

Slaying Dragons

A Book for Michaelmas

From Uh-Oh

To Elise, Aedyn, Thomas and Freyja...

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You Can't See Everything that God Made

Look around you.

Go ahead. Take a look.

Our God made everything that you see, and that's a lot; but it's not all that he made. He made many things that you *cannot* see, too. Not everyone knows that.

Our bright, squishy, crackly wet world is wonderful, but the most amazing thing is that God made people that we cannot see too- at least not most of the time. We call these persons angels.

You and I are *human* persons. We need bodies to be fully human. When you look at your mother, father or friends, that is what you see: a face, a hand, a round tummy.... a body. But angels don't have bodies. Like our God, they are *spirits*. That means that they don't need

bodies. So when they are around us, there is nothing for us to see.

They are very powerful. Most angels are the friends of our God. So they are our friends too.

But some are evil. They are God's enemies, and they hate those of us who are on God's side. We call these evil beings demons. The greatest and most powerful is their leader, Satan. Although he is terrible, he is no match for our God.

Many people only see the things that are in front of their eyes, but God made the things that we can see to remind us of other things, which we cannot see. The next time you look into the sky and see all the sparkling stars looking down at you from the darkness or watch the busy birds as they fly here and there, singing as they go, perhaps you will be reminded of the angels who are among us, too. They are as real and as close as those feathered friends.

There are Many Different Kinds of Angels

Like you and me, angels have minds- only stronger. They think and choose; but they haven't any body at all. In fact they are *all* mind and will. That's why you can't see them.

Sometimes, though, they want us to see them, and so they take on a shape. We know that often they appear as men. Sometimes these men look special, but sometimes they look very ordinary. People like you and me have spoken with angels without even knowing it.

At other times angels appear as strange and awesome beings. Holy Scripture tells us of many different kinds of angels. Among these different kinds of angels are Seraphim, Cherubim and Archangels.

When Seraphim or Cherubim appear, men and women try to describe what they see, but they always have a hard time. Here are some of the

things they say about the angels they've seen: They hold flaming swords. They have eyes all over their bodies. They have three pairs of wings- two that cover their face; two that cover their feet and two to fly about with. They sound like thunder. They have four faces- some of them look like eagles, oxen and lions. They wear robes that glow a pure white.

It's hard to know how all of those things go together. They look so awesome, odd and strong that people are always afraid of them. It's good to remember that though they are not safe, they are our friends. We all serve the great Servant King Jesus.

God's Throne is Surrounded by Angels

Whenever God's throne appears to men, it is surrounded by a great cloud of these angels. There are so many that no one can count them. The sound of their wings is like the roar of the ocean, and lightning flashes from out of their midst.

Crash, Roar!

Angels form God's powerful chariot, and they are an expression of his glory. They praise him by singing: *'Holy, Holy, Holy!'*

Sometimes men and women are allowed to see this sight. It is so beautiful and powerful that it was terrifying, but it's wonderful to know that this is our God. His great army of angels are our friends and protectors.

Also we know that right in the middle of this angelic host are the souls of those men, women and children who belong to God and

have died, and are waiting for the day when God will give them new bodies. They are not angels. They are our human friends, but they are there among our angelic friends. We are one family, and we serve one King.

When we meet to worship our God, we are joining this great body of persons- both angelic and human- praising and serving God before his throne. This is why each Sunday we say-

*Therefore we praise you, **joining our voices with Angels and Archangels and with all the company of heaven**, who forever sing this hymn to proclaim the glory of your Name:
Holy, Holy, Holy Lord, God of power and might,
heaven and earth are full of your glory.*

Let's sing a song that encourages all of creation- including the angels to praise our God

*Praise God from whom all blessings flow
Praise him all creatures here below
Praise him above ye heavenly hosts
Praise Father, Son and Holy Ghost! Amen.*

God Chooses Angels- and Us- For Many Different Jobs

Some men serve God as cooks. Others serve God as teachers or garbage collectors. Some are pastors. The same is true for women and boys and girls. God gives each of us a different *calling*- a different job to do. Angels are the same way. They serve God in many different ways.

We have already seen that many fly about his throne- serving as guards, choir and attendants. This must be the greatest job in the world. Scripture tells us of many other tasks angels do, too.

