

Things Which Angels Desire to Look Into

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[0 : 00] And please open your Bibles to 1 Peter chapter 1, and we'll just look at verses 10 through 12.

1 Peter 1, 10 through 12. Peter, in this first chapter, has been speaking about the salvation that is ours in Jesus Christ, and now in verse 10, he says, Concerning this salvation, the prophets who spoke of the grace that was to come to you searched intently and with the greatest care, trying to find out the time and circumstances to which the Spirit of Christ in them was pointing when he predicted the sufferings of Christ and the glories that would follow.

It was revealed to them that they were not serving themselves, but you. When they spoke of the things that have now been told you by those who have preached the gospel to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven, even angels long to look into these things.

The salvation of sinful men through the Lord Jesus Christ is here said to be the intense study of two kinds of creatures, prophets and angels.

The very prophets who wrote about the sufferings of Christ and the glories that would follow didn't understand everything that they were writing about.

[1 : 35] And it says that they searched intently with the greatest care to learn more about these events, even what the Holy Spirit had inspired them to write.

They knew they were serving a later generation such as us and that much of what they wrote about would only be made clear in the light of New Testament fulfillment and New Testament revelation. But this intense study was not only that of the prophets were told even angels long to look into these things. What things?

The work of our salvation, the sufferings of Christ and the glories that will follow. So though angels have a superior wisdom and power than men, they still do not understand everything about salvation either.

There was much that was mysterious and hidden for long ages past, not clearly revealed, not clearly understood as to many of its details.

[2 : 41] And it does appear that the angels also had to wait with the church and only understood more and more of God's plan of salvation as it was unfolded in history, as Ephesians 3, 10 and 11 suggest.

And 1 Timothy 1, 10. Well, here we find the elect angels of God with more than a casual interest in the unfolding of God's great plan of salvation.

It says they long to look into these things. The Greek word there for look into has the idea of to bend over and examine, such as your kids might do if you saw an ant dragging something along the ground and you were wanting to find out what's he pulling.

And you bent down and looked intently to see what they were doing. That's the picture of the angels bending down with intense interest to see what this salvation in Jesus Christ, how it is unfolding and how it will come to pass.

Well, they are heavenly onlookers and they're fixing their intense gaze on these things in order to know more. So tonight I'd like for us to consider our salvation, but especially the cross of Christ from the perspective of the watching angels.

[4 : 08] In Psalm 103, David calls these angels God's mighty ones, a heavenly host, a veritable army of servants who do God's will and obey his word.

You remember in Genesis 28 when Jacob was running from his brother Esau and going into a far land to find a wife. He spent the first night sleeping on that rock for a pillow and he had a vision in the night.

And in that vision, the veil was pulled back to look into the unseen world for a minute. And it's there that we see the activity of these spirit beings that we call angels, that the Bible calls angels. He saw a stairway reaching from the earth all the way to heaven with the angels of God ascending and descending on it. There at the top was the Lord, the great I am, and they're receiving orders from him.

They're coming down to the earth and fulfilling his will and then going back up for further orders. Up and down this stairway they go, just one word from him, and they're off, quick as lightning, the scriptures teach us, to see that God's decree and his plan is fulfilled to the very letter.

[5 : 26] And I think that we'll find out in heaven that much of what we call providence is carried out by God's angels. Now, how much, we don't know, but we know that some of it is.

They are very interested in our salvation. Did you know that they rejoice when you, as one sinner, repented? That they rejoiced in your salvation.

And then they went to work to serve you, you who are to inherit eternal life. That was their purpose. Indeed, we find in Hebrews 1.14, Are not all angels ministering spirits sent to serve those who will inherit salvation?

Is that you? Are you going to inherit salvation? They're sent to minister to you. And Psalm 91.11 says, For he, God, will command his angels concerning you to guard you in all your ways.

And the Bible's full of examples of this. How the angels are God's agents to protect his children, to destroy his enemies. Remember how he shut the lion's mouth.

[6 : 33] It was a lot. It was an angel that shut the lion's mouth so they would not harm Daniel. It was angels who destroyed the enemies of God in Sodom, in Egypt, in the ten plagues.

