

# 1st Advent - Angels

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[ 0 : 0 0 ] Thank you. I just say thanks to the guys at the back. Sometimes technology doesn't do what you want it to do. And that's quite fitting, because we're going to be talking about angels and what they do, and sometimes it differs from what humans do, and sometimes, I'm sure you'll agree, we don't always do what we ought to do, what we were made to do.

Sometimes we're awaiting an update. Well, let me pray. Heavenly Father, we thank you that you have given us your sure word. And perhaps we have not always been in a place where we trust your word or believe your word.

I know I haven't, but you brought me to a place to see that your word is true, that your word is living, that your word is reliable, that your word is powerful.

And we thank you for the servants in the past who have recorded these things. We pray that we would be changed by them, that we would trust them, and that through them we would see you, and you would be glorified.

Amen. Well, are we alone in the universe? Is there life out there? I remember thinking about these things growing up, watching films like E.T.

[ 1 : 2 0 ] E.T. the extraterrestrial. Or TV shows like The X-Files. Does anybody remember the tagline? The truth is out there. Yes.

Mulder and Scully. Are we alone in the universe? I believe we are not. I believe there are extraterrestrial beings. Not aliens, but angels.

You see, I believe that we are not the only intelligent life form. But we come from an intelligent creator. We're not alone. We are terrestrial beings. We are earthly beings.

And I believe that God also created extraterrestrial beings, heavenly beings, sometimes called angels. What would you do if you had seen an angel?

What would you do? I know what I would do. I'd be shaking in my boots. Because that's what everyone in the scriptures is like when they meet an angel. Maybe you have.

[ 2 : 2 0 ] I'm pretty sure most of us haven't. Or maybe you don't think that angels really exist. Well, let me tell you why I think that it's both unlikely that most of us have seen an angel.

It's unlikely that any of us have seen an angel. And also why people might not even believe that they exist. Let me start with the second one. Why some people don't believe angels exist.

You see, we live in a secular society. In which materialism is prevalent. Materialism is the view, if you don't know, that all matter, and all things, including mental states and consciousness, are a result of material interactions.

Everything is caused by physical matter and processes. Or even reducible to them. Basically, that everything is physical, biological. And there's nothing immaterial that isn't caused by what is material.

Basically, if you took away the material, there would be nothing. No consciousness, no love, no mind, no God. Before I became a Christian, I was a materialist.

- [ 3 : 30 ] I would say things like, everything is too biological for there to be a God. That is, everything there is, can be explained by, and as a result of biological matter.
- That's what a materialist is. And I would say things like, once you're dead, you're dead. There's nothing more. That's what I would say. But I've since changed. Not everything can be explained, or traced back to biological matter.
- What's the difference between a living person and a dead person? They've got the exact same biological matter. How can't you just do something to bring the life back?
- We can't, we've never figured it out. There's something more. Not everything can be traced back to that. There are real cases of near-death experiences, real cases, that cannot be explained by neurons firing in the brain.
- And this is not just people hearing or seeing random things, but knowing information when their body, their brain, their biological matters in a completely different room can't be explained by materialism.
- [ 4 : 43 ] What you make of that is a different story, but that's just to say that many people, irrespective of religion, many people in the world have experiences that fly in the face of materialism.
- There's more than what we can see. We don't need to allow materialists to act like they're the only rational ones. I want you to know that. There's a real case to say that materialism itself is irrational.
- We don't need to be intimidated into thinking that they are scientific and we are faith-based and blind belief. That's not true. Materialism is a philosophy.
- And it cannot explain rationally everything about the world and the human experience. It cannot. Let me ask you this. Back to ET.
- What do you think about UFOs? UFOs? I think you'll probably agree that people who often claim to have seen UFOs are often branded as being a little crazy.
- [ 5 : 46 ] A little crazy when talking about UFOs. Maybe a little irrational. Now, if we put aside the claims about aliens in Area 51 for a minute, see when you're simply talking about unidentified flying objects, did you know that this year, back in June, the US government launched an investigation into UFOs?
- A US task force was set up to investigate sightings of what they call UAP, Unidentified Aerial Phenomena.
- A real report, a serious report, a serious investigation. And the Pentagon released a report this year. Because there have been real sightings of unexplained things.
- Not talking about aliens, but unexplained things. Real sightings from Navy pilots on training missions, videos, things in the sky that cannot be explained.
- I'm not saying they're angels or anything like that. I'm just saying that people are often labeled as crazy when talking about UFOs. Yet, proponents of materialism act like it's the only show in town.
- [ 7 : 07 ] Let me tell you, it's not. It's not the only show in town. And religion aside, there are more people than not in the world who believe there's more than just a material. Just because you don't see it doesn't mean it doesn't exist.
- So there may be people who don't believe angels exist, but don't be intimidated by materialists. Belief in angels isn't necessarily irrational.
- You think about the world's leading physicists spending money in research on whether there's parallel universes or other dimensions. We can hold a rational belief in otherworldly beings.

