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# **The Angel Said, “Fear Not!”**

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**Series: Angels**

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# The Angel said, "Fear Not!"

We are nearing the end of our journey, walking alongside the angelic host. We have seen them at their creation, witnessed the horror of the fall of probably one-third of them, and seen the results of that fall and how it has affected both man and the plan of God.

We have walked alongside the host of heaven who did not fall, and seen the wonder and the marvel of the tasks God has given them to do. We watched them intervene in the lives of God's children when they had veered off the path. We saw them bring a wife to Isaac in answer to his father's prayer, and watched at the very last moment as an angel interrupted Abraham's implicit obedience in order to provide the lamb, Himself.

We saw the angel get Moses' attention with a burning bush and watched as God spoke out of the bush and told Moses it was time for his ministry to begin, when Moses thought it was retirement time. We watched Daniel in the lion's den and saw an angel give his furry friends lockjaw.

We saw the angels announce to an amazed old couple named Zacharias and Elizabeth that they were going to be the Abraham and Sarah of the New Covenant, bringing a child into the world in their old age. We listened as the angel Gabriel comforted and encouraged a startled woman named Mary as he explained that she, a virgin, would bring a boy into the world, and that His name would be Jesus.

It was an angel who comforted Joseph and told him that this child in Mary's womb belonged to God. We listened as an angel told Joseph to flee to Egypt, then later to return to Israel. We saw angels minister to Jesus in the wilderness. We saw them trouble the waters at the pool of Bethesda. We watched as they strengthened Jesus in Gethsemane.

And, finally, we viewed in awe the restraint of Jesus as He faced that cruel cross. While his disciples were trying in the flesh to prevent His arrest, He admitted to them that He could easily call on His Father and 72,000 angels would descend from heaven,

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and the battle would be over. The problem would be that the battle would be lost.

The reason Jesus came to earth was to die. We so often forget that. He was born to die so that we who were born in sin could be born again and never die. So any intervention, no matter how dramatic that would be, would interfere with the Father's plan of redemption and would be the end of life for us.

So Jesus exemplified the *grace of restraint*. He refused to call down those angels. And though they must have chafed beneath their grief as they watched God die, they must have realized that somehow their perfect Creator-God had a reason for His restraint.

Angels. They were everywhere in the life of Christ. In fact, they were the first visitors the Father sent when His death on the Cross had become reality. It is at that point that we tune the VCRs of history back to that place in time, and watch the angelic host descend again to do the work of God. Let's tune in and see what happened.

In the end of the sabbath, as it began to dawn toward the first *day* of the week, came Mary Magdalene and the other Mary to see the sepulchre.

And, behold, there was a great earthquake: for the angel of the Lord descended from heaven, and came and rolled back the stone from the door, and sat upon it.

His countenance was like lightning, and his raiment white as snow:

And for fear of him the keepers did shake, and became as dead *men* .

And the angel answered and said unto the women, Fear not ye: for I know that ye seek Jesus, which was crucified.

He is not here: for he is risen, as he said. Come, see the place where the Lord lay.

And go quickly, and tell his disciples that he is risen from the dead; and, behold, he goeth before you into Galilee; there shall ye see him: lo, I have told you. (Matthew 28:1-7)

If you were alone on a desert or trapped in a dungeon with no way of escape and had only had one passage of Scripture to comfort you, this one would be more than adequate. This is our hope. This is the Truth come to reality. This is the resurrection.

Notice what happened. The Sabbath was ending. The disciples

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were probably somewhere feeling sorry for themselves. They had left their jobs, been ridiculed by their families, and been hunted by the religious establishment for following this stranger of Galilee. In His hour of need, they had all forsaken Him and fled. This One, whom they had believed to be God, was not only humiliated before the whole world, but they also crucified Him. He's dead. He's buried. It's over.

It is good for a lot of reasons that God made women. One is that they feel the spiritual emotions of the moment; so often, men don't. Men see things through the eyes of information. They digest facts and respond accordingly. Women have an additional antenna. It picks up the emotions of the moment and digests them; and they respond often from those emotions first, and the facts later. Without them, our world would be cold, calculated, and, so often, without feeling.

