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Luke 1:26–33

“An Angelic Christmas”

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Over the years angels have fascinated Christians and non-Christians alike. In this study, Pastor Gary provides an overview of the duties and description of angels, as well as the six specific biblical accounts of angelic involvement in the Christmas story.

Angels

1. Angels are mystical, but they aren't mythical.
2. Angels are mentioned more than 300 times in the Bible.
3. Angels are sometimes mentioned as being warriors and sometimes as being messengers.
4. Most angels worship God, but some have rebelled against God.
5. Sometimes angels have appeared to people in splendor, and sometimes as a regular-looking person.
6. According to an AP poll, 94% of those who regularly attend church believe in the existence of angels, and 95% of those who identify as “Evangelical Christians” believe in angels. ¹
7. Even among a cross-section of Americans surveyed (Christian and non-Christian as well as church attenders and those who don't attend church services), nearly 8 out of 10 (77%) indicated they believed in the existence of angels. ²

¹ <http://www.cbsnews.com/news/poll-nearly-8-in-10-americans-believe-in-angels/>

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8. Today, we see images of angels everywhere, including works of art, which depict them as being anything from fierce warriors with swords and 6-pack abs to effeminate, Caucasian, fairy-like creatures, or chubby, naked, winged children!

Angels In The Christmas Story

9. An angel told Mary about the conception of Jesus.
- a. **Luke 1:26–33** – *“In the sixth month [sixth month of Elizabeth’s pregnancy], God sent the angel Gabriel to Nazareth, a town in Galilee, to a virgin pledged to be married to a man named Joseph, a descendant of David. The virgin’s name was Mary. The angel went to her and said, ‘Greetings, you who are highly favored! The Lord is with you.’ Mary was greatly troubled at his words and wondered what kind of greeting this might be. But the angel said to her, ‘Do not be afraid, Mary, you have found favor with God. You will be with child and give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus. He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his father David, and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever; his kingdom will never end.’ ”*
10. An angel encouraged Joseph to stay with Mary.
- a. **Matthew 1:20–21** – *“But after he had considered [divorcing Mary], an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, ‘Joseph son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary home 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.’ ”*
11. Angels announced the Jesus’ birth to shepherds.
- a. **Luke 2:8–12** – *“And there were shepherds living out in the fields nearby, keeping watch over their flocks at night. 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 Savior has been born to you; he is Christ the Lord. This will be a sign to you: You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger.’ ”*
12. Angels celebrated the birth of Jesus.
- a. **Luke 2:13–14** – *“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 favor rests.’ ”*
13. An angel warned Joseph to flee to Egypt with Mary and Jesus, because Herod wanted to kill Jesus.
- a. **Matthew 2:13** – *“When [the Wise Men] had gone, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream. ‘Get up,’ he said, ‘take the child and his mother and escape to Egypt. Stay there until I tell you, for Herod is going to search for the child to kill him.’ ”*

14. An angel told Joseph that it was safe to return to Israel because Herod was dead.
- a. **Matthew 2:19–20** – *“After Herod died, an angel of the Lord appeared in a dream to Joseph in Egypt and said, ‘Get up, take the child and his mother and go to the land of Israel, for those who were trying to take the child’s life are dead.’ ”*

The Description Of Angels

15. The word angel comes from the Greek word, angelos, which means, messenger.
16. The Bible tells us angels are *“ministering spirits.”*
- a. **Hebrews 1:14** – *“Are not all angels ministering spirits sent to serve those who will inherit salvation?”*
17. Angels are not glorified human beings, and they neither marry nor reproduce like human beings.
- a. **Matthew 22:30** – *“At the resurrection people will neither marry nor be given in marriage; they will be like the angels in heaven.”*
18. God created angels before he created the heavens and the earth and they were present with singing and rejoicing when he spoke the world into existence.
- a. **Psalm 148:5** – *“Let them praise the name of the Lord, for he commanded and they were created.”*
 - b. **Job 38:4–7** – *“ ‘Where were you [referring to Job] when I laid the earth’s foundation? Tell me, if you understand. Who marked off its dimensions? Surely you know! Who stretched a measuring line across it? On what were its footings set, or who laid its cornerstone – while the morning stars sang together and all the angels shouted for joy?’ ”*
19. Angels are immortal but they are not eternal beings since God created them.
- a. **Colossians 1:16–17** – *“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. He is before all things, and in him all things hold together.”*
20. Angels who once rebelled against God are known as fallen angels or demons.
- a. **Jude 6** – *“And the angels who did not keep their positions of authority but abandoned their own home – these he has kept in darkness, bound with everlasting chains for judgment on the great Day.”*
 - b. **2 Peter 2:4** – *“For if God did not spare angels when they sinned, but sent them to hell, putting them into gloomy dungeons to be held for judgment...”*
21. All angels in the Bible are presented as masculine.
- a. In 300 references they are mentioned as being male, however, it is possible there are female angels.