We can. We don't need to suspend logic. For instance, take light, color, sound. There are limits to humans to what we can see and hear.

You all know this if you've been to school. There's more colors in the spectrum than we can see. There's more waves of light than we can detect with our eyes.

[ 8 : 15 ] UV, stuff like that. there's more range of sound than humans can detect. Do you not think there's more out there that we just simply cannot detect?

There's more going on. There are colors, light waves and sounds that exist though we cannot experience them because of our limits.

Human experience, the material experience does not determine what exists. We are fools to think that it ever would. That's the view of materialism.

Fools to think that our experience would determine what exists. So we can see why some people don't believe in angels but I hope you know that believing that they do exist is perfectly rational.

So if they do exist why is it likely that most of us have never seen an angel? You see I had this question in my mind if they do exist if angels exist why do they not appear more often?

[ 9 : 19 ] Well simply put angels are not at our command. They're not. Clearly we cannot by our own means detect something beyond our range of sight.

We could only see them if they themselves by the will of God make themselves appear to us. But why should they appear to us at all?

Look at what Gabriel says to Zechariah. I am Gabriel. I stand in the presence of God. Hey Zechariah you're forgetting who I am.

The fact that he was visited by an angel in the first place is incredible. You see asking why there are very few angelic encounters or why their world doesn't interface with theirs more often are questions driven by our own assumptions.

Assumptions about our world and about their world. About how heaven and earth interact. about the purpose of angels and such. Who are we that our creator should bend his will to us?

[ 10 : 26 ] Who are we earthly mortals that heavenly beings should even want to appear or interact with us? Who are we? Another TV show that I watch is called The West Wing.

I don't know if you've ever seen it. It's about the White House. And then this it goes on about the team, the inner team of the president. There's only a few people who can freely stand in the presence of the president.

There's only few people who can walk into the Oval Office without invitation. I stand in the presence of the president. I serve at the pleasure of the president.

president. You see, these kind of people, they're operating at a different level. They're operating at a level and in a place that is far from the common people.

You see, these kind of people, the staff of the president, the inner circle of the president, their business is to serve the highest office, not to serve the people on the street.

[ 11 : 31 ] They don't need to take any and every meeting requested by any old person. They serve at the pleasure of the president. And this is what we see with angels. Gabriel says, I am Gabriel.

I stand in the presence of God. You think I'm here because you've been praying and praying and I just thought, okay, I'll do what you want. No, angels serve at the pleasure of God.

They don't obey us. If angels serve us, it's only because they serve God. You see, we were created lower than the angels and they, angels, they attend to the business of heaven.

They attend to business that's far more fitting to their design and place than simply appearing to humans to reassure us of another world. Angels serve at the pleasure of God.

They attend to heavenly business because they are heavenly beings. They war with principalities and powers of evil and darkness and they give glory and praise to God most high.

[ 12 : 35 ] It's not a common thing for angels to appear. It's not a normal thing for angels to appear. And so when we consider this, and this is the beauty of it, when we consider this moment in history, the birth of this Bethlehem boy, it speaks absolute volumes that this child and his birth should be marked by the appearing of one of the highest ranking angels that we know of.

of all the angels mentioned in the Bible, we know there's thousands, a multitude of heavenly hosts. Of all the angels mentioned in the entirety of this book, only two are named.

Michael the archangel and Gabriel. And here we have Gabriel visiting people in relation to the birth of this child. It begs the question, who is this child?

What is it about this baby? Zechariah was an old temple priest married to a barren woman, and he was visited by an angel of God, and suddenly he was struck mute, and his wife was pregnant.

Mary was a young virgin from Nazareth. She was engaged to be married. And as such, it was impossible for her to be pregnant because she'd never known a man.

[ 13 : 58 ] She was visited by Gabriel. Suddenly she became pregnant, a child in the womb from the Holy Spirit. Joseph was engaged to Mary, knowing that she was pregnant, maybe having heard the reason or the excuse.

It seemed impossible. It seemed like an excuse. she must have been with a man. How else would she be pregnant? He was wrestling with these things, it says in the Bible.

He was considering these things. He was wrestling with them, whether or not he should divorce her. He was visited by an angel. Then he made his mind up, and he married her anyway.

Despite the scandal, despite the shame, he married her. Finally, a group of unnamed shepherds in the countryside of Bethlehem were tending to their sheep. Suddenly, visited by an angel, terrified they'd seen the glory of God and the host of heaven.

They were given a message. They were given a sign. They saw the angels go away into heaven, and afterward, they left their sheep to go into town to go and see a baby wrapped in swaddling cloths and lying in a manger.

[ 15 : 16 ] What is it about this baby? Why would an angel who comes from heaven, who stands in the presence of God, why would a heavenly delegate from God come to earth and appear to these people, all in relation to this baby boy in Bethlehem?