It was an angel that conducted prison breaks for the apostles and for Peter, striking down wicked King Herod with worms such that he died.

Remember when Elisha and his servant woke up, and the servant saw that the whole city was surrounded with chariots and horses, seeking the life of Elisha.

And he goes and runs to Elisha. Oh, what should we do? And Elisha said to him, Don't be afraid. Those who are with us are more than those who are with them.

And I'm sure he was counting Elisha and himself, too, against all of them. That's new math. And then Elisha prayed, God, open his eyes that he might see reality.

[7 : 38] See the way this world operates. What's really happening in our world? And he saw that fiery chariots and horses were surrounding Elisha.

Angels sent to minister and serve those who will inherit eternal life. Sinclair Ferguson has noted that the mention of angels in Scripture seems to track with the great advances in the kingdom of God and also in protecting against dangers to Messiah's mission.

So angel appearances increase in the Scriptures surrounding the coming of the Son of God to earth, just as we have noted that demonic activity increased at the time of Christ coming to earth. These things, angels were not constantly appearing to men. And one of the ways we can know that is that whenever they appeared, it scared the living daylights out of people. If it was a daily thing, they would just say, Oh, what do you want?

But the first words almost every time out of an angel are what? Do not fear. Fear not. Why? Because they're scared to death. Most of them never saw an angel before, had read about him, heard about him.

[9 : 06] And so these were rare occurrences. And yet when we come to the time of Christ, there's a bunch of them, isn't there? So let's walk through this plan of salvation and see the involvement of angels. First, we see them in the incarnation.

Angels, the word for angels means messenger. And that's what we see them doing, announcing the coming of Messiah. They appear, an angel, Gabriel, appears to Zechariah, the priest, as he's offering a sacrifice.

And he tells him his barren wife will have a son. And he's to call him John. And he will make ready a people prepared for the Lord. And then Gabriel is sent to Nazareth in Galilee to a virgin Mary and announces the miraculous conception and birth of Jesus that he will be the son of the Most High, the promised King of David, sitting upon a throne with a kingdom that will never end.

And then after appearing to Mary and after she became pregnant, an angel appears to Joseph to whom she was betrothed. And he was thinking that she was unfaithful to him since she was pregnant and was planning to break their betrothal and call off the marriage.

And God sends an angel to him to tell him that what was conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit, so he shouldn't be afraid to take her home and to marry her. And before ultrasounds were invented, the angel told him, she will give birth to a son.

[10:38] He named the gender a son. And you're to give him the name Jesus because he will save his people from their sins. And then on the night of Jesus' birth, there in Bethlehem, there were shepherds abiding in their fields, keeping watch over their flocks by night.

And an angel of the Lord appeared to them and the glory of the Lord shone round about them and they were sore afraid. And the angel said unto them, Fear not, for behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people.

For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, which is Christ the Lord. And this shall be a sign unto you. You shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger.

And 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 to man on whom his favor rests.

The angels are thrilled with the glory of God that is being revealed in the incarnation, sending his son on this rescue mission of a people to be the bride of Christ.

[11:50] We can only imagine the increased interest of the angels at this time as they gaze with wonder. And admiration as the long-promised Redeemer had come to save his people.

All angel eyes were upon him, the Lord Jesus. This was the age of fulfillment. It is here. Well, then around two years after Jesus' birth, King Herod hears from the wise men from the east that the king of the Jews has been born.

And they want to know where and upon finding out from the scholars that it's Bethlehem, he sends soldiers to massacre all the baby boys two years old and younger, timing it from the time that the star appeared.

Jesus' life is in danger from a human perspective. And an angel of the Lord is dispatched to warn Joseph in a dream, get up and 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. And after King Herod died, an angel of the Lord is sent to Egypt to tell Joseph, it's time, return to Israel.

[13:06] And he goes to Nazareth where Jesus grows up. And during that time, the Bible is basically silent about the years of our Savior in Nazareth except for getting lost and then found in the temple three days later at age 12, going home and then submitting to his parents.

But this protection, his protection, being the special concern of angels, we can be sure that the promise of Psalm 91, 11 and 12 applied to this period of our Savior's life as well.

