

Angels

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Date: 09 August 2026

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[0:00] Good morning again. First slide please, Josh. First of all, I just want to say a big thank you to Eve and to Veronica and to Ken for being so willing to take part. I appreciate it very much.

And for Ken and Veronica, who've come from their sickbeds to be here this morning. So it just goes, you know, to prove that old adage that the show must go on. So thank you to all three.

And who are you? I'm angel, said angel. And our reading this morning is from Luke chapter 2 and verses 8 to 15. It's all right. I'll get my Bible. That's fine.

I don't want Lisa to be getting too excited this morning with the passage that I'm going to read.

Luke 2 verses 8 to 15. And there were shepherds living out in the fields nearby, keeping watch over the flocks at night.

[1:24] We don't have a Christmas tree standing here in the corner somewhere, isn't it? An angel of the Lord appeared to them and the glory of the Lord shone around them and they were terrified. But the angel said to them, do not be afraid. I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people.

Today in the town of David, a saviour has been born to you. He is Christ the Lord. This will be a sign to you. You will find a baby wrapped in strips of cloth and lying in a manger.

Suddenly a great company of the heavenly host appeared with the angel, praising God and saying, Glory to God in the highest and on earth peace to men on whom his favour rests.

When the angel had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, Let's go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has told us about.

Amen and may God bless the reading of his word. So yes, it isn't Christmas. You are hearing things right. But I thought this morning, next slide please Josh, we'd just look at angels who feature quite a lot in the Bible.

[2:34] Some of you, I'm sure, are very knowledgeable about angels and have read about them when you've read the Bible. So we hear about angels from a young age.

What do you think of, particularly young people, when people talk about angels, what do you think about? Sorry? Holy men?

Holiness. Sorry, beg your pardon. Holiness. What else do we think about? Wings. Yeah. Sitting on clouds with harps, you see them in pictures.

Sorry. Guidance. Yeah. We hear about angels a lot, don't we, in our lives? You know, we hear them in song. You know, remember Matt Monroe?

Yes, cast your minds back there. Matt Monroe. She walks. Like an angel. Thank you. Like an angel. See? Matt Monroe.

[3:34] She walks like an angel walks. She talks like an angel talks. So there we go. And we have ideas about what they look like, as we've just said. Some wings sitting on clouds with harps and so on.

And we call people my angel sometimes. We call our boyfriends, girlfriends, husbands, wives, you're my angel. And we talk about...

Sorry, John? Yeah, there you go. And we talk about guardian angels. That must have been his guardian angel that looked after him in that situation.

But what does the Bible say about angels? What are they really like? What do they do? Do we have a guardian angel? And I thank American theologian Wayne Grudem for the biblical facts about angels when I was looking up about it.

Because he has 14, but I've condensed them into six. So the creation of angels, the types of angels, the power of angels, what angels are not, guardian angels, and examples that angels give to us.

[4:43] Next slide, please, Josh. So the creation of angels. We don't know exactly when angels were created. But we do know that they were created by the sixth day.

Because it says in Exodus, For in six days the Lord made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them. So we know that the angels were made by the sixth day.

And in Nehemiah it says, You alone are the Lord. You made the heavens, even the highest heavens, and all their starry host. That's the angels.

And all their starry host. The earth and all that is in it. The seas and all that is in them. You give life to everything and the multitudes of heaven worship you.

Angels are spirits. They're not seen unless they're revealed to us. But sometimes they do take on bodily form and appear. We've just heard the reading about the angel who took on bodily form and appeared to those shepherds out in the fields near Bethlehem.

[5:55] In Judges 6 and 11, Gideon, who comes from a small tribe, the angel called him mighty man and said, You will defeat the Midianites.

Quite a shock for Gideon. He had no idea. He had that strength. But God gave him the strength and the angel came and told him that he was a mighty man and he would deliver Israel from the Midianites.

In Daniel 6.22, Who knows about Daniel? Anybody know anything about Daniel? Any young person? Daniel and the lion's den.

Thank you, Tony. The very one. We know about Daniel and his three fennens, of course. Meshach, Shadrach and Abednego in the fiery furnace. And then Darius the Mede, King Darius, decided that everybody should worship him.

Daniel wouldn't. Darius had made an edict. Nobody worshipped him. He tossed them into the lion's den. And that's what he did with Daniel. He was expecting the lion to eat Daniel.

[7:04] But the angel came. It tells us the angel came and shut the lion's mouth. And Daniel was safe. It's alright.

In Luke 1, the angel appears. Appears to Zechariah. Appears to Mary. The same angel, Gabriel, appears. And in Matthew 28.5, the angel is there at the tomb.

When Mary Magdalene and the other Mary go, the angel has been there, rolled a stone away, and is there to greet them at Jesus' tomb. So there's four examples of angels taking on bodily form and appearing to people.

Next slide, please. So what types of angels are there? Well, we're told there are three types.

