



**CHRISTMAS – ANGELS & DEMONS**  
**The Job Description of a Christmas Angel**  
**Luke 1:26-38**

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I love interviews with kids when they answer questions about life or about God. Recently, some children were asked about angels, and here's what they said.

- Matthew, age 9 – “It’s not easy to become an angel! First, you have to die. Then you go to heaven, and then you have to go through flight training.”
- Daniel, age 9 – “Angels talk all the way when they’re flying you up to heaven. The main subject is where you went wrong before you got dead.”
- Vicki, age 8 – “Some angels are in charge of helping heal sick animals and pets. And if they don’t make the animals get better, they help the kid get over it.”
- Greg, age 7 – “I only know the names of two angels, Hark and Harold.”
- Molly, age 8 – “In my dreams, I hear angels tell funny jokes all the time. And I’m sticking with that no matter how many people tell me I’m crazy.”
- Henry, age 8 – “My guardian angel helps me with math, but he’s not much good for science.”

Angels played a prominent role in the Christmas story. An angel visited Mary and told her that God had chosen her to give birth to the Messiah, and in a most miraculous way. An angel told a skeptical Joseph that it was all God’s plan. An angel told Zacharias the priest that the long-awaited Messiah was coming. And an angel appeared to some shepherds and told them that Jesus was born. The shepherds actually heard a vast choir of angels singing, “Glory to God in the highest!”

Angels were everywhere in the Christmas story. But as angels swirled above the manger, demons lurked in the shadows. Satan and his demons were there too. Long before that night in Bethlehem, a cosmic battle has been raging in the heavens, a battle that continues today. Christmas is a beautiful story. But overhead a battle is raging between angels and demons, between God’s will and Satan’s schemes. A battle that is futile for Satan to fight and a battle controlled by the sovereignty of God. Yet, a battle is raging for the heart of people we know and love; a family member, a neighbor, a co-worker, a friend. That’s why we need Christmas. And that’s why, this Christmas, we’re going to talk about angels and demons.

Nothing seems more archaic and superstitious than talk about angels and demons. We live in a sophisticated and advanced day; it seems foolish to believe in angels and demons. Are we fools to believe it? No, because Jesus talked about angels and demons, and He talked about the devil as a real being.<sup>1</sup> To reject the reality of angels and demons and the devil is to reject the words of Jesus, and to reject the truth of the Bible. I choose to believe the one who predicted His own death and then rose from the dead. For me, the resurrection proves that Jesus is the Son of God and that everything He said is true. He gives credence to the Bible. So I trust what it says.

So, what can we learn from the angels of Christmas? An angel’s job is to point to Jesus. To announce to the world that Jesus has come. The Son of God, Immanuel, the Savior of the world.

***An angel's job is to point to Jesus, and that's our job too. As Francis Chan has said, "The point of your life is to point to Him."***<sup>2</sup>

#### FOUR APPEARANCES

The Christmas story begins with four appearances of angels. Four times, an angel appeared to someone to announce the coming of Jesus.

The angel Gabriel first appeared to Zacharias. "Now it happened that while he was performing his priestly service before God ... An angel of the Lord appeared to him, standing to the right of the altar of incense. Zacharias was troubled when he saw the angel, and fear gripped him. But the angel said, 'Don't be afraid, Zacharias! God has heard your prayer' " (Luke 1:8, 11-13, NAS).

God had heard what prayer? Zacharias was a common priest, an old man whose wife Elizabeth had never been able to have children.<sup>3</sup> The angel Gabriel appeared to Zacharias and told him that Elizabeth, who was old and barren, was going to have a child. It's an amazing story told in detail in Luke 1. So there were two miracle conceptions at Christmas, an old woman and a teenage virgin. Elizabeth would give birth to John, and six months later, Mary would give birth to Jesus.

Zacharias understood what was happening. With his insights as a Jewish priest, he understood that every promise and prophecy of God was converging in Mary's child. And his own miracle child, John, would be the forerunner of the Messiah, and declare, "Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world" (John 1:29).<sup>4</sup>

An angel also appeared to Mary. Mary was a teenager when this happened, just a few years earlier she would have been playing with dolls. And then an angel appeared. "God sent the angel Gabriel to Nazareth, a village in Galilee, to a virgin named Mary. She was engaged to be married to a man named Joseph, a descendant of King David. Gabriel appeared to her and said, 'Greetings, favored woman! The Lord is with you!' Confused and disturbed, Mary tried to think what the angel could mean. 'Don't be afraid, Mary,' the angel told her, 'for you have found favor with God!' " (Luke 1:26-30, NLT).

