

BE NOT AFRAID – A SAVIOR IS COME ANGEL’S ANNOUNCEMENT

Luke 2: 8-15

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The announcement of angels was preceded by the consolation “be not afraid”. Why?

Angels were often used by God to be terrible in the life of men i.e Sodom and Gomorrah).

Daniel 5 Then I lifted up mine eyes, and looked, and behold a certain man clothed in linen, whose loins were girded with fine gold of Uphaz: 6 His body also was like the beryl, and his face as the appearance of lightning, and his eyes as lamps of fire, and his arms and his feet like in colour to polished brass, and the voice of his words like the voice of a multitude. 7 And I Daniel alone saw the vision: for the men that were with me saw not the vision; but a great quaking fell upon them, so that they fled to hide themselves...

Exodus³¹ Then the LORD opened the eyes of Balaam, and he saw the angel of the LORD standing in the way, and his sword drawn in his hand: and he bowed down his head, and fell flat on his face.

Judges²² And when Gideon perceived that he was an angel of the LORD, Gideon said, Alas, O LORD God! for because I have seen an angel of the LORD face to face.

Judges 13:6 - Then the woman came and told her husband, saying, A man of God came unto me, and his countenance was like the countenance of an **angel** of God, **very terrible**: but I asked him not whence he was, neither told he me his name:

2 Samuel 24:17 - And David spake unto the LORD when he saw the **angel** that smote the people, and said, Lo, I have sinned, and I have done wickedly: but these sheep, what have they done? let thine hand, I pray thee, be against me, and against my father's house.

1 Chronicles 21:16 - And David lifted up his eyes, and saw the **angel** of the LORD stand between the earth and the heaven, having a drawn sword in his hand stretched out over Jerusalem. Then David and the elders of Israel, who were clothed in sackcloth, fell upon their faces.

Isaiah 37:36 - Then the **angel** of the LORD went forth, and smote in the camp of the Assyrians a hundred and fourscore and five thousand: and when they arose early in the morning, behold, they were all dead corpses.

Angels were also used to bring news of hope, promise, comfort and joy

Matthew 18:10 - Take heed that ye despise not one of these little ones; for I say unto you, That in heaven their **angels** do always behold the face of my Father which is in heaven.

Zechariah 1:13 - And the LORD answered the **angel** that talked with me with good words and comfortable words.

Daniel 9:21 - Yea, whiles I was speaking in prayer, even the man **Gabriel**, whom I had seen in the vision at the beginning, being caused to fly swiftly, touched me about the time of the evening oblation.

Luke 1:19 - And the angel answering said unto him, I am **Gabriel**, that stand in the presence of God; and am sent to speak unto thee, and to shew thee these glad tidings.

Luke 1:28 - And the **angel** came in unto her, and said, Hail, thou that art highly favoured, the Lord is with thee: blessed art thou among women.

Sermon prepared by:

Romans 10:14...and how shall they hear without a preacher? ¹⁵ And how shall they preach, except they be sent? as it is written, How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things!

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The words "Fear not" appear in the Bible exactly 365 times. Did you ever wonder why? Did you ever wonder why we are not to fear? The reason, of course, is that a Savior has been presented -- a Deliverer, a rescuer, one who is adequate to free us from any threat and danger in any situation. That is why the shepherds were told not to be afraid. It did not make any difference what Herod or the Romans would do, or what the clever, manipulative minds of men would try to set in motion; there was a Deliverer, a Savior among them. A Redeemer had come who would change the situation and use it for his own glory and bring them through. Therefore the announcement of the angel was "Be not afraid."

Every Christmas season we remind each other that it is not enough for Christ to have been born in Bethlehem 2,000 years ago. What really counts is Christ being born in the human heart. Your Bethlehem is when Christ came to you and was born in your heart. It is that remarkable parallel that constitutes the good news of Christianity today -- that Jesus can be born in us as certainly as he was born in Bethlehem. Therefore, to us, the angel stands to make his welcome announcement: "Fear not. Fear not, for unto you is born this day a Savior, who is Christ the Lord."

