

Praising God: The Angels

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[0 : 0 0] Well, please turn with me to Luke chapter 2, Luke 2. We're going to read from the beginning down to verse 14, and then focus particularly verses 8 to 14.

Luke 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.

And while they were there, this time came for her to give birth. 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. 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.

[1 : 2 0] 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 Savior, who is Christ the Lord. And this will be a sign for you. You'll 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.

Amen. And as we consider this great theme of praise, praising God, we're going to look this morning, God willing, look at the angels who praised God, who were found in praise regarding the good news of great joy, regarding the birth of the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

And as these angels gave praise, they glorified God, glory to God in the highest. And earth peace among those with whom he's pleased.

[2 : 3 6] We'll be looking at these particular subsections, if you like, but bringing it all together in this great theme of praise. Because if you remember, those of you who were worshipping on Sunday evening, very much our focus was on praise.

We were considering one of the earlier prophecies regarding the coming of the Lord Jesus. And we were looking in Genesis 49, the prophecy regarding Jacob, or Jacob's prophecy regarding his son, his fourth son, Judah.

And we learned that Judah, the Hebrew name, are very much like the word for praise. And certainly when Jacob was blessing, prophesying, blessing his 12 sons, he gave particular honour and attention to Judah.

The name that means praise. And from that, we learned that this prophecy regarding Judah spoke forth of the coming of the Lord Jesus.

We might say the divine offspring of Judah, the lion of the tribe of Judah. And as we consider even that prophecy of Jesus coming, to whom we give all praise, then it's for us to continue in that praise for him who came in human form.

[3 : 52] Because really that has to be the response of every believer. Not just this time of year, but all times of year when we reflect, when we consider, when we remember the coming of the Lord Jesus, that we give praise.

Praise to God for sending his son. Praise to the Lord Jesus for coming, voluntarily coming of his own will, to come and save his people from their sins.

And yes, we've been called then to praise him. Even when, of course, there are these times when praise sometimes can be something so far from our hearts and minds, but still we praise him.

Still praise our Lord and Saviour. And when we find these times when it's difficult to praise him, then turn to God's word.

Because God's word encourages you to praise the Lord. Particularly, I may suggest the book of Psalms. Especially when you find praise difficult, turn to the book of Psalms.

[4 : 54] There are so many expressions, even what we're singing here this morning, and will be at the end of the service. Psalm 106, when we were singing that earlier. Praise the Lord.

We'll give thanks to the Lord for his good, for his steadfast love endures forever. We can praise him from the heart, even from the encouragement of God's word.

And certainly to encourage you, even in these weeks that we, you know, bring before our hearts and minds the birth of Jesus, we will look at this great subject of praise.

Praise offered to God. Praise offered to our Lord and Saviour. Yes, we're going to hear the Christmas story again and again. We're going to hear it in this building.

We're going to hear it through various media channels. We're going to hear it, I pray, in the home. We're going to hear this message that is heralded at this time of year so loudly.

[5 : 54] When we turn to the scripture accounts of the birth of the Lord Jesus, the coming of the Lord Jesus, it's fascinating how praise is uppermost in these accounts.

We're going to consider the praise of the angels this morning, when they announced the birth of the Lord Jesus. And then, God willing, next Lord's Day, we'll look at the praise of the shepherds, these ordinary shepherds, when they came to worship the newborn Christ there in the manger.

And then, God willing, on the 26th, 26th December, we'll look at the praise of these eastern dignitaries who followed that star and came to where the infant Jesus was in that house in Bethlehem.

And there they worshipped him in praise. And each of these three separate instances, praise offered, praise given to the Christ child, because he's worthy of all praise.

So, let's look at the praise of the angels, as we read there in Luke 2, in verse 8 to 14. Good news, great joy. You know, the more that you read the gospel accounts of the birth of Jesus, the more, you know, you realise the mystery, the wonder, the depth of mystery in what you read.

[7 : 17] You might say that the supernatural occurrences combining together to present the incarnation of the uncreated Saviour.

The birth of the one who's the eternal Son of God. This is mystery. This is wonder. And yet, true to you who know the truth, who receive that word within truth and by faith.

Because that's the way that Luke presents the story of the birth of Jesus. Here he presents it, giving us the sense of mystery and wonder. It's what we read from verse 8.

These ordinary, humble shepherds, they're in the fields over Bethlehem, doing what they did habitually. Every, every, every, every evening, every night, day after night.

