

Shock and Awe

Luke 2:8-14

Jarrett Stephens

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If you are on social media and follow anyone who listens to their music via Spotify, chances are you saw this week what is called the *2024 Wrapped*. OR, if you are an iTunes kind of person, it's called *Replay*.

All it is, is a list of listening trends for a person...it shows:

- The top songs someone has listened to...
- The top artists someone has listened to...
- The top genre someone engages with...
- How many minutes of music that person has listened to...
- On Spotify, you can see who has the most streamed podcast, audiobook,

And people put it on their social media, and it just gives you a glimpse into what kind of music that person likes. It's also cool because you can not only see who your friends and followers are listening to, but also can see (if they post it) see who some of your favorite artists and other celebrities are listening to.

I went on a deep dive this week looking into it...you can see what the top music streams are in Houston vs what it is the most popular in other cities and in other countries. It's great.

If you are wondering who my top artists are, I'm a pretty simple guy. George Strait and Shane and Shane got the top two places in my artists list...depends on what mood you catch me in!

And I guarantee you this hasn't changed for like the third year running...I am a creature of habit! Although I am getting a little interested in some newer artists. One of the residents introduced me to Forest Frank recently and I had him playing when I put my girls in the car – they were impressed the old man was listening to their tunes!

I found it timely that *Unwrapped* and *Replay* came out this week because in today's message, were going to talk a little about music.

We're continuing in our *Christmas Calling* series and we are looking at and hopefully being challenged and encouraged by the various responses people had to the very first announcement of Christmas that was given all those years ago.

Last week, we looked at Mary and Joseph and talked about how their response to the message of Christmas was one of trust and obedience. This week, we're looking at how the angels responded to this message...and it shouldn't surprise us that their response was one of praise and worship.

I'm calling the message: **Shock and Awe**

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 cloths 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!”

Did you know – a little Christmas trivia here there are four songs in the early chapters of Luke all surrounding the birth of Jesus. The songs of Christmas would be another great Christmas series to preach in the future!

Graham Scroggie was a popular author and pastor in the UK. He was a graduate of Spurgeon's Bible College and would eventually follow in Spurgeon's steps serving as pastor at the Metropolitan Tabernacle for a number of years.

He wrote a great statement of insight regarding these songs in the gospel of Luke - **"It is the last of the Hebrew Psalms, and the first of the Christian hymns."**

That's beautiful to think about! First, there is Mary's song. We know it as *The Magnificat*, and it is by far the most famous of all the songs in the Christmas story. It describes Mary's praise of the Lord for being chosen by God to deliver the Messiah into the world and it is a declaration of her trust in him.

The second song is Zechariah's song. In Latin, it's called *The Benedictus*. The father of John the Baptist is filled with the Holy Spirit and this song too is full of praise and prophecy.

The third song is known as the *Nunc Dimittis*. The words mean “Now dismiss” and this is a song lifted up by the old man, Simeon who upon seeing the Christ-child forty days after his birth when his parents brought him to the Temple – Simeon – he is described as one who was righteous and devout and waiting on the consolation of Israel. When he saw the baby, he took him into his arms and praised the Lord with a hymn, saying “Now I can depart in peace...my eyes have seen the Lord's salvation (Luke 2:29-32) - he could now be dismissed from life... he could depart!

The fourth song is this song of the angels – it's given the title, *Gloria* because that is what the host of angles were singing the night they announced the birth of Christ to the shepherds in the fields of Bethlehem.

They lifted up in praise, the words “Glory to God in the highest!” So much music...so much praise...so much worship surrounded the Christmas story and it was ALL in response to what God was doing as he intervened in history and sent Jesus his son, to the earth.

Now, as we talk about praise and worship being the response of the angels, it could be easy to write off their response as being normal...or “par for the course” if you will...it's expected!

And you wouldn't be incorrect. After all, angels were created by God to worship! This is what they do...and it's what they have been doing since they were created!

Very briefly, let me give you some of the roles and responsibilities of angels straight from scripture. It's important that we know who angels are and what they do because angels play a SIGNIFICANT role in the Bible, in history, and in our lives.