The word Angel means '*Messenger*,' and this seems to be one of their main jobs. God uses angels to deliver messages to mankind. The angel Gabriel visited the Virgin Mary to tell her that she was going to have baby Jesus. At the empty tomb angels told the sad women the

good news that Jesus was no longer dead. Angels explained where Jesus had gone at the Ascension. There are many more examples of angels acting as God's messengers.

Angels care for men, women and children when they are in trouble. They did so for Jesus in the Wilderness. They took care of Hagar in the Wilderness and spared Isaac's life. Angels protected Daniel in the lion's den. God watches over us through his angelic guards.

Angels are also mighty warriors. They fight against God's enemies- especially those evil angels who hate all that is good. They stood guard at the entrance to the Garden of Eden. The greatest of all Angelic Warriors is St. Michael. He is the commander of heaven's army.

God doesn't need angels as guards, choirs or attendants, but how generous it is that he allows angels to have a part in these tasks. God could do everything he desires to do, himself. He could speak to us, himself. He could lend aid himself when we are in trouble. He could destroy his enemies himself, and sometimes he

does all of these things himself; but more often he enjoys sharing these things with his friends. The work of angels reminds us that we too do the work of God when we serve him.

What work has God trusted you to do?

The Great War

The world is very beautiful, but it is broken too. There is pain and sickness. People hurt each other, and go to bed hungry because there is not enough food. People and animals die. Many are crying right now. No matter how hard we try to fix these things, they are always with us.

Why can't we ever make these evil things go away for good?

The reason is that the evil goes beyond the hurt and ugliness that we see. Behind the pain and sadness in our world are hateful powers that despise goodness, beauty and truth. They hate our God, and they hate his world. This is why they work to destroy it.

There is a great war between good and evil. There are people and angels on the side of God, and there are people and angels on the side of evil. Everything we do is part of this

war. Everything we do either points towards the life of heaven or the death of hell.

Do you know how to tell the difference between the two sides?

One side looks at creation-especially at other people- and says '*I am here for you.*' The other looks at creation- especially other people- and declares '*You are here for me.*'

Do you know which one is the motto of God's army and which one is the cry of Satan's army? It's easy. Which one looks like our God on the cross? Did his actions say- I am here for your good or You are here for me?

Sometimes the war is fought in great battles, but mostly it is fought in very small ones. You see it all around you in the way people treat each other and the rest of creation when they simply live, play and work. Are we fighting on the side of angels or demons? It's easy to know. Do we do the little things thinking '*I am here for you.*' or '*You are here for me.*'

Can you give me an example from your day of each?

A Great Battle In Heaven...

And on Earth

Satan and his forces are our greatest enemy. He is known as the great Dragon; and sin, fear and death are his greatest weapons. Though he is mighty, he is like a bug when compared to *our* God. He is no match for the God who made him. Our God could simply destroy him, but he has chosen to allow us- angels, men, women and children- to rule over his kingdom.

Scripture tells us of a terrible battle that took place in heaven between St. Michael and his army of angels and Satan and his demonic army. It is all very mysterious because we haven't been told many of the details, but it must have been truly awesome and terrible at the same time because of the power of each side.

St. Michael defeated Satan, and threw him out of heaven. The Old Dragon was beaten in this battle, but not for good.

God would defeat Satan once and for all, but he wouldn't do this through an angel. God desired that one day men and women- not angels- would finally rule over his kingdom. So he planned how he would free his kingdom from the Dragon through the victory of a human like you and me. Many, many long years ago this was accomplished when God became a man, himself.

You know who this special person is, right?

Jesus defeated sin, fear and death for good; and as a result Jesus was given the crown of the universe. Our big brother sits on the throne of creation, and the army of St. Michael and his angels are at the service of a man- the Great Servant King, Jesus.

Though the enemy is defeated, he has not given up. Perhaps he does not know that he has lost. St. Michael and his warriors and baptized men, women and children fight for

King Jesus until that day on which King Jesus returns and locks the Dragon and his minions away.

Standing with the King

King Jesus has won the Great War, but the fighting is still going on all around us. Sometimes we can see it in big ways when really horrible or maybe wonderful things happen. But most often it happens in little ways- how we treat our brother or sister; or how quickly we obey.

