



AFTERWARD: AN ANGEL'S STORY

The final chapter.

From *An Angel's Story* by Max Lucado

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Christmas is full of cozy thoughts: a sleeping Jesus, wide-eyed shepherds, a soft-faced Mary. The nativity sentiment is warm, the emotion is joy, and the feeling is peace. Such is the picture in the gospels of Matthew and Luke. In John's Book of Revelation, however, he offers another perspective. From his perspective, the birth of Jesus stirs more than excitement; it stirs evil.

Pulling back the curtain of the skies, he reveals a bloody war in the heavens. John sees a woman, ready to give birth. He sees a dragon, ready to bring death. The woman is beautiful and the dragon ugly. The dragon lunges at the newborn child, but he is too late. The child and the mother are granted safety and then "there was a war in heaven. Michael and his angels fought against the dragon, and the dragon and his angels fought back" (Rev. 12:7 NIV).

"A war in heaven." I've wondered about that war: when it occurred, who it involved, what it meant.

Cosmic Christmas is the result of those wonderings.

Several colleagues have stirred my imagination. Eugene Peterson stretched me through his study of the Book of Revelation, *Reversed Thunder*. Some time ago I read an article by Philip Yancey which broadened my thinking ("Cosmic Combat," *Christianity Today*, December 12, 1994). I am indebted to the

creative pen of David Lambert for his story, “Earthward, Earthward, Messenger Bright.” This piece, which appeared in the December, 1982 issue of *Moody Monthly*, offered a fresh, creative approach to the Christmas story. That approach sparked with this writer and led ultimately to the development of *Cosmic Christmas*.

I’m equally appreciative to Steve Green, Karen Hill, Liz Heaney and the wonderful team at Word for your incredible support.

Parts of *Cosmic Christmas* are fiction—fruits of my imagination. Other parts of the story, however, are true. Whether or not you like the fiction is insignificant. But whether or not you see the truth is essential.

Scripture, for example, says nothing of a vial containing the essence of Christ, an arch demon named Phlumar, an angel named Sophio, or several of the other characters and events about which you just read. Scripture is, however, very clear that “our fight” is not against people on earth but against the rulers and authorities and the powers of this world’s darkness, against the spiritual powers of evil in the heavenly world” (Eph. 6:12 NCV).

The Bible doesn’t refer to angels trapped in nets or Satan sweet-talking Gabriel. The Bible is clear, though, that Satan is real and his life purpose is to ‘be like God Most High” (Isa. 14:1-4).

God’s creation is divided into two camps: those who follow God and those who follow Satan. Satan is the energizing power of the unsaved (Eph. 2:2) and God is the energizing power of the saved (Phil. 2:15). The saved are to live aware of but not afraid of Satan. The devil prowls about as a lion looking for someone to devour (I Pet. 5:8). But the believer need not live in horror, because “greater is he who is in you, than he that is in the world” (I John 4:4 KJV). We must put on the armor of God to fight against “the devil’s evil tricks” (Eph. 6:11) and remember that Satan disguises himself as “an angel of light” (II Cor. 11:13).

Our weapons against Satan are the same as those used by Gabriel and the angelic army: prayer, praise, truth, and trust. We do not rely upon our own

strength, but upon God's. "So stand strong, with the belt of truth tied around your waist and the protection of right living on your chest. On your feet wear the Good News of peace to help you stay strong. And also use the shield of faith with which you can stop all the burning arrows of the Evil One. Accept God's salvation as your helmet, and take the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. Pray in the Spirit at all times..." (Eph. 6:14-18).

Finally, the Bible tells no story of a throne room encounter where Lucifer is offered a second chance. But the Bible does contain page after page showing God giving grace to the scallywags and turncoats of the world. He seems more willing to give grace than we are to seek it. Such divine love leaves me to wonder one thing more: If the old snake himself sought mercy, wouldn't he, too, find it where millions have—at the foot of the cross of Christ?

John's description of the "war in the heavens" doesn't answer all our questions, but it does answer the most important. He tells us who won. God did. He also tells us who matters. You do. Imagine, if God will fight such a fight to save you... He must really think you are worth the effort. Though we may wonder about the war that occurred, there is no need to wonder about His love... He really cares about His children.