

Angels of Christmas: An Angel Visits Joseph

Matthew 1:18-25

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December 17, 2017

I. The Messenger of the Lord

Matthew 25:41, Isaiah 14:12-15, Revelation 12:4-8, 2 Peter 2:4

II. The Message from the Lord

A. Personal Message

Hebrews 13:2

B. Prophetic Message

Isaiah 7:14, Psalm 130:8, John 3:17

He Saved Us from the Penalty of Sin

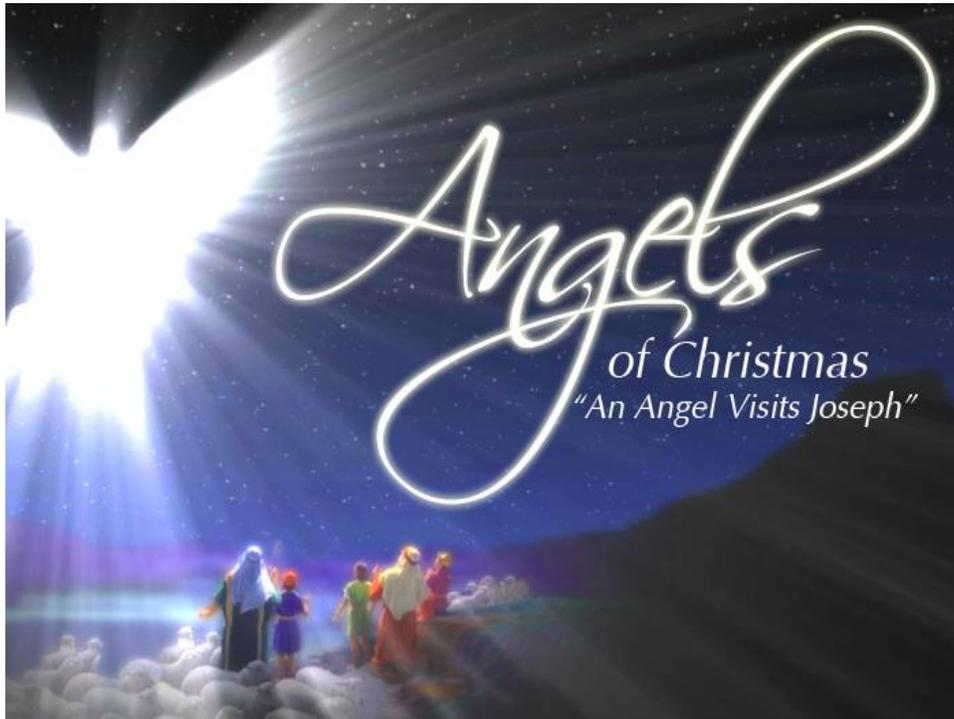
Romans 6:23, 1 Corinthians 15:52-57

He Saves Us from the Power of Sin

Romans 6:6, Hebrews 2:18

He Will Save Us from the Presence of Sin

Revelation 22:3



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OUR VISION

Introduction: Louis Zamperini in *Unbroken*: On the fortieth day, Louie was lying beside Phil under the canopy when he abruptly sat up. He could hear singing. He kept listening; it sounded like a choir. He nudged Phil and asked him if he heard anything. Phil said no. Louie slid the canopy off and squinted into the daylight. The ocean was a featureless flatness. He looked up. Above him, floating in a bright cloud, he saw human figures, silhouetted against the sky. He counted twenty-one of them. They were singing the sweetest song he had ever heard. Louie stared up, astonished, listening to the singing. What he was seeing and hearing was impossible, and yet he felt absolutely lucid. This was, he felt certain, no hallucination, no vision. He sat under the singers, listening to their voices, memorizing the melody, until they faded away. *Unbroken* pg 167

God sent angels to give hope to a man in distress, much like in our story...

I. The Messenger of the Lord

But after he had considered this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream...

- Not all angels are “of the Lord.”

Then he will say to those on his left, ‘Depart from me, you who are cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels.’ Matthew 25:41

- Out of millions of angels; only three are mentioned by name in the Bible: Michael, Gabriel and Lucifer. Lucifer is found in Isaiah 14 and Ezekiel 28 in which he is described as:

*A High ranking angel v 14, 16 Close to God v 14
Full of beauty and splendor v 12, Full of wisdom v 12, 17*

- We can’t understand how this happened, but from within by an act of the will, Lucifer chose to exalt himself rather than God. In an act of foolish rebellion, he tried to take God’s place on the throne. He persuaded other angels to join in his rebellion. Revelation 12 suggest that a third of the angels joined forces with him.

His tail swept a third of the stars out of the sky and flung them to the earth...And there was war in heaven. Michael and his angels fought against the dragon, and the dragon and his angels fought back. But he was not strong enough, and they lost their place in heaven. Revelation 12:4, 7-8

For if God did not spare angels when they sinned... 2 Peter 2:4

- Angels have free will! The Bible warns us that these angels use that free will to try to divert us from the true meaning and joy of Christmas. We must guard our hearts and minds when we talk about angels realizing that not all stories about angels are about angels “of the Lord.”