Here are some ways you can fight for King Jesus- shoulder to shoulder with St. Michael's angels in the Great War. After I read each one, let's think about ways we can make them a part of the day tomorrow.

1. Feed the hungry and give drink to the thirsty
2. Clothe the naked
3. Shelter the Homeless
4. Defend the helpless
5. Give your time to those who are ignored by others

6. Be respectful of authority, holy things and situations
7. Laugh and Enjoy God's gifts
8. Be thankful; say 'Thank You' to God and others
9. Ask for forgiveness- from God and others you've wronged
10. Bear wrongs patiently
11. Forgive wrongs willingly
12. Comfort the afflicted
13. Tell others about King Jesus and the Great War
14. Pray for others

You are a Warrior Prince or Princess

Not everyone knows about The Great War.

Not everyone knows that there are things-both wonderful and terrible, which are real even though we cannot see them.

Not everyone knows about King Jesus, the powers that would harm us or that we fight against these evil powers every day by the way we love each other and creation.

Not everyone knows that God made men and women, boys and girls to rule over his kingdom.

Not everyone knows that they are fighting on the side of St. Michael and his angel warriors or Satan and his demonic army.

Not everyone knows; but you know. God made you his warrior Princess or Prince at your baptism. On that day he called you by name and made you both royalty and a warrior.

Through his minister, our God said to you **'child's name' I baptize you in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit'**

Do you know what that means?

He was saying: **'child's name', today I give you MY name. Against all powers, evil and ugliness that would take you away from me I say "THIS ONE is MY child. He/She belongs to me!"**

That is the most important thing to know about yourself: who God says you are!

It's hard to believe. The Great Dragon will use others to tell you that it's not true. He will say that you are not really God's Prince or Princess; or that God doesn't really love you. He will whisper that only the things you can see are truly real; but God doesn't lie. It's the Great Dragon who is the liar. Believing God's word is part of The Great War.

You are called to rule in your world as your God would rule!

You are called to fight alongside of God's armies as he would fight!

When faced with doubt, fear of the enemy or the desire to switch sides, remind yourself whom the King says you are, by crossing yourself with his mark on your body. He has placed his name on you. You belong to the royal house of Father, Son and Holy Spirit!

Let's tell everyone who you are right now - 'In the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit'

A Verse to Memorize

***"For he shall give his angels
charge over thee, to keep thee in
all thy ways. They shall bear thee
up in their hands, lest thou dash
thy foot against a stone."***

Psalm 91:11-12

A Prayer for Michaelmas

Everlasting God, you have ordained and constituted in a wonderful order the ministries of angels and mortals: Mercifully grant that, as your holy angels always serve and worship you in heaven, so by your appointment they may help and defend us here on earth; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

Resources for a Family
Celebration of
Michaelmas

An Introduction to the Family Resources

The point of a calendar is order the lives of a particular people around the events, persons and values, which they deem the most important of all. For the society around us, this can only mean the heroes and successes of State and commerce. A look at the secular calendar will verify this to be the case.

As followers of King Jesus, our values and heroes- our accounting of time and history- is different; or at least it ought to be.

The Christian calendar has been a means of shaping the imagination of our family in a way that is wonderfully revolting (literally) to the culture around us. It has been the greatest source of family traditions and resulting memories. It binds us to our fellow Christians- whether separated from us by time or space. It is how the church throughout the world and across the centuries, envisions time. Like all creatures, it was made to bring us closer to our Creator.

Obviously there are no 'rules' for a family celebration, but perhaps it will be helpful to know how we go about it.

Michaelmas (pronounced Mickel- mus) occurs towards the end of the church year, but in our family's mind it signals the beginning of that time, which includes the crispness of fall, college football, All Hallow's Eve, Thanksgiving, Advent and Christmas. It is one of our favorite celebrations; and we're excited when it arrives.

The night always involves the friends of our children. It is a fun night. It has a purpose, but it is not a scripted or solemn affair. No need to stress.

We begin with a prayer that recognizes the occasion of the feast, and then move onto the feasting. In our house the recipes are only served on this night, and so the 'exotic' meal is a large part of the uniqueness and fun of the celebration.

