

## The Prophecy of the Birth of Christ



## Angels and Shepherds

Were there other prophecies? As I studied the ones in the Old Testament, I wondered about the Angels, the Shepherds, and the Magi.

According to a definition of a prophet it is one who speaks for God or a deity, or by divine inspiration.

By that definition which applies to the prophets of the Old Testament who were guided by divine inspiration, we also have others that are not usually thought of prophets because they have

*“And the angel said unto them, Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, which is Christ the Lord. And this shall be a sign unto you; Ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger. And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God, and saying, Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men.” Luke 2: 10-14*

not been called that by historians of the Scripture. Who is one who speaks for God? If we speak of God’s love to others are we prophets of what is revealed for all who accept Christ as their personal Savior? There is so much to think about and so much to study.

A study of this Scripture tells us many things. The angels were sent by God. They had good news about a *Savior* being born, which is *Christ the Lord*. You will find the babe in a manger, not in a home or palace. Then a multitude of angels joined in and told them there would be *“Glory to God in the Highest”* and peace on earth for men. Then they were gone. We don’t know their names, in fact, we don’t even know the name of the “lead” one who first appeared to the shepherds.

The angels weren’t alone. According to Scripture, *“the glory of the Lord shone round about them”* and the shepherds were scared. There have been volumes written about angels and we know that many appeared in the Old Testament to various people. People wear one on their

shoulder to say they have an angel watching over them and some people feel that each one of us has an angel watching over us. It gives them a feeling of security.

*“God’s angels often protect his servants from potential enemies.”*

Billy Graham

I don’t know how God does it, but I feel He is watching over me every day, in good times and bad times, when I am seeking to follow his will and when I am disobeying. Does an angel protect me? Is an angel sitting on my shoulder keeping me from making the wrong choice at times, like Jiminy Cricket?

Then there were shepherds. At that time in history, shepherds were considered the lowest of mankind. They often grazed their sheep on other people’s property, and weren’t even permitted to appear in court. But, Shepherds were the first to receive the good news of Christ’s birth—not the Scribes or Pharisees, the insiders, the royalty, not the government officials—not even King Herod!

They weren’t ordered to go tell the people. They were told they would find the baby, *Christ the Lord*, wrapped in swaddling clothes and lying in a manger. But as most of us would want to do, they couldn’t keep quiet. They told everyone what they had seen and heard about this new born baby. Were they speaking for God? We never hear of them again! We should want to thank them for their

*“Do not forget to show hospitality to strangers, for by so doing some people have shown hospitality to angels without knowing it.” Hebrews 13:2*

courage and pray that we also have that same courage when faced with adversity.

We do know they went back to work “glorifying and praising God for all the things that they had heard and seen, as it was told unto them.”

As I thought about these two groups of people and their prophecies, I had a new appreciation for what they did. I’m sure the angels were guided, but how were they chosen to tell this “good news?” They returned to heaven and continued their work.

In the classic movie, “It’s a Wonderful Life” we are all told that Clarence got his angel’s wings on Christmas Eve when he helped save George Bailey from drowning in Bedford Falls!

There is comfort for some in the words of Humperdinck’s “Evening Prayer” with fourteen angels gathering around Hansel and Gretel to protect them. Is there joy for us just realizing we are in God’s hands?

Is there assurance and joy in being a shepherd? If we become angels in heaven when we leave earth as some people think, then I think those shepherds are angels now! The Bible does not tell us exactly what happens to us when we die. In the New Testament, Christ tells us that he is the Good Shepherd and we are his sheep. This Scripture passage which is stated as a command should give us all the assurance we need that we are in good hands if we accept Christ as our personal Savior. The good shepherd watches over his sheep. John 10:11-18

*“I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. The hired hand is not the shepherd and does not own the sheep. So when he sees the wolf coming, he abandons the sheep and runs away. Then the wolf attacks the flock and scatters it. The man runs away because he is a hired hand and cares nothing for the sheep.*

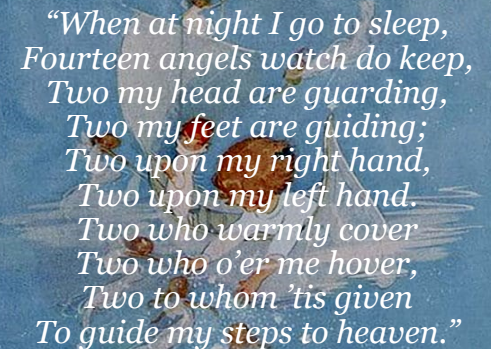
*“I am the good shepherd; I know my sheep and my sheep know me— just as the Father knows me and I know the Father—and I lay down my life for the sheep. I have other sheep that are not of this sheep pen. I must bring them also. They too will listen to my voice, and there shall be one flock and one shepherd. The reason my Father loves me is that I lay down my life—only to take it up again. <sup>18</sup>No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have authority to lay it down and authority to take it up again. This command I received from my Father.”*  
John 10:11-18

I know I can’t measure up to being an angel, and certainly not a shepherd, and I am very well satisfied to be a sheep in God’s pasture. If a prophet is one who tells, should we all seek to be prophets? Christ commanded “Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen.” Matthew 28:19-20

Prayer: Father, You are the Good Shepherd. Your word tells me that You will bring me to green pastures and running waters. Help me to realize you are there for me always and feed me Lord in my waking and in my sleeping. Amen.

1. Why do you think the angels were sent to shepherds?
2. How do you think the people received them? Are we ever set aside because we tell the good news of Christ’s birth and salvation?
3. Matthew tells us “If anyone will not welcome you or listen to your words, shake off the dust from your feet as you leave that house or town.” Matthew 10:14 What does that mean for us?
4. As we go through these devotionals, we are finding so much that we don’t know. The Old Testament is revealed in the New Testament, but we still don’t know all the details we want. Where does our faith come in and how does it grow?

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*“When at night I go to sleep,  
Fourteen angels watch do keep,  
Two my head are guarding,  
Two my feet are guiding;  
Two upon my right hand,  
Two upon my left hand.  
Two who warmly cover  
Two who o’er me hover,  
Two to whom ’tis given  
To guide my steps to heaven.”*

From Humperdinck’s “Evening Prayer,  
Hansel and Gretel