (Is 24:21), and Paul reminds us that our most significant struggles in this life are against the spiritual powers of darkness who fight on the heavenly plane (Eph 6:12). The most explicit NT passage to depict this warfare is Rev 12:7–11, where the archangel Michael and the angels under his command fight Satan and his angels; Michael and his troops expel the fallen angels from heaven after the first advent of Christ. (CC)

The divine man told Daniel, “I had been left there against the kings of Persia” (Dan 10:13), which refers to demons who had stationed themselves over Persia during the reigns of past Persian kings. The verb “left” (נוֹתַ֣רְתִּי) probably means that God the Son was left alone, repelling the enemy by himself until Michael came to his aid. This is similar to the temptation of Christ: he alone fought against Satan (Mt 4:1–10), then after his victory over the devil, angels attended him (Mt 4:11). Jesus was also abandoned on the cross (Mt 27:46, quoting Ps 22:1), where he alone defeated the devil (Heb 2:14; 1 Jn 3:8) by atoning for humanity’s sins, then angels accompanied his resurrection (Mt 28:2–3; Mk 16:5; Lk 24:4). (CC)

Presumably after the divine man and Michael won the most recent battle against the prince of the kingdom of Persia, Michael remained stationed in the Persian court to thwart further attacks while the divine man visited Daniel. After the Son of God would complete his visit to reveal the divine message to Daniel, he would return to continue his spiritual warfare along with Michael against “the prince of Persia,” and after that, against “the prince of Greece” (10:20). His statement “I had been left there against the kings of Persia” (10:13) emphasizes that spiritual attacks had come throughout the reigns of several past Persian kings. It also suggests that spiritual assaults would continue in the future under the Persian kings who would succeed Cyrus. The divine man would have to continue to wage spiritual war to ensure that the Judeans who returned to Israel would have a heavenly warrior who would defend them as they would struggle to rebuild the temple in Jerusalem. The opposition they would face and eventually overcome (recorded in Ezra 1–6) was a reflection of the ebb and flow of the battles that the divine man and Michael would fight on their behalf in the spiritual realm. (CC)

 *Michael*. Israel’s prince/angel, whose name means “who is like God.” Helped the messenger in his spiritual struggle against the prince of Persia. (TLSB)

Michael is called “one of the chief princes” (10:13), the equivalent of ἀρχάγγελος, “archangel” (Jude 9). Thus it is possible that in addition to Michael himself, other angels under his command (Rev 12:7) were posted at the Persian court. (CC)

**10:14** What the messenger had to say to Daniel concerned a time that lay in the future. (TLSB)

TIME YET TO COME – The revelation to Daniel will relate the coming events that will affect God’s people and will culminate in the resurrection of all the dead (Dan 12:2–3) on the Last Day, after the return of Christ. This eschatological perspective is confirmed when the divine man says, ע֥וֹד חָז֖וֹן לַיָּמִֽים, literally, “yet [the] vision is concerning the days [to come]” (10:14). Thus the vision is not simply about future world history, but about the eschatological and theological future that culminates in the promised eschatological kingdom of God in Christ, which arrived at his first advent (Mk 1:14–15; 9:1; Col 1:13) and will be consummated at his second advent (1 Cor 6:9–10; 15:24; 2 Tim 4:1, 18). (CC)

**“At that time Michael, the great prince who protects your people, will arise. There will be a time of distress such as has not happened from the beginning of nations until then. But at that time your people—everyone whose name is found written in the book—will be delivered. ﻿2﻿ Multitudes who sleep in the dust of the earth will awake: some to everlasting life, others to shame and everlasting contempt. ﻿3﻿ Those who are wise will shine like the brightness of the heavens, and those who lead many to righteousness, like the stars for ever and ever.**

**Ch 12** Luther: “The twelfth chapter of Daniel … has to do wholly with the Antichrist and with these last times in which we are living. For this reason we do not have to consult the histories any longer at this point. Rather it is the clear gospel” (AE 35:313). (TLSB)

**12:1** AT THAT TIME – These words connect this passage with the preceding one, which had pictured the destruction of the Antichrist at the end of the world. (PBC)

 *Michael.* See note on 10:13. (CSB)

An angel who had already come to their rescue in the battle with Persia in 10:13. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 10, Part 4)

“Michael, the great prince” is a reference to the archangel Michael, the warrior who helps the Lord (Dan 10:13, 21). (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 19, Part 4)

Michael was charged to care for Israel but this reference may include “new Israel,” the Church. (TLSB)

 *time of distress.*† See Jer 30:7; Mt 24:21; cf. Rev 16:18. (CSB)

God’s people would suffer greatly because of the great conflict. (TLSB)

“A time of trouble, such as never has been since.” We find these words quoted by Christ in Mt 24:21–22. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 19, Part 4)

Jesus quoted from this verse in speaking about events leading up to the final judgment. Matthew 24:21-22 “For then there will be great distress, unequaled from the beginning of the world until now—and never to be equaled again. ﻿22﻿ If those days had not been cut short, no one would survive, but for the sake of the elect those days will be shortened.” (PBC)

Perhaps you have heard somebody describe this world as a madhouse. Actually the world is not a madhouse, but arena, a battleground where a war is constantly raging between the forces of God and the forces of anti-God. There is not a single area of life which has not been claimed by God and counterclaimed by Satan and his henchmen. (PBC)

The struggle will continue and even intensify as the time draws closer to the end. The devil and his forces will become ever more desperate to win people over. The world during its tortured centuries of existence has seen distress of many kinds, but nothing like this last distress. These words remind us that being a Christian does not mean putting on rose-colored glasses so that everything looks pink and pretty. Daniel makes it clear that as we contemplate the future there’s no reason for overconfidence. (PBC)

But there’s no reason for despair, either. Not only is there trouble ahead; there’s triumph, too. “At that time Michael… will arise.” Daniel chapter 10 pictured Michael as the great angelic prince who was active behind the scenes of history, working against Satan’s agent in the Persian government. Michael was God’s agent to overthrow those satanic schemes and to guarantee that God’s good will for the returning exiles would be carried out. Here we learn that when the final great distress overtakes the world Michael, God’s angelic champion, will again intervene on behalf of God’s people. (PBC)

Jeremiah 30:7 “How awful that day will be! None will be like it. It will be a time of trouble for Jacob, but he will be saved out of it.”