At some point, we take time to discuss the occasion of the feast. We've tried to avoid a 'field guide' account of 'Angel Facts.' Instead we've focused on the nature of reality, which a discussion of angels is especially good at making clear. Often this is precisely where the world's accounting gets things wrong. Perhaps the brevity of this book would make its reading an appropriate summary and starting point for discussion. I've included another brief summary that I've used in the past, too.

I imagine this could be done before the meal or afterwards.

After the dishes are cleared, we bring out the Dragon Bread dough. Our Michaelmas celebrations have always included a Dragon Bread Contest. Teams compete to shape, decorate and bake the winning Dragon. Unfortunately, someone has to be the judge. It would surely be fun without the completion, too.

The evening finishes with our Family's Michaelmas Hymn. We would be honored, if you chose to make use of it, too.

A Summary for Reading at Michaelmas

Today we are thanking God for our brothers, the angels. We call today Michaelmas after the great prince of God's heavenly armies- Michael. The 'mas' part comes from the fact that today the church celebrates in Eucharistic worship- or at a Mass- this wonderful part of her story. And so 'Michael's- Mass' or Michaelmas.

The most important thing to know about angels is that God made them. He sends angels to help and deliver messages to us. The word angel actually means God's messenger.

The bible tells of many angels who acted as messengers: there are the angels that announced Jesus birth to the shepherds, they were at the tomb to tell Mary and Martha that Jesus was alive, and the angel, Gabriel, that told Mary she would have a son. There are many more places where angels gave messages but these stories you probably know the best.

Angels also protect us when we're in trouble. Remember Daniel in the Lion's Den? An angel came and shut the mouths of the lions. What about Shadrach, Meshach, and

Abednego? An angel was standing with them in the fiery furnace to keep them safe.

So you can see angels are important, but they're not more important than God; they serve God. Angels are actually like us in some ways. Angels can choose to follow God or not. Most of the angels chose to follow God and work for him, but some of the angels went to work for evil instead.

It's good to know there is real evil in the world. Keep in mind, God and his angels are much more powerful than the dark angels; after all, the devil was an angel, but he began to think he was better than God. So God sent him out of heaven.

Angels are also like us because they worship God, but they do this continually, that means they never stop. In Revelation 4:8 (NIV) it says, "Each of the four living creatures had six wings and was covered with eyes all around, even under his wings. Day and night they never stop saying: 'Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God Almighty, who was, and is, and is to come.'"

Another way angels are like us is that they don't know everything God knows. The Bible says that not even the angels know when he is going to come and make all things new. (Matt.24:36).

Angels are very different from us in some ways, too. They are all around us, but are part of that

unseen creation we talk about in the Creed each Sunday. They are also in God's presence in a special way, so there are some things about God that they understand better than we do. God's throne is surrounded by a great cloud of his heavenly armies. Their wings sound thunderous. It must be awesome to see.

Angels can make themselves visible, too. They were seen at Jesus tomb and in the sky by the shepherds, but they can be invisible- helping us when we don't even know it.

You might wonder what angels look like. Well, there is no clear answer to this. When people saw angels in ancient times they were often afraid at first (imagine if you saw an angel all of a sudden). I think it's okay to imagine angels as friendly, beautiful creatures that help us.

There are also different ranks of angels. They have different jobs. The Bible mentions some angels by name. There is Michael who is called an archangel, which means he is a prince of angels. Gabriel is also named in the Bible. He was the angel that told Mary that she would have a baby and that he was to be named Jesus. The ancient stories of God's people also know of another archangel. He is called Raphael.

In a vision St John saw Michael fight with the great Dragon. This dragon was the serpent that tempted our first parents, Adam and Eve. This

is why we eat Dragon's tongue- to remind us of this great battle; and of who lost and who won. Angels also have been mentioned in different groups. Some are called chief princes. Others are called cherubim or seraphim. They all are important to God and all seem to have specific duties, which they perform.

One of the best things about angels is that whenever someone becomes a Christian they sing and rejoice, in other words they have a big party! Each Lord's day we meet to join them in their singing.

So you see, angels are important and they're very real. God uses them to give us messages, to help, protect and encourage us. They are creatures like you and me... our elder brothers, and they fight alongside of us against the enemies of our King.

