

12-21-25

## **Greater than the Angels**

### **Matthew 1: 18 -25**

I was immediately drawn to her flowing locks of brown hair falling softly on her shoulders. Her sparkling blue eyes and rosy cheeks set her face aglow. Her sweet smile told me she was full of joy.

Right then and there I knew I had to have this angelic vision for my own, But at what cost? I wondered. I dared not even guess, for I was on a tight budget and this whole bidding process on EBay was a complete mystery to me.

I had already made a couple attempts to win another item only to be outbid at the last second. This time I wasn't going to let that happen. I needed her, I wanted her. She would be the perfect ... tree-topper for my Christmas tree!

During the Christmas season, angels sure get their moment in the sun, don't they?

Every year at Christmas, Grandma Norma, Julie's mom, would buy Christmas ornaments for the grandkids:

Calem would get sport figures,

Casey? Animals;

Lily would get bells,

Sydney stars,

and Courtney, being the first-born, angels.

Angels get more than their fair share of air-play too:

“Angels we have heard on high”,

“Hark the herald angels sing”,

“The first noel, the angels did say...”

That's okay by me. After all, angels play a significant role in the Nativity story. As a matter of fact, in the Biblical account immediately leading up to Jesus' birth and in the time following his birth, angelic activity is off the charts, being recorded no less than 6 times and potentially up to 8 times. (I Sound like that crazy scientist from Ghostbusters!)

First, we read about Gabriel visiting Zechariah in the temple to inform him that his wife Elizabeth will be the mother of John the

Baptist – the voice of one calling in the wilderness.

Second, Gabriel visits Mary telling her that she will be the mother of the Messiah.

Third, a great company of angels visit the shepherds to announce the Savior has been born in Bethlehem.

These are three of the most famous accounts.

But there are three and possibly five more accounts in the Gospel of Matthew in chapter two alone, all involving dreams!

An angel appears to Joseph in a dream at a very crucial moment – right when Joseph was on the brink of divorcing Mary. And one might wonder how Joseph could divorce Mary when they were not yet married. But according to Jewish custom, the betrothal of a woman to a man legally bound the two together as if they were already married. Only divorce or death could separate them.

Joseph, being a righteous man who clearly loved Mary, decided to do the honorable and compassionate thing and divorce her quietly, thus sparing Mary an even worse fate of public humiliation and possibly death by stoning.

From a purely pragmatic perspective, divorce was the logical thing to do under the circumstances, so Joseph made up his mind to do just that – that is until God's angel showed up in his dream. Matthew records the angel's words in Matthew 1: 20 – 21:

*“Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife, because what is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. She will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus because he will save his people from their sins.”*

These verses show us how much God loves us.

They remind us of how God showed up at the very moment we needed him the most. Right when it looked like our Savior was going to have to enter the world lacking a human father, God kept his plan for our salvation moving along, ensuring that this little baby would have a father to take care and provide for this newly formed family.

I'm reminded of the phrase the Apostle Paul used in Romans 5:6:

*“At just the right time, when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly.”*

In other words, when we were without hope because sin had

invaded every area of our lives like an incurable disease, and we could see no alternative but spiritual death, God's Word of truth showed up in the person of Jesus Christ to save our souls. All we have to do is believe.

Joseph chose to believe and obey the angel's message: He took Mary to be his wife.

Matthew's account also reminds us of how important God views a father's role and responsibility to the family.

Could Jesus have been the Savior of the world without Joseph?

Of course, He is after all God, but because Jesus chose to take human form, becoming fully human, he needed a mom and dad to teach him important things and to show him love and support as he grew to become a man ready to fulfill his mission.

God's design for the family is best: A husband and a wife raising their children up in the admonition of the Lord. Life is tough enough even when the nuclear family remains intact.

Are you the father of young ones, teenagers or even young adults?

Then God believes you are the man for the job, just as He believed Joseph was the man to raise Jesus. Your job is not to just be a material provider. You're to be a source of spiritual strength and truth that will guide, direct, and even determine the character and destiny of your offspring.

There is no greater calling for a man than to be a good father to his children. Yet how can we men rise to such a monumental task?

Well, we can begin by ...

Ø Reading the Bible with and to our children and teaching them Biblical principles.

Ø Praying with and for our children. (Children need to see their father relating to his Father in heaven.)

Ø Treating their mother with love, honor and tenderness. (How we treat our children's mother speaks volumes about our personal faith in Christ.)

Ø And by demonstrating love and compassion to our children while at the same time meting out appropriate discipline when they choose to disobey.

This is Godly love, and as Dr. James Dobson once said, "parenting isn't for cowards."

I think we'd all agree that Joseph did alright as a father. Not only did he raise Jesus, the Son of God, he raised James and Judas, half-brothers to Jesus, who wrote the Biblical letters of James and Jude!

In Matthew's account we also learn that the Magi were warned in a dream to not return to Herod after they had visited the Christ child. Could an angel of God have brought this message?

We can't say for sure, but the evidence seems to suggest that this is the case, especially since, in the same chapter, Matthew records that an angel appeared to Joseph on two more occasions:

first, with instructions to flee Egypt with Mary and their son and, second, to return to Israel after Herod's death.

Certainly, all three of these messages had the same purpose: To keep the Christ child safe from harm, thus protecting the means to our salvation.

Finally, in one last dream Joseph is warned that Herod's son could be trouble, so he moves his family one last time to the district of Galilee to a town called Nazareth this fulfilling the one more prophecy concerning Christ: *"He will be called a Nazarene."*

So, with all this angelic activity swirling around Christ's birth and upbringing, is it any wonder that early Christians – especially Jewish Christians became fascinated with angels? Most Jewish folks, Christian or not, understood angels to be exalted beings *practically* worthy of worship – and one can see why.