Michael will be successful in defending God’s people, His Israel, the spiritual children of Abraham who have been gathered from the east and the west. The huffing and puffing of the enemies will stop when God sends final deliverance at Judgment day. (PBC)

 *book.* See 10:21; see also notes on Ps 9:5; 51:1; 69:28. (CSB)

God’s Book of Life, listing those who remain faithful. (TLSB)

“Everyone whose name shall be found written in the book.” This book should be identified with the Book of Life (Dan 7:10; Ps 69:28) and not “the book of truth” of Dan 10:21 (see also FC Ep XI 6). (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 19, Part 4)

God’s book is His family register containing the names of those who have been loved and chosen from all eternity. (Exodus 32:32; Psalm 69:28; Rev. 21:27) (PBC)

Through faith in Christ’s perfect life and His innocent death we will not only be pitied by God but delighted in, as a father delights in his own child. (PBC)

While these, too, will feel the stress and strain of life, they can have the peace that passes all human understanding knowing their place in heaven is secure.

Philippians 4:3 “Yes, and I ask you, loyal yokefellow,﻿a﻿ help these women who have contended at my side in the cause of the gospel, along with Clement and the rest of my fellow workers, whose names are in the book of life.”

**12:2**† A clear reference to a resurrection of both the righteous and the wicked. Cf. Isa 26:19; Jn 5:24–30. (CSB)

 WHO SLEEP – The dead will be raised to live again. Ambr: “Well, then, did he speak of the rest of those that sleep, that one may understand that death lasts not for ever, which like sleep is undergone for a time, and is put off at its time” (*NPNF* 2 10:184). Jn D: “The words … clearly show that there will be a resurrection of bodies” (*NPNF* 2 9:100b). (TLSB)

“And many of those who sleep.” This verse is quoted by Christ in Jn 5:28–29, but Christ substitutes “all” for “many.” The Hebrew could also be translated “multitude” or possibly “all” in this context. This is the clearest example of the bodily resurrection to be found in the Old Testament Scriptures (see also Is 26:19). It is also interesting to note the use of language similar to that of Genesis in reference to the dust of the ground (v 2; Gen 2:7; 3:19). This verse shows us the reality at the Last Day when Christ returns. Those who have been faithful and survived the great tribulation will be joined with Christ, and those who have died in the faith will awake and arise bodily from the grave and join Christ. Those who died as unbelievers will also rise bodily but to everlasting shame and contempt. The Old Testament has many examples of sleep being a reference to death (e.g., Ps 13:3; Job 3:13; Jer 51:39, 57). Remember 1 Cor 15:26 and the reality that death is the last enemy to be destroyed. The Hebrew *ləchayye ‘olam*, “to everlasting life,” is found only here in the Old Testament. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 19, Part 4)

One of the enemies which has intruded into God’s good creation and which has caused untold misery for God’s people is death. This enemy will also be overcome in the final victory. Death is “the last enemy to be destroyed” (1 Corinthians 15:26). It will be destroyed by Him who as His resurrection broke the power of death. (PBC)

 *everlasting life.* The phrase occurs only here in the OT. (CSB)

For those written in the book (v 1). (TLSB)

There will be those who will outlive the distress and those who won’t, but all will appear before the Lord at the end. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 10, Part 4)

 *shame and everlasting contempt.* For those who cooperated with Antichrist. (TLSB)

**12:3** THOSE WHO ARE WISE – With so much coming at a person at all at once it is difficult to always make wise decisions. One way to help the decision-making process is to be in the Word constantly.

 WILL SHINE LIKE BRIGHTNESS OF THE HEAVENS – They will live in the glory of heaven getting their light from Christ.

Like stars. Their glory is a blessing of God’s grace. Ambrose: “The progress of that life which shall be after death is better than that which is passed in sorrow and pain before death” (*NPNF* 2 10:184). (TLSB)

Christ quotes this verse in Mt 13:43. The use of *raqia‘*, “expanse,” reminds us again of Genesis (1:6–8) and the creation. The use here may indicate a restoration of creation—new heavens and new earth. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 19, Part 4)

Matthew 13:43 “Then the righteous will shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father. He who has ears, let him hear.”

 THOSE WHO LEAD MANY TO RIGHTEOUSNESS – These are those Christians who by word and example have brought others to faith in Christ Jesus.

Ambrose: “So the choirs of apostles, martyrs, and priests, shining like glorious stars, might give light throughout the world” (*NPNF* 2 10:226). (TLSB)

EPISTLE – Revelation 12:7-12

**.﻿7﻿ And there was war in heaven. Michael and his angels fought against the dragon, and the dragon and his angels fought back. ﻿8﻿ But he was not strong enough, and they lost their place in heaven. ﻿9﻿ The great dragon was hurled down—that ancient serpent called the devil, or Satan, who leads the whole world astray. He was hurled to the earth, and his angels with him. ﻿10﻿ Then I heard a loud voice in heaven say: “Now have come the salvation and the power and the kingdom of our God, and the authority of his Christ. For the accuser of our brothers, who accuses them before our God day and night, has been hurled down. ﻿11﻿ They overcame him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony; they did not love their lives so much as to shrink from death. ﻿12﻿ Therefore rejoice, you heavens and you who dwell in them! But woe to the earth and the sea, because the devil has gone down to you! He is filled with fury, because he knows that his time is short.**

**12:7** *Now*. Indicates a new aspect of the vision: what happened after the “child was caught up to God and to His throne” (v 5). (TLSB)

