

# Moments *for* You

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Theme: Angels



## WHAT ARE ANGELS?

God created the angels, just as He created humanity. But angels are an entirely different order of being than humans (Psalm 8:4–5). Human beings do not become angels after they die. Angels will never become, and never were, human beings.

Angels are more powerful than we are (2 Peter 2:11). They also seem to have greater knowledge than humans. Perhaps this is because angels do not have to study the past. Since angels have been around since the beginning of time (Job 38:4–7), they have experienced all of human history. Therefore, they know how others have acted and reacted in situations and can predict with a greater degree of accuracy how we may act in similar circumstances.

Angels are spirit beings without true physical bodies (Hebrews 1:14). But they can, to a certain degree, take on physical form (Acts 12:7; Hebrews 13:2). Because they are created beings, their knowledge is limited. This means they do not know all things as God does (Matthew 24:36). Though they have wills, angels, like all creatures, are subject to the will of God.

Scripture gives us only glimpses into the supernatural realm, but it is enough to learn that angels perform a variety of tasks and are used for several purposes:

**1. To serve the people God saves.** One purpose of angels is to minister to the elect of God: “Are they not all ministering spirits sent out to serve for the sake of those who are to inherit salvation?” (Hebrews 1:14). Paul experienced an angelic visitation during a storm at sea. The angel

brought him comfort (Acts 27:23–24). Others who have been served by angels include Elijah (1 Kings 19:3–8) and Peter (Acts 12:6–10).

**2. To deliver messages.** The word angel literally means “messenger.” In the Bible, angels often appeared as men when they delivered messages from God to people (see Genesis 18:1–22). The angel Gabriel appeared to at least three people in the Bible. He interpreted a vision for Daniel (Daniel 8:16), told Zechariah about the birth of John the Baptist (Luke 1:19), and proclaimed to Mary that she would be the mother of the Messiah (Luke 1:26).

**3. To wage spiritual battle.** Another purpose of angels is to fight the forces of spiritual darkness who try to thwart God’s plans (Ephesians 6:12; Jude 1:9). When an angel appeared to Daniel to deliver the interpretation of a vision, the angel stated that Michael the archangel had to help him fight his way through enemy forces (Daniel 10:10–14). The full extent of angelic warfare is not known to us, but these few glimpses are enough to suggest that a fierce cosmic battle rages just out of sight.

**4. To worship God.** Angels constantly surround the throne of God, worshiping and shouting His praises (Psalm 148:1–2; Isaiah 6:3; Hebrews 1:6; Revelation 5:8–13). Since angels were created to worship God, their rejection of that purpose is an unforgivable wrong. When Lucifer, a chief angel, refused to worship God and insisted that angels worship him instead, God cast him from Heaven (Isaiah 14:12–15). Angels siding with Lucifer were exiled with him.

**5. To serve.** Angels exist to do the

will of their Creator. They go where God sends them, say what He gives them to say, and minister to His children on earth (Psalm 103:20; Revelation 22:9). After Jesus' forty-day temptation in the wilderness, angels came and ministered to Him (Matthew 4:11).

**6. To execute judgment.** Angels are not all radiance and joy. They also carry out God's orders for destruction. The book of Revelation foretells many angelic acts that will bring about the ultimate destruction of the world (Revelation 7:1; Revelation 8–10). When Pharaoh refused to let the people of God leave Egypt, God sent "destroying angels" to bring plagues on the land (Psalm 78:43–49). Angels were involved in the death of Herod (Acts 12:23), the slaughter of the Assyrian army (2 Kings 19:35), and the punishment of Jerusalem (1 Chronicles 21:15).

**7. To aid in the transmission of God's word.** Hebrews 2:2, speaking of the Mosaic Law, calls it "the message declared by angels." Somehow, angels were involved in the process of Moses receiving the law on Sinai. The apostle John also indicates an angel was involved in God's transmission of the book of Revelation to John (Revelation 1:1–3).

God uses angels any way He chooses. Because we hardly know anything about a world outside our physical universe, we cannot possibly understand all the purposes angels fulfill. But Christians have the confidence that God's holy angels stand ready to protect and deliver God's mortal children (Psalm 91:11). While angels are created beings, as we are, and should never be worshiped, we can thank the Lord for them and the unseen ways He uses them to impact our lives. —GotQuestions.org, adapted

## GOD'S MESSENGERS

God had His reasons for creating angels. And just like His reasons for creating you and me, those reasons spring from who God is. What can we learn from God's holy angels?

### COMMUNICATION CHANNELS

In the Bible, our English word "angel" translates the Hebrew word *mal'ak* in the Old Testament and the Greek word *angelos* in the New. The core meaning of both those words is *messenger*. That's the essence of who and what angels are. They are couriers for Someone other than themselves. They're Someone else's ambassadors, Someone else's agents. They represent only Him, and never themselves. They are channels to carry only His information. They speak and act according to His instructions and they bear His authority.