First of all, there is no doubt they exist. They are mentioned over 100x in the Old Testament and nearly 200x in the New Testament. Both in the Hebrew and in the Greek, the word "angel" means "messenger". This is what angels are – they are God's messengers.

Angels are spiritual beings. They are incorporeal – meaning they are without material form although they can at times take on physical form – the Bible says it's possible (Heb. 13:3) that we've entertained angels and not even been aware of it.

Heb. 1:7 (quoting Ps. 104:4), **14** – **“Of the angels he says, “He makes his angels winds, and his ministers flames of fire...Are they not all ministering spirits sent out to serve for the sake of the those who are to inherit salvation?”**

So, angels are “ministering spirits”. Whenever we do see them in scripture there is always a bright light that envelopes them or surrounds them. They are mighty beings...majestic beings...and evidently they have the capacity to think and to feel and to act.

Let me give you some examples of this. The ability to think intelligently, and we'll come back to this verse toward the end of the message this morning.

1 Peter 1:12 (The context of this verse is concerning salvation) - **“It was revealed to them (prophets of old) 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.”**

Angels look upon the creation of man and the redemption of God and wonder...they think on...ponder – they have intelligence.

They can feel! Luke tells us in the parable of the lost coin that when one person is found like that one lost coin: **Luke 15:10** – **“Just so, I tell you, there is joy before the angels of God over one sinner who repents.”**

Angels seem to have a will. Remember there are good angels and bad angels – we call the bad angels, demons. And evidently sometime in eternity past there was a rebellion in the heavenlies and Rev. 12 teaches us that 1/3rd of these fallen angels...we call them demons rebelled against the Lord.

Jude 6 – **“And the angels who did not stay within their own position of authority, but left their proper dwelling, he has kept in eternal chains under gloomy darkness until the judgment of the great day.”**

This is who angels are...the book of Job (1:38) tells us they were present at the creation of the world, and they are responsible for carrying out and executing some of the plans of God.

There seems to be a hierarchy with the angelic realm. There are angels known as Seraphim who are seen in the throne room of God. There are a group of angels known as Cherubim who were stationed at Tree of Life after the Fall and are symbolized over the ark of the covenant...it seems these angels are responsible for guarding the glory of God.

There is A LOT in the Bible about angels. And remember, as mentioned last week, these aren't naked floating babies with a bow and arrow in their hand trying to hook two people up...these angels are warriors!

Only three angels are named in scripture. Lucifer, the fallen angel – that's Satan. Michael, the archangel. We are told in Jude 9 that he contended with the devil and we see Michael leading out in war. The book of Daniel refers to him as the "prince". It appears he is the leader of the angelic army.

Gabriel as discussed last week appears to be God's messenger to people because that's all we see him doing in scripture is giving messages to people specifically within the Christmas story. He is seen one time in the Old Testament in the book of Daniel.

This is who angels are and what they are like. Very quickly, let's look at what angels do. Big picture is:

Angels serve and worship God

Now, zoom in and you will see one of the main ways that angels serve God is by serving us.

1. Angels serve us

We already saw this in Heb. 1 – they are ministering spirits. The word "minister" means to "serve". And this is what we see angels doing in scripture. They are serving God, executing and carrying out some his plans as he sees fit, and one of the major ways they serve God is by serving man.

2. Angels watch us

1 Cor. 4:9 – "For I think that God has exhibited us apostles as last of all, like men sentenced to death, because we have become a spectacle to the world, to angels and to men."

Angels observe our ways...although there is little scriptural support or a personal guardian angel, a survey of scripture will show that angels are present and aware of what is happening and watch us. In fact, we'll see this in a moment, they wander at us!

3. Angels protect us

We just recently completed our Daniel study. Remember when Daniel was thrown into the Lion's Den?

Dan. 6:22 – “My God sent his angel and shut the lions' mouths, and they have not harmed me, because I was found blameless before him; and also before you, O king, I have done no harm.”

John Calvin - “The angels are the dispensers and administrators of the divine blessing toward us. They regard our safety, undertake our defense, direct our ways, and exercise a constant solicitude that no evil befall us.”