 *war.*† The battle Jesus fought when he came in the flesh to destroy the works of the devil (cf. 1Jn 3:8; Jn 12:31; Lk 10:18). (CSB)

What is now announced and portrayed to John staggers the human imagination. That there should be war before God’s presence in heaven would seem to be unthinkable, utterly out of place. The angels sang at the birth of Jesus, “Glory in highest places to God and *on earth peace*” (δόχα ἐν ὑψίστοις θεῷ καὶ ἐπὶ γῆς εἰρήνη, Lk 2:14). The pilgrims who welcomed Jesus on Palm Sunday as he rode triumphantly into Jerusalem sang a similar hymn of blessing: “*In heaven peace* and glory in highest places” (ἐν οὑρανῷ εἰρήνη καὶ δόξα ἐν ὑψίστοις, Lk 19:38). They were singing about “peace” and “glory” in heaven. According to Luke, then, the Christ was born to bring peace to earth and through his death and resurrection was about to bring peace in heaven. But what does that “peace” mean? While human warfare on earth includes physical struggles and bloodshed, to the Christian on earth the most horrible battle is a spiritual one fought against forces *in the heavenly realms:* “our fight is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers and authorities and cosmic powers of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil *in the heavenly realms*” (Eph 6:12). While Christ’s birth, death, and resurrection established peace between God in heaven and humanity on earth, that peace is now being contested by evil spiritual powers in heavenly realms who seek to sever the peace between God and people achieved by Christ. *The warfare in heaven must be interpreted as a spiritual struggle in which the dragon attempts to displace the Christ Child, the victorious Lamb who was slain, in order to establish himself again in the presence of God as the prince of the angels and as the one who has dominion over humanity on earth, and specifically as the one who has the authority to stand before God and accuse people for their sins*. (CC pp. 332-333)

At the center of this warfare in heaven is Satan’s ability to stand in God’s holy presence and accuse the saints of God (Rev 12:10). It is a war, so to speak, of words—the words with which Satan accused God’s saints of their sins (e.g., Job 1–2; Zech 3:1–5). With these words Satan claimed that he, not the Christ, truthfully represented the saints before God’s heavenly throne. This warfare, though of words, is deadly serious, for if Satan’s accusations were validated in the heavenly court, then God’s justice would require him to deny even his own people because of their sin. But for that to happen God would have to deny the claim of his own Son to be the rightful representative and advocate for God’s people. Christ’s victory has earned for him the right to represent fallen humanity; he is the one “who loves us and set us free from our sins by his blood” (Rev 1:5). Therefore the accusations of Satan are thrown out of court, and Satan himself is thrown out of heaven (12:8–10). Because of the rightful claim of Christ to represent God’s people with Christ’s own sinlessness and righteousness, the very presence of Satan in heaven was now an offense to God and all the heavenly host. (CC p. 333)

When did this war, this expulsion of the dragon and his evil host, take place? According to 12:5, it happened when the “Child was snatched up to God and to his throne,” that is, at the ascension of Christ. Apparently before Christ’s victory and ascension, the devil could at will stand before God and bring accusations against God’s saints. There are two well-known instances of this in the OT. In both Job (1:6–11; 2:1–5) and Zechariah (3:1–7), Satan stands before God’s heavenly presence to accuse two of his saints: Job and Joshua the high priest. From the original rebellion to Christ’s ascension, Satan could take his place in the council of angels before God in heaven (Job 1:6; 2:1; cf. Dan 7:7–8). But at Christ’s enthronement at the right of God, Satan was forever banished from God’s presence and his place in the heavenly court was taken from him. (CC pp. 333-334)

This war in heaven in Rev 12:7 is not the original rebellion of the devil against God, which took place before the fall of Adam and the woman (Gen 3:1). *The war and expulsion described in Revelation 12 happened as a result of Christ’s victory and elevation*. Not only is Satan judged, because of Christ’s triumphant return to his heavenly Father’s throne, Satan is now expelled and banished forever from God’s presence. And finally, at the End when Christ returns, Satan and all his fellow evil spirits will be cast forever into hell, the lake of fire (Rev 20:10; cf. 2 Pet 2:4; Jude 6). The conclusion that the expulsion of Satan from heaven here in Revelation 12 is the result of Jesus’ ministry of redemption agrees with Jesus’ statement at the return of the seventy-two, when he said, “I was watching Satan falling like lightning from heaven” (Lk 10:18). Jesus also said, “*Now* the ruler of this world will be thrown out outside, and I, when I am lifted up from the world, will draw all people to myself” (Jn 12:31–32). (CC p. 336)

 *Michael.* An archangel who defeats Satan in heavenly warfare. In Da 12:1 he is the protector of Israel who will deliver her from tribulation in the last days. (CSB)

Michael is similarly depicted as fighting for God’s people in Dn 10:13. (TLSB)

The war in heaven was concluded by “Michael and his angels” against “the dragon” and “his angels,” that is, it reached its climax when Michael cast the dragon out of heaven (12:7–9). This war, this casting of Satan out of heaven, took place as a result of Christ’s victory and at his ascension and session at the right of God (see 5:1–14). There was no room for *two* opposing advocates, each claiming to be the rightful representative of sinful humanity. No longer could God tolerate Satan’s presence since his accusations were rendered false by the victorious Lamb, who now returned to heaven. At the command of God, Michael and all the faithful angels drove out the dragon and his angels. The dragon and his hordes were not to take part in the celebration that ensued among the heavenly hosts—the celebration of Christ’s coronation at his ascension. Once the Messiah of God, the Savior and Champion of his people, had defeated the prince of darkness and had taken his seat at the right of God, the dragon was expelled by Michael. Now dethroned from his seat in the council of angels (see Job 1:6; Zech 3:1), the dragon could never again appear before God. (CC pp. 333-334)