It was the women who followed after Jesus who made the trip to the tomb that morning. They were grieving. Their hearts were broken. While the disciples were feeling sorry for themselves (they thought He was the One who would set up a Kingdom on earth, and they had fought over who would be able to sit next to Him), the women were thinking, "What can we do for the Master?". That is why churches who don't listen to the voices of the women often become well organized, but without feeling, often without effective ministries to the hurting. The church is not an organization, remember, it is a part of a body. And a body has nerves as well as muscles. A body not only thinks; it feels. Women are assigned certain roles in the church and limited from a few, by reason of example. But if the men who are designated to be the "heads" of the body do not listen to the heart and soul, they often lead the body where it doesn't belong. End of sermon.

So the women were the ones who rushed to the tomb. The two Marys were there at the crack of dawn, as soon as it was legal to do so. We don't know for sure what they expected. It's hard to visit a funeral home to see the dead. There's not a lot you can say or do, but they were there. We don't know what they expected, but we do know they found a lot more than they expected. Look at what happened:

1- An earthquake shook the region. We don't know what it was on the Richter scale, but on the angelic scale it was a whopper. It would have made front-page news in the New York Times, but

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they would have missed the fact that God had died and risen from the dead. We don't look for miracles because we want to be able to explain what we report, and miracles are hard to explain. Apparently, the angel caused the earthquake. It says,

“...there was a great earthquake for the angel of the Lord descended from heaven...” (Matthew 28:2)

I don't know about you, but I think these ladies had reason to be afraid.

2- The stone in front of the tomb had been rolled to one side. This took an incredible amount of strength, but we have already learned that angels are stronger than men. This angel had not only moved that monumental stone, he was perched on top of it when the women arrived on the scene. Try to digest this as we study it. Put yourself in Mary Magdalene's heart and imagine your thoughts. You were coming to inspect the tomb and pay your respects. As you arrive, the world starts shaking as though it was going to erupt, and as you get there, the stone is rolled away and an angel is perched atop it. That ought to get your attention.

3- Now consider what that angel looked like. His countenance was like lightning. Sometimes angels appeared as though they were normal men, and were not even recognized. On other occasions, in particular, when great power had to be demonstrated, their countenance literally was afire with the presence of God. This was such a demonstration.

A countenance like lightning could never be forgotten. Lightning is blinding. It is fire, but it is more than that, it is fire on the move. It flashes as it screams across the horizon. Lightning is something you see and never forget. That's what this angel looked like. He had a body like we have, but his face was on fire with the essence of the God He beheld night and day. One day we shall be like Him for we shall see Him face to face. When we do, our faces, too, like Moses of old, will be aflame with His glory. We shall focus on Him, and as we do, we shall become like Him. Oh, what a day that will be. These angels had already beheld Him night and day. They, when God allows it to be seen, are literally on fire for God. Oh, that we could learn from them the secret of the countenance of God.

Their raiment was white as snow. This was true throughout Scripture. It is repeated over and over. Angels wear clothes. They shop no doubt at “Gabe's Garb” in the north side of heaven. I don't know how many different outfits they have, but I know one

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thing. They don't have to fret over what color to buy. They wear white. They are pure ones. They have never defiled their spirits by disobeying God. Their raiment or clothing is a picture of their hearts. As a bride wears white to demonstrate the holiness of the Bride of Christ coming to Him, so the angels wear white to demonstrate the holiness of moral purity.

Their clothes were more than just white; they were white as snow. They were glowing white. Imagine how these women felt. They witnessed an earthquake followed by an angelic moving mystery which took place by someone whose clothes glowed like a mountain of snow in bright sunlight, and whose face was on fire like the burning bush. But they didn't run. They didn't disbelieve that what was happening was real. It was not so with these big brave heroes that the Roman government had sent to guard the tomb. Scripture says,

For fear of him the keepers did shake, and became as dead men.