And then as we read, in the midst of that pitch black, Middle Eastern evening, the glory of God shines around the shepherds. And an angel, a messenger from God, appears and gives that most exciting of announcements, that most exciting of news.

[8 : 24] Fear not, for behold, I bring you good news of a great joy that will be for all the people. And in giving the reason for that good news of great joy, for unto you is born this day in the city of David, a Saviour who's Christ the Lord.

And you know, as you hear again these words of that solitary angel, you get the sense of excitement, that joy in the voice of that angel, as he's telling the shepherds, as they're being struck down with terror, and, well, there's something wonderful.

Something that's happened in that little town down there, that little town of Bethlehem. Something's happened that's an event, that's good news of a great joy for all. A Saviour's born, and he's Christ the Lord.

He's Messiah. He's the Lord. Just think what that angel's saying. Good news, great joy. This is more than just words. These are words of absolute assurance that takes away, well, certainly took away the great fear of these shepherds.

They saw the angel. They saw the brightness of the glory of God surrounding that angel. They were afraid. But the angel speaks these words of assurance, of good news, of great joy.

[9 : 43] These shepherds, they were absolutely terrified. But the good news of great joy calms their anxious, anxious hearts, their terrified hearts.

And that news brings them, or these words bring them to a place of peace, because they know that what's been revealed to them is from God, it's about God, it's for their good, it's for good of all for whom Jesus came to give his life.

And you know, whether this time of year, all times of year, the same word is given from heaven to you, especially when particular fears, you know, envelop you.

You know, when God intervenes in your life in ways that maybe are quite unexpected. When you're knocked off your feet by some particular event that maybe shakes you to your very core, and your comfort zone is, there's no comfort zone anymore.

And it's in these times to be reminded of the good news of great joy. That good news, the gospel of the Lord Jesus. That gospel, that good news that Jesus has come, he's come to save his people, he's come to deliver you, he came to deliver you from darkness, to bring you into his glorious light.

[11 : 02] He's come to bring you into his eternal kingdom. So don't be afraid of these circumstances that appear out of your control. Because God is sovereign.

God's in control. And that control is seen ultimately in the coming of the Lord Jesus. He came for you. His incarnation, his enfleshment, his enfleshment in human form happened for you.

So that yes, even through your tears and through your fears, you can still praise him. Still give him thanks for his steadfast love. You can still praise him even when things aren't adding up in the way that you might have particularly desired.

You see, Jesus came from heaven to earth. He came to earth, from heaven. And his birth, yes, it changes everything.

But you now have that absolute assurance that his coming means that you're safe eternally. You who put your trust in him for salvation, you're safe eternally.

[12 : 14] Yes, you're going to endure particular afflictions this side of eternity. They are momentary afflictions, lasting for a moment. But you've got that promise, that realization, that reality of joy now in his presence, of that, the eternal joy in Christ.

Because he came, he came to give you that hope, that peace, that joy. Joy in his abiding presence, his abiding love. And so, yes, we can echo these words, joy to the world, the Lord has come.

The promised Christ, the promised Messiah, promised through the, the centuries before his coming, promised even through the pages of Old Testament scripture. The promises, realized in Jesus coming.

The angel, the angel, that solitary angel, that, that met with the shepherds. That angel praised God for, for that good news of great joy. And you can, utter and offer that same praise, of good news, of great joy.

You can join with even that angel, in giving thanks to God. Thank God the Father, for sending God the Son, for all, for all, for all who are his.

[13 : 34] And as you praise him even now, praise him even in the quiet of your hearts. As you praise him, give him thanks. Give him the glory. Just as that multitude of angels, that joined with that solitary angel, that multitude of angels, they joined together, in praise of God, as they cried out, glory to God.

Suddenly there was, with the angel, a multitude of the heavenly hosts, praising God, and saying, glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, among those with whom he's pleased.

The one angel had announced, the birth of the Lord Jesus, the Messiah, the Christ. And that wonder, that great announcement, well, is now followed with this next announcement, this next announcement, by these, this multitude, this great vast number, this old William Tyndale purit, this multitude of heavenly soldiers, this vast number of angels, joining with that solitary angel, to sing that angel song, glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among those, with whom he's pleased.

And that coming of the glory of God, that coming of God's glory, in the person of the Lord Jesus, is now announced, and accompanied by this vast number of angels, because the event of the birth of Jesus, truly was, and is great, wonderful.

Angels had longed to make that announcement, the announcement of the birth of Jesus. And such is the greatness of that announcement, that God sends his multitude of angels, his multitude of heavenly soldiers, this army of angels, who've been sent from the invisibility of heaven, to the visibility of earth.

