

# The King of Angels

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Preacher: Rev Cal Morrison

[ 0 : 00 ] Well, if you have a Bible with you, you could turn it to Luke chapter 2.

I'm going to read the first 20 verses of Luke chapter 2. In those days, a decree went out from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be registered.

This was the first registration when Quirinius was governor of Syria, and all went to be registered, each to his own town. And Joseph also went up from Galilee, from the town of Nazareth, to Judea, to the city of David, which is called Bethlehem, because he was of the house and lineage of David, to be registered with Mary, his betrothed, who was with child.

While they were there, the time came for her to give birth. And she gave birth to her firstborn son, and wrapped him in swaddling cloths, and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn.

And in the same region there were shepherds out in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night.

[ 1 : 49 ] And an angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were filled with great fear. And the angel said to them, Fear not, for behold, I bring you good news of great joy, that will be for all the people.

For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, who is Christ the Lord. And this will be a sign for you. You will find a baby wrapped in swaddling cloths, and lying in a manger.

And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host, praising God and saying, Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among those with whom he is pleased.

When the angels went away from them into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, Let us go over to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has made known to us.

And they went with haste, and found Mary and Joseph and the baby lying in a manger. And when they saw it, they made known the saying that had been told them concerning this child.

[ 2 : 56 ] And all who heard it wondered at what the shepherds told them. But Mary treasured up all these things, pondering them in her heart. And the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all that they had heard and seen as it had been told them.

Amen. As we get closer to Christmas, many people put trees up. Have you got your tree up yet?

The most popular, if you were to search on Google what the most popular tree toppers are, the top results for the most popular tree toppers are a star or an angel.

So, did anyone in here put an angel on top of their tree? Yes. Firstly, how did you convince the angel to go up there?

And secondly, did the tree survive? Has anyone in here got a star on top of their tree? We've got a few. Now, the smallest known star in the universe is around 60,000 kilometers wide and dense enough to sustain hydrogen fusion.

[ 4 : 12 ] I know that your tree wouldn't survive. I joke, but how funny is it that we reduce these things, stars and angels, to things we can put on top of our trees. And they're reminders to us at Christmas.

They're reminders of these things to us. But we tend to think so small of things because we can't understand these great things. C.S. Lewis helps us to see how our thinking is small and limited when he writes in *The Voyage of the Dawn Treader* that Eustace Scrubb, Eustace Scrubb is talking to a person who was a star and who is now retired.

He was a star in the sky. And Lewis writes, Eustace saying this, Interesting, isn't it?

We think so small. Similarly, we've turned angels into all sorts of playful little things, none of which would ever have to say, fear not. Like real angels often have to say.

The other night at bedtime, Levi was reading a book. It was questioning answers about animals. And one of the questions was, What do cows do at night?

[ 5 : 39 ] I don't know if you know the answer to that. You could probably guess. You could probably say the same answer is about the sheep that the shepherds are watching by night as well.

What do cows do at night? And he turned over the wee thing and the answer was, The same as in the day. They might sleep in short bursts, but they spend most of the time standing up and chewing grass.

And me and Levi both remarked how boring that sounded. Imagine that was your life, spending most of your time standing up and chewing grass. The image of angels we have and the activity of angels that we have an image of is quite small.

And so when I was thinking about these cows at night just standing up chewing grass all night, it brought a couple of things to mind. It made me think about the image we have of angels and it made me think about our view of the activity of angels.

And so first, as to the image of angels, how absurd would it be if cows decided to make little simple human statues out of mud and grass in the shape of little miniature cows and they placed them on fence posts and they said, Ha, look, harmless little humans.

[ 7 : 02 ] And yet the cows didn't know that humans would be eating burgers and wearing leather jackets. How absurd would it be that a cow would have that image of a human?

And the point is, cows are lower than humans. No matter who you are, it doesn't take a genius to tell that cows are lower than humans.

We might have some people in the east and places like India who absolutely revere cows more than humans, but it doesn't take a genius to know that cows are lower than humans.

Cows are lower than humans and it would be absurd if cows thought that they were higher than us. In Hebrews chapter 2, when talking about Jesus, it explains Psalm 8 how man is lower than angels.

You made them a little lower than angels. Man is lower than angels. And so our image of angels is severely lacking, considering we are lower and they are heavenly beings of far greater power existing on a higher plane than us, able to observe and inhabit multiple realms and able to behold God in glory.