He will command his angels concerning you and they will lift up and they will lift you up in their hands so that you will not strike your foot against a stone.

Now that promise in Psalm 91, I do believe, is true of all who take refuge in God. But it is especially to Messiah that those words apply as even Satan knew as he used that very text to tempt him to jump off the temple because after all, the angels of God will protect you so you do not hit your foot. And then there's the Gospel. The Gospel accounts pick up his story. At age 30, as Jesus enters his public ministry, this angelic care of the Son of God is again stated and it's seen because right after fasting and triumphing over the devil's temptation for 40 days, during which time he was with the wild animals, we read in Matthew 4.11, then the devil left him and angels came and attended him.

[14:49] It's a beautiful picture of the Heavenly Father sending these angelic beings to minister to Christ whatever his need was. We can remember prophets of God having angels come and minister to them.

Elijah, they put him to sleep and they feed him, wake him up and feed him and let him sleep.

Probably fed the Lord Jesus. After all, he hadn't eaten for 40 days.

Spiritual warfare is exhausting. And he went hand to hand with the prince of darkness for 40 days. We can imagine that he was exhausted emotionally.

Let's remember, his humanity was as real as ours. You get weary of trials and temptations? So did Jesus. And angels were sent to strengthen him, to minister to.

And Matthew Henry suggests that just seeing the powers of heaven siding with him after seeing the powers of hell set against him would minister encouragement to our Lord.

[15:59] In one way or another, angels were sent to serve him. And so the pattern emerges in Scripture that angelic help was sent when it was most needed.

The promises of such help in the Psalms would make us think that this was more than an isolated event in our Savior's earthly life. Well, it just happened there. No, we would rather think that it happened many times.

As angels with an intense interest in man's salvation through the Messiah bend down and watch, they're ready to fly into action in the nick of time to bring him help and protection.

And we can rightly believe that the angels were probably involved in thwarting the many plots to take the life of our Lord Jesus, even as they were involved in the plot to take Peter's life in jail when James was beheaded and Peter was in jail and Herod was planning to behead him after Passover. An angel sent to break him out of prison to protect his life. Should we think that that didn't happen to our Savior? Over and over we read of plots to take his life.

[17:15] After preaching when he went back up north from Judea up into Galilee like we're studying in Mark's Gospel, when he preached in his hometown of Nazareth, the Bible says all the people in the synagogue were furious when they heard this.

They got up, drove him out of the town, took him to the brow of the hill on which the town was built in order to throw him down from the cliff. But he walked right through the crowd and went on his way.

How'd he do that? Well, we don't know. We don't know. But is it too much to think that angels were protecting him lest he dash his foot upon a rock like Psalm 91 promised?

John makes it clear that very early on in Jesus' public ministry, we read it in John chapter 5 that the Jews were already trying hard to kill him because he healed on the Sabbath day and claimed that he was equal with his father trying to kill him.

They couldn't do it. It didn't happen. John chapter 8, Jesus said before Abraham was, I am, and at this they picked up stones. They actually had the stones in their hands ready to stone him, but Jesus hid himself slipping away from the temple grounds.

[18:32] How did he do that? Three months later when telling the Jews, I and the Father are one. John 10, 31. Again, the Jews picked up stones to stone him for blasphemy and again, they tried to seize him, but he escaped their grasp.

all these attempts on his life were unsuccessful and we have to remember that angels were commanded to guard him in all his ways.

Psalm 91, 11. And that brings us then at last to his passion. And as he came into Gethsemane, he began to be sorrowful and troubled and said to Peter, James, and John, my soul is overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death.

I don't know what that means. It sounds like he's ready to die of sorrow. They'd never seen him like this before. He had told them, don't be anxious for nothing.

You believe in God, believe also in me. And now here he is, anxious, overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death. Well, he withdrew about a stone's throw beyond them, knelt down and prayed, Father, if you are willing, take this cup from me, yet not my will but yours be done.

[19:50] What's he looking at? He's looking at the cup of God's wrath that he is about to drink and he's asking the Father if there's any other way that he would be spared from drinking that cup, yet not my will but yours be done.