Cherubim. And it says in Genesis, after he drove the man out, he placed on the east side of the Garden of Eden, cherubim.

And it goes on to say that that cherubim had a flaming sword. Better than Buzz Lightyear's whatever it was. Whistle. The angel had a flaming sword to stop people getting to the tree of life.

[8:16] And that's a cherubim. The seraphim. Around him were seraphs calling to one another. Holy, holy, holy is the Lord Almighty. The whole earth is full of his glory in Isaiah.

And one of them gets a coal from the fire. Isaiah doesn't feel worthy to be in God's presence and to prophesy for God.

And the angel gets a coal and touches his lips with the coal and cleanses him from all his sin and his impurity. And that's the angel coming to Isaiah.

And living creatures. In Revelation, it says, Angels have rank and order.

And two are named in the Bible. The archangel Michael and the angel Gabriel. The angel Gabriel, perhaps most famously, is known for coming to Zechariah and to Mary before the birth of John the Baptist and the birth of Jesus.

[9:26] And the archangel Michael, he's the head man, the archangel, just like we have the archbishop as the head over the Church of England. So the archangel Michael. And he's actually called that in Jude when he's arguing with Satan about the body of Moses.

So archangel Michael is actually arguing with Satan about Moses' body. And that's when he's called the archangel Michael. Next slide, please, Josh.

The power of angels. Angels are very powerful. And there are a lot of them. That night, the angel of the Lord went out, it says in 2 Kings, and put to death 185,000 men in the Assyrian camp.

That's powerful. That's powerful, isn't it? Going out to fight on behalf of Israel and killed 185,000 men in the Assyrian camp overnight.

Praise the Lord, you his angels, you mighty ones, who do his bidding, who obey his word, it says in Psalm 103, verse 20. And then in Matthew 28, 2, we're back to Jesus' tomb.

[10:46] And it says, There was a violent earthquake, for an angel of the Lord came down from heaven and going to the tomb, rolled back the stone and sat on it. And this wasn't a small little stone here, like, you know, that I could move here.

This was a big stone over the tomb, that the angel came down and moved the stone. That's great power that God has equipped the angel with, to come and move that stone by the tomb of Jesus. And in Hebrew it says, To join thousands upon thousands of angels. And it talks about thousands and tens of thousands of angels. There are a lot of them, and there's a lot of power that they have given to them by God.

Next slide, please. They use their power to battle Satan's demonic forces. It says in Revelation, An angel seized Satan, grabbed hold of the devil, and bound him for a thousand years.

Again, huge power that the angels have been given. Hold of Satan, bound him for a thousand years. They carry out some of God's plans on earth.

[12:01] Now an angel of the Lord said to Philip, Philip was out walking, and an angel of the Lord came and said to him, There's somebody going to come past on a chariot. I want you to go talk to this person.

It was a eunuch that was on his way. And Philip was given this God-given task by the angel. The angel came to him and said, I want you to talk to this eunuch in his chariot.

And Philip went and shared the gospel with him. And history suggests that that is how the gospel began to be spread into Africa. Through that man.

And all stemming from the fact that the angel obeyed what God asked him to do. God asked the angel, said to the angel, Go and speak to Philip.

Philip. And the angel of the Lord went to Philip and spoke to Philip, who then gave the gospel to the eunuch. This gospel that has saved many of us here.

[13:02] This gospel of Christ that many of us could stand up and say, this is the most important piece of news ever in our lives. And if you don't know the gospel of Christ today, if you don't know Jesus as your Lord and Savior, please talk to somebody.

What you need to do, you just need to pray to God. You just need to say, God, I'm sorry for all the wrong things I've done and said in my life. I acknowledge that you are Jesus.

You are the Son of God. I want you to be my Lord and my Savior. That's the gospel of Christ. To come into the kingdom of God is as simple and as profound as that.

At the moment, it says in Hebrews, we are a little lower than the angels. But when Jesus returns, believers will be higher than the angels and we'll judge them.

Do you not know that we will judge angels? We will judge angels. That's a pretty important task that we're going to be given, given some of the things that the angels have done that we've just spoken about.

[14:16] We will judge the angels. Next slide, please, Josh. So what angels are not? They are not omnipresent.

They're not here around us, with us all the time, everywhere we go. God is here all the time, everywhere we go.

God is omnipresent. Angels are not. In Daniel, it says, Daniel, your words were heard and I have come in response to them. Now I have come to explain.

The angel came. He wasn't there. He came. The angels are not omnipresent. They are sent or they are called. They do not marry.

At the resurrection, people will neither marry nor be given in marriage. They will be like the angels of heaven. They will not marry. They are not to be worshipped or prayed to.

[15:16] Do not do it. I am a fellow servant, John is told in Revelation. When he starts to think about worshipping the angel, do not do it. They are fellow servants.