[ 8 : 21 ] Yet we have reduced them to ladies with halos and white dresses or cute babies with wings. That's not what angels are like. They behold God.

In reality, whenever an angel appears in glorious form, the people are terrified, very afraid, like Zechariah in Luke chapter 1 or the shepherds in Luke chapter 2 or like the guards that are guarding the tomb in Matthew 28.

And out of fear and awe, people can even feel compelled to worship an angel like John did twice in Revelation 19 and 22.

Angels are sometimes described with an appearance like lightning, shining brightly with light and glory, sometimes with flaming fire. They're often described as mighty and at times referred to heaven's army.

They are spirit, not flesh. So they do not have the same needs as us. They're not subjected to the same weaknesses as us. They don't need to eat or sleep or take breaks.

[ 9 : 27 ] They're not harmed. So then I thought, our image of angels needs to be reset, renewed, refreshed.

And then I thought about the activity of a cow at night compared with the activity of humans.

And I thought about how we imagine the activity of angels. None of you have ever wondered, what do angels get up to? How do they spend all their time? Where do they live?

What do they do? Do they have houses? Do they have offices? Do they have strategy meetings? What do you think they do all day? Especially if they don't need to eat or sleep.

What is their dwelling place like? What is their work like? It made me think at the very least that if they are higher than us, it would be absurd to think that their realm and their lives are somehow less organized and structured and less active than our lower mortal lives.

[ 10 : 36 ] We can think, they probably don't get up to much, they probably wait about just singing to God all the time, just singing, singing until God sends them to go and speak to someone.

Where do they live? Is it just one great big hall in heaven? But you see, imagine a cow thinking that humans are less active and less busy than cows are when they're standing up chewing grass all day and all night.

We are lower than angels, so at the very least, if they are higher than us, it would be absurd to think that their lives are less active and less structured than ours.

The Bible often depicts angels worshipping, warring with fallen angels, wielding flaming swords, executing judgments, assisting people to reach salvation, ministering to people's needs, protecting people from lions, releasing people from prison, guarding the throne of God, moving massive stones out of the way, and making divine announcements.

We see in the book of Revelation a very structured activity of various angels with various roles, with trumpets and bowls and all these different things. Elsewhere, they are referred to as thrones and powers and rulers and authorities.

[ 12 : 00 ] Clearly, these have a lot of things to be getting on with. Revelation 5 talks about myriads, a myriad of myriads and thousands of thousands. Do you know how much a myriad is?

A myriad was a Greek word that meant 10,000. A myriad of myriads is 10,000 times 10,000. Who's quick at math?

It's 100 million. 100 million. And thousands of thousands. But John didn't stand there counting all the angels. It just means a number too vast to count.

Myriads of myriads of angels around the throne of God all saying worthy is the Lamb who was slain. Interestingly, we see the same thing in Daniel chapter 7.

Have you ever read Daniel chapter 7? It talks about the Ancient of Days taking his throne. And in Daniel chapter 7 it says, when the Ancient of Days took his seat, a thousand thousands served him and 10,000 times 10,000 stood before him.

[ 13 : 08 ] Daniel and John saw the same thing in heaven. These thousands and thousands and millions and millions of angels all serving God and standing before him and bowing and worshipping God.

Now, angels, the image we have of angels is so little. And our view of their activity is so little.

what's the point of me mentioning all this? It's not to make a big deal about angels. Our remit as we gather together isn't to worship angels or to make much of angels but rather, how about this thought?

Seeing that we are not the only people and we are not the only world with an interest in Christ. You see, for the great many things we don't know about angels there are a few things we do know.

And here's one thing that we do know about angels. They are his angels. They are Jesus' angels.

[ 14 : 13 ] They were created by Jesus. They belong to Jesus and they serve Jesus as their king. If you have any interest in Christ, let me tell you, angels have a great interest in him too.

Now, our interest might be different in that we know him as Savior he died for us not for them. However, he is their king too and they behold him in his glory and they worship him and serve him faithfully all the time.

Now, probably Stephen might be the only person to know this. I don't know if you listened to Sinclair Ferguson but it just so happened that all this week his podcast devotion has been thinking about the angels and how Jesus is their king too.

I promise you I didn't just steal my sermon from him. I had this planned Alan can verify that. I've been thinking about the same thing. He's their king too.

They knew him and served him long before he became flesh. Angels worshipped him before he took on a human nature. They ministered to him in body at many times as well when he did take on a human nature.