And then an angel from heaven appeared to him and strengthened him. Prayer can be exhausting. And this prayer, it was exhausting so much that an angel is sent to strengthen him.

His praying so drained him that the Father says, go and strengthen my son. And he goes, lest he die of sorrow before the cross, perhaps.

Jesus is just eight to ten hours away from his crucifixion. He's going to need strength for that whole ordeal, especially after being up all night without sleep.

So, an angel is sent to strengthen him. How does Jesus use that strength that he was given? And being in anguish, he prayed more earnestly.

[21:04] That's how he used the strength, to pray more earnestly. And his sweat was like drops of blood falling to the ground, a rare medical condition of intense pressure when blood is squeezed through the sweat glands and beads up and it rolled down off of him onto the ground.

It was no small thing that our Lord was about to do and the mere contemplation of it nearly killed him.

An overwhelming, deadly sorrow of soul to be cursed by God, to be separated from him, to be treated not as a son of his love, but to be treated as sin for us.

The Father laying on him the iniquities of us all and then punishing him with the punishment we would have endured forever in hell. Just the thought of drinking that cup nearly crushed him. And after asking the third time, my Father, if it is possible for this cup to be taken away unless I drink it, may your will be done. Well, there was no other way. There was no other way for the cup of God's wrath to pass from us unless he drank it instead of us.

[22 : 18] And so he continued unmoved in his mission to save us, resolving afresh to drink the cup for us on the cross. So he wakes up his sleeping disciples, says, Rise, let us go.

Here comes my betrayer. And while he was speaking, Judas, one of the twelve, arrived, and with him was a large crowd armed with swords and clubs sent from the chief priests and the elders of the people.

Now the betrayer had arranged a sign with them, the one I kiss is the man, arrest him. And then the men, going at once to Jesus, Judas said, Greetings, Rabbi, and kissed him.

And then the men stepped forward, seized Jesus, and arrested him. With that, one of Jesus' companions reached for his sword, drew it out, and struck the servant of the high priest, cutting off his ear.

Can you imagine the intense interest of the angels in heaven about now? If Peter is ready for a fight, how much more this angel army charged with his protection as they see wicked hands laid upon their holy king to arrest him, on the alert, ready to fly to his relief or to destroy his wicked enemies at just the slightest nod from God the Father.

[23 : 37] But none is given. Instead, Jesus said to Peter, Put your sword back in its place, for all who draw the sword will die by the sword. Do you think that I cannot call on my Father?

What would he do for you, Jesus? And he will at once put at my disposal more than 12 legions of angels? But then how would the scriptures be fulfilled to say it must happen in this way?

We sing the song, He could have called 10,000 angels to destroy this world and to set us free or to set him free. He could have called 10,000 angels, but he died alone for you and me.

So angels were neither requested by the Son nor sent by the Father. Was it with wonder that they stand down and do nothing when so many times before they came and ministered to the Son of God in his humanity?

Now no command is given as he's abused by men, striking him in the face with their fists and a staff pounding a crown of thorns in his head. They must watch as his back is torn open with a cat of nine tails, the whipping, and then on to Golgotha and the crucifixion, the nails held in place to dry through the hand of Jesus.

[25 : 00] The hammer is raised. There was a time when a man named Abraham had his hand raised with a knife and he was about to slay his son, his one and only special son, Isaac, and an angel was sent to stop him.

But no angel is sent to stop the Roman with his hammer and nail and he drives it through our Lord and nails him to a cross and hoists him into the air and all the armies of heaven stand by as their king is tortured.

Remember, they look on with deepest interest to learn about the sufferings of Christ and the glories that would follow. And then it's the three dark hours, the hours when darkness reigned.

As Jesus said, the powers of evil were let loose on and the demons doing their worst. And then out of the darkness, the angels hear this cry of abandonment.

My God, my God, why have you forsaken me? And they see him suffer so alone and not allowed to raise a finger to help him.

[26 : 17] Psalm 22, 11. That psalm that begins with those words, my God, my God, why have you abandoned me? It goes on in verse 11 saying, do not be far from me for trouble is near and there is no one to help.

Abandoned by men, abandoned by God. He must suffer and die all alone for he's bearing the punishment that we would have received alone in outer darkness and forsakenness of hell.