In Moses' blessing of the Israelites before his death, it is recorded that he said, *"The Lord came from Sinai and dawned over them from Seir. He shone forth from Mt. Paran. He came with myriads of holy ones."*

"Holy ones" can be translated "angels".

When God met Moses on Mt. Sinai, to deliver the Law to the nation of Israel, God's angels were there! They witnessed and perhaps even took part in the most historic and sacred event known to the Jewish race, so, of course angels were held in high regard... but are they worthy of our worship?

Thank goodness we have the books of Colossians and Hebrews to set the matter straight.

In Colossians chapter one Paul makes it clear as to whom our worship is to be directed. Beginning in verse 15 he writes this about Jesus, our Savior:



*“He is the image of the invisible God, the first-born over-all creation. For by him all things were created, things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things were created by him and for him.”*

Let me say a couple of things about these verses:

First, don't let the phrase “firstborn over all creation” throw you. Paul's not talking about when God's Son came into existence. God the Son and God the Father have been in a co-eternal relationship before the beginning of time.

What Paul is doing is making an analogy, and it goes like this:

Just as the firstborn Son had certain privileges and rights in the Biblical world, so Jesus Christ has certain rights in relation to all creation, namely complete supremacy and sovereignty because He made it all.

Second, Paul's use of the terms

thrones

powers

rulers and authorities can pretty much be summed up in one word:

Angels

We know this, because one of Paul's primary reasons for writing to the Colossians is to address the church's problem of angel worship. That's why Paul is so quick to write in 1:9,

*“For in Christ all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form...”*

In other words,

Worship Christ and Him alone, for He is God!

And in Colossians 2:18:

*“Do not let anyone who delights in false humility and the worship of angels disqualify you for the prize.”*

The “prize” being eternal salvation by faith in Christ Jesus alone.

Wow! How about that for a shot across the bow of our cult friends, the Mormons and the Jehovah Witnesses!

Both of these cults have a deliberate and erroneous view of who Christ is: They do not see Jesus a Deity, but rather a part of creation not unlike the angels.

As a matter of fact, the Jehovah Witnesses believe Jesus to be none other than Michael the Archangel and the Mormons understand Jesus as the first of many Spirit Children of Elohim - Elohim who needed a whole lot of people to help him with Creation, people like Noah, Abraham, Moses, and, not surprisingly, Joseph Smith himself.

But where does all this talk of angels take us?

No matter how awesome, powerful and exalted angels may be, they are nowhere near the same league as our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

This is the main point of my message:

You've read about Gabriel the angel that struck fear into Zechariah, and greatly troubled Mary.

We've read about the great company of the heavenly host that terrified the shepherds.

Who can forget the account of the Roman soldiers who fell over as if dead when an angel of the Lord rolled back the stone one Jesus' empty tomb and sat on it?

As awesome as God's angels are, the writer of Hebrews devotes the entire first chapter to explaining how Christ is Superior to the angels, concluding,

*"Are not all angels ministering spirits*

*to serve*

*those who will inherit salvation?"*

If we can be so easily dazzled by God's angels, imagine Christ's Glory when He returns!

Are you ready for His return?

We, who humbly believe, are to inherit his salvation. In 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17 Paul writes,

*"For the Lord himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel, (there are those angels again) and with the trumpet call of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. After that, we who are still alive and are left will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so, we will be with the Lord forever."*

I know there are skeptics among us. If there weren't, I'd be out of a job!

I was once a skeptic. I pray that one day as you pass a mirror, you'll stop and ask that image staring back at you, *What's*

keeping you from giving your life to Christ? Is it unbelief? Then ask God to reveal Himself to you. Hebrews 11:6 says,

*“Without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him.”*

The Bible is God’s revelation to man. To read and study it with an open heart and mind is key to earnestly seeking Him.

God’s greatest revelation to mankind is Christ Jesus in the manger then on to the cross.

Is it fear that keeps you from following Christ?

The Bible says perfect love drives out fear: focus on God’s amazing love for you that was demonstrated on the cross.

Maybe it’s anger, bitterness or pain that’s keeping you from coming to Him. God says you will find rest from all of this when you take up His yoke. Jesus says,

*“My yoke is easy and my burden is light.”*

Why is this so?

It’s because Christ has worked out the Great Exchange:

|                 |     |                            |
|-----------------|-----|----------------------------|
| Your sin        | for | His complete forgiveness   |
| Your pain       | for | His unspeakable joy        |
| Your brokenness | for | His complete healing       |
| Your mortality  | for | life everlasting with Him! |

When I start thinking about all that Christ offers, I can’t help but think that the angels’ announcement to the shepherds might have been a bit understated:

*“I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people.”*

Good news of great joy?

This is more like “supercalifragilisticexpialidocious” news!

This news is like being trapped in a cave-in, pitch black, oxygen level depleting rapidly; right when it appears all is lost, a pin-hole of light appears, and, oh, how bright is that light!

Isaiah prophesies 500 years before Christ,

*“The people walking in darkness have seen a great light,  
on those living in the land of the shadow of death a light has dawned!”*

In his gospel, John writes this about Christ:

*“In him was life, and  
that life was the light of men.*

*The light shines in the darkness and  
the darkness cannot overcome it.”*

There’s a reason God sent his angels  
to inform,  
guide and  
protect

Zechariah, Mary, Joseph, the shepherds and the magi and ...

God’s precious Son who was on a mission to bring  
hope,  
love, and  
peace

to a dark and desperate world – nothing and no one was going to  
interfere.

Now do your part: unwrap God’s gift to you, His precious Son;  
today, accept Him as your Lord and Savior. “Angels we have  
heard on high, sweetly singing o’er the plains”: they are God’s  
messengers, calling you to Him.

Listen to their message and respond to Christ.