

Christmas at Grace

#2: Angels Are Watching

Hebrews 12:1; Job 1

Dr. Matt Cassidy ---- December 14, 2025

Today we're going to look at a version of a lecture that was the most influential and significant lecture that I had in four years of graduate school. In seminary this was a lesson about the meaning of life. It was giving us the answer to the purpose of all things in existence. It is why there is something instead of nothing. It's the story of creation and the importance of angels.

Order of Creation

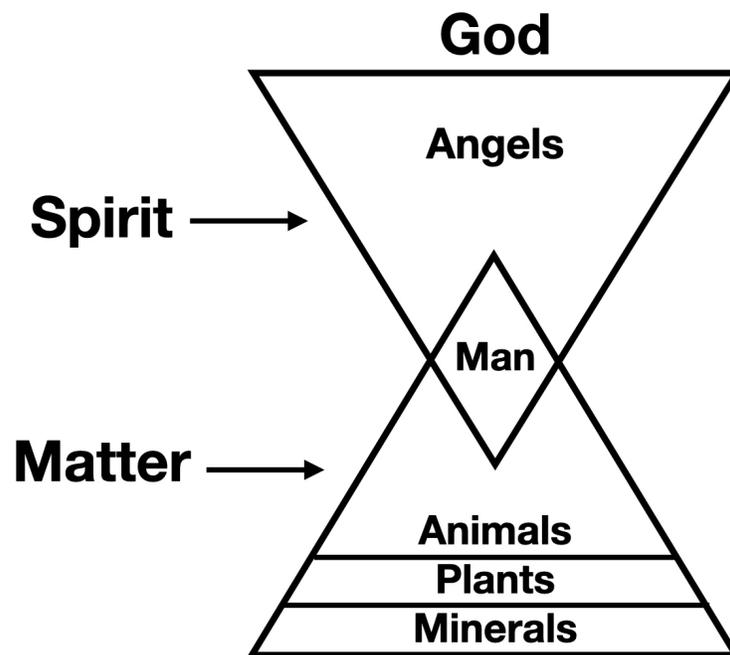
Before there was a before ... before time ... you can't say it starts like this. It's always existed. There was God Almighty, Jehovah, Yahweh, the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, in perfect harmony and in fellowship, lacking in nothing. There was perfect holiness, perfect glory, perfect love. It was perfect.

And then God created the spirit world. He created angels. And Scripture suggests that before there was a single dust particle in space, before there was space, God created these angelic beings to serve Him, to glorify Him, to worship Him, to do His bidding. And amongst the highest-ranking angels was Lucifer. His name means "the morning star." And according to Ezekiel 28 he was adorned with great beauty and wisdom and was known for his power. He radiated. He was one of the guardians of the very throne of God. He enjoyed the presence of God.

And then, inexplicably, not to be understood or attempted to be understood, Lucifer rebelled. He gazed at his own beauty, right out of the myth of Narcissus. He stared at himself, gazing at his reflection. And he realized that he didn't want to reflect the glory of God; he wanted to obtain it. And he causes a great rebellion described in Isaiah 14. It says that the rebellion began with these words: "I will ascend ... I will raise my throne ... I will make myself like the Most High."

There was a mutiny in the spirit realm. And it appears in Revelation 12 that a third of the angelic beings sided with now Satan. It's a name change. It means "the adversary." And there's a cosmic war. And the archangel Michael takes up the troops of the angels who chose God Almighty. And they fought until God Himself intervened and cast Satan out of His presence, out of the throne room, to be cursed.

And then there's a creation. And then God created the heavens and the earth. He spun together all the universe, the galaxies, the planet Earth itself, and made the sea and the land and the sky and the fish of the water and the animals on land and the birds of the air. And it was good. It was very good.



And in the climax of creation on the sixth day, God created man. Out of dust He made Adam, and out of Adam He made Eve in His own image—in God's own image—the image of God. And they would rule and co-reign over all creation and enjoy intimacy with God. That's why they were put on planet Earth.

And man is different in kind, not in degree, than all the rest of creation—different in kind. We're not like anything else. We are suspended. We have a post between earth and heaven. We're straddled between the temporal and the eternal. We are matter with a soul and a spirit. And we've been placed here for a very purpose. There's a purpose for our lives. And the purpose, in our uniqueness, is that we have freedom. We have freedom to choose. Who has a

right to rule? Who reigns this creation? Who should be the object of our worship? We choose those things, because we are human, because we can.