There's no rescue or relief in hell and so there must be none here at Calvary. It was for our sakes that the helper was helpless and cried out and received none.

It must have been an awesome scene in heaven that day. A astonished angels perhaps, staggered, speechless at what they saw as they eagerly looked on. This mystery of man's salvation.

Surely here at Calvary, whatever they knew about the cross that was coming, here they saw in awful detail its price.

[27 : 35] That to save wicked men, the Holy Son of God would suffer and die like this. Yes. Johann Hederman says, what punishment so strange is suffered yonder?

The shepherd dies for sheep that loved to wander. The master pays the debt his servants owed him. Who would not know him? The sinless Son of God must die in sadness.

The sinful child of man may live in gladness. Man forfeited his life and is acquitted. God is committed. And if the glory of God's grace amaze the angels at Jesus' birth such that they praise God, glory to God in the highest for his birth, how it must have affected them at his death.

The glory of God's marvelous grace to save sinners at such a cost. Rebels, enemies, God haters. God haters. God had often sent his angels on errands to rescue his people from trouble as we see in the Old Testament in the book of Acts.

[28 : 50] But he didn't send an angel this time. He sent his one and only son to do for us what no angel could ever do to save us from our sins.

You see, ours was a God-sized debt and none but God could pay it. And pay it, he did. He did. For Christ died for sins once for all time, the righteous for the unrighteous to bring us to God.

So there on the cross he was mocked, he was taunted, he was tempted. If you are the son of God, the king of the Jews, save yourself and then we'll believe you. Come down. Oh, but if he saved himself, that meant he can't save us, didn't it?

So when the choice was given Jesus between saving himself or us, he chose us over himself. If that isn't love, if that isn't love, that he would choose us over himself.

Rebel sinners. And the angels looking on said, that is amazing. Amazing. So much so that it becomes the theme of their everlasting song.

[30 : 05] In Revelation 5, 11 and 12, we find ten thousands times ten thousands, myriads of angels encircling the throne of God.

And in a loud voice they sing, worthy is the lamb who was slain to receive power and wealth and wisdom and strength and honor and glory and praise. Our promised salvation had been the peculiar object of their interest and search and now it's been accomplished in Jesus Christ.

They cannot stop singing with adoring wonder about the lamb that was slain to purchase men for God. and I can't help but think that some of their amazement is the fact that when their own fellow angels fell into sin God didn't send a savior for them but assigned them to everlasting torment in hell.

Angels are higher orders of being than men and yet God didn't save those fallen angels and yet when men had sinned he could have just left them to perish he didn't owe them salvation and yet he sent his son to be a redeemer for them and they're amazed they wonder at such love and such a cost so though these angels don't know the amazing experience themselves of being redeemed out of sin they do stand amazed in the presence of Jesus the Nazarene and wonder how he could love us sinners condemned unclean and perhaps even wonder that we are no more amazed than we are at the lamb slain for us so brothers and sisters of sinless angels who never fell can't get over this amazing love of

Jesus at Calvary that it tunes their song for eternity how much more then should we redeemed ones for whom he was slain who bore our sins in his body to the tree and by his blood purchased us for God take up the everlasting song worthy is the lamb worthy of what worthy of my love worthy of my obedience worthy of my trust worthy of my life worthy of anything that he would ask of me and so may we tonight rededicate our lives is that fair to say to say to him Lord Jesus I'll live for you who died for me thank you for loving me thank you for giving your body and your blood for me here am I I'm not my own I've been bought with the price of not silver and gold but your own precious blood and so help me to glorify you may this lay us low in humility to see the ends to which

[33 : 19] God had to go to save us that our offense against him was so great that nothing but the condemnation of his own son could take away the offense of our sin against God let it lay us low and then let it lift us high in praise that this blood has redeemed us for God let us bring our sins to this Savior and know that the blood of Jesus cleanses us whiter than snow here's a fountain open for sin and uncleanness that whoever comes and plunges in is made whiter than snow okay can over through any things that someone can code to preach for those who have to choose inside the going that that hits through 21 and that means when surprisinglyirsillsosi