

Imagine a World without Angels

It's a Wonderful Life--part 4

December 22, 2013

DAY 1: Angels as Ambassadors

We don't hear much about angels in daily life, but they play important roles in God's revelational history.

Luke 2:8 And in that 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 fear. ¹⁰ And the angel said to them, "Be not afraid; for behold, I bring you good news of a great joy which will come to all the people; ¹¹ for to 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 babe 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 men with whom he is pleased!"

1. As the shepherds were shepherding at night, who showed up? (v. 9)

2. When our culture thinks about an angel they think of cute little creatures with wings. However, that's not the usual biblical image! What else was evident to the shepherds in v. 9?

3. What was the reaction of the shepherds?

4. What message was "hand-delivered" to these men...
 - ... in v. 10--

 - ... in v. 11---

 - ...in v. 12---

5. This dazzling message was delivered by ONE angel. When the angel finished with the message, what happened next? (vv. 13-14)

6. One angel delivered the message. A host of angels could not contain themselves and burst out in worship and song. The lyrics of their song are important! What messages are in their song?

7. What role do angels play in this story? How can you follow their right now?

DAY 2: Angels as Heralds of Redemption

1. Human beings can be standing in the presence of the most important event in history and miss it!!

Luke 2:7 And she gave birth to her first-born son and wrapped him in swaddling cloths, and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn.

2. Consider the nameless innkeeper. What kind of man would not find *some* way to find a room for a pregnant woman? Bad enough, but he was blind to who the child would be! He shouldn't have been.

3. Messiah was coming. Here's the question: Would *anyone* notice? Are we that spiritually dull or dead that people would even miss *Him?! What would you have done?*

4. Maybe you've sort of "pooh-poohed" the idea of angels. Funny thing about the angels: at the most important redemptive moments, the angels show up, as ambassadors of the event and to demonstrate by example what the human response ought to be!!!

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5. A major role of an angel is to be an ambassador, a spokesman for God, **telling mankind what not to miss!**

a. What was the initial response of the shepherds?

b. What should it have been?

c. What was the message the angel heralded?

d. After the message was delivered, what happened next? (v. 13)

e. What example is there to follow in the angels' response?

DAY 3: Angels Tell Us What's Important

1. "It's a Wonderful Life." Maybe life doesn't feel very wonderful to you. It sure didn't feel wonderful to George Bailey, the main character in this 1946 Christmas movie. The circumstances of George's life were so awful that he decided to jump off a bridge and end it.

Clarence, an angel, is sent to rescue him and show him how important and wonderful his life is. The angel does this by showing George how the history of Bedford Falls would have unfolded without him. By the end of the movie George sees that he has indeed been given a wonderful life for which he is grateful.

2. Do angels really do this kind of thing? Like most movies there is a mixture of truth and error in this one.

3. The Bible makes it clear that angels are real. They are mentioned almost three hundred times in Scripture. Angels were created by God some time before us and they outrank us in terms of ability, power and appearance. Compared to them it's amazing that God even notices us.

Psalm 8:4-5 What is mankind that you are mindful of them, human beings that you care for them? You have made them a little lower than the angels and crowned them with glory and honor.

4. Yesterday, we saw that angels are ambassadors, heralding the great moments in redemptive history. Check out this stunning example!

Luke 24:1 But on the first day of the week, at early dawn, they went to the tomb, taking the spices which they had prepared. ² And they found the stone rolled away from the tomb, ³ but when they went in they did not find the body. ⁴ While they were perplexed about this, behold, two men stood by them in dazzling apparel; ⁵ and as they were frightened and bowed their faces to the ground, the men said to them, "Why do you seek the living among the dead? ⁶ Remember how he told you, while he was still in Galilee, ⁷ that the Son of man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men, and be crucified, and on the third day rise." ⁸ And they remembered his words...