In 12:7 Michael, while not called an “archangel,” is the captain of the host of angels engaged in the war with the dragon and his hosts. The verbal construction τοῦ πολεμῆσαι (“had to make war”) governed by the nominative forms ὁ Μιχαήλ (“Michael”) and the first οἱ ἄγγελοι (“the angels” of Michael) suggests that the war was at God’s command and that they “*had* to make war” because of the exaltation of the Christ Child before God in heaven. As a result of Christ’s victory on the cross and his public vindication over the dragon at his ascension and exaltation, there was no longer any room in heaven for the accuser. The dragon *had* to be thrown out of heaven, for Christ’s vicarious atonement and justification of the saints made Satan’s accusations false—lies—and an offense against God’s gracious justice in Christ. Once Christ was elevated and enthroned, the slanderer was held in contempt of God’s court and “was thrown out” (12:9), never again to appear before God’s heavenly presence. (CC p. 335)

 *the dragon and his angels*. Satan and his demonic cohorts. (TLSB)

**12:9** *dragon was hurled … to the earth.* Not the original casting of Satan out of heaven, but his final exclusion—an explanation of his intense hostility against God’s people in the last days (vv. 12–17). (CSB)

The dragon did not want to leave his lofty place before God. But although he struggled to maintain his position, it was to no avail. At his expulsion the dragon is clearly identified to John: he is “the ancient serpent, who is called the devil and Satan” (12:9; cf. Gen 3:1–5; Mt 4:10; Lk 4:3). That is, he is *the* ancient and ever-present enemy of the human race, and in particular of God’s holy people. (CC p. 335)

 *devil, or Satan.* See notes on 2:9–10. (CSB)

Reminds the reader that Satan first deceived Eve while disguised as a serpent (cf 2Co 11:3). “He led them away from God’s outward Word to spiritualizing and self-pride [Genesis 3:2–5]” (SA III VIII 5). Because of that primeval deception, he is rightly called “the deceiver of the whole world.” (TLSB)

The word “Satan” (ὁ Σατανᾶς) means “adversary” or “enemy,” sometimes also “accuser.” Likewise “devil” (διάβολος) means “slanderer” or “false accuser” (Jn 8:44), and true to his name he “deceives the entire inhabited [world]” (Rev 12:9). He and his host of evil angels are now confined to the earth and its sphere. (CC)

 *leads … astray.* Cf. 2Co 11:3; see also Lk 22:31; Jn 13:2. (CSB)

“If you try to help yourself by your own thoughts and counsel, you will only make the matter worse and give the devil more space. For he has a serpent’s head [Revelation 12:9]. If it finds an opening into which it can slip, the whole body will follow without stopping. But prayer can prevent him and drive him back” (LC III 111). (TLSB)

 *he was thrown*. Though Michael and the angels help God’s cause by waging war against Satan, the real cause of this enemy’s defeat is “the blood of the Lamb,” as v 11 makes clear. The decisive victory of Christ over Satan was won at the cross (Jn 12:3–33). (TLSB)

**12:10** LOUD VOICE – “A great voice in heaven” now calls forth a declaration of victory and celebration, for “the accuser” of God’s saints “has been thrown out” (Rev 12:10). The saints here are called “our brothers.” Because of that designation, the “great voice” apparently is not that of an angel or one of the four winged creatures (e.g., 4:6–8; 6:1; 7:2). Most likely it is spoken by the twenty-four elders, since the elders represent OT Israel and the NT church (see 4:4, 10; 5:5; and the commentary on 4:4). If so, then the elders, together with all the saints in heaven and on earth, had to suffer the accusations of the devil as he stood before God, but now they suffer no longer. (CC p. 336)

In response the elders shout out their words of praise and celebration. The “great voice” declares, “Now has come about the salvation and the power and the kingdom of our God, and the authority of his Christ” (12:10), that is, “the salvation, power, and kingdom of God are present realities.” The victory was won on the cross (5:6; cf. Jn 12:31–32), and the completeness of that victory is demonstrated by the resurrection of the Christ for all to see and witness (Rev 1:17–18; cf. Acts 2:29–36). Now at the ascension and elevation of the Christ of God, that victory is fully displayed and consummated in the heavens when the dragon is expelled and can never again stand before God’s heavenly glory. The devil can never again bring accusations against the saints before the heavenly throne (see Rom 8:31–39). (CC p. 337)

 KINGDOM OF GOD – The phrase “the kingdom of our God, and the authority of his Christ” (ἡ βασιλεία τοῦ θεοῦ ἡμῶν καὶ ἡ ἐξουσία τοῦ χριστοῦ αὑτοῦ, Rev 12:10) is similar to “the kingdom of the cosmos has become our Lord’s and his Christ’s (ἐγένετο ἡ βασιλεία τοῦ κόσμου τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν καὶ τοῦ χριστοῦ αὑτοῦ, 11:15). In 11:15 the total and cosmic comprehensiveness of “the kingdom” is emphasized. Here in 12:10 the sovereignty and power of that kingdom in its completeness is emphasized. “The authority” (ἡ ἐξουσία) of Jesus Christ is displayed now in all its power and grandeur at the expulsion of Satan. The Lord Jesus partially exercised and displayed some of this authority during in his earthly ministry, though not all recognized it (e.g., Mk 1:27; 2:10; 3:22–27). But now this “authority” of Christ is seen in all its consummating power, before which no enemy can stand and by which Christ completely exonerates his followers and the faith they have in him (cf. Phil 2:7–11). (CC p. 337)

 *accuser.*† See Job 1:9–11; Zec 3:1. Satan in Hebrew means “accuser.” Millennialists should note that God’s power is manifest not in the suppression of the ungodly, but in that Satan is no longer able to accuse God’s people. (CSB)