(Matthew 28:4)

These women stood amazed, but these soldiers, the elite guard of the Roman regiments, passed out on the spot. They fell over like dead men. The phrase "scared to death" comes to mind. God knows what it takes to put the fear of God into the world. Fortunately, He is a God of mercy, and seldom does He exercise but a tiny fragment of His power. One day soon, He'll turn loose of a lot more, and this world as we know it will burn up like a piece of paper on fire. In seconds, it will be charcoal. But He never displays His power unless it is for a reason. In this case, the reason was obvious.

The big, bad Romans were lying in a heap next to the open tomb, the angel was perched on the big rock, and the women were almost in shock, but still conscious. Then it happened. The angel spoke. His first words were words that you have heard from virtually every angel who spoke in Scripture. He said, "Fear Not!" Oh, that we could understand what those words really mean. More about that in a moment. He said,

Fear not, ye, for I know that ye seek Jesus, which was crucified.

He is not here: for He is risen as He said. Come see the place where the Lord lay.

(Matthew 28:5b,6)

"He is not here. He is not here because He is not dead. He has been raised from the dead. Don't you remember what He told you? Come, see for yourself." That's a paraphrase of what was said. Then the angel did something incredible. He invited the women into the

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open tomb. I can't imagine what must have gone through their minds. Maybe they had to climb over those unrevived Romans to get in, we don't know. But he invited them to see for themselves that the tomb was empty, and that Jesus was alive.

The women believed. And look what happened because they believed.

And they departed quickly from the sepulchre with fear and great joy; and did run to bring his disciples word.

And as they went to tell his disciples, behold, Jesus met them, saying, All hail. And they came and held him by the feet, and worshipped him.

Then said Jesus unto them, Be not afraid: go tell my brethren that they go into Galilee, and there shall they see me.

(Matthew 28:8-10)

Jesus met them. That's what happens when you believe. You go on your way, having believed that God is who He says He is and that He has done what He said He would do, even when, and especially when, you do not yet have evidence that what you believe is true.

They had not yet seen the Master. They only knew that the tomb was empty. They had hope, and they were filled with joy and ran to tell the disciples. The disciples were skeptical, to say the least. No matter. As they were going, they met Jesus, and they worshipped Him. That's what it's all about.

John, chapter 20, gives another account that pinpoints the role of angels in the revelation that Jesus had risen. Now turn to Acts, chapter 1,

When they therefore were come together, they asked of him, saying, Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?

And he said unto them, It is not for you to know the times or the seasons, which the Father hath put in his own power.

But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth.

And when he had spoken these things, while they beheld, he was taken up; and a cloud received him out of their sight.

And while they looked stedfastly toward heaven as he went



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up, behold, two men stood by them in white apparel;

Which also said, Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? this same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven. (Acts 1:6-11)

Jesus was going back to the Father. He was giving the church its marching orders. Unfortunately, many are too busy munching to be marching. He promised power, but the power He promised was for a purpose. We want the power, but we want to ignore the purpose. The Holy Spirit was going to take over the ministry, and the people were being challenged to become something incredibly different: witnesses. A witness is one who tells what he knows. To be a witness to a crime and refuse to testify has grave consequences. Someone may be seriously affected by your unwillingness to tell what you know.

Jesus gave us a clear mission. So often churches struggle to devise a mission statement. There is no need to, because God did it for us. It is for every person who calls themselves a Christian to become a witness. If that happens, the ministry statement is unnecessary, because it will take care of itself. Our mission statement is to testify in the court of planet earth what is taking place in heaven and what happened when heaven came to earth. God came down and died. Now man can look up and live. This is so simple. Yet this simple command is being so overlooked in the church today that some 90% of the people who are joining Christian churches today are coming because they are looking for a new church, not because they have just been born again. We aren't reaching the lost because we're in disobedience to God's command to be witnesses. And there are consequences.

More than that, we are to be witnesses not only in Jerusalem, but the ever-widening circles of influence of the church are supposed to keep spiraling outward until they touch the ends of the earth. Evangelism and missions are the reason the church exists. We do not exist to make our spiritual pilgrimage comfortable. We do not exist to entertain ourselves or just to educate ourselves.

We exist to become vessels through which the world is to be changed. That can only happen when men and women come to Christ, confess their sins, and ask Jesus into their hearts. When that happens, be it in the city we live in or 10,000 miles away in Africa, Russia, South America, or anywhere else, God is glorified,

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the angels rejoice, and we are fulfilling our mission on earth.