For Mary, something miraculous happened, but for Joseph, something scandalous had happened. "Mary, was engaged to be married to Joseph. But before the marriage took place, while she was still a virgin, she became pregnant through the power of the Holy Spirit. Joseph, to whom she was engaged, was a righteous man and did not want to disgrace her publicly, so he decided to break the engagement quietly. As he considered this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream. 'Joseph, son of David,' the angel said, 'do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife. For the child within her was conceived by the Holy Spirit' " (Matthew 1:18-20, NLT).

God interrupted their romantic plans. He had something different in mind, something He had been planning, the Bible says, "before the foundation of the world" (1 Peter 1:20). Mary and Joseph were asked to join the Messiah on center stage. It was as if God said to Mary and Joseph, "I trust you with this. Mary, of all the women in the world, and Joseph, of all the men in the world,

throughout all generations, I choose you. The time of the Messiah has come. And I want you to be a part of it. I trust you with My Son to be your son.”

And the night Jesus was born, an angel appeared to some shepherds. “That night there were shepherds in the fields nearby, guarding their flocks of sheep. Suddenly, an angel of the Lord appeared among them, and the radiance of the Lord’s glory surrounded them. They were terrified, but the angel reassured them. ‘Don’t be afraid!’ he said. ‘I bring you good news that will bring great joy to all people’ ” (Luke 2:8-10, NLT).

Four times, an angel appeared. Four times, an announcement from God. And four times, each person was terrified and afraid.

Why were the characters of Christmas so afraid? Because they had never seen an angel before. They had never seen a creature from heaven. And the angels they saw were not childlike cherubs, but were dazzling and terrifying, reflecting the brilliant glory of God.

And we would have been terrified too. Because the angel that appeared was not like this sweet guardian angel watching over a sleeping child. Gabriel was not like an angel we put on top of the Christmas tree. Gabriel was not like Cupid, the angel of love, hitting us with the arrow of romance. And Gabriel was not some little cherub. This came from the belief that children become angels when they die. This is the way Raphael depicted angels in his famous painting *Sistine Madonna*, painted in 1512, with two cherubs at the bottom. But Reni’s depiction shows Michael the archangel as a warrior with his foot on Satan’s head.

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### **HISTORY & THEOLOGY OF ANGELS**

Angels are mentioned throughout the Bible. The history and the theology of angels are fascinating.<sup>5</sup> Angels were a part of the drama of God’s interaction in the world.

The first mention of an angel is after Adam and Eve were expelled from the Garden of Eden. An angel, called a cherubim, with flaming sword was placed at the entrance to Garden of Eden to prevent Adam and Eve from returning.<sup>6</sup>

Abraham saw an angel. The Lord tested Abraham’s faith, asking him to sacrifice his own son Isaac. As Abraham raised the knife in obedience, an angel stopped him, and said, “Now I know you fear God.”<sup>7</sup>

Jacob had a dream of angels descending a ladder from heaven. In the dream, the Lord reassured Jacob of His faithfulness and His covenant. During another time of agonizing prayer, Jacob actually wrestled with an angel, and would not let go until the Lord blessed him. The Lord did bless Jacob and renamed him Israel.<sup>8</sup>

Moses was tending sheep in the desert when an angel appeared in a burning bush. And from the bush, Moses heard the voice of God. And Moses took off his sandals because he was standing on holy ground.<sup>9</sup>

An angel appeared to Gideon with God's command to defend Israel from Midian. Gideon knew he was outnumbered, but said, "I have seen the angel of the Lord face to face!"<sup>10</sup> And with only 300 men, Gideon defeated the Midianites.<sup>11</sup>

David, as God-fearing as he was, saw an angel, and the Bible says David was "terrified."<sup>12</sup>

When Daniel was thrown in the lion's den, during the night an angel of the Lord came and shut the lions' mouth, and saved his life!<sup>13</sup>

The Babylonian king Nebuchadnezzar was outraged when three Hebrews refused to bow and worship him, so he threw them into a fiery furnace. But miraculously, an angel stood in the fire with them, and protected them. And the pagan king Nebuchadnezzar declared, "Praise to the God of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, who has sent his angel and rescued his servants! They trusted in him and defied the king's command and were willing to give up their lives rather than serve or worship any god except their own God" (Daniel 3:28, NIV).