[ 15 : 28 ] think about how seriously angels take their king. Just think about how seriously they take Jesus their king. Think how they live for his glory and they worship before his throne.

Think how absurd it would be it would seem to them when they were announcing the arrival on earth of their great king that all mankind didn't at once take notice and bow before him.

How absurd to the angels was it that the whole earth didn't take notice of Jesus coming into the world. Even fallen angels acknowledge Jesus.

We've seen that throughout Mark's gospel that demons recognize him and cry out you're the son of the most high. They fear him and they obey whatever he commands.

Even fallen angels obey whatever Jesus commands them. Martin Luther famously said even the devil is God's devil. God is absolutely sovereign.

[ 16 : 32 ] There's no contender for the throne and the angels know it. The devil knows it. The fallen angels they all know that God is king and they are at his command.

They are at the mercy of God's sovereignty. Even the devil is God's devil. He's on a leash and the only reason why God allows the devil to do anything is because he will thwart the devil's plans in order to make it turn out for his own purposes because God is sovereign.

James 2.19 says even demons believe and tremble. Colossians 1 says that Jesus is the image of the invisible God and that by him all things were created in heaven and on earth.

Visible and invisible whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities all things were created through him and for him. Now we might say yes we can see the visible things and we can see the things on earth but he created all the things in heaven and the invisible things as well.

You might say if angels exist why don't we see them more often? Well thinking about Colossians 1 consider that number 1 they are heavenly and number 2 they are invisible and number 3 they are created for him not for us.

[ 17 : 57 ] They are heavenly not earthly they are invisible not visible and they are created for him not for us. As to their heavenly and invisible nature belief in such beings doesn't need to be irrational.

We don't need to allow materialists to act like they are the only rational ones or that they are the only show in town. Materialism is a philosophy that thinks that everything just comes from that which is physical.

Everything can be explained and has its origin and cause in that which is physical. And many people who are not religious even atheists don't necessarily believe in materialism.

There is a good case that materialism itself is irrational. It doesn't explain rationally everything about the world and the human experience. And even in physics we know that humans cannot see the whole spectrum of light.

We only see a slither of the spectrum of light visible light that's what they call it but there's things that are invisible to us. We do not hear the whole range of sound waves. There are things if you have a dog you know that dogs hear things that we don't hear.

[ 19 : 10 ] there's so much even in our own world that we cannot detect. And then there is the scientific study of other dimensions and parallel realms.

Many atheists scientists of all beliefs know that they're studying these other dimensions and that there's got to be more than just this. things. And so I want to encourage you that even although angels are heavenly and invisible it is not irrational to say that you believe in angels.

Maybe even to use the word I used last week somebody asks do you believe in aliens? Are you brave enough or crazy enough to say yes I do? I believe in angels.

even if you've not seen one we have very good evidence that the testimony of scripture is reliable and true. The shepherds saw the angels and they went and told Mary and Joseph it was good enough for them.

Yet not only do they rarely appear due to them being heavenly and invisible but also think about this perhaps humans rarely see angels because they're not created for humans they're created for Jesus.

[ 20 : 28 ] Angels are not at our command they are at his command. Clearly we cannot by our own means detect something beyond our range of sight. We could only see an angel if they appeared to us either by their own will or by the command of God.

But why? Why should an angel appear to any one of us? Even when an angel did appear we can see that they have greater things to do than appear to us because when the angel Gabriel appeared to Zechariah and Zechariah began to question it Gabriel said I am Gabriel I stand in the presence of God who do you think you're speaking to Zechariah?

Zechariah might have been important in the temple rota but certainly he was not the most important person that Gabriel had stood before. You see asking why there are very few angelic encounters and why their world doesn't interface with ours most often these are questions driven by our own assumptions assumptions about our world and their world about heaven and earth and how they interact and what are the purpose of angels angels who are we who are we that our creator should bend his will to us who are we earthly mortals that heavenly beings should even want to appear to us and interact with us now God does have a great interest in us such that he would send his own son into the world but the point is this this is the point of bringing all this stuff about angels up their primary interest is their king in heaven the primary interest of angels is not us but their king in heaven