22. Angels are without number.
- a. **Hebrews 12:22b** – “...thousands upon thousands of angels in joyful assembly...”
 - b. **Daniel 7:10b** – “Thousands upon thousands [of angels] attended him; ten thousand times ten thousand stood before him.”
 - c. **Matthew 26:53** – “Do you think I [Jesus] cannot call on my Father, and he will at once put at my disposal more than twelve legions of angels?”
23. Only three angels are named in the Bible: Gabriel, Michael, and Lucifer.
- a. Gabriel – The messenger angel
 - b. Michael – The archangel
 - i. Michael is the only archangel mentioned in the Bible.
 - ii. **1 Thessalonians 4:16** – “For the Lord himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel...”
 - iii. **Jude 9** – “But even the archangel Michael...”
 - c. Lucifer – The fallen angel (Satan)
24. There are different kinds of angels with differing roles, ranks, and duties.
- a. Seraphim
 - i. Six-winged creatures that worship at the throne of God.
 - ii. **Isaiah 6:3** – “And they [seraphs] were calling to one another: ‘Holy, holy, holy is the Lord Almighty; the whole earth is full of his glory.’ ”
 - iii. The word seraphim in Hebrew means, fiery ones.
 - b. Cherubim
 - i. The first mention of cherubim in the Bible is **Genesis 3:24**, which says: “After he drove the man out, he placed on the east side of the Garden of Eden cherubim and a flaming sword flashing back and forth to guard the way to the tree of life.”
 - ii. **1 Samuel 4:4a** – “So the people sent men to Shiloh, and they brought back the ark of the covenant of the Lord Almighty, who is enthroned between two cherubim.”
 - iii. Cherubs adorned the Temple of God, according to **1 Kings 6:26**, which indicates their prominence, considering the “... height of each cherub was ten cubits.”
 - iv. Cherubim are typically represented with wings, feet, and hands, but they are also described in different forms as having two or four faces.
 1. **Ezekiel 41:18a** – “... were carved cherubim... each cherub had two faces: the face of a man toward the palm tree on one side and the face of a lion toward the palm tree on the other.”
 2. **Ezekiel 10:21** – “Each had four faces and four wings, and under their wings was what looked like the hands of a man.”
 - c. Archangel
 - i. The Greek word is archangelos, which comes from two different words.
 1. Archo means to be first, referring to political power or rank, or to reign or rule over.
 2. Angelos means, messenger.

25. Angels are not to be worshipped.
- a. **Revelation 22:8–9** – “ *I, John, am the one who heard and saw these things. And when I had heard and seen them, I fell down to worship at the feet of the angel who had been showing them to me. But he said to me, ‘Do not do it! I am a fellow servant with you and with your brothers the prophets and of all who keep the words of this book. Worship God!’* ”
26. Angels sometimes take on the appearance of human beings.
- a. **Genesis 18** – Account of the three visitors
 - b. **Mark 16:5** – “*As they entered the tomb, they saw a young man dressed in a white robe sitting on the right side, and they were alarmed.*”
 - c. **Hebrews 13:2** – “*Do not forget to entertain strangers, for by so doing some people have entertained angels without knowing it.*”

The Duties Of Angels

27. Worship And Praise
- a. Worship and praise of God is the main activity portrayed in heaven.
 - i. **Isaiah 6:1–3** – “*In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord seated on a throne, high and exalted, and the train of his robe filled the temple. Above him were seraphs, each with six wings: With two wings they covered their faces, with two they covered their feet, and with two they were flying. And they were calling to one another: ‘Holy, holy, holy is the Lord Almighty; the whole earth is full of his glory.’* ”
28. Execute God’s Judgment
- a. An angel of the Lord went forth and smote an Assyrian camp, according to **2 Kings 19:20–34**.
 - b. A destroying angel was sent, but later withheld, to punish David for his sin in taking a census of the great number of his people, according to **2 Samuel 24**.
 - c. An angel of death came at the time of Moses and the Exodus of the Israelites, and killed the firstborn of the Egyptians.
29. Deliver Messages
- a. Angels serve as messengers who communicate God’s will or plans to men.
 - i. One example is Gabriel, who came to Zechariah concerning the birth of John the Baptist.

30. Instruct

- a. The Bible tells us in **Matthew 1–2**, that Angels gave instructions to Joseph about the birth of Jesus.
- b. Angels gave instructions to the women at the tomb after Jesus had risen from the dead.
- c. The Bible tells us in **Acts 8:26**, that angels gave instructions to Philip.
- d. The Bible tells us in **Acts 10:1–8**, that angels gave instructions to Cornelius.

31. Provide

- a. God has used angels to provide food for Hagar and Elijah.
 - i. Hagar – **Genesis 21:17–20**
 - ii. Elijah – **1 Kings 19:5–6**

32. Protect And Guard

- a. Angels have been used to keep God’s people out of physical danger, and one example is Daniel and the lions.
 - i. **Daniel 6:22** – *“My God sent his angel, and he shut the mouths of the lions.”*
 - ii. **Psalm 91:11–12** – *“[God] will command his angels concerning you to guard you in all your ways; they will lift you up in their hands, so that you will not strike your foot against a stone.”*
- b. We refer to some angels as being guardian angels.
 - i. **Matthew 18:10** – *“See that you do not look down on one of these little [children]. For I tell you that their angels in heaven always see the face of my Father in heaven.”*

33. Strengthen And Encourage

- a. Angels strengthened Jesus after the time of his temptation.
 - i. **Matthew 4:11** – *“Then the devil left him, and angels came and attended him.”*
- b. Angels encouraged the apostles to keep preaching after releasing them from prison.
 - i. **Acts 5:19–20** – *“But during the night an angel of the Lord opened the doors of the jail and brought them out. ‘Go, stand in the temple courts,’ he said, ‘And tell the people the full message of this new life.’ ”*
- c. Angels told Paul that everyone on the ship would survive the impending shipwreck.
 - i. **Acts 27:23–25** – *“Last night an angel of the God whose I am and whom I serve stood beside me and said, ‘Do not be afraid, Paul. You must stand trial before Caesar; and God has graciously given you the lives of all who sail with you.’ ”*

34. Care For Believers At The Moment Of Death

- a. In the story of Lazarus and the rich man, we read that angels escorted the spirit of Lazarus when he died.
 - i. **Luke 16:22** – *“The time came when the beggar died and the angels carried him to Abraham’s side [Paradise].”*

* Unless noted, all Scriptures quoted are from the New International Version (NIV 1984).