Jesus' last words to us were clear. We're not here to be served, we're here to serve. We are to look for the kind of people He loved whenever possible. He loved the sick, the bereaved, the handicapped, the poor, and the downtrodden. He loved the leper, the unemployed, and the grieving mother. He loved the outcast, the unloved, the dirty, and the helpless. He proclaimed that those who don't know they are sick don't need a doctor. So this one who claimed to have the right to live in the palace of eternity, spent His short human life loving dirty, sick people into the Kingdom.

That simply means that if He is living through us, we will be pouring our lives into hurting, weary, sick, and dying people. They know they need something; and as we love them, Jesus can get through to them about things eternal. That means that if the church is doing its job, it won't be sitting around in its comfort zone having meetings to determine what color to paint the foyer. We'll be too busy invading the nursing homes, the hospitals, the funeral homes, the doctor's offices, the neighborhood, and the mission field with the gospel by sharing the love of Christ.

Washing dirty feet won't be a problem. Jesus did. Touching dying people won't be a problem. Jesus did. A witness tells what he knows, and he goes wherever he must to tell it. Sitting and listening to truth will change your perspective; but only sharing that truth with others will change your life. You weren't given the Word to become a storage tank. It was given so you could be a channel, a pipeline to a hurting, dying, grieving world.

Jesus minced no words. He told it like it was. Then He rose up on angel's wings, if you will, into the heavenlies as the awed crowd looked on in wonder. Two angels were standing by. They just happened to be in the neighborhood. They spoke up and gave us both the challenge and the hope. They said,

Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? This same Jesus which is taken up from you into heaven shall so come in like manner as ye have seen Him go into heaven.

(Acts 1:11)

Don't just stand there gazing up in awe that He's gone. He's coming back. He told you what to do between now and then. "Be witnesses. Send witnesses. Now go." The angels came, and they told us to stop wandering around in awe at what happened. It is done. God died. We can live. The greatest event in history has

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taken place, and every person that lets it touch their life will be dramatically transformed and will live forever. Now go tell it. Go tell it on the mountain. Tell it at the dinner table. Tell it at the office. Tell it on the telephone to that intruder who is trying to sell you a new roof when you don't own a roof.

Tell it to your parents. Tell it to your children. Tell it to your in-laws. Tell it to your outlaws. Just tell it. Be discerning in *how and when you tell it*, but don't use a rejection or two to keep you from telling it. Jesus was despised and rejected of men. That didn't stop Him. It was part of His calling. And to us He added,

I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you. (John 15:19)

So

Blessed are you when men revile you and persecute you and say all manner of evil against you falsely for My sake. Rejoice and be exceedingly glad, for great is your reward in heaven. (Matthew 5:11,12)

The angels told the disciples to stop gazing and start witnessing, to stop daydreaming and start witnessing and to stop planning on how to keep the church together and make it bigger, but to start planning on how to take it, break it, and send it to the ends of the earth. I wonder what the angels think when they know what we were commanded to do, and they see us choosing rather to hold hands in our holy huddles and spend our lives encouraging each other to keep holding hands.

The angels continued to appear throughout the New Testament after Jesus rose from the dead and ascended into heaven. In Acts 5 we see angels engineer a jailbreak,

Then the high priest rose up, and all they that were with him, (which is the sect of the Sadducees,) and were filled with indignation,

And laid their hands on the apostles, and put them in the common prison.

But the angel of the Lord by night opened the prison doors, and brought them forth, and said,

Go, stand and speak in the temple to the people all the words of this life. (Acts 5:17-20)

Again we read in Acts 12,

Peter therefore was kept in prison: but prayer was made

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without ceasing of the church unto God for him.

And when Herod would have brought him forth, the same night Peter was sleeping between two soldiers, bound with two chains: and the keepers before the door kept the prison.

And, behold, the angel of the Lord came upon *him*, and a light shined in the prison: and he smote Peter on the side, and raised him up, saying, Arise up quickly. And his chains fell off from *his* hands.