When angels give strength or enlightenment, it is God's strength or enlightenment that they impart. Their encouragement is God's encouragement. Their guidance is God's guidance. Their protection is God's protection. When they bring comfort, it is God's comfort they offer, and when they bring wrath, it is God's wrath they inflict.

### THE MESSAGE, NOT THE MESSENGER

Suppose you received a letter today from a favorite friend who's far away. What would you do with it first? Would you stare at the stationery for hours, to analyze and admire it? Would you obtain a chemical analysis of the ink, to learn exactly what it's made of? Would you investigate where the paper came from, and how it was woven and cut?

No—paper and ink are simply the means of your friend's communication. What you're interested in is your *friend* and your friend's *message*.

The paper and ink fully serve their intended purpose by simply bringing that personal message to you.

The same logic applies in our approach to angels. While angels are a means of communication, it is God who communicates. Through what angels say and do, God personally expresses His friendship to us and His fatherhood and much more. What's most important is the message angels bring—not the messengers themselves.

#### A DEEPER LOVE FOR CHRIST

Remember that angels are always one-way messengers. They are God's messengers to God, and never our messengers to God. No one in Scripture ever prays to an angel, and neither should we. They are not go-betweens or mediators between us and Heaven.

They are not mediators because there is Another who already fulfills that role—and praise God for that! “There is one God, and there is one Mediator between God and men, the Man Christ Jesus” (1 Timothy 2:5). Christ's mediation brings us what any mediation of angels could never begin to accomplish: the freedom and eternal salvation of our souls. “He is the Mediator of a new covenant, so that those who are called may receive the promised eternal inheritance” (Hebrews 9:15).

That's why in the New Testament the mention of angels is so completely dominated by a focus on the excellence of Christ in every way. When Paul tells us to set our minds and hearts “on things that are above,” he points out specifically that Heaven is “where Christ is” (Colossians 3:1–2). Angels are there too, but Paul doesn't put them in the spotlight. Before Paul warns against worshipping angels, he reminds us that true “substance belongs to Christ” (Colossians 2:17–18).

Angels, men, and demons alike must all bend the knee someday to acknowledge the glory and supremacy of Jesus. Have you done so today?

—Condensed from *Angels* by David Jeremiah

## WHAT ANGELS CAN'T DO

While God has delegated angels to make special pronouncements for Him, He has not given them the privilege of proclaiming the gospel message today. Why this is so, Scripture does not say. Perhaps spirit-beings who have never experienced the effects of sin would be unable to preach with understanding.

Rather, God has commanded the church to preach. This great task is reserved for believers. Only people can speak salvation's experience to other people. God has, however, assigned angels to assist those who preach. Their assistance includes the use of miraculous and corroborating signs. Missionaries have reported many wonderful incidents where angels seemed to help them as they proclaimed the gospel. My wife, whose parents were missionaries to China, can remember many instances in her life where angels must have intervened in the ministry of her father and his fellow missionaries.

At any rate, you and I have the privilege of conveying a message to people from God in Heaven, a message that angels cannot speak. Think of that! No angel can be an evangelist. No angel can pastor a church. No angel can do counseling. No angel can enjoy sonship in Jesus or be partaker of the divine nature or become a joint heir with Jesus in His kingdom. You and I are a unique and royal priesthood in the universe, and we have privileges that even angels cannot experience.

—Adapted from *Angels* by Billy Graham

## RIVETED ANGELS

The apostle Peter describes our salvation as predicted by Old Testament prophets who spoke of “the sufferings of Christ and the subsequent glories” (1 Peter 1:10–12). The prophets longed to grasp this gospel more fully. But the prophets weren’t the only ones. According to Peter, the gospel of our salvation also contains “things into which angels long to look.” And the reasons for their longing are worthy of our looking into.

Peter’s words here are somewhat ironic, given our human interest in angels. How many of us long to look into what’s going on with them? And yet if you could listen in on their conversation, if you could see what’s on their bestseller list, if you could somehow travel into their abode and have a conversation with some angel standing sentry out there, he’d tell you that in their world, all the buzz centers around what Jesus is doing for you.

That is what they long to look into. That is what keeps them riveted. Your salvation is like a book they can’t put down, because they can’t wait to see what happens next. The angels are spectators of God’s great story. Ever since creation, they’ve been watching and marveling. In Job 38, we read of how when God laid the foundation of the earth in the beginning, “the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy” (Job 38:4–7). They were like fans in the bleachers cheering as God displayed His wisdom; or like spectators watching the opening act of an epic movie, murmuring “This is gonna be good!”

But the story wasn’t over; the best was yet to come. Peter reminds us that the angels don’t know all the details. That’s why they’re on the

edge of their seats, because they don’t know all the spoilers! When Adam and Eve fell in the garden, and God promised to save them, the angels must’ve been wondering, “How’s He gonna pull this off?”