And what will you do with your freedom? Who rules, who reigns, in your life?

And Satan slithers into the creation story. God gives Adam and Eve Eden, heaven on earth, paradise. And Satan is jealous of the affections that man is receiving from God Almighty and will put a stop to that. He tempts Adam and Eve in the same way he was tempted, just with pride. *Has God really said ...? Is Yahweh withholding goodness from you? Let's just get to the point... and you can be like God if you take of this fruit.*

And Eve did, and Adam joined her, and then there was paradise lost. This is the fall of all creation. But make no mistake, it was about a choice, a choice about a kingdom. It was a choice about who had a right to rule the creation. Who reigns in your life, Adam? Whose kingdom do you belong to? And the answer was: I, me, mine. And all of creation groans.

Enter shame. Exit intimacy with God. Now all creation and man are cursed. But even in the curse God gives a promise. In Genesis 3:15 God promises that a descendant of a woman will crush the head of Satan. And that's the first gospel clue. That's the first good news story in this story of the fall, that God will somehow make this right.

And then the story of redemption begins. And the story of the redemption is that God will provide a savior. He will squelch this rebellion. He will rule His kingdom forever and ever.

This is our lot—this graphic here. This is what Solomon talked about in Ecclesiastes, that we are stuck in the middle between eternity and the earth, between the spirit and the flesh. We are mammals that are everlasting with a soul and a spirit. And our temptations pull us away from our post, away from our lot in life, away from where we're supposed to be as unique humans with our freedom. We can find ourselves becoming arrogant and proud, thinking that we can be like God and use any authority that God has given us to abuse and to take advantage of others. That's when we are becoming like gods.

Or we can become like dogs and just slide down and acquiesce and reduce ourselves to animal passions. Our temptations are making us megalomaniacs or erotomaniacs.

Angels Watch and Wait

And now ... angels. Let's talk about angels. They're vital to the Christmas story, because the Christmas story is the salvation story. And when we looked last week at what angels do,

Kevin went through a survey of what angels do. He said that they work, they witness, and they worship.

And this week I want you to see that the purpose of angels is also to wait and to watch. Angels wait and they watch. And they wait and watch to see what God would do. They wait and watch to see what you and I will do. They wait and watch to see what God would do in fulfilling the promise to restore man, to reclaim intimacy, to bring harmony to chaos, to bring holiness to sludge. And then they wait and they watch to see what we will do about what God has done.

Daniel 4:13

I saw in the visions of my head as I lay in bed, and behold, a watcher, a holy one, came down from heaven ...

Listen ... angels are watchers. They're literally called watchers in Daniel 4. Nebuchadnezzar is having a dream, and he knows the dream is brought to him by God, whoever that is. He has brought this dream by a watcher. Look what it says in chapter 4: "I saw in the visions of my head as I lay in bed, and behold, a watcher, a holy one"—an angel—"came down from heaven." He'll use that same term "watcher" two more times in his explanation of his dream.

And the point is that that word is used because in the Babylonian era of that time, watchers were envoys of the king. They would send the watchers out, and they would be the eyes and the ears of the king. They would be listening; they would be seeing the condition of the empire. And that's what angels do. They wait and they watch. **And first and foremost, they wait and they watch to see what God will do.**

1 Peter 1:12

The salvation plan was revealed to them (the prophets) that they were serving not themselves but you, in the things that have now been announced to you through those who preached the good news to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven, things into which angels long to look.

Look how Peter describes it as the rolling out of the salvation promise, the way it's going to be let loose, how it will be grasped, that it could even be understood. Peter writes it this way: "The salvation plan was revealed to them (the prophets) that they were serving not themselves but you"—the recipients of the good news—"in the things that have now been announced to you through those who preached the good news to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven, things into which angels long to look."

The salvation story, the plotline, how it comes to fruition—these are the things into which the angels long to look. "Long to look" is a Greek word that has a passion to it. It means straining, looking in curiosity. *What is God going to do? They're inspecting something. How could it happen? When will it happen? Could it happen?* And if Peter was being fun, he would say something like, *Angels wake up every morning wondering when it's going to happen. What would God do? Is today that day?*

1 Timothy 3:16

Great indeed, we confess, is the mystery of godliness: He was manifested in the flesh, vindicated by the Spirit, seen by angels, proclaimed among the nations, believed on in the world, taken up in glory.