And the angel said unto him, Gird thyself, and bind on thy sandals. And so he did. And he saith unto him, Cast thy garment about thee, and follow me.

And he went out, and followed him; and wist not that it was true which was done by the angel; but thought he saw a vision.

When they were past the first and the second ward, they came unto the iron gate that leadeth unto the city; which opened to them of his own accord: and they went out, and passed on through one street; and forthwith the angel departed from him.

And when Peter was come to himself, he said, Now I know of a surety, that the Lord hath sent his angel, and hath delivered me out of the hand of Herod, and *from* all the expectation of the people of the Jews. (Acts 12:5-11)

Peter always was a slow-learner. Eventually, however, he got the picture. He was not only in prison, he was sleeping between two guards, chained to both of them. It was hardly an opportune time for an escape. It was a good chance, maybe, to have your head amputated. But something happened to Peter that night. The world's first spotlight came on, and Peter got whopped on the side by a guy dressed in white as bright as the light. This light-bearer speaks to Peter and says, "Put your shoes on, Pete, and don't forget your robe. Now follow me."

Peter did, thinking he was dreaming. They passed through two more holding areas where prisoners were sleeping and came to the big padlocked iron doors that made up the gates to the prison. They popped open with the world's first remote control system, and the next thing Pete knew, he was out on the street gazing back at the prison, wondering when he would wake up from this crazy dream.

Then he realized, he was awake, and he realized it was an angel. Once again, God had picked the locks on the prison doors and sent his angelic locksmith to pluck up his man in the nick of time, just as he had Lot from Sodom. Peter, of course, found his way to Rhoda's house where he nearly had to break down the door

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to get in. They were having a prayer meeting for him to get out of prison, you remember, and when their answer to prayer came to the door, they said to themselves, "it must be an angel", and they wouldn't answer the door.

Sounds strangely like a lot of our prayer meetings, doesn't it? If the answer showed up in flesh and blood, we probably wouldn't answer the door, either. We don't expect God to answer, somehow. Too bad. Sometimes God knocks on the door right after we pray, just to see if we'll bother to let Him in, and we're too busy praying to go to the door.

In Acts, chapter 8, we read of another angelic visitation. The circumstance was a man of great authority in need of the gospel. The background is this: a man named Paul was behaving like a wild man, even sneaking into people's homes to see if they were Christians, and everywhere he found a believer, he dragged them off to jail (verse 3). The believers in Jerusalem, fearing for their lives, began to disperse to the four corners of the nation (verse 4). Philip, for example, went to Samaria and began to share his faith. It was there that he encountered Simon the magician (verses 9-24). Peter and John returned to Jerusalem,(verse 25), and Philip probably would have returned with them, but something happened.

And the angel of the Lord spake unto Philip, saying, Arise, and go toward the south unto the way that goeth down from Jerusalem unto Gaza, which is desert.

And he arose and went: (Acts 8:26,27)

Then Philip opened his mouth, and began at the same scripture, and preached unto him Jesus.

And as they went on *their* way, they came unto a certain water: and the eunuch said, See, *here is* water; what doth hinder me to be baptized?

And Philip said, If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest. And he answered and said, I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God. (Acts 8:35-37)

Philip was headed for Jerusalem. He had no good reason to head off by himself, let alone to go into the Gaza desert in the heat of the day. But the angel came...and said, "Phil, this-a-way." And Phil said, "yes, sir," and went. Philip wasn't like most men. We don't like to go the way we're supposed to. It isn't macho to follow the normal route. We like shortcuts, and sometimes dead-

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ends. Philip, however, was tuned in to God's directions. When God sends an angel and says "go", we're supposed to go. The story is so familiar. The man was searching. All he needed was someone to open the Scriptures to him, so he could believe.

God sent one of his best evangelists in the noonday sun into the desert by himself for the salvation of one man. He will leave 99 sheep who are in the fold to go after one who is still lost. And yet we will often worry more about why only 67 of the 99 who are already in the fold don't show up for cake and ice cream, or even for Sunday School. It never dawns on us that the reason we are here is not to enjoy each other, but to encourage one another to become witnesses. Once he followed the angel to the chariot, it was the Spirit who told him what to do. What a great lesson we can learn from that one passage.