What does that say about this child? Some may say that these things were made up retrospectively, but the things that the angels said about this child being the Christ don't make a lot of sense when the Christ has now been crucified.

You see, that's not the logic of humans if we were to make that up. That's not the plot twist that humans came up with on our own for national rejection of their Messiah.

If humans were to put words in the mouths of angels while making this story up retrospectively, they would not say what they did. Rejection and crucifixion was not the expectation that the people had of their Messiah.

These words, instead, have been carefully recorded from eyewitnesses of what they heard from a heavenly messenger about who this child was. The fact that an angel announced the birth of this child is itself a magnificent and extraordinary thing.

[ 16 : 40 ] It says something about the importance of this child, but to really understand exactly who he is, we must look at what the angel said. Who is this Christmas child?

To Zechariah, the angel said that his prayer had been heard, that his barren wife would become pregnant and they would have a son. They would call him John. He would be filled with the Holy Spirit from the womb.

Not just because Zechariah had been praying for a little baby, but because they were chosen to raise up the boy who would prepare the way for the Bethlehem boy.

To Mary, the angel Gabriel said that she had found favor with God, that she would conceive and her women bear a son, and his name would be Jesus, which means God saves.

He would be great. He would be called the son of the Most High. Unless that's true, it's a blasphemous thing. The angel said that the Lord will give this child the throne of his father David.

[ 17 : 51 ] The angel said that this child would reign over the house of Jacob. not for one year, two years, forty years, but forever. The angel said that of this child's kingdom, there would be no end.

To Joseph, who was considering divorce and Mary, the angel addressed him as son of David. Joseph, son of David, remember your lineage.

Remember who we're talking about here. If Joseph was wrestling with the story that Mary told him about the boy being the one to sit in the throne of David, then the angel was reminding Joseph of his lineage.

Reminding Joseph of the Messiah. Reminding Joseph of the prophecies and promises. The angel told Joseph not to fear Mary and Mary, for the child in her womb is from the Holy Spirit.

He is from God, not from a man. Don't worry, Joseph. The child is from God, not from a man. He was then told that he would have a son.

[ 18 : 54 ] That Joseph should call him Jesus, which means God saves. For he would save his people from their sins. Folks, do you have sins?

Pretty sure you do. He would save his people from their sins. Is that not good news? Who is the Christmas child?

How does he have relation to us? Well, do you have sins? Yes. Do I have sins? Yes. Who is the Christmas child? But the one who saves people from their sins.

And then to the shepherds, they were told not to fear. The angel was bringing good news of great joy for all the people. For unto you, unto these shepherds of Bethlehem, unto you, is born this day in the city of David, a saviour, who is Christ the Lord.

The prophecies of old were coming to pass. The Messiah, who comes from the house of David, who is to be born in Bethlehem, who will sit on the throne of David and reign forever, whose kingdom will have no end.

[ 20 : 08 ] If you were here last week, you would have heard it from David. Second Samuel chapter seven. Hundreds of years before. Someone coming from David will sit on the throne forever.

Someone coming from David will have a kingdom that will have no end. Someone coming from David will be the Christ and the Lord. Someone, as Isaiah prophesied, would be born of a virgin.

Someone, Isaiah prophesied, would be great. Would be called the prince of peace. Be called God with us. The Messiah would be the one who takes away the sins of the world.

The prophecies of old were coming to pass. And he was born. The shepherds would find him wrapped in swaddling cloths and lying in a manger. That's not the usual place that you find a baby.

And then they saw a multitude of the host of heaven saying, glory to God in the highest and on earth peace among those with whom he is pleased. Who is the child whose birth was announced by angels?

[ 21 : 19 ] He is the one and only Messiah. He is the true Christ who has been prophesied in these scriptures hundreds of years before it happened.

Now he has come. He is no ordinary child. He is the Christ, yes, but also the Lord. He is the one who sits on the throne forever.

He is the one who reigns forever. The one whose kingdom has no end. Who is the Christmas child? Do you have sins?

Yes. Do you want to live in a kingdom that will last forever? That will have no evil, no sin, no shame, no sorrow, no death, no pain? Do you want that?

That is his kingdom. Do you want a righteous and just king who will do what is right? Yes, you do. This is this king and he will reign forever.

[ 22 : 21 ] Do you want freed from your sin which brings death? The child was born to take away the sins of his people. Who is the Christmas child?

He is our savior. He is Jesus Christ. You think that it's amazing that an angel should visit? They were coming to tell the story of a God who would visit.

Because the Christmas child is the son of the most high God. Let me pray. God, our heavenly father, we thank you so much that this Christmas we can have hope that the story 2000 years ago has relevance to us even today, even this year, even right now.

for you have sent your son, the son of the most high, that he should take away the sins of the world, that he should save his people, that he should give his eternal life, that his kingdom should reign forever, that he should sit on the throne forever.

His name is Jesus. He is the Christ and Lord, the son of the most high, and in his name we give you praise. Amen. Amen. Let us sing a final song.