[15 : 36] And, you know, the birth of Jesus, the announcement of that birth, accompanied by that vast number, not again, in selling Jesus' life on earth, with such a vast number of angels, may present.

But, what were the angels actually saying? What were they singing? In their, calling out glory to God in the highest. What were they doing? Well, they were praising God.

I mean, they were giving praise, the angels' praise, to God in high. God in the highest, God in heaven. And, because God is, utterly worthy of angelic praise, the angels, continue to praise God in heaven.

But now, they're praising God, for something wonderful, something new. The Son of God has come, in human form, come, to bring salvation, to his people. And so, God must be praised.

Glory to God. He's got to be worshipped. He's got to be honoured. He's got to be glorified, because of, because of what he's done, for poor sinners, such as ourselves.

[16 : 42] And that glory, that the angels, praise God for. Glory tells of God's, great purpose. Purpose for your salvation. Because it's for God's glory.

God's glory. That's what the, 16th century reformers, uttered when they, spoke about, glory to God alone. Solo dia, gloria. Glory to God alone, not glory for self, not glory for man, but God's glory.

That's something, of course, we continue to, praise God for, that he, is given the glory, for sending his Son, for us. Jesus came, from the highest heaven, we might say, to the, to the lowest earth.

He came, to make it possible, for you, to know the glory of heaven. So that you might be, in the eternal presence of God, eternally, and continue, and continue eternally, to give him, the glory, and the praise.

And that's the good news, that we proclaim, yes, that's what this, time of year is all about, praising God. Of course, we do it not just, one time of the year, throughout the year, so that we can, echo the words, of these angels, glory to God, in the highest.

[18 : 01] You know, at this time of year, there isn't, there's so much, glorying of another sort. Just go to the media, just see how, the media portrays, this time of year, and it's glorying, there's a glorying, but it's a glorying, in the whole, concept of excess, glorying in possessions, glorying in the, you know, the excesses, that this time of year promotes.

That's not true glory. True glory, glorying in the, is that praise and honour, that you give to God, that, yes, acclaims excess, but acclaims the, the excess of the majesty of God.

True glory, ascribes greatness to God. It speaks of his power, it speaks of his splendour. And that's what, this time of year is about, that's what Christmas is about.

Looking to our Lord and Saviour, and yes, giving glory to God, for that is great love, and sending Jesus for us. Because he is the glorious one, he's the one, who's worthy of all praise.

So let's not stop glorying God, after 26th of December. Don't stop praising God, for who God is, and for what he's done, and what he's still doing for you.

[19 : 21] Give him praise, for what the angels, praise God for. Give him the glory, because, the Son has come. The Saviour who's come, the Saviour who's come to, to bring peace.

Peace among those, whom he's pleased. It's what the angels praise, as we think of God's, peace on earth. Glory to God in the highest, and on the earth, peace among those, with whom he's pleased.

You see the connection, between heaven and earth. God in heaven, is to be glorified, because he's brought peace, on earth. Like heaven and earth, linked, that, that great blessing, that we know, in reality, in truth.

You who, on whom his favour rests, you know his blessing. You know, that he is, truly, has given you, that, that joy of salvation.

But what about this peace? On earth, peace among those, with whom he's pleased. What's that peace, that these, that multitude of heavenly soldiers sang?

[20 : 29] Oh, were they saying, that there's going to be a, a cessation, a stopping of, conflict, and wars? That's what they're saying? Well, the angels got it wrong. But of course, that's not what the angels, were, were praising God for.

Remember what Jesus said, that before his return to earth, there's going to be wars, and rumours of wars, nations, rising against nations, famine, earthquakes, and certainly through the millennia, to, to the present day.

What we're seeing, distorts any sense of, peace, in the, in the sense of, absence of conflict. And just look around the world, that we're living in, at this very moment.

We're gripped, in many ways, in a time of, of no peace. We've got a virus, that keeps changing, and keeps causing, the most horrendous, of, of social, and economic, and political, results.

We've got divisions, in society. We've got conflict. We've got governments, that seem to be, out of control. Conflicts, in different parts, of the world. Where's the peace, that was promised?

[21 : 39] Where's peace, on earth, if it's all just, a dream and illusion? Now, it's one of the, more well-known, Christmas songs, sang. Is that what, this peace is about? Absence of conflict?

Absolutely not. I mean, the angels knew exactly, what they were proclaiming, when they, when they sang, of peace on earth. And look, of course, the author, the author of the gospel here, he knew what these angels, were telling of, when they were singing, of this new dynamic, that had come, because of the Savior's birth.