A Family Hymn for Michaelmas

We thank you Lord for guarding us,
With fiery wings and swords of flame;
Armies of light to shield this home,
Hearth's mantle warm and doorway's
frame.

The night's cold terror and its storm,
The arrows of our family's foes,
The dragon's claw and hateful roar,
First break on shield's protective rows.

Our brothers older than the stars,
Unnamed to us, yet knowing ours,
Ye watchers and ye holy ones,
Accept our thanks for selfless scars.

Lord, grant us strength to stand beside,
Archangel's spear and awful blade,
Defending those who call your name,
Before whose arms, hell's gate must
cave.

Glory to you, and to the Son,
Who with the Spirit- One in Three-
Cause eyes oppressed to see our weak
hands,
Like Michael's shield, as a place to
flee.

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Sung to the tune of
Fare Thee Well
(10,000 Miles)

Recipes

Traditional fare for Michaelmas involves a goose. This is beyond our family's experience. I'm not really sure where to even get a goose. That might not be the case with you; but if it is, Turkey or Roast Chicken would make an excellent substitute.

Our family has gone an entirely different direction, though. I think you'd enjoy it. St. Michael defeated the Great Dragon, and legends say that long, long ago Christian Knights battled these beasts to the death. We acknowledge our part in this ongoing conflict by feasting on the tasty defeated quarry. We love us some Dragon's Tongue. It's to be remembered that while dragon's tongue is a less expensive cut of meat, it is still delicious and there's enough to feed the lot of us. Ours comes from a Romanian Dragon farm (wink). Dad knows the guy. It tastes a lot like pork. Even though it is inexpensive enough to indulge in once a year, dragon's tongue is still too costly to allow anything to go to waste. We utilize

the... well, less savory remnants in the making of Dragon Slime Bread. Delicious!

We like to decorate the table in a way befitting a feast. Swords and shields seem an appropriate theme. In the past at our home, a large wooden sword, which we found for sale among the Halloween decorations, is laid lengthwise on the table to form the center piece. Asters and daisies (the traditional flowers for Michaelmas) are arranged around. Put someone in charge and let them have fun.

ROAST DRAGON'S TONGUE RECIPE

originally found online...somewhere

INGREDIENTS

1 pork tenderloin, silver skin removed
or 1 Pork Prime roast, or boneless loin roast
olive or vegetable oil
Tom Douglas' Chinese 12 Spice Rub, or
Dragon Dust**

DIRECTIONS

Rub pork with oil and roll in seasonings. Rest at room temperature for 30-60 minutes. If a heavier crust is desired, you can roll in seasonings a second time.

Grill, or brown in a pan and finish in a 375-degree oven. Check for doneness with an accurate meat thermometer*, 140-150 degrees internal – no more, no less! Rest covered for at least five minutes (10 is better) and slice thinly.

** Dragon Dust

1 TBS Fine Sea Salt
1 tsp Smoked Sea Salt
 $\frac{3}{4}$ - 1 tsp Chinese 5 Spice Powder
 $\frac{1}{2}$ tsp dry lemon zest
 $\frac{1}{2}$ tsp fine white pepper
3 TBS brown sugar, to taste

Combine seasonings to taste and store in a closed container. Variations: $\frac{1}{4}$ tsp dry granulated garlic; $\frac{1}{4}$ star anise, crushed; Szechwan Peppercorns, crushed; ground coriander.

DRAGON SLIME BREAD (a.k.a. Blueberry
Zucchini Bread)
Makes two loaves

INGREDIENTS

Mix ingredients until gross.

- 1 1/2 cups white flour
- 1 1/2 cups whole wheat flour
- 1/4 teaspoon baking powder
- 1 teaspoon baking soda
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 1/2 teaspoon ground cinnamon
- 3 eggs
- 2 cups white sugar
- 1 cup vegetable oil
- 2 teaspoons vanilla extract
- 2 cups grated zucchini
- 1 teaspoon orange zest
- 1 1/4 cups blueberries

DIRECTIONS

Preheat the oven to 350 degrees. You will need two loaf pans, but because of all the oil in this recipe there is no need to grease them.

