

Title: What Angels Want to Know
Date: September 9, 2018
Subject: We should be amazed at the salvation the Lord has provided.
Scripture: 1 Peter 1:1-12

Angels. Those marvelous, mysterious, fantastical beings. And not because 100,000 can dance on the head of a pin or whatever amount the ancient scholars arrived at after their debate.

Angels display incredible power. An angel with a flashing sword was posted on the east side of the Garden of Eden to block the way to the tree of life (Genesis 3:24). Two angels were used by the Lord to destroy Sodom and Gomorrah (Genesis 19). The death angel wiped out the firstborn of Egypt at the Exodus (Exodus 12). On another eerie night the destroying angel killed 185,000 Assyrian soldiers (2 Kings 19:35). Jesus when he was being arrested in the Garden said he had 12 legions of angels, 72,000 angels, that the Father could put at his disposal (Matthew 26:53). Don't think for a moment that they would come to earth for a tea party. Their mission would have been to serve, protect and destroy. At the end of time an angel will come down from heaven with the key to the Abyss and a great chain. He'll grab the devil, bind him and throw him into the Abyss locking and sealing it over him (Revelation 20).

Angels were involved in many of the pivotal moments of Scripture history. They witnessed the Lord's creation activity (Job 38). They spoke with Abraham about the impending destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah (Genesis 19). They communicated with the patriarch Jacob in his dreams. They enabled Daniel to interpret dreams. They delivered messages to Mary and Joseph then beheld God becoming human and being born in a manger. They had the privilege of being the first to communicate the birth of the Savior to someone other than Mary and Joseph who obviously knew.

Angels are dispatched to do the Lord's will without batting an eye. They're privy to God's messages. They are the Lord's agents, attendants and messengers. But there's something missing. They aren't able to fully appreciate the full work of God, specifically in salvation. Let's put the angels' situation into a Scriptural context.

READ 1 Peter 1:1-12.

Angels want to know but will never know the full dynamics of salvation. That's because they aren't people or former people. They don't have the spiritual nature God places into people. Therefore they don't have the capacity to know, either intellectually or by experience, the things the Lord provides in saving people from their sins. They long to know. They want to know. They stoop over and look intently just like the kid who looks down at the ant hill in attempt to know. But alas, it escapes them. They remain observers in the greatest plan of God.

There was another group who really wanted to know what the Lord was doing. These were the Old Testament prophets. They heard amazing things from God. They spoke amazing things for God. They wanted

to know the meaning of those amazing things. Verse 10 says “they searched intently and with the greatest care.” Men like Isaiah and Micah recorded some of the go-to prophecies used at Christmas. They “spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit (2 Peter 1:21). As God breathed out his word to and through them, they may have thought, “This is really good. Wow. What does it mean?”

What did they want to know? Oh thinks like when the Promised One of God would come. Who would he be? What would he say? What would he do? What kinds of sufferings would he have to experience? What glories would he experience? What glories would be the result of his coming? They were filled with questions and not so many answers.

It had to be hard wanting to know but not being able to know. For example, here are a few sentences that may be difficult to understand. “An open field is better than the street because lots of room is needed. It’s better to run than to walk at first. Birds seldom get too close. It takes some skill, but it’s easy to learn. Even young children can enjoy it. If there are no snags it can be very peaceful. But if it breaks loose, you won’t get another chance.” Any ideas? It’s difficult to understand without the key – how to fly a kite. “An open field is better than the street because lots of room is needed. It’s better to run than to walk at first.”

The prophets weren’t given the answers to their questions because it wasn’t for them to know because they weren’t serving themselves. They were serving someone else, people who lived hundreds of years after them, and now thousands of years after them.

The Gospel could only be fully understood after Jesus’ birth, life, death and resurrection. This was the message of Peter, Paul who died a few years before Peter’s letter and the other teachers and evangelists of the first century church and forward.

There are times when we might not understand something now that will become clear in the future. We don’t know who, what, why, or how and we really want to ...but, it’s not for us to know now. What we’re doing could be in the service of others.