Jb 1–2 provides the crucial background here. There, Satan is depicted as a prosecuting attorney in the heavenly court (cf Jb 1:6–11; 2:1–8). “Satan” means “adversary” in Hbr (as in a courtroom accuser). Similarly, the Gk term “devil” comes from a verb meaning “bring charges with hostile intent.” (TLSB)

 *thrown down*. Now that Jesus has secured mankind’s acquittal through His death and resurrection (Col 2:14), Satan is no longer allowed to bring charges against us. Luth: “When, I say, [Satan] comes to you and accuses you not only of failing to do anything good but of transgressing against the Law of God, then you must say: ‘You are troubling me with the memory of past sins; in addition, you are telling me that I have not done anything good. This does not concern me. For if I either trusted in my performance of good works or lost my trust because I failed to perform them, in either case Christ would be of no avail to me. Therefore whether you base your objections to me on my sins or on my good works, I do not care; for I put both of them out of sight and depend only on the freedom for which Christ has set me free’ ” (AE 27:11). (TLSB)

**12:11** *by … by.*† The Greek preposition means “because of.” (CSB)

 *blood of the Lamb.*† See note on 5:9; see also 1:5; 7:14; 1Jn 1:7. (CSB)

The Church’s victory over Satan was achieved through the blood shed by Jesus on the cross (1Jn 1:7). (TLSB)

The saints of God, the followers of Christ, were not destroyed or condemned by God based on the accusations of the devil. Though tormented by his accusations because of their guilt over sins they had indeed committed, they never gave in to despair. For their faith was that their sins were washed away in the blood of the Lamb (see Rev 7:13–14). Now it becomes evident for all to see that the guilt of sin no longer clings to believers in Christ. And God’s people had trusted that they were innocent despite the accusations of “the old evil foe.” They knew that truth because of the Word of promise to them (cf. Jn 17:15–17). “The blood of the Lamb” was the actual cause of their acquittal, and “the word of their witness” (Rev 12:11) was the result that testified to their victory in Christ. They gave “witness” to that truth of God’s forgiveness because of the blood of the Lamb. They held to that witness even in the face of threats, suffering, and death (see 2:10, 13; 3:10–12). Their faith was their victory because they held firmly to the victorious Christ (1 Jn 5:4–5). And for that victory in faith they were not afraid to die. Thus they were a living demonstration of Jesus’ words: “The one who loves his life loses it, but the one who hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life” (Jn 12:25; cf. Mt 10:39; Mk 8:35). (CC pp. 337-338)

 *the word of their testimony.*† The gospel (cf. Ac 1:8; 1Jn 5:10; Lk 24:46–47). (CSB)

Though Jesus’ death is the effective cause of salvation, the Gospel testimony is the means by which this deliverance is received and spread. (TLSB)

**12:12** REJOICE YOU HEAVENS – The “great voice” (Rev 12:10) then calls upon the very “heavens” themselves and all “those who dwell in them” to “break out in celebration” (12:12)! At various times the heavens were invoked to hear and to testify to God’s words and promises (e.g., Deut 32:1; Ps 19:1 [MT 19:2]; Is 1:2). Now they praise God for the fulfillment of those words and promises. The angels are invited to rejoice with the elders and all the people of God. Though the angels are not the recipients of the saving victory of Christ, they, nevertheless, celebrate with the followers of the Lamb (cf. Rev 5:11–14). They also celebrate because their Lord, the Christ of God, has returned triumphantly to claim his rightful seat at God’s right in the council of angels. (CC p. 338)

 *his time is short.*† The period of final, intense hostility of Satan toward the people of God (cf. 20:3). While Satan has lost his power to accuse, he has not yet been cast into the lake of sulfur (20:10). (CSB)

Until his final banishment in hell (20:10), the devil will spare no effort in attacking the faithful (cf 12:17). As he nears the end of his run, the devil’s attacks will become increasingly furious (cf 20:7–10). (TLSB)

The “great voice” (12:10) also cries out, “Woe to the earth and to the sea, because the devil has come down to you” (12:12)! He has been thrown out of heaven and is now confined to the earth and sea, and he will attack its inhabitants in his evil designs of destruction. No longer able to vent his hatred or plot evil against the Christ of God, and no longer able to express his hatred and cunning craft in lies before God concerning God’s saints, he takes out his fury on the human race and life on earth. The dragon also knows “that he has but a short time” (12:12) to attempt the destruction of God’s creation. The End is soon to come, and then the dragon will be forever separated from all of God’s creation. And so the devil “sets to work at once with redoubled zeal, goaded by his defeat.” And this “short time” of his activity “is the time of unprecedented peril” in which the church lives, from Christ’s ascension to the end of this world when Christ returns. (CC pp. 338-339)

GOSPEL – Matthew 18:1-11

**At that time the disciples came to Jesus and asked, “Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?” ﻿2﻿ He called a little child and had him stand among them. ﻿3﻿ And he said: “I tell you the truth, unless you change and become like little children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. ﻿4﻿ Therefore, whoever humbles himself like this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven. ﻿5﻿ “And whoever welcomes a little child like this in my name welcomes me. ﻿6﻿ But if anyone causes one of these little ones who believe in me to sin, it would be better for him to have a large millstone hung around his neck and to be drowned in the depths of the sea. ﻿7﻿ “Woe to the world because of the things that cause people to sin! Such things must come, but woe to the man through whom they come! ﻿8﻿ If your hand or your foot causes you to sin cut it off and throw it away. It is better for you to enter life maimed or crippled than to have two hands or two feet and be thrown into eternal fire. ﻿9﻿ And if your eye causes you to sin, gouge it out and throw it away. It is better for you to enter life with one eye than to have two eyes and be thrown into the fire of hell.**