In a mixing bowl combine the two types of flour, baking powder, baking soda, salt, and cinnamon. Stir until everything is evenly distributed.

For the next step, I like to break each egg individually into a measuring cup or small bowl to make sure it's good (i.e., doesn't smell, the whites are clear, not cloudy, etc.) before adding all the eggs together into their large mixing bowl.

Place the eggs into a second, large mixing bowl and beat them until the yolks are completely indistinguishable and everything has become a pale yellow. Add the two cups of sugar and beat until well combined. Add the vegetable oil, vanilla extract, and orange zest. Beat until well combined. Add the zucchini and mix it in thoroughly.

Add half of the flour mixture into the wet mixture and beat until combined. When the first half of the dry mixture has been absorbed by the wet mixture, add the second half of the dry mixture and beat until well combined.

Now add the blueberries and fold them into the batter (i.e., not beating them into the mixture so much as moving them around in the batter by using your spoon or a rubber spatula to bring the bottom layer to the top over and over again) until they are evenly distributed throughout.

Distribute the batter as evenly as you can between the two loaf pans. Bake for approximately 50 to 60 minutes, but start checking the loaves after 45 minutes. When done, the loaves will be medium brown; when you test them with a toothpick or sharp knife, the toothpick or knife will come out clean (i.e., no wet batter will stick to it.)

Let the loaves cool enough to be able to slice them. Serve with a pat of butter on top.

MICHAELMAS PIE

According to one legend, when Michael and his warriors threw Satan from heaven, the old serpent landed in a patch of blackberry briars. Furious at his defeat and sore from the stickers, he stomped and spat and...um, “messed up” the poor plant. Understandably no one wanted anything to do with blackberries picked after Sept 29th.

So, *Michaelmas Pie* makes use of the last available blackberries. It’s great finished with
Vanilla Ice Cream

INGREDIENTS

12 oz plain flour, sifted
1/2 tsp ground cinnamon
3 oz white vegetable fat or lard
3 oz chilled butter, diced
3 fl oz chilled water
pinch salt
2 lbs cooking apples
2 oz sugar
1 tsp ground cloves
1 tsp ground nutmeg
12 oz) blackberries
1 egg, beaten

DIRECTIONS

Pre-heat the oven to 350 F.

Prepare the pastry. Place the flour in a large bowl and stir in the cinnamon and salt. Rub in the butter and white fat with your fingertips until the mixture resembles fine breadcrumbs. Make a well in the centre and add the chilled water. Bring the mixture together using a round bladed knife. Once it has come together, knead for a brief moment and place in a plastic bag in the fridge. Leave to rest for 30 minutes.

Peel and core the apples. Cut them into large chunks and place them in a saucepan with the sugar, cloves and nutmeg. Cover with a lid and gently cook for 5 minutes, until the apples have softened. Fold in the blackberries and remove the saucepan from the heat. Cool completely.

Remove the pastry from the fridge and roll out two thirds on a lightly floured surface. Line an 8-inch metal pie plate. Prick the base of the pastry with a fork. Strain the fruit, reserving the juices and spoon the fruit mixture over. Roll out the remaining pastry. Lay the pastry over the fruit. Lift back the edge and brush the base with a little egg and seal the edge. Trim and crimp the pastry edges. Brush the surface with the remaining egg and make a couple of slits in the

top. Scatter a little more sugar over the pastry and bake for 35 minutes. Serve hot or cold with ice cream or fresh double (whipping) cream.

DRAGON BREAD

INGREDIENTS

1 cup warm water
3 tablespoons honey or sugar
1 tablespoon yeast
4+ cups whole wheat flour
5 teaspoons baking powder
½ teaspoon baking soda
1 teaspoon salt
1 ½ sticks of butter, warmed
Slivered and sliced almonds
Sunflower seeds
Raisins
Green, yellow, and/or red food coloring

DIRECTIONS

Combine the water, honey (or sugar), and yeast. Combine the flour, baking powder, baking soda, and salt; cut in the butter. Add the yeast mixture and stir until stiff. Knead 5 minutes. Place dough on a cookie sheet and shape it into a dragon lying flat. Decorate dragon and bake at 450 degrees for 15-20 minutes.

