

Angels Appeared to the Prepared

International Bible Lesson

Luke 2:8-9

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“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” (Luke 2:8-9—KJV).

“In that region there were shepherds living in the fields, keeping watch over their flock by night. Then an angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified” (Luke 2:8-9—NRSV).

In all of the accounts surrounding Jesus’ birth, those who saw Him as a baby were the most prepared to meet Him. The angels did not appear to the shepherds who lived in their fields just because they were poor; rather, this especially chosen group of shepherds probably thought in ways similar to the shepherd boy David, who became Israel’s greatest king and an ancestor of the Messiah. These shepherds had learned about God from the beauties of God’s creation. They may have known and identified with these words of David, “The heavens are telling the glory of God ... Day to day pours forth speech, and night to night declares knowledge” (Psalm 19:1-2). But the heavens did not speak words they could hear until the angel of the Lord appeared to them. The glory of God showed around them in a new way, and they heard an angel of the Lord speak their language. The angel put into words what they had learned from the sun and the stars, “Glory to God in the highest heaven” (Luke 2:14). Moreover, they learned about God’s glory in a new way, because the angel proclaimed, “To you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is the Messiah, the Lord” (Luke 2:11). No wonder they left their field with haste to find the baby Jesus in a manger, and then returned “glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen, as it had been told them” (Luke 2:20).
— L.G. Parkhurst, Jr.

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Thinking Further

1. What were the shepherds doing when the angels appeared to them?
2. What possible reasons can you think of for God sending angels to these shepherds on the day Jesus was born instead of to others in Bethlehem or in the region?
3. If an angel appeared to you unexpectedly in the quiet of the night, how would you feel?
4. Read Luke 2:10-11 again. What truths did the angel share with them to help them overcome their feelings of terror at seeing him?
5. If you had been one of the shepherds, what would you have done after the angels' appearance? Give some reasons for your answer.