So what do the people of Peter’s time and forward get to know that the prophets didn’t and the angels don’t? What’s so terrific about the good news of the gospel? Peter, as an apostle, one sent by the Lord, a human messenger starts to explain in terms of who Christ followers are and what they possess.

Followers of Jesus Christ are called God’s elect. God chooses people to be on his team. Our district superintendent of churches frequently talks about only wanting #1 draft picks on his team to serve in churches. It’s based on character, competency.

God’s choosing has nothing to do with character, charm, or abilities. He sovereignly chooses according to his foreknowledge. God chooses those he wills and he is free to do so. He predestines and foreordains those who will be the elect according to his foreknowledge of those who will accept him. John 3:16 – whoever believes has eternal life.

Peter considered himself to be one of the elect. I think this truth burrowed deep into his soul, particularly after he had denied Jesus three times. Jesus still loved him and reaffirmed his love for Peter and

asked the disciple to reaffirm his love for him. I'm sure the guy who was impetuous and flew by the seat of his pants thought long and hard about being one of God's elect.

Think of being chosen by God. Being selected by him. **He** wanted you. He **wanted** you. He wanted **you**. He...wanted...you.

Skip past the part about being strangers in the world as that comes in later in the book.

The choosing came as a result of the sanctifying work of the Spirit and the sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ. The Spirit sets us apart as belonging to God. The sprinkling of blood means we're sealed by Christ, consecrated by Christ and transferred to Christ.

The purpose of these actions is for us to be obedient. We'll ignore that for now.

We're objects of God's grace and peace. The wish is that we'd have these in abundance. They're descriptive of God giving people what they don't deserve -- spiritual well-being, soundness, and completeness. God's great mercy provided new birth. This was required because the old us was dead and dying. That might sound a little weird. At least it did to me when I wrote it. Dead and dying. But we were dead in our sins and in the process of eternally dying. Not good news at all.

Then Jesus confronted us with himself. He promised we could be born again. Reborn. Born from above. It's a change of state going from dead to alive. It opens up all sorts of new prospects. Born into a living hope. Hope by its nature has something of life in it. Who's ever heard of a dead hope? Who'd want that? A living hope? That's something everyone would. A living hope has an attitude that looks to the future.

An inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade. All the stuff that people hope to get as an inheritance has a problem. Money can be devalued. In 2008 in Zimbabwe money was devalued to the point where a person wanting to buy an egg would have to fork over \$1,000,000. King Tut and the other Egyptian kings had their wealth entombed with their corpses in preparation for the afterlife. King Tut and his stuff was still there 3000 years later. Clothes are eaten by moths and crickets. Houses fall apart. Beautiful artwork fades over time.

A story is told about a man who found out it was his time to go to Heaven. He asked the Lord if he could bring just one thing. The Lord said, "No." Finally, after many requests the Lord said, "You can bring one thing." The man packed his suitcase full of gold. When he arrived in Heaven, Saint Peter, who's typically referred to as standing by the pearly gates, said, "Sorry you can't bring that in here." "The Lord said I could." "Okay. By the way, what's in there?" The man opened the bag so Peter could look in. "You brought pavement?"

Gold will be pavement in heaven. That's how devalued one of the most precious things to humans will be. The inheritance God provides will be kabillions times better. God's not going to fool around with his inheritance. It doesn't fade, spoil, or perish. It isn't ravaged by time. It's not polluted by evil and sin. It doesn't decay or wear out. It can't be destroyed.

The inheritance means we get to participate in all that it means to be a child of God. All the perks, all the advantages he can afford are stored in the most secure vault there is -- heaven. Could say it's astronomical. Thieves can't break in and steal, moth and rust can't destroy (Matthew 6:19, 20). Our inheritance is waiting to

be revealed at just the right time. At the last time. Like the curtain being pulled back so the theatrical performance can begin. But this “performance” doesn’t have an end. The salvation that will be revealed is the full buffet of the tiny appetizer we’ve tasted. It’s the full blown experience of salvation of the potential we have now.