Paul pictures it differently, but similarly, in 1 Timothy 3. Look what he says about angels watching God's salvation plan roll out. "Great indeed, we confess, is the mystery of godliness: He was manifested in the flesh, vindicated by the Spirit, seen by angels, proclaimed among the nations, believed on in the world, taken up in glory."

"Seen by the angels ..." The angels remember Genesis 3:15. And now they're on the edge of their seats. *Is today that day? They're inspecting. They're looking. How? How could*

God be both just and bring justification to these dust-breathing rebels? How could He make it happen? They wait and they watch.

Luke 2:8-14

And in the same region there were shepherds out in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night. ⁹ And an angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were filled with great fear. ¹⁰ And the angel said to them, “Fear not, for behold, I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. ¹¹ For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord. ¹² And this will be a sign for you: you will find a baby wrapped in swaddling clothes and lying in a manger.” ¹³ And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying, ¹⁴ “Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among those with whom He is pleased!”

And then ... and then ... He comes as a babe in a manger. He's born in a barn. And they're looking and peering into this. It's a plot storyline. You know the story, but listen to it now with better understanding. “And in the same region there were shepherds out in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night. And an angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were filled with great fear. And the angel said to them, ‘Fear not, for behold, I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is the Christ the Lord.’” The promised one—that's what “Christ” means. He's the promised one of the Lord. “ ‘And this will be a sign for you: you will find a baby wrapped in swaddling clothes and lying in a manger.’ And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying, ‘Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among those with whom He is pleased!’”

Of course! They'd been waiting and watching. And then it happens. And they're telling the shepherds, and poof, a whole legion of angels shows up. The first verse of the last song we're going to sing starts like this: “O come, thou long-expected Jesus, born to set the people free.”

Long-expected Jesus? Yes! For mankind? Sure. For angels? It's been millennia waiting, watching. And then they show up and it happens that day. And they just break out in worship, chanting. This is it—the unfolding of the promise of salvation.

Listen, when we sing these Christmas carols, we're just background vocals. Listen carefully. The angels are shouting these words throughout the heavens, because they've been waiting, and they've been watching, and they saw it happen. This is what God will do. And He did.

And now they wait and they watch to see what we will do. The angels wait and they watch to see what we will do because we have freedom. How are we going to play our part in the unique nature of our created being, both flesh and spirit, with free will? What will we do with our freedom, in light of what God has done, in light of who God is? And He has provided this method and means of salvation. How will we respond?

1 Corinthians 4:9

...because we have become a spectacle to the world, to angels, and to men.

First of all they watch and wait is for our salvation. In 1 Corinthians 4 look what it says: "... because we have become a spectacle to the world, to angels, and to men."

The word "spectacle" in Greek is the very word that use in English (through Latin) for "theater." The whole world, our lives, are a theater. And we get on this stage for a certain period of time. And it asks, *Who's watching?* The world: angels and all mankind. The visible and the invisible witness how we are going to respond with this offering, this gift of what God did to provide salvation, to make things right. What are you going to do with your freedom and this offer of salvation?

There's this grand play, and we play our part, and the theater is filled. Will you accept this salvation that's been offered to you?

We see this played out. And Jesus wants us to understand the depth of joy that happens when we use our freedom to surrender our lives to the King of kings. Salvation is about what kingdom you're in, and it requires repentance. And when a person repents from living in his or

her kingdom of “I, me, and mine” and says “I will live for King Jesus,” He wants us to know that the angels have been waiting and watching. And they celebrate.

Luke 15:7

Just so, I tell you, there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who need no repentance.

So, He’s telling stories that you’re familiar with in Luke 15. He’s trying to get through to us what’s happening in the cosmos. One story He tells (you shepherds will get this) is that a shepherd has a hundred sheep and then loses one. He goes and risks his life to find that one sheep. And when he finds that sheep, he comes back to all his shepherd friends and they celebrate. “Just so, I tell you, there will be more joy in heaven”—the heavenly realm—“over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who need no repentance.”

Luke 15:9-10

...saying, “Rejoice with me, for I have found the coin that I had lost.”¹⁰ Just so, I tell you, there is joy before the angels of God over one sinner who repents.

You still don’t get it? Okay, look. This is how important it is—about people using their free will to choose the kingdom of God and to let Jesus reign and rule in their lives. There’s a woman, and all she has to her name is ten silver coins. And then she loses one of them. And she’s torn apart. She tears her house apart looking for that last lost coin. She finds it, and she gathers all her friends together because she wants them to celebrate with her. And it says, “‘Rejoice with me, for I have found the coin that I had lost..’ Just so”—that’s kind of what it’s like—“I tell you, there is joy before the angels of God over one sinner who repents.”

