

Things the Angels Desire to Look Into

"Which things the angels desire to look into." – **1 Peter 1:12**

Summary:

Peter highlights the angels' eager attention to the Gospel to show the inexhaustible greatness of the gospel. Even the highest created intelligences remain dependent learners, and they find in Christ's sufferings and glory the fullest display of God's wisdom and perfection. The wonder and attention of the angels call us to be more grateful, to careful study, and to appreciate more eagerly the grace of the gospel, as well as public confession, and prayer for the Gospel's spread.

Outline:

1. The object of angelic study

- Salvation, the grace of God, and the sufferings and glory of Christ.

2. The continuing growth of creatures

- Even angels are finite, dependent, and always learning.

3. The vastness of the Gospel

- A Gospel that instructs angels cannot be shallow or easily mastered.

4. The excellence of redemption

- The Gospel displays God's perfections more fully than his other works.

5. The believer's response

- Receive, study, experience, confess, and spread the Gospel.

Text

If we had only known about beings like angels, with all their attributes as described by Scripture, and had been told they were deeply eager to learn about certain subjects, we would have been very curious to find out what those subjects were. If we tried to guess, it's likely we would have become mistaken—indeed, we would have been misled if our guesses were influenced by the spirit of the world. So, what do they study? What do merchants, princes, and statesmen focus on? What do people of science and learning pursue? What are the skills and knowledge that bring men fame and set them apart from others?

What do angels wish to observe? Is it the arts of trade, the secrets of government, philosophical investigations, or the mysteries of nature? No. They long for the salvation of sinners, God's grace, and the sufferings and glory of Christ. As Scripture states, "Of which salvation the prophets have inquired and searched diligently, who prophesied of the grace that should come unto you: searching what, or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow. Unto whom it was revealed, that not unto themselves, but unto us, they did minister the things which are now reported unto you by them that have preached the Gospel unto you with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven; which things the angels desire to look into."

This fact is revealed not for our amusement but to highlight a fundamental truth. It demonstrates that dependence, deficiency, and ongoing growth are essential for all beings, regardless of their level. Some believe that upon entering heaven, we will attain a final state with no further increase in knowledge or happiness. However, such stagnation—lacking hope, vitality, and excitement—would be undesirable, if it were even possible. But in reality, it isn't.

The future is called "that which is perfect," and it is considered perfect compared to the present, but it is not entirely so. Only one Being is absolutely perfect, with an eternal nature unchanged by time and complete knowledge unaffected by discovery. For him, past and future do not exist; his understanding is infinite.

Angels, as creatures, are finite in their abilities just as we are. He reproves his angels for folly, indicating they lack knowledge of many things, including the day of judgment. The

Book of Revelation, regardless of its mysteries, was sealed to both angels and humans; no one in heaven or earth could open or see its contents until the Lord of All unsealed it. Angels now understand much more than before, and new sources of knowledge and joy continually emerge for them, inspiring a fresh song of wonder and praise.

Doesn't this also highlight the vastness of the Gospel? While a lesser master might teach the ignorant, true honor lies in instructing the wise and learned. We should admire someone who could have improved figures like Handel in music, Milton in poetry, and Newton in philosophy. Angels, being the peak of creation, are often depicted in Scripture as symbols of profound knowledge. They are the most intelligent beings in the universe, surpassing humans in their faculties just as the heavens are higher than the earth.

When the Church reveals God's manifold wisdom to principalities and powers in heavenly realms, and the Gospel teaches, enlightens, and enlarges their understanding—filling them with wonder—it truly exemplifies the 'deep things of God' and "the wisdom of God in a mystery." Even after they have studied God's works and providence from the beginning, observed countless scenes across ages—through the Patriarchal, Jewish, and Christian systems—and witnessed the fullness of time, miracles, and the Holy Spirit's gifts, Peter says they continue to diligently explore the Gospel. This highlights how extraordinary the system truly is, contrary to the idea that it can be easily summarized in words by fallible humans.

This is the system that some believe they can easily comprehend and fully explore! However, if they were angels, they would cry out, "O the depths of the riches of God's wisdom and knowledge! How unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways beyond our reach!"

We also recognize the excellence, vastness, value, and immensity of the Gospel. Would such beings as angels show trivial interest? Their attention indicates the subject's worthiness of all acceptance. They study it because it is "the Gospel of our salvation," "the glorious Gospel of the blessed God," and because, in redeeming Jacob, He has glorified Himself in Israel. They see more of His perfections in this plan than in all His other works. We cannot rightly judge a thing's value solely by how much people pay attention to it, as they may be influenced by authority, interest, vanity, or novelty. Even great men have been mistaken

or foolish. Nothing so absurd that it hasn't attracted notable names. Seeing that knowledge doesn't always equate to wisdom, we have no reason to doubt the importance of these things—if angels desire to seek them, they certainly merit examination.

Let us understand our duty regarding them. Should we not be grateful for the opportunity to witness and hear about these truths? Our eyes see, and our ears hear—blessings we should cherish. It is also our responsibility to study them diligently, for we are deeply involved in their meaning. The one they relate to is our Saviour, whose story records our eternal redemption. He became poor and died for us. Therefore, we should turn away from meaningless, vain, vexing, degrading, and defiling worldly pursuits to focus on the profound mystery of godliness. We must never tire of reading and hearing about it, but instead, experience the Lord's graciousness and walk in the truth. We should also own, confess, and boast of these truths before others. I am unashamed of the Gospel of Christ—angels are my witnesses. Finally, let us pray for the extension of this knowledge to all, so that across the earth, everyone can see God's salvation together.

This sermon is taken from William Jay's devotional, *Morning and Evening Exercises* (January 3, Evening), first published in 1854.