Isaiah saw angels in a vision from the Lord. "I saw the Lord sitting on a throne, lofty and exalted, with the train of His robe filling the temple. Seraphim stood above Him, each having six wings: with two he covered his face, and with two he covered his feet, and with two he flew. And one called out to another and said, 'Holy, Holy, Holy, is the Lord of hosts, the whole earth is full of His glory.' And the foundations of the thresholds trembled at the voice of him who called out, while the temple was filling with smoke" (Isaiah 6:1-4, NAS).

Angels often came to Jesus. After being tempted, the Bible says, "The devil left him, and angels came and attended him" (Matthew 4:11, NIV). The night before His arrest, with the cross only hours away, Jesus prayed in the Garden of Gethsemane, and the Bible says, "An angel from heaven appeared and strengthened him" (Luke 22:43, NLT).

The Bible says that Mary, and the other woman, found the empty tomb and two angels there in dazzling apparel.<sup>14</sup> And they "were terrified and bowed their faces to the ground," and the angels said, "He is not here! He has risen just as He said."

Jesus said, "There is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents" (Luke 15:10, NAS). He also said of His second coming, "For the Son of Man will come with his angels in the glory of his Father and will judge all people according to their deeds" (Matthew 16:27, NLT).

Angels appeared throughout the New Testament. Twice, an angel opened the prison door to free Peter.<sup>15</sup> An angel appeared to Philip and told him to take the gospel to Gaza.<sup>16</sup> An angel appeared to the Gentile Cornelius and told him to welcome Peter, a Jew, into his home. And an angel also appeared to Peter and told him to tell Cornelius about the gospel.<sup>17</sup> An angel appeared the day King Herod arrogantly demanded that he be worshiped as a god. The Bible says, "Instantly,

an angel of the Lord struck Herod with a sickness, because he accepted the people's worship instead of giving the glory to God. So he was consumed with worms and died" (Acts 12:23, NLT).

And the book of Revelation is filled with angel activity. When John was allowed a peek into heaven, he said, "I heard the voice of many angels around the throne ... and the number of them was myriads of myriads, and thousands of thousands" (Revelation 5:11, NAS). It is impossible to count the stars in the sky, and it would be impossible to count the angels in heaven.

Angels have four primary roles in the Bible.

- Angels worship God, as Isaiah witnessed. Angels swirling around the throne, worshipping God, and singing, "Holy! Holy! Holy!"<sup>18</sup>
- Angels speak for God, as many angels spoke to the Old Testament prophets, and as Gabriel spoke to Zacharias, Mary, Joseph, and the shepherds.
- Angels fight for God, as the angel that answered Hezekiah's prayer and struck down 185,000 Assyrians in battle.<sup>19</sup> And as the book of Revelation is filled with judgment that will be delivered by angels.<sup>20</sup>
- Angels serve God and His people. Angels are called "ministering spirits sent to serve those who will inherit salvation" (Hebrews 1:14). That includes us.

I read every reference in the Bible about angels this week. I studied every story about angels, and was enthralled by the power and glory of these stories. And so was John. John was allowed a peek into heaven, and an angel explained the future, the unfolding of God's plan for the end times and for eternity. And John was so amazed that he fell down and worshiped the angel. But the angel said, "Do not do that. Get up. Worship God."<sup>21</sup> Because an angel's job is to point to Jesus.

### THE BIG ANNOUNCEMENT

And it was an angel who made the big announcement about Jesus. An angel made four appearances that first Christmas, and spoke to Zacharias, to Mary, to Joseph, and to some shepherds.

What did the angel say to Zacharias? "I am Gabriel. I stand in the presence of God, and I was sent to speak to you and to bring you this good news" (Luke 1:19, ESV). Zacharias, the old priest, understood what was happening. God "has raised up a horn of salvation for us in the house of his servant David as he said through his holy prophets of long ago" (Luke 1:69-70, NIV). Imagine how excited he must have been to be alive, at that moment in history, to see the convergence of God's plan before his very eyes. He had studied 4,000 years of Jewish history and realized every covenant, every prophecy, and every promise was being fulfilled in Mary's child.<sup>22</sup> It all pointed to Jesus. Through Jesus, salvation had come!

What did the angel say to Mary? "You will conceive and give birth to a son, and you will name him Jesus. He will be very great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his ancestor David. And he will reign over Israel forever; his Kingdom

will never end!” (Luke 1:31-33, NLT). The angel declared that Jesus was the Messiah, Lord, and King!