Jesus is saying that when a person makes this choice of what kingdom they’ll live in, in heaven the crowd goes wild. There’s a standing ovation. Do you have any idea that angels are waiting and watching to see the way God will fulfill His promise? That He could be righteous and at the same time providing us righteousness by injecting His righteousness into our soul and

spirit? He imputed that righteousness. And we can be saved. And when they see that a rebel repents and says--*I don't want to be part of my kingdom anymore; I want to change my citizenship. I want a new passport. I want Jesus to be king*—that's when they wait and they watch.

But that's not all. They just don't wait and watch to see how we're going to respond to salvation. **They wait and they watch us for each and every moral decision that we make—each and every one.** Brace yourself. The Bible says we are all Job. We are all like Job.

And Job is a beautiful book that explains how the spirit world interacts with the physical world and even how the spiritual world is ranked and how they make an audience with God Almighty. Let me just read you the first chapter so you can see that we're all like Job.

Job 1:6

Now there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the Lord, and Satan also came among them.

Verse 1: “There was a man in the land of Uz whose name was Job, and that man was blameless and upright, one who feared God and turned away from evil. So this man was the greatest of all the people of the east.” God was his king.

“Now there was a day when the sons of God”—that's another name for angels—“came to present themselves before Yahweh, before God, and Satan also came among them. The Lord said to Satan, ‘From where have you come?’ Satan answered the Lord and said, ‘From going to and fro on the earth, and from walking up and down on it.’ And the Lord said to Satan, ‘Have you considered my servant Job, that there is none like him on the earth, a blameless and upright man, who fears God and turns away from evil?’ Then Satan says, ‘Well, sure...does he fear God for no reason? Have You not put a hedge of protection all around him? Haven't You caused everything that he touches to be prosperous?’”

Well yeah ... he follows You. You spoiled him. He doesn't love You unconditionally. He likes You because You give him everything he wants.

Job 1:11

“But stretch out Your hand and touch all that he has, and he will curse You to Your face.”

And Satan says, “But stretch out Your hand and touch all that he has, and he will curse You to Your face.”

So, it’s on. Will Job love God unconditionally? Will he choose in the midst of sorrow that Yahweh is still king? Will he let God Almighty reign in his life no matter what? Drunk on sorrow, concussed by grief ... and the Lord says, *Fine, have it your way, but don’t touch his body.*

And Satan comes in, and Job loses his income, his great wealth, all his possessions, and then his children—all of his children. And the entire spirit realm waits and watches. What will he choose to do, this man with free will?

Job 1:20-22

Then Job arose and tore his robe and shaved his head and fell on the ground and worshiped. ²¹ And he said, “Naked I came from my mother’s womb, and naked shall I return. The Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord.” ²² In all this Job did not sin or charge God with wrong.

“Then Job arose and tore his robe and shaved his head and fell on the ground and worshiped. And he said, ‘Naked I came from my mother’s womb, and naked shall I return. The Lord God, Jehovah, gives, and the Lord Jehovah has taken away; blessed is the name of Yahweh.’ In all this Job did not sin or charge God with wrong.”

That’s his moment on the theater. That’s his life on the stage. We are all Job with every choice we have. *I didn’t get the promotion I wanted. I counted chickens before they were hatched. I bought the brass boat. I didn’t get that promotion, so now I’m torn. Will I become like a god and throw a tantrum and manipulate and connive? Will I just use the limited authority that*

I have? What will I do with my freedom? Will I go home and kick the cat or, better maybe, I don't know, maybe slide down and become like the other mammals and give into my mammal desires and give myself permission to indulge or involve myself with excess?

What will you do with your freedom? The angelic world, the spirit world, the angels are waiting and they're watching. What kingdom do you vote for?

Hebrews 12:1

Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us ...

Hebrews 12, verse 1—this is familiar to some of you. “Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside”—before you think about sinning—“every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us ...”

You're not just on a stage in a theater. You're in the Coliseum. And it's not just filled with Old Testament saints, old heroes of the past, other humans. It is filled with the angelic world, and they're telling you, *Don't sin! Run hard! Focus on the end, not the pain and the misery that you're in right now.*

There's a cosmic realm, and they're waiting and they're watching. They've been waiting and watching to see what God has done, and now they wait and they watch to see what you and I will do about what God has done.

