

# Christmas Is Jesus (The Message of the Angels )

by Colin Peckham

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*The angels' messages to Zacharias, Mary, Joseph, and the shepherds announced Jesus' birth and God's plan of salvation, bringing comfort, joy, and instruction to those who received them.*

**Topics:** "Angel Appearances", "Salvation Through Jesus"

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## Description

Colin Peckham delves into the four occasions where angels appeared to different individuals to announce the great event of the birth of Jesus. Each message was prefaced with 'Fear not,' bringing comfort and peace. The messages brought gratitude and joy to Zacharias, explanation and privilege to Mary, salvation and instruction to Joseph, and glory to the shepherds. These angelic messages all pointed towards God's mighty act of salvation through Jesus Christ.

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## Transcript

At the time of the birth of Jesus angels appeared on four occasions to different people announcing this great event and issues relating to it. An angel appeared to Zacharias, to Mary, to Joseph, and to the shepherds. On every occasion the message was prefaced by the words, 'Fear not,' words of comfort bringing serenity and peace of mind as the heavenly messages were delivered.

The angel appeared:

TO ZACHARIAS (Luke 1:11-20)

The angel Gabriel came to Zacharias the priest in the temple as he was ministering to the Lord, and announced that his prayers had been heard, that even in their old age, he and his wife Elisabeth would have a son whom they would call John. "Fear not Zacharias for ... thou shalt have joy," was the thrilling message of the angel. The coming son would go out in the spirit and power of Elijah and turn many to the Lord, making ready a people prepared for the Lord. It was a message which brought relief and gratitude, for his prayers were heard, and joy at the coming of this amazing child. The message was so staggering that Zacharias, good and godly though he was, could not believe it, and he was struck dumb for a time for his unbelief.

TO MARY (Luke 1:26-37)

Once again it is Gabriel who brings the message -- what a message! Never before or since has such a message been delivered. Mary's godly qualities are acknowledged. for she had lived in the presence and blessing of the Lord and had been greatly honoured. Mary will have a son called Jesus. He is the Son of the Highest and will reign forever. 'How shall this be?' she asks-- not in the language of distrust but in the desire for instruction. The divine overshadowing and incarnation are explained, reassuring her again that with God nothing is impossible. Mary, spiritually-minded as she was, accepts it with trust, submission and contentment. The elderly, barren Elisabeth had joyfully said that in her conception the Lord had taken away her reproach (Luke 1:25), but Mary, recognizing that the shadow of a seemingly illegitimate child would hang over her all her life, said in resignation, 'be it unto me according to Thy word.' Far surpassing all this was the message of God concerning the divine nature of her child and of his exalted position in the plan of God's salvation. That which the prophets had anticipated was now to take place, and she was the greatly privileged participant in this mighty act of God's grace. It was a message of comfort, privilege and great joy. It was an explanation as to the origin and person of the Prince, the King, whom she was to bear.

TO JOSEPH (Matt. 1:20-23; 2:13, 19 and 20)

Poor Joseph. His fiance was pregnant. Perplexity, dismay, alarm, fear and consternation must have coursed through the passages of his mind. While he 'thought on these things' (it is to the thoughtful, not the careless and unthinking, that God will reveal His will) God graciously sent His message of peace and advice, 'fear not to take unto thee Mary thy wife ...' Three times the angel came to Joseph, but this first was the most important of all. It was a message of comfort and information, instruction and inspiration. Joseph was informed that that which was conceived in Mary was 'of the Holy Ghost.' He was directed to take his wife-to-be, for her son Jesus would 'save his people from their sins.' Above all it was a message of salvation. To Mary His person, power and position was declared ('The Son of the Highest ... the Son of God'), and to Joseph His purpose and mission was disclosed ('He shall save...').

The second time he was commanded to flee because Herod wanted to destroy the child, and the third time he was instructed to return to Israel because it was safe.

Joseph received three commands, 'take Mary, flee to Egypt,' 'return to Israel,' and each time, the explanation for the commands being given, he obeyed. Faithful, trusting, obedient Joseph.

TO THE SHEPHERDS (Luke 2:9-14)

To the shepherds an angel appeared in great glory, and brought good tidings of great joy, signalling the birth of 'a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord.' This joy was to be universal, 'to all people. No sooner was the message delivered by the one angel than suddenly there was with that angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God. The goodwill of God towards men brings glory to God in the highest and peace on earth. The mighty doxology of praise filled the shepherds with wonder and amazement. The sign of the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes which they had been given, they found to be true, and they glorified and praised the Lord.

In summary then. the thrilling announcements and message of the angels were of great comfort and joy in the revelation of God's plan of salvation. To Zacharias it was a message which brought gratitude and joy, to Mary one of explanation and privilege, to Joseph one of salvation and instruction, to the shepherds, one of glory. To everyone the messages of the angels anticipated God's mighty act of salvation in our wonderful Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ.

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