

How Should We Respond to an Angelic Visitation?

Christmas is an especially supernatural time of year. I love reading the Christmas story in Scripture and discovering all the different ways God intends for heaven to break into our world and our hearts.

Obviously, the birth of our Savior, Jesus, is the reason we celebrate Christmas. The gift of His presence changed everything! But what about some of the other key players in the story: Is there anything we can learn from their examples and apply to our own lives today?

We have already looked at Joseph's dreams that saved Jesus' life. In addition to heavenly direction through visions of the night, there was another supernatural intervention quite common in our Christmas story: angels. We can't read more than a few verses of the first couple chapters of Matthew and Luke without tripping over an angelic visitation. Angels were showing up everywhere—in church, at home, even on the job!

Everyday Angels

A key revelation the Bible makes clear is that angels are for everyone. We might think only pastors or prophets interact with angels and mistakenly assume that happens exclusively in “holy” places like church. We see an example of this in Luke 1 where the angel Gabriel converses with the priest Zacharias in the temple (see Luke 1:1-25). So yes, it is true angels minister to our priests and pastors, and they are definitely with us when we are at our places of worship.

But that was only the beginning. Then we see Gabriel showing up at Mary's house. Mary wasn't a priest or a pastor; she was just a teenager. And she wasn't in church. This shows us that angelic interaction is not just for adults, nor is it reserved

for “professional ministers”. No, Mary proceeded to have a revelatory back and forth conversation with Gabriel, just as Zacharias had done, demonstrating that angels minister to us in our homes as well (see Luke 1:26-38).

We see angels are for both old and young; they are with us at church, and they are with us at home. Is that all? Next, we find angels showing up and delivering God’s message to the shepherds while they were watching over their flocks at night (see Luke 2:6-16). So angels minister to us while we’re at work too. Isn’t that encouraging? Truly, it is outside the four walls of our church that we need their assistance the most.

Angels and Worship

In fact, there is another incredible revelation hidden within this passage. Upon hearing the extraordinary angelic announcement of their Savior’s birth, what was the shepherds’ immediate response?

“When the angels went away from them into heaven, the shepherds said to each other, “Let us now go to Bethlehem and see what has happened, which the Lord has made known to us” (Luke 2:15).

Some Christians are afraid that if they begin interacting with angels, that will detract from their relationship with Jesus and worship of Him. However, biblically speaking, that fear is not justified. There is no record anywhere in Scripture of a believer ever accidentally worshiping an angel. Instead, we see the opposite. The shepherds glorified and praised God for all they had heard and seen (Luke 2:20).

Was it okay that the shepherds listened to an angel? What was the result of their obedience to the angel’s instruction? Because the shepherds honored the angelic message, they were the first ones to worship Jesus. We see that listening to angels does not detract from our relationship with Jesus; it

strengthens it. Listening to angels doesn't take us away from Jesus; it brings us closer to Him.

The reason we listen to angels is because they are God's messengers. In fact, the word "angel" actually means "messenger." So we understand that many angels are "communication specialists" in the kingdom and their job is to bring us God's word. When we honor angelic messengers, we are really honoring the one who sent them to us.

We see this clearly in our Christmas story in Luke 2, for who was it who gave the shepherds revelation about Jesus being born? I'll warn you, that's a trick question. We might say it was an angel, but that's not what verse 15b reveals: "Let us now go to Bethlehem and see what has happened, which the Lord has made known to us." The shepherds considered a message from angels to be a message from God Himself.

To make it more relatable, we can imagine it like jury duty. When we receive a summons in the mail, we show up at the courthouse at the time and day specified. Because we report for jury duty, does that mean we are obeying the mailman? Obviously not, as he is simply a carrier delivering a message. We know we are obeying the higher authority of the one who sent the message.

And, so it is with angels.

Why It Matters

We understand then that we don't have to be afraid of honoring angels in our lives, having conversations with them like Mary and Zacharias did or even following their instructions like the shepherds did. We see that listening to angels does not take us away from Jesus, but actually brings us closer to Him and allows us to worship and serve Him even more.

From these biblical examples we are encouraged that angels are for everyone. If we are older ministers in church or younger

believers at home, whether we are male or female, at work or at school, awake or asleep ... angels are with us.

We know God is the same yesterday, today and forever, and what He did through angels in Scripture He wants to do in our world as well. May we be open to receiving His blessings, direction, protection and revelation however He sends them, whomever He sends them through. {eoa}

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