Jesus and quite frankly that should be our primary interest as well we are so taken up by things on earth and so preoccupied by our own senses by all counts it seems like the question should be turned on its head we wonder why heaven where God's kingdom has come and his will is done we wonder why it doesn't interface more with earth the place that has fallen into darkness and rebellion against God where its creatures have become dull in all of our senses and have rejected and crucified heaven's king why should heaven interface with earth I imagine the angels are frustrated that earth doesn't have a greater interest in heaven and that humans do not have a greater interest in heaven's king the Lord Jesus if angels ever serve us it is only as they serve God we were created lower than the angels and they attend to business that is far more fitting to their design and place than appearing to us angels serve at the pleasure of God they attend to heavenly business they war with principalities and powers of evil and darkness and they give glory and praise to Jesus the son of the most high where do we see angels and we see them in the bible they do appear they appear when it has a relation to their king and look chapter 2 when they announce the arrival of their king the birth of Jesus look chapter 1 when they announce to Zechariah and to

Mary the coming of Jesus their king mark chapter 1 the angels minister to Jesus and the weakness of his humanity after he has overcome the devil's temptation in the wilderness and again in Luke chapter 22 in Gethsemane an angel appears to strengthen Jesus after he prayed for his father's will to be done then in Matthew 26 when the mob come to arrest Jesus Peter starts swinging his sword and Jesus turns around to Peter and said put your sword back do you not think that I cannot appeal to my father and he will at once send me more than 12 legions of angels Jesus is saying to Peter you don't need to protect me Peter my father could send 72,000 warrior angels if I wanted the idea as Jesus did not merely have 12 disciples at his disposal to defend him if he wanted he could have had 12 legions of heaven's warriors not merely a dozen weak men with only one willing to fight angels are at the disposal and command of their king

[ 25 : 27 ] Jesus and then we see the angels roll away the stone angels tell the women that Jesus has risen angels tell the disciples at his ascension that he will return in the same way he went and Jesus already told the disciples that when he returns he will come in glory with his holy angels they serve their king and as we see in Hebrews 1 verse 6 when God brings his son into the world he says Hebrews 1 verse 6 let all God's angels worship him let the angels worship Jesus God's son and so let me give you two concluding thoughts because when we see we've got an angel at the top of our tree as well just a small one when we see the angel on a Christmas card or on the top of a tree let us think about Christ being their king them being mighty heavenly warriors that worship their king and serve him faithfully two concluding thoughts we number one we are not the only ones with an interest in

Jesus he is the king of angels as well he's the king of all kings and the lord of all lords and perhaps presently our interest in him is too weak in comparison when we see him we will not be the only ones worshiping him it won't just be baptists it won't just be humans angels stars the heavens declare the glory of god all creation will sing praise Jesus said that if his people didn't cry out the very rocks would cry out and so when we see him we will not be the only ones worshiping him and we are not the only ones that Jesus has an interest in he has others he created for his glory who serve him faithfully and the joy of the angels when one sinner repents and believes in Jesus is a joy to them because it means that one like us would not only be saved but would worship and praise their king

Jesus who is worthy of all praise what wonder is it then that Jesus showed his love for us to become flesh and die for us and so the second concluding thought is even before we needed saving and before he died for our sins what a privilege it would be to worship and serve Christ the king do we consider it a burden to come to church to gather with the redeemed people who love Jesus do we find it an embarrassment to speak his name before the world do we find it uninspiring to sing the glorious name of Jesus do we find it inconvenient to serve Jesus and give him our whole lives in service we shouldn't we shouldn't find it a burden to gather together with the people of Jesus we shouldn't find it an embarrassment or nervous or be anxious to speak the name of the great king of all

Jesus we shouldn't find it uninspiring to want to sing praises to his glorious name and we shouldn't find it inconvenient to want to serve him with everything we have so please do what you can do to find some way to serve Jesus serve his kingdom give your life to serving Jesus and working for his glory what an immense privilege not only to be invited into his family but to be given the privilege of serving in his work what a glorious privilege it is to worship the king of all kings and the creator of all things the angels do and he saved us as a people to be zealous for good works he has equipped us and given us grace to serve his body and build us up that we might glorify him and he has redeemed us not only for our own good but for his glory and so let us give praise to the name of

Jesus amen lord we thank you so much that you came into this world that you wouldn't leave us in darkness we thank you that we discover that there are these heavenly beings and basking in the light of your glory who worship you and serve you always we thank you for this revelation that even these menacing demons and the devil are at the mercy of your sovereignty because you are sovereign above all things and yet you have shone your light into this world that we might know you and for those of us who have come to know you it's only because you shone your light in our hearts to see the glory of God in the face of Christ and so let us worship you in the way in which you are worthy for you are worthy of all praise and glory and worship forever and ever amen amen