None of these movements or methods will ever mean a thing unless they are backed by a life that has this mark of genuine Christianity -- the presence of joy and the absence of fear. Paul said in Romans 14:17:

The kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking, but of righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit, {Rom 14:17}

No matter what the trial may be, the promise of this verse is that we have a Savior, a Deliverer, especially designed to handle that problem, a Savior who is with us always. If we remember that, and look to him, he will take us through it. He does not promise to take the problem away, but he says he will take us through it. He will strengthen us to face it and will give us courage and peace and joy in the midst of it. Therefore the promise of the angel was "Do not be afraid, for I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people [not to everyone, automatically handed out, but to anyone]. Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is Christ the Lord."



Herod "the Great" Herod "the Great" (45min)

Was a very complex man, a man of many contradictions. He was cruel to many and helpful to some. He seems to have been insecure and even paranoid that others close to him were after his power. Herod was a man with a passion for building.

- He also offered (Mark) Antony money to make him king, just as he had given him money to make him Tetrarch. On Antony's advice, the senate decreed that Herod be king. When Herod became king, he slew all the members of the Sanhedrin and eventually Hyrcanus the High Priest as well.
- Herod was now fully in control of his kingdom, encompassing Idumea, Judea, Samaria, Batanea, Auranitis, Trachonitis, and Peraea, as well as Galilee.²³ Herod was "unflinchingly loyal to and dependent on Rome".
- From the very start of Herod's reign as king, he showed the many sides of his personality. In order to reduce the power of the High Priesthood, he appointed and dismissed many High Priests, ignoring the hereditary nature of the post. From then on, the High Priest was nothing more than a Roman underling, owing allegiance to Herod and the Roman government. Herod the Murderer
- One new High Priest was only 17, though tall for his age (which was not permitted to be held until age 20). The people were very warm towards him, professing their happiness too openly for the young man's own good. When Herod heard this, he "resolved to complete what he had intended against the young man." He was not more than 18 at the time he was murdered (drowned).
- At this point, Herod saw that Hyrcanus was the only man of "royal dignity" left, so, wanting to insure that there would be no future obstacles, he had him killed.
- Herod suspected Miriamne of having an affair with his uncle Joseph and so had Joseph killed. Herod killed both his sister's husbands (she married one after he killed the first

one).³⁰ Herod eventually, according to Josephus' account, had Miriamne executed. He seems to have gone a bit mad after this since, Josephus says, Herod had loved her. The Talmud confirms that Herod was mad, preserving Miriamne in honey and possibly having relations with her corpse (Bava Batra).

- Herod built a great many palace/forts. Herod's most famous building project, however, was the rebuilding of the Second Temple (Solomon's Temple) in Jerusalem. As a way for Herod to repent for having the rabbis killed. "He who has not seen the Temple in its full construction has never seen a glorious building in his life" in reference to Herod's Temple."
- He may have also acquired some of his money by robbing a grave. Herod opened a room in David's tomb at night and took out the gold furniture that was there, as well as precious goods. He did not enter the area where the bodies of David and Solomon were, reportedly because of fear.
- Herod reduced the power of the Great Sanhedrin to the point where they were virtually powerless. It is even possible that he may have "abolished the Great Sanhedrin altogether". Another source says the Great Sanhedrin was stripped of all political power.

Herod's Death

Having dealt with the major events of Herod's life, we now turn to his death. The disease Herod had caused him to have a great appetite, his "entrails were ulcerated, and the chief violence of his pain lay on his colon; an aqueous and transparent liquor also settled itself about his feet, and a like matter afflicted him at the bottom of his belly. Nay, farther, his privy member was putrefied, and produced worms, and when he sat upright, he had a difficulty of breathing, which was very loathsome, on account of the stench of his breath, and the quickness of its returns; he had also convulsions in all parts of his body, which increased his strength to an insufferable degree...." He had tried to be cured, even going over the Jordan to bath at some place called Calirroe, drinking the waters there. It is possible that this was some kind of sexually transmitted disease, seeing that Herod had many wives and followed many Hellenistic ways. The NIV version of the "New Testament" says, in Acts 12:23, "And immediately, because he had not given the glory to G-d, an angel of the L-rd struck him down, and he was eaten by worms and died" This picture of Herod, the man and the king, is based on the information available. While it cannot be known for certain where the histories are biased in one way or another, it seems clear that Herod was great in name alone. Even though he rebuilt the Temple and built a building around the tomb of the patriarchs, his cruelty overshadows his life.