I was an assistant manager at First Choice Haircutters, I was the only one in the store and it was a fairly new store so business was light. Our names were on the stations and I happened to be using another person station this day. I had just received tickets to a show in New York called, "John Edwards Crossing Over". I was excited because I wanted to connect with my real father who has passed a couple of years before.

A man came into the shop to get a haircut and as you know most people know me as "Roni" and not "Ronda". Remember I was at a different station working instead of my own. With the name "Becky". As I was cutting his hair he continued to tell me about a conference down the street at a huge church. Then he just came out and switched gears and said, "Ronda do you really think I came in here for a haircut?" That threw me for a loop and asked how he knew my real name. Then he stated, "Ronda, God does not want you to go to that show you have tickets for". WOW was I floored. Then he was ready to leave and as I turned around to ring him out he was gone...nowhere in sight.

- Had it not been for this angel, Roni very likely would have encountered angels at the Psychic's show, but they would not have been angels "of the Lord."
- Not all angels that minister to us in such dramatic fashion. The angel came to Joseph in a dream. One of you shared:

I had a strange dream in which 2 angels appeared to me. One seemed to be a young man in his 20's who looked similar to the angels in the drawing you showed during church on Sunday, except his hair was shorter and he was more slender. The other one had dark hair and a 3 day beard and was more portly. Somehow I knew they were messenger angels...

- Angels gave her message to "Be prepared..." It was just what she needed. Joseph, too got just the message he needed.

II. The Message from the Lord

...an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, "Joseph son of David do not be afraid to take Mary home as your wife, because what is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit."

A. Personal Message

- Just as the angel called Rhonda by name, he calls Joseph by name. God was looking for a righteous man to take part in his plan. Jesus would need a father while living as Immanuel. And this "son of David" was just the man he needed.
- Just as the angels came to LZ in his time of distress, so the angel comes now to Joseph who is in distress. His finance is gone for 3 months and returns pregnant. She tells you a story about an angel coming to her. There is not a man in this room that would have believed the story. Joseph had 3 options
 1. Get married quickly and take the child as your own: But he was righteous man. He "knew" Mary had displeased God. Couldn't marry a known adulteress and maintain his righteousness. Everyone would assume the child was his and that he had violated God's law by fooling around.
 2. Expose her as an adulteress: The law said that if a man is engaged to a woman and there is proof given that she is not a Virgin, and being pregnant seems to be pretty good proof, then the law specifically states that woman is to be stoned. But he didn't want her to be disgraced...and he certainly didn't want her to be stoned.
 3. Quietly divorce her: In Jewish customs of the day, an engagement was considered a legal and binding contract. And although not officially married, it could only be broken by divorce. He could send her away to have her child somewhere else. This seemed the best until he hears the message of the angel.
- To a man confused and in turmoil, God sends a messenger with a message of hope. God speaks a message of peace and assures Joseph that God's plan is greater than his turmoil. All that had happened was to fulfill God's plan spoken years ago by the prophet Isaiah.

B. Prophetic Message

She will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins. All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had said through the prophet: "The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel!"

- In these brief words from the angel, Joseph is given a glimpse of the true meaning of Christmas. Jesus is Greek form of Joshua which means "God will save."
- Is that not the essence of Christmas? God has come to save his people. The psalmist had prophesized it years earlier.

"He himself will redeem Israel from all their sins." Psalm 130:8

- God did not come to condemn us for sin. He came to save us from sin!

For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him. John 3:17

- The angel spoke clearly, he came to save his people from their sins.
- **He Saved Us from the Penalty of Sin:** The cost for our forgiveness was not cheap. To save us from our sins would require death for that is the penalty of sin. The baby came to die!

The wages of sin is death Romans 6:23

- We still die physically, for God's kingdom has not yet come in fullness, but death has lost its power.

*When the perishable has been clothed with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality, then the saying that is written will come true: "Death has been swallowed up in victory."
"Where, O death, is your victory? Where, O death, is your sting?" The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. But thanks be to God! He gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. 1 Corinthians 15:52-57*

- **He Saves Us from the Power of Sin:** Because Jesus has come, sin need not be our master.

For we know that our old self was crucified with him so that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves to sin... Romans 6:6

- We don't have to live in slavery to sin. The power of sin has been broken. Because the savior was born as a child and lived among us, and now lives with us, he helps us when tempted to sin.

Because he himself suffered when he was tempted, he is able to help those who are being tempted. Hebrews 2:18

- **He Will Save Us from the Presence of Sin:** The great promise of Revelation 22:3 will be fulfilled, "No longer will there be any curse." The hymn Joy to the World has it right

*No more let sin and sorrow grow
Nor thorns infest the ground:
He comes to make his blessings flow
Far as the curse is found,*

- That is the joy of Christmas!