**Ch 18** Extensive teaching on sin, forgiveness, and the community of faith. (TLSB)

**18:1** WHO IS THE GREATEST IN THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN? – We might think of Abraham or Moses or the apostle Paul. When the disciples asked Jesus that question, however, they wanted to know which one of them would be the greatest. They all expected to have positions of importance in Jesus’ kingdom, and each of them would have liked to be Jesus’ right-hand man. It may have appeared to them that Peter, James and John were the likeliest candidates for that position. Earlier that same day Jesus had selected Peter to catch the fish with the coin in its mouth to pay the temple tax for himself and Jesus. It had been only a short time since Jesus took only Peter, James, and John with Him to the Mount of Transfiguration, and the rest of the disciples also remembered that Jesus had taken those same three with Him when He went into the house of Jairus to raise that man’s 12-year-old daughter from the dead. And Peter often assumed a role of leadership by speaking up in behalf of all the disciples. So we can understand why the other disciples wondered about their positions in the kingdom that Jesus was soon going to establish. The problem was that they failed to understand the concept of greatness in Jesus’ kingdom. (PBC)

In the previous chapter, the disciples have witnessed several miraculous events. Naturally, they would like to have a piece of Jesus’ glory, fame, and power, and are wondering how to become successful and “make it big” in the kingdom of God. Jesus’ response is shocking and counterintuitive to these competitive and self-absorbed disciples. Jesus intends to refocus them from adult patterns of reasoning and faith toward childlike ones. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 18, Part 4)

The disciples seem to have had a recurring dispute about who was the greatest (20:21; Lk 22:24). Jesus used their question as the occasion for His fourth major discourse, in which He taught how Christians should act toward one another. (TLSB)

**18:2** LITTLE CHILD – He is essentially a lowly and dependent figure and this understanding provides the central key to this chapter. (CC)

Jesus is proclaiming that the greatest in the reign of heaven is the one who is, in fact, in a condition of lowly powerlessness and who willingly acknowledges his own emptiness and utter inability in spiritual things. (CC)

Jesus places a small child (*paidion*) in the midst of them as a model of discipleship and faith. In a similar manner, the heavenly Father places Jesus, his one and only Son, in our midst through the incarnation. Jesus’ action suggests a theology of the cross, which can be juxtaposed against the disciples’ theology-of-glory approach to ministry and salvation. Ancient nativity scenes would depict the Christ Child lying in the manger in *cruciform*, forthis small, cute *paidion* laid in the midst of humanity was sent with one mission: to be stretched out on a cross and die. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 18, Part 4)

**18:3** *turn*. To change one’s thinking as to what makes for greatness in God’s kingdom. (TLSB)

*turn*. Hbr shub, “to turn, turn around.” A very common verb, used over 1,000 times in the OT. Appropriately translated “repent” in more than 100 cases, most often in Jer (Isaiah rarely uses the term this way). Repentance is God’s work that leads a person to renounce sin—requesting God’s mercy and returning to His way For a classic OT example, see David’s confession and prayer in Ps 51. (TLSB p. 1080)

 *like little children.* Trusting and unpretentious. (CSB)

The child served Jesus as an object lesson in humility. (TLSB)

*straphēte*: The second aorist passive is reflexive; unless a person turns (and continues to turn) into a child—and away from being an adult—in his heart and attitude, he shall in no way, shape, or form enter God’s kingdom (as *ou mē* suggests). Only by seeing ourselves as babies in the arms of God can we begin to understand the nature of faith and the Christian walk. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 18, Part 4)

The main point of comparison was the child’s humility. That is the basic Christian virtue. As a matter of fact, there can be no virtue in God’s sight without humility. (PBC)

Jesus is simply and powerfully turning the disciples’ perspective away from any thought of competition or comparison according to worldly standards of importance. He is proclaiming that as they live under the blessing of the reign of God in Him, they are to look at one another with new eyes and realize that when they see a fellow disciple who is struggling or hurting or alone and in desperate need, at that moment they have seen him who is the greatest in the reign of heaven. (CC)

Jesus is not primarily talking about literal children, although He does use a real child to illustrate His point. Jesus directs His teaching in the first place to His adult disciples, calling them to repent and to acknowledge that they are as needy and dependent on the mercy of God as a child is dependent upon others for life itself. Jesus further declares that it is precisely the needy and those who cannot fend for themselves who should be regarded as the greatest and the most significant. These “children” are the greatest in the *reign* of heaven and they are not limited to disciples who happen to be very young. (CC)

Throughout the entire life of discipleship, there is never a time when, in terms of one’s relationship with God, one ceases to be a dependent child. (CC)

Until Christ returns in glory,, there will always be powerless ones, weak and desperately needy Christians whom other disciples are to regard as the greatest and so worthy of welcome and concern and forgiveness. In a sense, what more eloquent picture could there be of a helpless human being, utterly dependent upon God’s mercy, than a little child who is being baptized. (CC)

**18:4** HUMBLES HIMSELF – A child’s humility is evident esp in dependence on and trust in a superior. Greatness in the kingdom is characterized by humble trust in the Lord. “Just as a child neither takes nor seeks sovereignty for himself, so this shows that there is not to be sovereignty among ministers” (Tr 8). (TLSB)

Humility means, first of all, recognizing personal sinfulness and unworthiness and inability to do anything at all to become worthy before God and earn salvation wholly or even partially. Humility depends entirely on God’s mercy for forgiveness and salvation. It looks to Jesus Christ as the Savior, who offered up Himself as the perfect sacrifice for all sins. Humility is not about self-esteem; it is about Christ-esteem. Whoever humbles himself God exalts, and whoever exalts himself God humbles. (PBC)

The child is a model for the disciples’ spiritual growth because children possess nothing in themselves but depend on Christ, which is the essence of salvation. God wants us adults to become more like children. He sees the Holy Church on earth as a Church of children. Views of Baptism that make the faith or the reasoning ability of an adult the model of discipleship are to be rejected. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 18, Part 4)

Jesus provides us with the perfect example of God-pleasing humility. He came down from heavenly glory and became one of us. He was born in a lowly stable, and He submitted to all the laws God had given to His chosen people, Israel. He never used His divine powers for His won convenience or comfort. He allowed sinful people to mistreat Him, condemn Him, and crucify Him. And He endured all these things for us. That was the purpose for which He came into the world. (PBC)

