

MESSAGES FROM AN ANGEL:

Luke 2:1,3,6-15 – “And it came to pass in those days, that there went out a decree from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be taxed (“counted” or ‘registered in a census’) ... So everyone went to their home town to be registered. While (Joseph and Mary) were in Bethlehem, the time came for Mary to have her baby. And she brought forth her first-born son, wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn. And there were in the same country shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night. And, lo, the angel of the Lord came upon them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them: and they were sore afraid. And the angel said unto them, ‘Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, which is Christ the Lord. And this shall be a sign unto you; You shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger.’ And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God, and saying, ‘Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men ...’ When the angels had left them and returned to heaven, the shepherds said to one another, ‘Let’s go straight to Bethlehem’.”

Why Was Jesus Born in Bethlehem?

- ✓ If I asked you that question, most likely you’d say, “He was born there, because it was prophesied”. And that’s true. But why did God choose Bethlehem as Jesus’ birthplace?
- ✓ If you know your Bible, you’ll remember that, at Passover, everyone offered a lamb as a sacrifice. **Bethlehem was where they raised the lambs to sacrifice.** (It had been that way for hundreds of years.)
- ✓ When a lamb was born, Rabbinical shepherds would inspect it to make sure it was spotless. Perfect lambs were wrapped in swaddling clothes.
- ✓ I used to think “swaddling clothes” were like a “sleeper” a baby would wear. But no. These were strips of cloth.

- ✓ **Cloths wrapped securely around a lamb meant, “This one’s acceptable for sacrifice”!** (It was spotless, so they wrapped it tightly for protection – to keep it that way.)
- ✓ I’m sure you can see the parallels! **The Lamb of God was born in the town where ALL the sacrificial lambs were born.** When Mary wrapped Him in swaddling clothes, God was saying, “This is an acceptable Sacrifice for the sin of the world!”
- ✓ After 4000 years of prophets saying, “He’s coming!”, the Sacrifice was in the earth, and angels came to announce His arrival. They didn’t announce it to kings, to the influential, or even to the religious leaders. They came to ordinary men doing ordinary work on an ordinary night. Heaven invaded earth with four life-changing messages.

Four Messages for the Human Race

1.) Fear Not – v. 10 – And the angel said unto them, fear not ...”

- ✓ This first angelic message still resonates today! We live in an *age* of fear! We really do. (And, as we approach the end of the Age, it’s only going to get worse!)
- ✓ One website lists 530 phobias. In addition to the *common* fears (like fear of *flying*, fear of *heights*, and fear of *death*), they listed several medically recognized, yet strange, phobias. They included:
 - Arachibutyrophobia – The fear of peanut butter sticking to the roof of your mouth.
 - Arithmophobia – The fear of math.
 - Hippopotomonstrosesquippedaliophobia – Ironically, that’s the fear of long words.
- ✓ Out of All the Fears Listed: Do you know which fear man experienced first? The fear of God. (I don’t mean a *healthy* fear, like “the

fear of the Lord".) After he sinned, Adam was afraid of God.

Gen. 3:8-10 – “Adam and his wife **hid themselves from the Lord** among the trees in the garden. And God called unto Adam, and said, ‘Where are you?’ ... And he said, ‘When I heard the sound of You coming in the garden, **I was afraid** ... **So I hid from You**’ ...” (EXB, Voice)

- ✓ Guilt makes you afraid of God. And we were all guilty! But the angels’ first message was: “You don’t have to be afraid! This baby will redeem you, and redeemed people don’t need to fear!”

Romans 8:15 – “God’s Spirit doesn’t make us slaves who are afraid of him. You have been adopted into the very family circle of God and you can joyfully call him, ‘Daddy’!”

Romans 8:38 – “Who would dare to bring an accusation against God’s people? God himself declares them not guilty! Do you think anyone is going to be able to drive a wedge between us and Christ’s love for us? Nothing can ever separate us from His love. **Death can’t, and life can’t. The angels won’t, and all the powers of hell itself can’t keep God’s love away.** Our fears for today, our worries about tomorrow, or where we are—high above the sky, or in the deepest ocean – absolutely nothing can get between us and God’s love because of the way that Jesus has embraced us.”

2.) Everyone Matters to God

Luke 2:10 – “And the angel said unto them ‘Fear not: for behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to **all people**.’”

- ✓ “All people”! Nobody’s left out! *Race* doesn’t leave you out! *Upbringing* doesn’t leave you out! *Social status* doesn’t leave you out! Even *conduct* doesn’t leave you out! (We recently saw that in a parable!)

Matt. 22:10 – “So those servants went out into the highways, and gathered together as many as they found, **both bad and good** ...”

- ✓ Notice, the bad are JUST as welcome as the good! That’s always been God’s way! (We’re the ones who sometimes struggle with God showing mercy to evil people!)
- ✓ In Sunday school, they told us that Jonah fled to Tarshish because he didn’t want to be a preacher! But that’s not true. (Jonah tells us *exactly* why he ran to Tarshish!)

Jonah 4:2 – (This is after Ninevah repents) – “(Jonah) complained to the Lord and said, ‘I knew this would happen! I knew it when I was still in my own country. That’s why I tried to run to Tarshish in the first place. I knew that you are a loving and merciful God, always patient, always kind. **I knew you would rather forgive them than punish them.**’”

- ✓ Jonah wanted Ninevah to suffer! But God would rather show mercy, and Jonah knew it! So, he ran. (“If I don’t tell them to repent; they won’t! Then God will have to destroy them!”) But God valued the people in Nineveh.
- ✓ So far, the angels have said, “Fear not”, and “Everyone matters to God, no matter how bad they’ve been”! The third message was:

3.) Jesus Came to Save You

Verse 11 – “For unto you is born this day in the city of David, **a Savior** ...”

- ✓ A Savior is “One who saves from danger”. What danger? We could mention several things. But the *greatest* danger we were facing was eternal damnation! But this Baby came to save us! (John 3:17)

4.) Goodwill Toward Men

Luke 2:12-14 – “And this shall be a sign unto you; Ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger. And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God, and saying, ‘Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, **good will toward men.**’”

- ✓ I read that wrong for years! I thought it said, “On earth peace, good will AMONG men”. (Like God was saying, “Play nice, kids! Show goodwill to each other.” But that’s not what it said!)
- ✓ It didn’t say, “Goodwill AMONG men”. It said, “Goodwill TOWARD men”! (Goodwill FROM God TO men!)
- ✓ Goodwill Means: “Grace, kindness”, or literally “to think well of”. In other words, God was saying, “Because of this Baby, I’m changing the way I think of you.”
- ✓ Good will can also mean “grace thinking”. Grace was at the forefront of God’s mind.

v. 15 – “When the angels left them and returned to heaven, the shepherds said to one another, “Let’s go straight to Bethlehem.”

- ✓ When the shepherds heard the angels’ message, they responded by coming to Jesus. Will you?