4. Angels guide us

When Mary became pregnant and Joseph was thinking about leaving her quietly...he did not understand what was going on. It was an angel that came to him and told him what to do. Same for Mary! It was an angel that came to Joseph and warned him to flee to Egypt because of Herod's rage and him putting babies to death.

In Acts 12 it was an angel that appeared to Peter and led him out of prison in the middle of the night. Angels guide and lead God's people from time to time throughout scripture.

Exodus 23:20 – (context: before the people enter into the Promise Land, God speaks to them and says) - “Behold, I send an angel before you to guard you on the way and to bring you to the place that I have prepared.”

Now, a word of caution here. As Christ-followers, we're not to seek angels out or worship angels (Col. 2:18-19). We have the Holy Spirit who leads us and directs us. We are told in (2 Cor. 11) that Satan can disguise himself as an angel of light and in (Gal. 1), we're told that even if an angel were to show up and preach a different gospel, we are not to believe it and that angel is accursed.

Important because there are some major cults AND false religions out there whose entire belief system is based on an angel delivering a new gospel – (i.e. Mormonism and Islam to name two).

Angels are real. They are powerful. They serve God AND: **Angels worship God**

THIS is their primary calling! I already mentioned they were present at creation...you know what they were doing? They were worshipping!

Job 38:4-7 (Context is God finally answering Job) – “Where were you when I laid the foundation of the earth? Tell me, if you have understanding. ⁵ Who determined its measurements—surely you know! Or who stretched the line upon it? ⁶ On what were its bases sunk, or who laid its cornerstone, ⁷ when the morning stars sang together and all the sons of God shouted for joy?”

Just think about this! Angels have had courtside seats to watching God move in eternity and on earth!

Illus. Courtside seats – You ever had courtside seats? I have a buddy of mine that had some access to the seats and invited me to go...you don't turn down that invite! Look at how close you are! **(Show pics)**

Being courtside changes everything...you not only have to pay attention; you want to pay attention – the game is right there!

Well, this is the angels. They have been sitting courtside for all of eternity. And do you know what we see them doing as they sit courtside? They worship! They were worshipping at creation.

1. They are courtside at the throne room of God and worshipping there!

Isaiah 6:3 – “**And one (seraphim) called to another** (repeated action – it's been going on forever and will continue forever! – this is *Unwrapped Eternity*) **and said, “Holy, holy, holy is the LORD of hosts; the whole earth is full of his glory.”**

2. The angels will be courtside at the consummation of history!

Rev. 5:11-12 – “**Then I looked, and I heard around the throne and the living creatures and the elders the voice of many angels, numbering myriads of myriads and thousands of thousands (innumerable),¹² saying (v. 9 – “singing a new song) with a loud voice, “Worthy is the Lamb who was slain, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing!”**

So, check it out. Angels, created ministering spirits...they serve God and worship God. They were worshipping at creation, are worshipping currently and will be worshipping at consummation.

Here in Luke 2, let's get back to our text today...the veil is pealed back and what do we see the angels doing at the announcement of the incarnation – worshipping!

Luke 2:13 – “**And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host** (SHOCK and AWE! This is an army of angel warriors – only other time we see this many angels is at consummation. Interesting point: the consummation of history and incarnation of Jesus are the only time we see in scripture a multitude of angelic beings worshipping the Lord – they are...) **praising God** (“continuous verb” – meaning they were doing this before, the curtain just gets pulled back and we get to see it!) **and saying, “Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among those with whom he is pleased.”**

The angels response to the Christmas message was PRAISE and WORSHIP.

The question is: Is this your response? And I want to follow it up with another question: How can it NOT be?

ALL we need in order to be stirred to worship is fully understand what the angels communicated to the shepherds that evening in the fields of Bethlehem!
Let's look at what the angel said AND what the angels sang and unpack it...I think doing so will lead to praise and worship!

Luke 2:10 – “And the angel said to them (the shepherds – we’ll see their response next week!), “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.”

Living out what their name means...these messengers brought a message of good news! What's the message? What's this good news that will bring great joy to ALL people?