The smaller we grow in our own estimation, the greater do we become in the sight of God. True greatness before God consists in that humility of spirit which excludes every vestige of selfishness and pride. (Ylvisaker)

**18:5-6** Jesus is not praising every quality of a child, but by qualifying his discussion about receiving children “in my name,” he ties the discourse to a question of doctrine. Luther points out how the name of God is inseparable from his teaching. It is the faith of a child to which we strive as disciples of Christ. Each of the baptized has become a born-again child *of faith*. Not only that, but we also have a call to treat others as we ourselves have been treated by God (as precious children, 1 Jn 3:1, 10). This happens when we keep each other focused on Jesus instead of participating in one’s slipping away. Whoever scandalizes or offends another believer, causing him or her to stumble, whether intentionally or accidentally, can destroy that soul. The life of sanctification involves receiving others as children (dirty diapers and all!), for Christ is found sacramentally present in every single Christian. This may mean giving up some of our rights for the sake of a neighbor who may be weaker in faith. It may also require courage in keeping each other accountable in doctrinal matters. Luther teaches how a right distinction between Law and Gospel (believing in Law as punishment and in Gospel as unconditional forgiveness) is the essence of being a child of God. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 18, Part 4)

**18:5** WECLOMES A LITTLE CHILD – We welcome a little child in Jesus’ name, first of all, by recognizing that children are gifts of God, not grievous burdens. We serve Jesus by providing for the needs of our children. That means not only food and shelter and clothing and loving care, but above all, bringing them to Jesus in Holy Baptism and training them to know and love and obey their Savior. (PBC)

One who humbly trusts in the Lord (v 4). Jesus identified Himself with such children (11:25; 25:40, 45). (TLSB)

**18:6** ANYONE WHO CAUSES ONE OF THESE LITTLE ONES – If we are lacking in Christian humility, we may be guilty of causing little children to sin instead of serving them in Jesus’ name. We are personally responsible for children’s sin if we neglect to bring them to their Savior in Holy Baptism, if we fail to give our children Christian training, if we set a poor example in our homes. If we rely on others to teach our children the Word of God and then contradict God’s Word by the way we speak and act, we endanger our children’s faith. (PBC)

Prompting a fellow believer to sin through tempting words or bad examples. (TLSB)

The key concept here is “stumbling block,” in Greek skandalon. The word itself literally means a trap or snare. For example, Psalm 141:9 “Keep me from the snares they have laid for me.” The religious meaning of skandalon is a “temptation to sin, enticement to apostasy, false belief, etc.” Apostasy means falling away from the faith. (LL)

So who is it that’s hurt when parents fail to tell their children that so much on TV or radio is wrong? Who’s hurt when a person claims to be as good a Christian as anybody else but only shows up at church on Christmas or Easter? Who is hurt when a group spends its time maligning an absent person? Who’s hurt when Bible truths are forgotten in office politics or office parties? Who’s hurt? It is the quiet Christian who notices the discrepancy between what Christians profess and what they do. That discrepancy easily trips up a childlike faith. It easily snares the Christian into sinful conduct. “Must be okay. Everybody’s doing it!” Sin leads away from Christ and away from saving faith. (LL)

To offend, in Holy Writ, implies to build up moral obstacles in word or in deed, in doctrine or in our manner of life, so as to cause moral mischief or even a complete moral breakdown. He who is guilty of this, and who thus either hinders a person from coming to God or causes a child of God to be weakened in the faith, or even wholly to forfeit his life in God, commits a sin so grievous that it were better for him to lose his physical life by violence or by the death of a felon than to commit this awful offense and forfeit eternal life, and with bloodguilt upon his conscience, be drawn into the abyss of eternal degradation. So highly does Jesus esteem one of His believers. We should consider them equally priceless. (Ylvisaker)

 *who believe*. Faith and the kingdom of God are not limited by age or mental abilities. They are gracious gifts of God. See notes, 19:14; Lk 18:16.

 *better*. Better to die by drowning than to suffer eternal punishment (cf v 9) for causing a little one to sin. (TLSB)

 *large millstone.* Lit. “a millstone of a donkey,” i.e., a millstone turned by a donkey—far larger and heavier than the small millstones (24:41) used by women each morning in their homes. (CSB)

Such a person would be better off if he died a violent death before becoming guilty of such a sin. It would be better to be destroyed bodily than to be guilty of destroying a child spiritually. (PBC)

The millstones of this text are really the donkey millstones. Two kinds of mills were in use in Judea. The small house-mill, which could be placed on the table and be run by hand, and the larger variety turned by the donkey. Here there is reference to a millstone which would surely sink a person into the depths. (Ylvisaker)

**18:1–6** Jesus demonstrates that humility is the hallmark of greatness in the Kingdom of heaven. Humility means confessing our inability to do anything at all to become worthy before God and earn salvation. Humility depends entirely on God’s mercy for forgiveness. It looks to Jesus Christ as the Savior who became one with sinners to redeem them. • Daily teach me, dear Jesus, to turn and become like a child. Amen. (TLSB)

**18:7** *temptations to sin!* Gk word is also translated “take offense” (11:6; 15:12; 17:27) and “cause to sin” (vv 6, 8–9). The world sets up numerous stumbling blocks over which people trip and fall into sin. (TLSB)

 *necessary*. Because sin has corrupted this world, temptations will persist until Judgment Day (1Jn 2:16). Jesus pronounced doom on anyone who causes another person to sin. (TLSB)

 WOE THROUGH THE MAN WHOM THEY COME – There will be many things in this sinful world that will cause people to sin. That is inevitable. But that does not excuse the guilty. The sinner is guilty, and so is the person who causes another to sin. (PBC)