There are so many more passages, but look at one more in Acts 27. Paul was onboard a sinking ship. The crew and the crowd were in Panicville. It was then that Paul called a meeting to address these would-be sailors who were heading for what appeared to be a watery grave. He had some good news and some bad news.

But after long abstinence Paul stood forth in the midst of them, and said, Sirs, ye should have hearkened unto me, and not have loosed from Crete, and to have gained this harm and loss.

And now I exhort you to be of good cheer: for there shall be no loss of *any man's* life among you, but of the ship.

For there stood by me this night the angel of God, whose I am, and whom I serve,

Saying, Fear not, Paul; thou must be brought before Caesar: and, lo, God hath given thee all them that sail with thee.

Wherefore, sirs, be of good cheer: for I believe God, that it shall be even as it was told me. (Acts 27:21-25)

The good news was they would all make it to shore. The bad news was that Paul would make it to stand before Caesar. An angel had appeared to Paul with his e-mail. Personal delivery doesn't get any better than that.

And then there is that wonderful passage in Matthew 18,

At the same time came the disciples unto Jesus, saying, Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?

And Jesus called a little child unto him, and set him in the

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midst of them,

And said, Verily I say unto you, Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven.

Whosoever therefore shall humble himself as this little child, the same is greatest in the kingdom of heaven.

And whoso shall receive one such little child in my name receiveth me.

But whoso shall offend one of these little ones which believe in me, it were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and *that* he were drowned in the depth of the sea.

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.

(Matthew 18:1-6,10)

“Be careful,” Jesus said, when it comes to children. I wonder if every judge in the nation doesn’t need to read this passage before he or she judges a child-abuse case. Jesus said, “My Father has an angel assigned to each little child. “Their” angels, the passage says, “are always beholding the face of the Father.” Each one has an individual guardian angel. Does each adult? Probably so. Many believe that Jesus had likened each disciple or convert to a “little child”, and this passage refers to any believer. In any case, we know each child has a guardian angel. And anyone seeking to bring harm to one of God’s children has to deal with his or her angel.

Woe to the man or woman who abuses or harms a child or whose life or words keep a babe in Christ from following Him. Better a millstone, the Scripture says. Better a millstone, indeed.

One last thought about angels and their task on earth. Is there one message that seems characteristic of the angelic messenger service? I think there is one. Look,

And God heard the voice of the lad; and the angel of God called to Hagar out of heaven, and said unto her, What aileth thee, Hagar? fear not...  
(Genesis 21:17)

But while he thought on these things, behold, the angel of the Lord appeared unto him in a dream, saying, Joseph, thou son of David, fear not...  
(Matthew 1:20)

But the angel said unto him, Fear not, Zacharias...  
(Luke 1:13)

And the angel said unto her, Fear not, Mary... (Luke 1:30)

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And the angel said unto them, Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy... (Luke 2:10)

And the angel answered and said unto the women, Fear not ye: for I know that ye seek Jesus, which was crucified. (Matthew 28:5)

For there stood by me this night the angel of God, whose I am, and whom I serve,

Saying, Fear not, Paul... (Acts 27:23,24)

They had a common message. It was one meant to calm the fears, settle the nerves, and cause the spirit to be at rest. Their message and the message of God throughout the entire Bible is a common word. "Fear not." Over and over God warns us to "be not afraid". Paul just heard it from an angel. God's great message to us is this,

God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble.

Therefore will not we fear, though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea;

*Though* the waters thereof roar *and* be troubled, *though* the mountains shake with the swelling thereof.

*There is* a river, the streams whereof shall make glad the city of God, the holy *place* of the tabernacles of the most High.

God is in the midst of her; she shall not be moved: God shall help her, *and that* right early.

The heathen raged, the kingdoms were moved: he uttered his voice, the earth melted.