They are not to be worshipped or prayed to. God and Jesus are the ones to be prayed to, not the angels. For there is one God and one mediator between God and man, the man Christ Jesus.

Angels are not mediators. We don't need a mediator to go to God. We don't need someone else.

We don't need a priest, a pastor, sorry John, a minister, a bishop, an archbishop.

We don't need anyone to go to God. We don't need a mediator. We can go directly to the throne of God when we pray.

Next slide, please, Josh. So guardian angels. God sends angels to protect people. For he will command his angels concerning you to guard you in all your ways.

[16 : 25] They will lift you up in their hands so that you will not strike your foot against the stone. And individual people, certainly children, have guardian angels. See that you do not look down on these little ones.

For I tell you that there are angels in heaven. Always see the face of my Father in heaven. The Bible doesn't talk about guardian angels. It doesn't talk about each of us having a guardian angel. But angels clearly, from those two scripture passages, do protect people. They are sent to protect people. We were in France a long time ago.

And we'd been to church. And after church, we decided to go and to just find a playground. Let the two chill. We had only two girls then. Let them go and have a bit of a play in a playground.

And Anna and I just would sit there for a minute. It was nice. You know, they were a little bit older. I think Rebecca was maybe two and a half, something like that. And Emma was about five. So they were a little bit older.

[17 : 32] We could just let them go a little bit further than before. And it was nice. It was a lovely hot day. There was nobody else around because it was very hot. Mad dogs and Englishmen go out in the midday sun.

Or mad dogs and Ulster ladies go out in the midday sun as well. So there were very, very few people around. We're having a lovely time. Suddenly there's a terrible scream. Emma runs over. Somehow Rebecca had fallen off one of those roundabouts. You know those roundabouts where people push? And somebody pushed and Rebecca had gone, phew, off into the near distance. And when we ran and got out of her nose was like that and blood everywhere and what have you. We thought, what are we going to do? We don't know where we are. We don't know which town we were in. But we have no idea what part of town we're in.

No mobile phones then. No public phone box anywhere. Suddenly, a man and a woman appeared. And the man said, in English to Anne, he said, shall I call an ambulance?

[18 : 35] So Anne said, oh please, yes, thank you so much. So I went to phone an ambulance and Anne took care of Rebecca and I was looking after Emma.

And when we turned round, they were nowhere to be seen. And it was a square. It was a sort of public square. Where this playground was. They were nowhere to be seen. And to this day, we believe that those two, certainly that man, was a guardian angel sent at that time.

Because we really had no idea what we were going to do. And the angel, the ambulance then appeared very quickly. And off we went to the hospital.

Rebecca and Anne in the ambulance and me following on trying to keep up with the ambulance in the car. So I got to know where the hospital was. And when we got to the hospital, Rebecca's nose was, as I said, bent all over.

And the person in the ambulance said, well, her nose is broken. But when we got to the hospital and they checked, they said, when was the little girl's nose broken?

[19 : 44] And Anne said, well, today. They said, no, no, no. When was it broken before? It's never been broken. Oh, well, there's a mark where it's been broken, but it's healed. Which is mind-boggling.

At this time, I was doing my best Inspector Clouseau impersonation, trying to talk in sort of franglais to them about my licence de voiture.

My driving licence to give my address to them, which, of course, it's a permis, not a licence. But I was doing my best Inspector Clouseau. So, yes, guardian angels do come.

But they provide, as Wayne Grudem said, zonal defence rather than man-marking. They're not individual guardian angels for you personally or for me personally.

But they are there, covering a zone, if you like. And when they're needed, they will move in and can protect you. Next slide, please.

[20 : 45] So, what examples do angels give for us? Well, they model worship. In Revelation, it says, I looked and heard the voice of many angels numbering thousands upon thousands and ten thousands times ten thousand.

There we go. Huge number again. In a loud voice they sang, worthy is the Lamb who was slain. And they model obedience and service.

Your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Two things that we can learn from the angels.

One, how to worship. Worthy is the Lamb who was slain. Worthy is Jesus who took our sin. How worthy is Jesus who took our sin.

That we can have access to God through Jesus. How worthy is he. How worthy of our worship. Just like the angels worship, so we should worship.

[21:47] And obedience and service. And obedience and service. In heaven, God's will is done by angels as it is in heaven. Immediately, joyfully and without question.

And their highest joy is to praise God continuously. That's a tremendous example for us, isn't it? Do what God says.

Do what God says. Immediately, joyfully and without question. Boy, if we were like that. I'm not like that.

I'd love to be like that. To do God's will. Immediately, joyfully and willingly. Without question. That my highest joy would be to praise God continuously.

That should be our highest joy. To praise God continuously. Exactly. So, that's a little bit about angels.

[22:52] Who they are. What they are. Powerful. Mighty. Great in number. Do great things. Sent by God.

God commissions them. He commissions the angels. And they come to minister to us. Open your hearts and let them minister.

To you. Thank you.