We get a picture of this in the mercy seat—the golden lid that sat atop the ark of the covenant covering God’s law, where the sacrificial blood was poured (see Exodus 25:17–22). Atop that mercy seat were two carved cherubim looking down, as Spurgeon put it, “intently gazing into the marvel of propitiation by blood.” That’s a picture of what we have in 1 Peter 1:12, the angels looking down in wonder at how Christ covered the law we had broken with His own obedience and blood.

As a Christian, you may think your life and calling are dull. But you’re wrong. There’s an epic drama unfolding that keeps even the angels riveted, and you’re at the center of it. In Ephesians 3:9–10, Paul says that it’s through you, the church, that God is making known His wisdom to the “rulers and authorities in the heavenly places” (i.e., the angels). As the angels watch what God is doing through you, they learn more and more how wise He is, and they stand up and cheer, and fall down and worship.

When the devil drew a third of the angels after him, God said, “Let them go.” But when the devil drew God’s human children after him, God said “I want them back. And by My holy name I will have them back, whatever it takes.” And unlike all the prophets and angels for millennia, we now know exactly what it took. In the words of Hebrews 2:9–16:

*“We see Him who for a little while was made lower than the angels, namely Jesus ... so that by the grace of God He might taste*

*death for everyone ... Since therefore the children share in flesh and blood, He Himself likewise partook of the same things, that through death He might destroy the one who has the power of death, that is, the devil, and deliver all those who through fear of death were subject to lifelong slavery. For surely it is not angels that He helps, but He helps the offspring of Abraham.”*

The holy angels didn't need a Redeemer, and the devil and his angels didn't get one. But when it comes to the fallen sons of Adam, God's grace has overflowed all bounds. If we end up in the eternal fire with the devil and his angels, we won't have the devil's excuse. Because 2,000 years ago there was a Man on a cross with a nature like ours, who shed His blood for sinners just like us. So when you hear the message that says "Come, everyone who thirsts, come to the waters" (Isaiah 55:1), you're being given a uniquely human privilege. It's an invitation no angel has ever received. It'd be a shame to waste it.

There's nothing wrong with being curious about angels. But it would be backwards to make them our focus. Because if we could look into Heaven at what they're doing, we'd find their eyes fixed on the One seated on the throne, their mouths singing praises to the Lamb (Revelation 4–5). And we'd hear them telling us, "We are your fellow servants. Worship God" (see Revelation 19:10; 22:9).

So let us wonder about angels but worship their God. And for every look we take at them, let us take ten looks at the object of their gaze: Jesus Christ, the One who was made lower than the angels that He might raise us above them.

—Justin Dillehay, condensed

## ANGELS TO THE RESCUE

A number of contemporary books recount encouraging and inspiring stories of the holy angels at work in the lives of people throughout history and even today. These angels have saved the lives of Christians, provided encouragement during persecution, and helped in the conversion of non-Christians.

In *Celebration of Angels*, we find many stories of deliverance. For example, Walt Shepard was a very depressed non-Christian who had decided to take his own life. He rammed his sports car (at 120 miles an hour) into what he thought was an abandoned car parked on the side of the road. But the car was neither abandoned nor out of gas. It exploded and both vehicles caught on fire. What saved that car's driver and passenger was that they were outside the vehicle resting.

Walt was catapulted through the windshield and landed on the car's engine with fire surrounding him. Pinned and trapped, he passed out. Though the heat was so intense that no one could get close enough to help, the police watched in amazement as two men suddenly appeared, pulled Walt out of the fire, and helped place him in the ambulance. The police and a hotel manager "confirmed that two figures walked up to the car as though there were no fire at all. People said the searing heat kept everybody else 50–100 feet back. The attending police were dumbstruck by the peculiar rescue." Walt nearly died and endured many painful months of hospitalization in a body cast, but he realized he had been saved by angels. He now knew God wanted him to live. As a result, he accepted Jesus Christ as his personal Lord and Savior.

Then there is the story of David Moore and his friend Henry Gardner, who were trapped in severe fog in a small plane with nowhere to land. They radioed the Asheville, North Carolina, airport for emergency instructions but were told the field was closed due to fog and that the airport had no instrument capability for an emergency landing. The pilots were instructed to return to Greenville.

Henry notified the tower that there wasn't enough fuel to return to Greenville and that they needed to land immediately. After a period of silence, a voice said that they could land and that emergency preparations would be undertaken. They were then given specific and detailed instructions, which allowed the plane to land safely. Once on the ground, in a shaky voice, Henry thanked the air traffic controller for saving their lives. After a moment of silence, the controller responded, "What are you talking about? We lost all radio contact with you when we told you to return to Greenville." "You what?" Henry asked, incredulous. "We never heard from you again," the controller said. "And we never heard you talking to us or to anyone else. We were stunned when we saw you break through the clouds."