It's the news that a baby has been born! This is a birth announcement! Is there anything MORE exciting than a birth announcement?! We keep the twins birth announcement in a frame at the house (**SHOW PIC**) – sweet babies...what happened?!

BUT...this announcement wasn't a regular announcement! This was no ordinary baby! This baby is God in the flesh – God incarnate! The reformer, Martin Luther referred to the incarnation as: “en-flesh-ment”. And here, this child is given three titles.

Now, just listen to these titles given one by one and see if it doesn't prompt you to worship and praise! Because it should!

1. Savior

The very name of Jesus means to save. **Matt. 1:21 - "She will bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus, for he will save the people from their sins."**

THIS is the MAJOR reason Jesus came to this earth. He would say of himself in **Luke 19:10 - "For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost."**

It's interesting this word "Savior". It was a common word used in the vernacular of that day. The Old Testament translated this word as the word, "deliverer". It was often used in the context of a military conquest. You would have a judge or a king leading Israel into victory and they would be known by the people as a "deliverer" or "savior". They saved the people from death and destruction.

In Rome at the time of this birth announcement, it was Caesar that would have taken on this title as “Savior” - he would be revered as the one who saves - there was none more powerful than him.

But he wasn't a real savior...especially to Israel! Caesar did nothing but suppress them...tax them...hold them down and hold them back. They were dreaming of the day that God would send the real Savior who would come and deliver them from Rome's savior, Caesar.

So, it's significant that this word is used here because the angel tells these shepherds, a Savior has been born this day. Someone is finally here to deliver you and lead you to victory.

Now, we know looking back that the people interpreted this idea of a “Savior” in terms of a political leader. Jesus will set up his rule and reign here on the physical earth one day, but his first coming wasn't about that!

He didn't come bearing the sword, he came to go to a cross. His deliverance would be spiritual in nature. Jesus's work would encompass MUCH MORE than the shepherds that evening hearing this birth announcement for the first time could ever imagine!

The Life Application Bible, in its notes on this verse says: **“Some of the Jews were waiting for a Savior to deliver them from Roman rule; others hoped the Christ (Messiah) would deliver them from physical ailments. But Jesus, while healing their illnesses and establishing a spiritual Kingdom, delivered them from sin. His work is more far-reaching than anyone could imagine. He offers us more than temporary political or physical changes – he offers us new hearts that will last for eternity.”**

Jesus is Savior! The second title given to him is:

2. Christ

Luke 2:11b – “...For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord.”

The word “Christ” here is written in the Greek – it’s Hebrew parallel is the word “Messiah”. They can be used interchangeably. “Christ” not the last name of Jesus, it’s actually a word that means “anointed one”.

In the Old Testament we see often a king or a priest being anointed with oil, symbolizing the office they are called to or the mission they will fulfill.

The Old Testament prophets spoke of THE “Messiah” – not “a anointed one”, but “THE anointed one” who would hold the office of King forever. The Christ would be the final prophet to come.

As the promised one, all of the prophecies of the Old Testament find their fulfillment in this baby born in Bethlehem. This is the one they’ve been waiting on!

Jesus is the Savior, deliverer – he saves us from our sins.
Jesus is the Christ, the anointed one who keeps his promises.

3. Lord

Luke 2:11b – “...For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord.”

Interestingly, this is the only place in all of scripture where these three words: Savior, Christ and Lord all appear together concerning Jesus.

Luke, up to this point in his gospel as used the word, “Lord” more than twelve different times...each time he uses it, he uses it to describe God, the Father.

But, here he brings these terms together and says, the Savior that is born...he’s the Messiah...he’s the Lord. This baby is the sovereign God of the universe. This God governs the affairs of men.

This is what the angels said – put together, it prompts worship! Listen to what they say together in unison...it’s a chorus of praise!

Luke 2:14 – “Glory to God in the highest and on earth peace among those whom he is pleased.”

Jesus came to this earth to bring peace between us and God...to reconcile us to God! This is the message of salvation and it is the message of Christmas!

If you are having a hard time getting your worship on this time of the year, just slow down and consider what was being lifted up in song here!