5. The angels were present at His birth. They were present at His resurrection! It doesn't get any better than this!

a. Did the women who went to the tomb anticipate the resurrection? (vv. 1-4)

b. Why would it have been important for the two angels to show themselves as angels, and not men.

c. Look back at the question the angels ask the women. How do they announce His resurrection?

d. How did they reinforce their message? (v. 6-7)

e. What was the effect of the angels' message on the women? (v. 8)

6. Like the innkeeper and the shepherds, even these women could easily miss what God was doing!

DAY 4: Angels as Protectors

Matthew 18:10 See that you do not look down on one of these little ones. For I tell you that their angels in heaven always see the face of my Father in heaven.

1. This is where the idea of guardian angels comes from. The innocent and the God-fearers have an extra layer of celestial protection that the rest of humanity doesn't.

2. A year ago, a crazed gunman turned Newton upside down. One man took the lives of twenty children and seven adults. Why? This is the question that everyone is trying to answer. The "usual" answers range from mental disease to gun laws, but rarely do you hear of the moral factors.

Why are so few pointing to a moral factor?

(a) We'd all rather believe that man is basically good. To admit evil lurks in the heart of man is an assault on our pride. It insults our pride, and pride hates that!

(b) We don't know how to solve evil. If it's a missing chemical in a brain or the environment or the lack of a law, we can fix that, but evil? How can we defend against that? We don't have the manpower for that. We need protection.

3. We live in a fallen world. Evil exists in human beings, in our natural world (a visible reminder of our far worse human condition), and demons.

4. God's protection doesn't mean Christians or children are immune from the evil in this world. It does mean that God restrains evil to *some* extent. How much, is a mystery. Let's look at a few verses...

Psalms 34:7 The angel of the LORD encamps around those who fear him, and he delivers them.

a. What does God "encamping" around you mean?

b. What does God "delivering" you mean? Delivering from what?

5. God's restraining work is more clearly laid out...

2 Thessalonians 2:7 For the secret power of lawlessness is already at work; but the one who now holds it back will continue to do so till he is taken out of the way.

6. How aware are you of God's restraining of evil?

7. Thank God for His work every day to protection.

DAY 5: Spiritual Warfare

1. In this world, there is a spiritual battle going on. Satan and his demons are trying to destroy people and all God holds dear

2. When Jesus was being interrogated, Pilate was throwing his (supposed) authority around with Jesus. Jesus sat his straight...

Matthew 26:53 "Do you think I cannot call on my Father, and he will at once put at my disposal more than twelve legions of angels?"

3. Jesus points to an invisible power that can be activated. What strikes you about what Jesus knew?

4. Though God could have protected Jesus, He didn't protect Him from death. The war against evil is a real war. People die. Even Jesus wasn't spared. It was His death that provided a way for the power of sin to be broken.

5. We'll finish with a few more verses of God's protection or redemptive action through angels. Under each verse, jot down at least one thought or word that strikes you.

Psalms 91:11–12 For he will command his angels concerning you to guard you in all your ways; they will lift you up in their hands, so that you will not strike your foot against a stone.

Acts 12:21–23 On the appointed day Herod, wearing his royal robes, sat on his throne and delivered a public address to the people. They shouted, "This is the voice of a god, not of a man." Immediately, because Herod did not give praise to God, an angel of the Lord struck him down, and he was eaten by worms and died.

2 Kings 6:15–17 When the servant of the man of God got up and went out early the next morning, an army with horses and chariots had surrounded the city. "Oh, my lord, what shall we do?" the servant asked. "Don't be afraid," the prophet answered. "Those who are with us are more than those who are with them." And Elisha prayed, "O LORD, open his eyes so he may see." Then the LORD opened the servant's eyes, and he looked and saw the hills full of horses and chariots of fire all around Elisha.

Hebrews 1:14 Are not all angels ministering spirits sent to serve those who will inherit salvation?

6. Angels are not some Hollywood-type silly caricatures. When an angel showed up in scripture, the people are afraid. They are ambassadors, heralds, and protectors. Thank God for His angels in your life.