Although these lives were saved, many more, obviously, are not. As to why this is, that must be left to God's will and wisdom. But clearly, angels are more active in our world than many people would suspect. Like Elisha's servant, if the veil were removed, the average person be stunned (2 Kings 6:15-17).

—The John Ankerberg Show, condensed

## UNSEEN FRIENDS

The Bible says that there are angels who help us. These angels are

our unseen friends. The writer of Hebrews, referring to angels, asked the rhetorical question, "Are they not all ministering spirits sent out to serve for the sake of those who are to inherit salvation?" (1:14). The answer is yes. And they are normally invisible because they are spirits. They do not have physical bodies. Therefore, they can move quickly from the spirit world to our physical world to help us.

In the Bible, angels sometimes appear in the form of men as they did to Abraham (Genesis 18), and to the followers of Jesus at the tomb from which He had risen (Mark 16:5; John 20:12). The writer of Hebrews encouraged us to be hospitable to strangers because "some have entertained angels unawares" (Hebrews 13:2).

Do angels still appear in human form to help us? On the basis of our own experience, most of us would not be able to give a conclusive answer. But many of us have heard Christians tell of experiences in which they saw an angel in human form. I recently heard a missionary tell how a man suddenly appeared when she was in a dangerous situation, guided her, and then disappeared. She thinks he may have been an angel.

Angels appeared in this manner in the past. It's possible they're doing so today. We cannot prove or disprove the accounts of angels appearing to our contemporaries in human form. But if they are accurate, we must recognize that such appearances have always been the exception, not the rule. God can and will look after each one of us individually. He certainly has enough angels available if He chooses to use them to protect or help us. Myriads of these heavenly beings are our friends and stand ready to be our helpers and protectors.

Perhaps it is safe to say that they usually help and protect us without becoming visible. Consider the story of Elisha and his servant recorded in 2 Kings 6. The servant was frightened when he saw a large enemy army surrounding the city of Dothan where they were staying. He didn't know that God had placed an army of angels between these human soldiers and the inhabitants of the city. But when Elisha offered the petition, "O Lord, please open his eyes that he may see" (2 Kings 6:17), the servant saw the angelic host.

Our angel friends may be unseen, but according to the Bible they are all around us. God uses them as His servants to protect and help "those who are to inherit salvation" (Hebrews 1:14).

—Condensed from *What Can We Learn From Angels?*, available at [discoveryseries.org](http://discoveryseries.org)

## HEAVEN'S JOY

*"There is joy before the angels of God over one sinner who repents"* (Luke 15:10).

This chapter gives us an amazing glimpse into the joy of Heaven. This is about God's joy, the joy of the holy angels that surround His presence, and the redeemed and glorified saints that dwell in Heaven. God delights in the recovery of sinners. Part of the eternal rejoicing in Heaven is going to be this endless chorus of hallelujahs because we have been redeemed.

God has no pleasure in the death of the wicked. He finds His supreme joy in the *salvation* of the wicked. That's why in the wonderful teaching of Jesus in Matthew 25, He said to the faithful servants, "Enter into the joy of your master." Can you imagine being in Heaven and having God shouting for joy over the fact that you're there? Can you imagine, right now, because

you're in His kingdom, He is shouting for joy and the holy angels are shouting with Him and the church triumphant around His throne is joining in the cry. A party is happening in Heaven as we speak and it continues to escalate every time a soul is saved.

Our Lord was "a Man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief" (Isaiah 53:3), but He also knew joy. In His high priestly prayer He said He wanted us to "have My joy fulfilled in themselves" (John 17:13). He knew joy. He knew joy even going to the cross because Hebrews 12:2 says that He endured the cross for the joy that was set before Him. And what was that joy? The joy of recovering the lost. Heaven's joy emanates from the recovery of lost sinners.

What comes out in Luke 15 is how different Jesus was from the religious leaders of Israel. Jesus rejoiced in the salvation of the lost because as God He possessed the divine joy that belongs to the Creator and the Redeemer when the lost are found. He is in stark contrast to the religious leaders of Israel, who found no joy in even approaching the lost, let alone seeing them converted. They were the worst kind of shepherds, the worst kind of religious leaders, and the worst kind of representatives of God. In contrast to them, we see our Lord Jesus Christ demonstrating the priority of Heaven in saving the lost.

As we look at our own lives, we might ask the question: "How important, in my life, is the recovery of the lost? How critical is that to me? Is it my highest joy? Or do I find my joy in some trivial, temporary, insignificant thing in this world?" That's exactly the point of Luke 15. It's a very convicting chapter. May we see Heaven's joy as a fresh motivation in reaching the lost. —John MacArthur, adapted