Since it’s kept in heaven, this means it’s in the future. We won’t get it down here. There are tremendous benefits associated with being God’s child now. There’s protection from the consequences of sinful activity, peace, contentment. We’re shielded by God’s power from that which seeks to harm us. The devil can’t destroy us. Death can’t permanently wrap its icy fingers around our throats. Yes, there are trials, substantial ones, that impact and affect us, but let’s forget about them for now except to say that they have a refining purpose just like when gold is refined to make it pure.

Remember that gold vanishes. What happened to all the gold that belonged to ancient kings and was taken by other kings and then taken by other kings and then by other kings? Who knows where it is? The faith in Christ that we have is of greater value than gold. Likewise, the goal of our faith is greater than what gold can purchase. The goal of our faith is the salvation of our souls. A person who has trusted in Christ as Savior is saved – regeneration, positional sanctification, justification. They’re in the process of being saved -- experiential sanctification. Ultimately they’ll experience full salvation when in heaven with Christ – glorification, ultimate sanctification.

Peter wrote this book about 30 years after Christ’s death and resurrection. He addresses people in the early 60’s AD. The original readers hadn’t had the opportunity to see Jesus. They didn’t witness the miracles, hear the teaching, or observe the final events of his life. And they didn’t see him at that moment as Jesus wasn’t running around earth but in heaven. The lack of physical sight didn’t negatively impact their ability to believe.

The same things are true of us. We weren’t there when he walked on the water. We weren’t there when he healed the man blind from birth. We weren’t there as he assured the disciples that in his father’s house are many mansions. We weren’t there when they crucified our Lord, when they laid him in the tomb, when he rose up from the grave. We weren’t there.

We didn’t have to be. All we needed and what anyone needs is to believe that Jesus did what he did for us so we could live with him. It’s not dependent on our gold. It’s not dependent on our abilities. It’s not dependent on our intelligence. It’s not dependent on our goodness. Thank the Lord for that because we fail on all accounts and any other ways people try to get to God. We just need faith.

The result of believing is joy. Happiness and joy are sometimes used interchangeably but often joy is brought down to sentimentality and warm fuzzies, at least in our culture. Joy is more than happiness caused by having a warm puppy no matter how much I like what Charlie Brown said about Snoopy. Joy is more than just putting on a happy face. “It refers to the extreme happiness with which the believer contemplates salvation and the bliss of the afterlife” (Baker's Evangelical Dictionary of Biblical Theology - Joy). Theopedia, “Joy is a state of mind and an orientation of the heart. It is a settled state of contentment, confidence and hope.”

It's good to look at the benefits we have as Christ followers. It should do something to us and in us. However, if it stalls there, and our focus is on ourselves, we haven't gone far enough.

A.W. Tozer explains, "The quality of our worship is enhanced as we move away from the thought of what God has done for us, and move nearer the thought of the excellence of His holy nature. This leads us to admire God. The dictionary defines admire as 'to regard with wondering esteem, accompanied by pleasure and delight; to look at or upon with an elevated feeling of pleasure.' According to this definition, God has few admirers among Christians today. Many are simply grateful for the His goodness in providing salvation, or answering their prayer in troublesome situations. But the simple truth is that worship is still in infancy until it begins to take on the quality of admiration. Just as long as the worshiper is engrossed with himself and his own concerns, he is a babe. We begin to grow up when our worship passes from thanksgiving to admiration" (Closer Walk, 8/88, p. 8).

Our faith in Christ leads to salvation which provides numerous benefits. Yet the overriding goal of our faith, including the trying of our faith, is to bring praise, glory and honor to God. He is the source as he is the one who chooses. He provides the means through the death and resurrection of Christ. Christ is the agent through whom it comes. It's all about God's kindness which brings unworthy outsiders into his forever family. And though the angels don't fully understand it, there is rejoicing in the presence of the angels when each and every person repents and turns to the Lord (Luke 15:10).

Prayer – May we be amazed by your grace. May we be mesmerized by your mercy. May we be transfixed by your love. May we revel in the salvation you've provided for us.