If you haven't responded to God's salvation invitation, maybe today is the day to do that. It might be that there's a heavenly party about to break loose this very moment. Salvation comes only through Jesus Christ, only because of His death and His resurrection. The offer couldn't have been made any easier. He comes as a baby in a barn, just to make it easy to say yes.

And then the angels wait and watch to see how we drive in our cars and how we find ourselves in transactions in the marketplace and what we talk to our neighbors about. And it's on display on a stage. And our few seconds on this place called Earth we vote for who is king. Who reigns and who rules?

Which brings us to the Christmas story. Read it like it's meant to be read. It's part of the plot where angels are waiting and watching to see what God would do. They're waiting and watching to see what the players will choose, what part they would play.

Episode one of what God would do—Jesus' first coming—the angels are looking. They're on the edge of their seats. *Is today the day? Is this it?*

Luke 1 says that "In the sixth month, 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.'

"And 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 Son of the Most High.

Luke 1:32-33

"The Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David,³³ and He will reign over the house of Jacob forever; His kingdom will never end."

"'The Lord'"—look, it's about kingdom, it's about rulership—" 'will give Him the throne of His father David, and He will reign over the house of Jacob forever; His kingdom will never end.'

"'How will this be,' Mary asked the angel, "'since I am still a virgin?'

"The angel answered, 'The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. And you will give birth to the Son of God. For nothing is impossible with God.'"

And now, Mary, what will you do with your freedom? You in this unique place in all of creation, you are human. You are a mammal with a soul and a spirit. You can choose your reputation and your life comfort, or you can choose for God to be king. And you will live with this choice for the rest of your life. Who rules? And all the angels wait and they watch. What will Mary do with her freedom?

Luke 1:38

“I am the Lord’s servant,” Mary answered. “May it be to me as you have said.” Then the angel left her.

“ ‘I am the Lord’s servant,’ Mary answered. ‘May it be to me as you have said.’ Then the angel left her.”

And all of heaven roared. She chose well. It would cost her the rest of her life. But after that she traded up.

We’re not just Job. We are all Mary. And every one of us chooses and makes moral choices about who has a right to rule our life and be king. Angels are still waiting and they’re still watching. They’re not just waiting to see what we’re going to do—they’re still waiting and watching to see what God will do.

There’s episode two—Jesus Christ returns. And when Jesus Christ returns, there will be absolute justice. In the context of justice, there are awards given. If you think of life as a metaphor, whether it’s track and field or on a stage like this where we perform for the glory of God, trophies are given, medals. And it’s better than any Academy award, and everybody thanks God, but really, this time.

And after the ceremonies are done, we find ourselves walking back the very throne of God where we give those crowns, those awards, back to the King, because it all belongs to Him anyway. And we are rewarded and blessed for the choices that we made to the glory of God, for the angelic realm as they witnessed us.

What’s the purpose of life? Why is there something instead of nothing? Why do we live? To give God glory, using our unique place as creatures in the image of God, still bent but soon restored to glory so that the angelic world will know that, at least in my life, Thy kingdom come and Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. That’s why.

Listen and see---look at the last verse of the last song that we’re going to sing today:

*Born Thy people to deliver,
Born a child and yet a King,
Born to reign in us forever,
Now Thy gracious kingdom bring.*

*By thine own eternal spirit
Rule in all our hearts alone:
By Thine all sufficient merit,
Raise us to Thy glorious throne.*

Christmas is about a king. And it's about angels watching us bend our knee to gaze upon Him in a cattle trough. He's still king. Make Him king in your life. I hope you've been blessed by today's teaching time.

1 Timothy 5:21

In the presence of God and of Christ Jesus and of the elect angels I charge you to keep ...

We'll worship in just a minute. Let's have a word of closing prayer. I thought I would start the prayer with this verse out of 1 Timothy. "In the presence of God and of Christ Jesus and of the elect angels I charge you to keep ..."

In the presence of the elect angels I charge you to keep being holy, to make yourself like Christ in all aspects of your life, to become the way you were meant to be, to glorify God and to cause angels to cheer and demons to quake because of your resolute obedience to the great and glorious King.

Keep your heads down. Let's just all pray the Lord's Prayer together. It's all about kingdom. We'll use the words "debt" and "debtor." Pray with me.

Our Father, who are in heaven, hallowed be Thy name. Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For Thine is the kingdom, Lord, forever and ever. And all God's people said, Amen.

