

VISITORS FROM OUTER SPACE

Introduction

I. The Angelic Visitor to Zechariah, Lk. 1:11-20

A. When the Visitor appeared Gabriel, vs. 19

1. As he was doing the Lord's work
2. Suppose he had been absent from church that day?
3. Angels observe our prayers and worship

B. The Message of the Angelic Visitor

1. Fear Not
2. Prayer Answered
3. Prophetic description of John the Baptist

C. The effect of the visit

1. He was troubled
2. He did not believe
3. He was judged for his lack of faith
 - a. Unbelief is a great sin.
 - b. What silence we would have today if every unbeliever were stricken dumb!

II. The Angelic Visitor to Mary, Lk. 1:26-38

A. The name of this angelic Visitor.

1. Gabriel, the Power of God, vs. 26
2. Same angel as had 6 months previously appeared to Zecharias.

B. The place of the visit.

1. Nazareth, an obscure little village
2. The blessings of God will reach God's children, wherever they are.

C. The person to whom the angel appears -- Mary.

1. He addresses her as a favored human being.
2. He does not worship her as a goddess.

D. The message he brings of the Son to be born.

E. The effect of the visit on Mary

1. She was afraid
2. She believed
3. She quietly & humbly accepted the favor bestowed upon her.

- NOTE also - the angelic visitor to Joseph - Matt. ch. 1:20-21

III. The Angelic Visitors to the Shepherds, Lk. 2:8-14

A. The fact that humble shepherds were the first to receive the glad tidings is in itself instructive. In the view of the world it would seem an utter waste to brighten the sky with angels, and pour down from the steeps of glory cataracts of tumultuous song, merely for a few poor shepherds.

This shows us plainly that there is no respect of persons with God; in His eye the loftiest & the lowest are as one.

B. This wonderful visit was given to them while they were at work, (as Zechariah)

Idle men do not receive visions.

It isn't in the working up of emotional ecstasy, but in the regular & honest discharge of life's duty that we are most likely to find God & be found of Him. (Moses received his call from the Lord while keepin the flocks of Jethro.)

Gideon threshed wheat by the wine-press when the angel brought him his commission.

(Samuel waited to anoint David king while they brought him from "those few sheep in the wilderness."

(Elisha was ploughing when "Elijah passed by" and cast the mantle of prophecy upon him; and Amos was among the herdsmen of Tekoa and a keeper of sycamore trees when God gave him the prophecies of judgment upon Philistia & Tyre.)

Yes, it was while they were attending to their business that the shepherds had a visit from the angels.

If they had been at home, or out at a party, they would have missed these Visitors from Outer Space.

If they had been at a civic or fraternal organization or playing on harps at a sacred concert, or ornamenting pottery for a synagogue fair, when they ought to have been in that sheep-field on the Bethlehem hillside, they would not have heard that song of the angels, or seen the glory of the Lord round about them.

The best place in all the world to be is
at the post of duty.

Nowhere else can such blessings be so confidently
looked for.

If your duty calls you to stay at home
and care for your loved ones,
then stay there, and never suppose that you can have a
bigger blessing somewhere else.

If your duty calls you to be in another city,
or out in the streets or fields,
or at a prayer meeting,
or in a store or factory,
or at a church function,
or in the home of a friend,
then be there, at whatever cost or inconvenience,
and understand it is best for you to be there
and nowhere else.

Be in the place of God's appointment,
and stay awake and alert.

Suffer not your eyelids to shut,
but sift and shake your own heart.

Examine yourself, and remember what a blessing and
privilege it is to be a watchful shepherd,
that an angel of comfort may come
and sing redemption's song unto you.

C. The time was night, and the sky was cloudless.
Hill & dale slept under the bay of the clear moon,
and the quiet flocks were gathered to the
shelter of the fold.

To such a scene came the first news of the Savior's birth
Not to man's busy places, where trouble & sorrow reign
but to those peaceful folds,

sleeping in the bosom of the voiceless hills,
came these welcome visitors from God's great outer space.

When the angels came with their messages of peace
on earth, they came to a scene of green woods
and grassy vales & solemn hills.

D. The glory of the Lord which came to this peaceful scene was the Shekinah glory of God which had appeared many times in early ages.

~~in Eden~~ It had gleamed as a flaming sword, turning every way, to keep the way of the tree of life.

~~in the wilderness~~ It had flickered as a lambent flame in

the burning bush.

~~in Sinai~~ It had hung as a great canopy ^{over} the mt. of the law. It had marshalled the hosts of Israel for 40 years towering like a pillar of cloud by day and like a pillar of fire by night;

It had hovered as a glittering sun above the cherubs overshadowing the mercy-seat.

It had filled the temple of Solomon, flooding it with a brightness so intense that the priests could not enter to minister.

It was ~~in~~ the radiant cloud which ~~had~~ enfolded out of sight the ascending Lord.

And It will shine from the cloud with which the Lord shall return in the glory of his second advent.

But never had it served a purpose so great and so blessed as on this most memorable of nights when, after centuries of eclipse, it suddenly reappeared and shone around these

* This Shekinah Glory signaled the astonished shepherds near Deep Descent of Jesus to Earth Bethlehem.

E. And what did these humble shepherds do after their visit with the angels?

They believed; they moved and acted on their faith and demonstrated it; they witnessed of the Savior, and they returned to their occupation.

At first they were naturally afraid and excited, but their fear soon gave way to action.

When the angels had gone away,

they said to one another,

"Let us now go even unto Bethlehem and see" --- not if the thing is come to pass, but ---

"this thing which is come to pass."

They did not go because they doubted,

but because they believed.

It was a grand journey of faith -- this journey of the Shepherds from the sheep-fields to the manger.

What is OUR attitude to God's Divine announcements?
Do we as readily believe & act on our faith?

Having seen the Infant Savior,
they immediately made known their story, first to Mary,
and then to the busy crowd of travelers
bustling about the inn.

No sooner had they found Christ for themselves,
than they began to tell others about Him.

But the scripture record does not leave them here
as evangelists in the streets of Bethlehem.

We are told in the 20th verse that they "returned"--
returned to their ordinary work,
to their flocks and folds,
to those vales & hills from which they had come,
and there in their own quiet life
they "fought the good fight, and kept the faith."

God does not call every man to be an apostle.
He wants preachers in private as well as in public.
He wants the gospel to be told in sheep-folds,
and in markets, and in shops, ^{its}
just as in places set apart for proclamation.

And if God has met and forgiven you,
then in the place where your daily lot is cast,
in the sphere of your common duties and labors,
stand forth^{as} a witness for righteousness and for God;
tell the glad tidings of peace & salvation to the
sin-stricken, sorrow-laden men and women all around you.

Although the shepherds went back to their regular work
and to their ordinary occupation, it was forever
afterward bright with something of the angels' glory,
and echoed the music of their hallelujah chorus. They
went back to the same place and to the same work,
yet it was different.

And after you meet God in a personal religious experience
you may go back to your same job, yet it will be different.
Lowly secular and manual tasks will be sanctified by
a new and glorious motive and joy and meaning.

Common things will be transfigured,
and all of life will be a sacrament,
when you learn to do everything to the glory of God.

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