The LORD of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our refuge. (Psalm 46:1-7)

We need to hear that message in our day. Joseph needed it. He was afraid of what people were saying, when an angel said, "fear not". Elizabeth needed it. She was bewildered by the miracle growing in her womb, until an angel said, "fear not". Mary needed it. She was to be ostracized and criticized; no one would understand. And then an angel said, "fear not". The women at the tomb needed it. They were witnessing something the human mind could not comprehend without spiritual intervention. God had died and was alive again. Suddenly, an angel said, "fear not". Paul needed it. He was about to experience incarceration and abuse and eventually death. But an angel said, "fear not".

We all need it. We live in a world where there is good cause



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to fear. There are drive-by shootings, murders, rapes, senseless killings, and senseless abuse; but fear is the absence of faith. And without faith it is impossible to please God. So God's Word to us is this: "Fear not." This earth is headed for the graveyard, but God's children are headed for mansions in glory. What can Satan do to change that? Absolutely nothing.

Take that with you for the next week. Meditate for seven days on this one thought,

The heathen raged, the kingdoms were moved. He uttered  
His voice, the earth melted. (Psalm 46:26)

Therefore will not we fear, though the earth be removed, and  
though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea;  
(Psalm 46:2)

That ought to cover most of our fears, don't you think?

### THOUGH THE EARTH BE REMOVED

Though the earth be removed, the mountains dissolved,  
We have no cause to fear.  
Softly through the wind that blows  
God whispers, "Do not fear".

The waters roar, the mountains shake,  
The oceans rise and roll,  
But there is a river calm and clear,  
And God is in control.

The nations cry and rant and rave  
They cry out their resolve.  
Then God speaks— that's all it takes,  
For man's strength to dissolve.

The heathen rage, oh, let them cry,  
From kindoms far and near  
For when God speaks, it's over, child,  
And there's no cause for fear.

Let's pray.

*Our Father and our God,*

*In the midst of all our trials and difficulties it seems we cannot  
but help to be afraid. We're fearful of the unknown. We're fearful  
that we'll never be healed. We're fearful that our loved ones will*

The Angel said, "Fear Not!"

*not meet our expectations. We're fearful the thing we prayed for will never happen. We're fearful that our livelihood will be lost. We're fearful that our loved ones will let us down. We're fearful the thing we prayed for will not be answered. And we won't admit it but we're afraid.*

*This morning You've reminded us, Father, that at every appearance angels came and spoke. And at virtually every appearance they began by saying, "Don't be afraid. Don't be afraid. Don't be afraid."*

*Father, though the earth be removed and the mountains are carried into the midst of the sea, You've told us there is no reason to be afraid. Utter Your voice this week, Father, and may our fears melt beneath the weight of Your voice. And may we crawl up into the arms of Jesus and rest and not be afraid.*

*In Jesus' name we ask it,*

*Amen.*

The Angel said, "Fear Not!"

For Focus and Application

1- Read Matthew 28:1-7 again. How would you describe in your own words what you think this angel looked like? What would you have done if you had been one of the Marys? Why the earthquake? How could a countenance be "like lightning"? Why do you think angels wear white?

2- Jesus had a clear message at His ascension. Read Acts 1:6-11 again. What was the message? What part did the angels play? How can you liken what the crowd was doing to what the church is doing today?

3- Where do you think Jesus would be likely to go to start a new church if he lived in your city? Where do you think He would start ministering? How would He finance His work? What do you think would be the key to His audience? In what ways might it differ from ours?

4- Read Acts 5 and Acts 12. Why did God let His people be jailed in the first place? Think carefully about that. Why did He send an angel to set them free? Why do you think Peter couldn't grasp what was happening?

5- Read Acts, chapter 8. Why do you think God would separate the leadership of the church and send one man out in the desert by himself to share his faith with one man? How did Philip know to go? Why do you think he went? Would you have been likely to have gone? To what would you liken Philip's instructions in today's world? Would you have known how to share your faith if God had sent you? If not, could that be why God isn't sending you? When was the last time you shared your faith and led someone to Christ or to the point of decision? How important do you think that is to the work of the church? Do you pray daily for people to witness to? If not, why not?

7- Do you believe in "guardian" angels? If not, why not? If so, explain how you think they might have ministered to you in the past. Do you believe children have "guardian" angels? If so, why? Why is God so strong in His protection of children? How do you think He views the abortions, child-abuse and general neglect of children today?

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