“Woe” (*ouai*), a verdict mixed with a heartfelt grief (R. C. H. Lenski, *The Interpretation of St. Matthew’s Gospel* [Columbus, Ohio: The Wartburg Press, 1943], 689). A God who loves us judges us for our self-destruction. A world of adultlike spirituality and reasoning is the cause of our own demise. It is ironic that the message of a religion that is almost universally despised, that of Satanism, is none other than our narcissistic focus on self-improvement at the expense of others. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 18, Part 4)

The effect of 18:6-7 on a believing follower of Jesus might be compared to a slap in the face. (CC)

Shifting from the danger of causing another to stumble, Jesus reminds His disciples that all must live vigilantly as they follow in His way. They must be aware that they too will encounter causes of stumbling. (CC)

**18:8-9** Jesus offers a radical illustration to press home the seriousness of preserving a saving faith at any cost. Ultimately, Jesus’ instructions are impossible to fulfill for a Christian. We need a Savior from these sins. If one attempted to cut off one’s sinful limbs in order to cleanse oneself, the process of self-mutilation would be endless. In contrast, Jesus was truly maimed for us. He became sin for us in every way, shape, and form, and he underwent the ultimate slaughter on the cross, since “what he did not assume he did not redeem” (St. Athanasius). By preaching the Law, Jesus is allowing these adult-minded disciples, who are fixated on earthly glory, to see their desperate condition as children in need of the saving Gospel and its eternal glory. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 18, Part 4)

This text may also have an ecclesiological perspective. St. John Chrysostom comments on how the removal of a limb is representative of excommunication. In short, it is better for the Church to enter the kingdom of God with fewer people than not at all (David P. Scaer, *Discourses in Matthew* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2004), 330). This idea then ties in with the discussion of the locking and unlocking effect of the Office of the Keys discussed in v 18. It is a necessary practice of exclusion, which is visually present in the administration of the Lord’s Supper. However, our Lord’s ultimate goal is reconciliation and restoration back to the Body (Scaer, 317). (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 18, Part 4)

Cf 5:29–30, where Jesus spoke similar words to warn against sexual sins. He used such strong and hyperbolic language to emphasize the seriousness of sin.(TLSB)

**18:8** HAND OR FOOT CAUSES YOU TO SIN – Before you cripple or blind yourself, however, realize that no member of your body can be responsible for causing you to sin. The problem is how you use your body. Jesus used this same illustration in His Sermon on the Mount (see 5:29,30). The CSB comment is, “Jesus is not teaching self-mutilation, for even a blind man can lust. The point is that we should deal as drastically with sin as necessary.”

**18:7–9** One need look no further than these words of Jesus to see how much the holy God hates sin. Here, the Law strikes us with all its fury. Who of us can say that our hand or foot or eye has not caused us to sin? We all deserve to be thrown into the hell of fire. Thank God that Jesus’ hands and feet were pierced for our iniquities and that His eyes beheld our sin in order to turn the Father’s face from it. By His wounds and precious death, we enter life. • Holy Father, I confess my sins of thought and word and deed. Forgive me for Jesus’ sake. Amen. (TLSB)

**10﻿ “See that you do not look down on one of these little ones. For I tell you that their angels in heaven always see the face of my Father in heaven.**

**18:10** NOT LOOK DOWN - The root word *phroneō* of *kataphronēsēte* suggests holding an attitude of judgment. A wrong understanding or worldview is being condemned, not just the belittling of children. To reject these words of Jesus and maintain an adultlike metaphysic regarding the faith is to despise children and reject their heavenly Father, both of whom are surrounded by angels. This, in essence, expresses hatred toward the Church, which is the community of worshipers (both human and angelic), and represents one’s own excommunication from the family of God. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 18, Part 4)

E.g., cause a fellow believer to sin (v 6). (TLSB)

 *their angels.* Guardian angels not exclusively for children, but for God’s people in general (Ps 34:7; 91:11; Heb 1:14). (CSB)

Believers can be certain that angels keep watch over them (Ps 91:10–11). This text is the basis for the depictions of “guardian angels” common in art. (TLSB)

This verse summarizes, rephrases, and captures the spirit of the teaching in 18:6-9. What is distinctive (and unusual) about this saying is the supporting clause that follows it: “for I say to you that their angels constantly see in heaven the face of my Father who is in heaven.” (CC)

Whatever else Jesus may be saying here in 18:10, He is teaching that God the Father’s heart is open to those who are in need and who cannot provide for themselves. To be sure, in the most profound sense, every disciple (and every human creature, for that matter) is a little one; all of us are poor in spirit in relation to God (5:3) and equally in need of His blessing. (CC)

In the process of overturning that way of thinking, Jesus teaches that the

ones who might be most despised by the world – and by the worldly thinking disciples – are those whose angels are constantly in the very presence of the heavenly Father. The message is clear: the littlest ones must not be despised, because God Himself treasures and values them! (CC)

This single clause with “their angels” provides the only direct biblical support for the concept that in some way or in some sense or during some periods of time, God assigns particular angelic creatures for certain human creatures. (CC)

Although the seven churches in Revelation 1-3 each have an “angel” and throughout Scripture angels are sent for specific tasks and to minister to certain individuals (cf. Heb 1:14) or to fight for God’s people (cf 2 Kings 6:17; Dan 10:13-21), there is no other mention in the Bible of the idea that God has designated a particular angel or angels to guard each and every believer (all of the “little ones”). The closest parallel passage may be the obscure reference to Peter’s “angel” in Acts 12:15. (CC)

Rather than guess, I will leave the topic hanging in the face of our ignorance, rejoicing nevertheless in the goodness and grace of the heavenly Father, in whose eyes those whom the world would despise are so precious that, in whatever sense Jesus intends, it is true that “their angels” have constant access to God the Father in heaven. (CC)

 *see the face*. Angels have direct access to our Father in heaven, who cares greatly for each of His little ones. (TLSB)