Because of this baby, there can now be peace between God and man. Before Christ, there is hostility...this is the essence of sin!

Think about it: In the Garden, we messed this up...man sinned against God and from that point on destroyed the unique fellowship we once shared with him. Sin brought conflict between man and God...and man in his pride essentially declared war against God!

And how was this conflict going to be resolved? How would peace be restored? There were sacrifices of course, but we know from the Bible:

Heb. 10:4 – “For it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins.”

Sin offerings could never bring a full and final peace between God and man? Therefore, it seemed impossible for peace to be restored...for the conflict to end. So, what was God going to do?

He had to send salvation! And that salvation is a person! His name is Jesus.

Gal. 4:4-5 – “But when the fullness of time had come (Born to you THIS day), God sent forth his Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem (to SAVE) those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons.”

And because he came to earth...he was born...lived a perfect life...died as a substitute for us...on our behalf – watch this: We can now have peace with God!

Col. 1:19-20 – “For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, and through him to reconcile (bring peace) to himself all things whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of the cross.”

This is WHY the angels worship...this is WHY they were praising him! They were singing “Glory to God in the highest!” There is NONE like our God.

So, I ask you again if the angels respond in praise and worship to the birth of Jesus, shouldn't we?

Louie Giglio (CF) – “Worship is our response, both personal and corporate, to God for who He is, and what he has done; expressed in and by the things we say and the way we live.”

Praise and worship IS the only appropriate response to Christmas...especially for those of us who are saved.

I told you earlier we'd come back to this. and I want to end with it right here...a closing thought as you consider the angels response to worship as well as your own.

1 Peter 1:12 “It was revealed to them (prophets of old) 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.”

Angels sing praise to God because he created them...it's what they know...it's their responsibility...their duty...one of the MAJOR ways they bring glory to him. But get this:

- Angels have never praised God because they know what it is to be saved by a Savior...they don't! That privilege is ours!
- Angels have never praised God because they know what it means for a Redeemer to come and purchase them back from the domain of darkness...they don't! That privilege is ours!
- Angels have never praised God because they know what it means for God to send his only son into the world for them...they don't! That privilege is ours!

See, Jesus came for us...NOT them! He lived for us...NOT them!
He died for us...NOT them! He raised for us...NOT them! He intercedes for us today...NOT the angels!

These majestic angels of heaven look in wonder at us and all that Christ has accomplished on our behalf! It's a mystery to them...they don't fully understand it because they have never experienced it!

Knowing what Jesus has done and seeing it from eternity...having courtside seats...they must look at us with an unbelievable curiosity when they KNOW what they know...and see us gathering together in this place to sing his praises and yet some choose NOT to participate because:

- we don't like the style...
- or the song we are singing just doesn't do it for us...
- or our minds are too occupied with other things and we can't stay focused...
- Or we just don't feel like it...

They must look at us with incredulous amazement! How can we not praise his name and worship him with all that we!

Jesus said if we don't worship his name, the rocks will! Do you remember that? Jesus marched into Jerusalem during Passover just a few days he would go to the cross and give his life.

Luke 19:36-40 – “And as he rode along, they spread their cloaks on the road. As he was drawing near—already on the way down the Mount of Olives—the whole multitude of his disciples began to rejoice and praise God with a loud voice for all the mighty works that they had seen, saying, “Blessed is the King who comes in the name of the Lord! Peace in heaven and glory in the highest!” And some of the Pharisees in the crowd said to him, “Teacher, rebuke your disciples.” He answered, “I tell you, if these were silent, the very stones would cry out.”

I'm telling you after studying worship this week...I made a personal decision...and I hope you will join me in it this Christmas.

I made a decision. The angels...and the rocks...they will not out praise and worship me! NOT this Christmas and I hope not any day of the week! It's the ONLY response Christmas rightly deserves.

Let's pray.

Please Note: This document is not meant to be a published, cited, annotated research paper. It is simply a transcript of a spoken message, provided as a resource. Many commentaries, articles, and other sermon helps were likely studied and contributed to the forming of this message.