What did the angel say to Joseph? “She will have a son, and you are to name him Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins ... She will give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel, which means ‘God is with us.’ When Joseph woke up, he did as the angel of the Lord commanded and took Mary as his wife” (Matthew 1:21-24, NLT). Jesus is Immanuel, God with us. Jesus makes it possible for us to experience a personal, intimate, day-by-day, and moment-by-moment relationship with God!

What did the angel say to the shepherds? “I bring you good news of great joy which will be for all the people; for today in the city of David there has been born for you a Savior, who is Christ the Lord” (Luke 2:10-11, NAS). Do you hear that? It was spoken to shepherds 2,000 years ago, but it’s for us too. “There has been born for you a Savior, who is Christ the Lord!”

This is the message of Christmas! This is the big announcement. Jesus is our salvation. Jesus is Messiah, Lord, and King. Jesus is Immanuel, God with us. Jesus is the Savior of the world. ***An angel’s job is to point to Jesus, and that’s our job too. The point of your life is to point to Him.***

## CONCLUSION

Angels were everywhere in the Christmas story. But as angels swirled above the manger, demons lurked in the shadows. Satan and his demons were there too. Long before that night in Bethlehem, a cosmic battle has been raging in the heavens, a battle that continues today. Christmas is a beautiful story. But overhead a battle is raging between angels and demons, between God’s will and Satan’s schemes. A battle that is futile for Satan to fight and a battle controlled by the sovereignty of God. Yet, a battle is raging for the heart of people we know and love; a family member, a neighbor, a co-worker, a friend. And that reality must be a part of our Christmas.

So, let me ask you, what kind of Christmas are you going to celebrate? What is your Christmas going to look like? A family gathering? Presents under the tree? Perhaps a ski trip or some type of vacation? That’s great. My Christmas is going to include all three. But that alone will not cause us to love Jesus more, to adore Him more, or to point people to Jesus. What are you going to do this Christmas to love Jesus more, to adore Him more, and to point people to Jesus? This Christmas, may the Lord stir within us a greater love for Jesus and a burden and passion to point people to Jesus. An angel’s job is to point to Jesus, and that’s our job too. The point of your life is to point to Him.

## NOTES

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<sup>1</sup> These verses are examples of Jesus talking about angels; Matthew 22:30, Luke 15:10, Luke 20:36.

<sup>2</sup> Francis Chan, *Crazy Love* (Colorado Springs, CO: David C. Cook, 2008), page 44.

<sup>3</sup> The NAS calls him Zacharias and the NIV calls him Zechariah. See Luke 1:7.

<sup>4</sup> See John 1:76, where Zechariah prophesies about his own son John. “And you, my child, will be called a prophet of the Most High; for you will go on before the Lord to prepare the way for him” (NIV).

<sup>5</sup> In the 2nd century, church father Origen came up the notion of guardian angels, for which there is no solid biblical evidence. In the 5th century, Dionysius devised nine classifications of angels. In the 12th century, Thomas Aquinas developed a detailed doctrine of angels, based mostly on speculation, which still stands in Catholic teaching. There has been a lot of speculation about angels through historical theology. But the Bible gives only slight detail about angels. Because angels are incidental to every story. Angels point to something more important than themselves.

<sup>6</sup> See Genesis 3:24.

<sup>7</sup> See Genesis 22:11-12.

<sup>8</sup> See Genesis 28:24-32.

<sup>9</sup> See Exodus 3:2-5.

<sup>10</sup> See Judges 6:22.

<sup>11</sup> See Judges 7.

<sup>12</sup> See 1 Chronicles 21:30.

<sup>13</sup> See Daniel 6:22.

<sup>14</sup> See Luke 24:4-6.

<sup>15</sup> See Acts 5:19, 12:7.

<sup>16</sup> See Acts 8:26.

<sup>17</sup> See Acts 10.

<sup>18</sup> See Isaiah 6 and Revelation 4-5.

<sup>19</sup> See 2 Kings 19:35.

<sup>20</sup> See Revelation 12, and also the trumpet judgments delivered by angels.

<sup>21</sup> See Revelation 19:10, 22:8-9.

<sup>22</sup> Walter Kaiser explains that the Old Testament is “an ongoing stream of announcements” (page 29). All the prophecies of the Old Testament add up to “God’s single, unified plan” (page 31). [Walter C. Kaiser, Jr., *The Messiah in the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1995)]