These angels, weren't proclaiming, a political peace, or a social peace, or an economic peace. They were living, in a time, you might say, of the Roman peace, the Pax Roman.

They weren't proclaiming, peace among the nations. They weren't even, proclaiming a peace for all. No, they were proclaiming, the good news, that Jesus, had come, to restore, relations, between God and man.

Jesus had come, to bring reconciliation, between God and man. Jesus had come, by his, living that perfect life, of obedience, and dying on the cross.

[22 : 49] He came, to make it possible, for God and man, to be reconciled, for there to be peace, between God and man. Because there had been, hostilities, yes, between God and man, ever since the fall, ever since man, fell in the garden of Eden.

But Jesus had come, to restore relations. And so we have to say, the cradle, and the cross, absolutely inseparable.

You can't have Jesus, in a cradle, without Jesus, on the cross. You can't sing, well, dubious though the words, might well be, away in a manger. You can't sing these words, without Jesus, the same time being, praise for being, the way, the truth, and the life, because of what Jesus, did on the cross.

See the good news, of great joy, yes, involves cradle, but it involves, the cross as well. And you see the good news, that the angels proclaim, is the same good news, that you and I, must proclaim.

And proclaim at all times, not just this time of year. Jesus has come, yes, he's come to bring peace, and he's come to do it, ultimately on the cross, where he paid that price, for sin.

[24 : 03] That was the price, of peace. It was the price, that made it possible, for sinners such as me, and such as you, to be reconciled, to God, through the work, the saving work, of the Lord Jesus.

He took upon himself, the guilt of sin. He took the penalty, you and I deserve. He paid that price, in full. And he did it, in coming to earth, in human form.

He came fully man, to take the place of man, and facing the wrath of God, against sin. So we can say, with great praise in our hearts, he is.

He is our peace. It's that peace, that's restored, a broken relationship, between man and God. That's the peace, that's the blessing, of the Christmas story.

It's the good news, that the carol tells us, God and sinners, reconciled. Jesus, the Prince of Peace, he's come. It's that peace, that Jesus gives to, to you, that you receive, by faith.

[25 : 10] It's that peace, that you have, to know that your relationship, with God's restored. And if it's restored, with God, then it surely has to impact, your relationships, one with another.

So yes, hail the heaven born, Prince of Peace. And hail the, the son of righteousness. And yes, sing glory, to the newborn king. But finally, to whom are the angels, referring to when they're, singing of that, peace amongst those, with whom he's, he's pleased.

Is it everyone? Is it absolutely everyone? Well, we can't say that, can we? I mean, yes, the angels are directing, they're praised to God, they're, I mean, they've given God the glory, and they're singing of God's peace, for his blessing, the blessing of peace, on those in whom, God's favour rests.

They're singing of God's grace, the saving grace, his saving mercy, to those who are his, who know salvation, through the Lord Jesus.

And you know, as I know, there'll be many people, singing glory to God, glory to the newborn king. There'll be many, at this time of year, singing, you know, the Prince of Peace, who's come for God and sinners, God and man, to be reconciled.

[26 : 39] But let's pray that those, who are singing these words, whether a week, tomorrow, whether different parts of our land, different parts of our country, that there'll be that conviction, that what they're actually singing, will bring them to, to realise that they are sinners, who need salvation, need to come to the Lord Jesus.

That they'll see the one whom they're singing of, who truly did come from heaven to earth, the one who was born in Bethlehem. And pray that, yes, those who are singing these words, who as yet don't know the Prince of Peace, that they'll come to know him by faith.

And pray that, yes, this time of year will be a time when there will be glory to God in heaven over sinners being reconciled to God. Maybe even some here this morning, you might at this moment not know the Prince of Peace as your saviour.

If you haven't responded as yet to the good news of great joy, turn to the Lord Jesus, turn to him, turn to the one who came to save you.

And then, join with these angels and give praise and glory to God for the Lord Jesus. Praise him for that peace that he offers to you, to all who are his by faith.

[28 : 01] Amen. Let us pray. Lord, we truly do give you praise and thanks for your goodness to us. We give you praise, Lord, for all that we have heard this morning of the blessing of the coming of the Lord Jesus.

May the praise of our hearts be asked the praise of the angels in giving glory to God in the highest. Lord, teach us, we pray, to be the more in praise of you for your name's sake.

Hear us, Lord, as we continue in praise before you now. We pray these things in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen.