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### The activity of angels in the ministry of Jesus

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THE ACTIVITY OF ANGELS IN THE  
MINISTRY OF JESUS

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A Thesis Presented to the Faculty  
of Concordia Seminary, St. Louis,  
Department of Exegetical Theology  
in partial fulfillment of the  
requirements for the degree of  
Bachelor of Divinity

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by

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## CHAPTER I

### THE ANGELS IN CHRIST'S MINISTRY

#### Introduction: Objectives and Scope of the Study

The question this thesis attempts to answer is, "What were the activities of the angels during the earthly ministry of Jesus?" The scope of this thesis lies within the range of that question. It has been my aim to draw together the known material about the angels during this period, thus allowing us to get a better overview of their activities and importance.

In attacking the problem, I have taken the various Gospel accounts of the angels and their activities during this period, and studied them exegetically. I have observed the conclusions of many commentators and have incorporated some of them into this report. In the exegetical study I have also made note of the form and appearance of the angels, as well as their actions, in order to get a more complete picture of what has been revealed concerning them in Holy Scripture.

#### Limitations of the Study

When one takes up a study of this nature, there are naturally certain limitations which have to be observed in order to keep the thesis within bounds. For this reason, this particular study deals alone with the angelic appear-

ances and activities from the time of the announcement of the birth of John to the Ascension of Jesus. Furthermore, the study is limited alone to the good angels of God without going into the question of the activities of the servants of the Devil. I have incorporated a chapter dealing with Christ's own sayings about the angels in connection with His earthly ministry. Here the references to eschatological activities were not touched upon, because they were outside of the scope of this particular study.

### Results of the Study

Within the scope and limitations mentioned, I have attempted to set down in this thesis the results of my study. I do not presume to have exhausted the question, for there is still much more to be said on the subject. It is my hope that I have here portrayed in a clear and understandable way the part played by the angels in the Savior's earthly ministry.

## CHAPTER II

### ACCOUNTS OF THE APPEARINGS OF ANGELS

#### The Number of Accounts

The majority of the accounts concerning angels in the ministry of Jesus are found in the Gospels according to St. Matthew and St. Luke. St. John and St. Mark in their Gospels have only a few references which concern the immediate field of our study.

The first group of activities of angels within the scope of our topic takes in the announcement of the approaching birth of John and the announcement of the approaching birth of Jesus followed by the proclamation of His nativity. There is no duplication of accounts in this area by the Evangelists. St. Matthew and St. Luke alone treat the angelic activity here, and neither gives an account of the same event. St. Luke alone brings us an account of the angel Gabriel as he appeared to Zacharias to announce the coming birth of John (Luke 1:15-22). Likewise, this same Evangelist alone mentions the important Annunciation to Mary by Gabriel (Luke 2:8-20). Exclusive with Matthew, on the other hand, is Joseph's vision in which an angel appears to him to foretell the birth of Jesus (Matt. 1:18-25). Also, in the Gospel according to St. Matthew, we find the only account of the warning and guidance of the angel as he directed Joseph to flee with the Christ-child and Mary to Egypt and later to return (Matt. 2:19-23).

During His ministry on earth, our Savior gave insight into the activity of the angels as He spoke of them. Much of what Jesus said about angels had an eschatological significance as He related the duties and activities which would be theirs at the end of time. This particular phase of their activity lies outside of the scope of our study. Nevertheless, there remain instances in which the Savior spoke of the angels in activities which were pertinent to His earthly ministry. Thereby He gave added information concerning their pursuits. St. Matthew records the Savior's words concerning the angels of little children who always behold the face of God in heaven (Matt. 18:10). This Evangelist also notes the words of our Savior in which He speaks of the legions of angels which stand ready to obey His behest should he desire to call upon them (Matt. 26:53). We are given further knowledge of the angels by St. Luke, whose record reveals to us a different pertinent instance in which Jesus mentioned the angels. Here Jesus tells us of the joy that is in the presence of the angels of God over the repentance of a sinner (Luke 15:10). The Evangelist John tells us of Jesus' words to His disciples telling them that they shall hereafter see heaven open, and the angels of God ascending upon the Son of man (John 1:51). In these accounts our Savior helps us to see the activities of the angels more clearly in relation to His own ministry on earth.

The activity of the angels as they ministered to Christ in His earthly ministry is a picture drawn for us in the

**Synoptics.** Here we become aware of the fact that angels strengthened Jesus after the Devil abandoned his temptation (Matt. 4:11). The Savior was also strengthened by an angel in the Garden of Gethsemane as He was in agony (Luke 22:43).

✓ In one event alone, the role played by the angels in the ministry of Jesus on earth is mentioned in all four Gospels. That is the account of the angels' activity on Easter morning. All of the Evangelists take into account the appearance of angels and their activities on the morn of Christ's resurrection from the dead (Matt. 28:2-8; Mark 16:5-7; Luke 24:4-8; John 20:11-13).

The Gospels carry no account of the angels present at Christ's ascension. This, however, Luke gives us in the Acts of the Apostles in the account of the Ascension found there (Acts 1:9-11).

### The Variation of Accounts

As we can observe from the above enumeration, there is a great variety of accounts before us. It is because of this variation that we can learn much about the angels and their activities in the sphere of our Savior's ministry. Because of the different phases of their activity treated by each Gospel writer, we have many insights into their various pursuits.

The accounts of the Evangelists harmonize well in all cases with the exception of the Easter account. There we have what some refer to as a discrepancy in the various rec-

ords. However, such a discrepancy does not necessarily exist. That question we discuss in the chapter concerning the appearance of Angels at Easter.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Infra, p. 43 ff.

## CHAPTER III

### THE FORMS IN WHICH ANGELIC APPEARANCES TOOK PLACE

#### The Individual Angel

Often one angel is portrayed as carrying out a duty alone. In many cases this individual angel is introduced to us by the Evangelists as *ἄγγελος κυρίου*. This title is used to designate the angel in Matt. 1:20.24; 2:13.19; 28:2; Luke 1:11-13 and Luke 2:9. The same words *ἄγγελος κυρίου* are used in all these expressions except in Matt. 1:24 where the article *ὁ* is prefixed. Here it is referring to an angel already mentioned. There has been some question as to the translation of *ἄγγελος κυρίου*, whether it should be "an angel of the Lord," or "the angel of the Lord." There are some who would always translate it "an angel of the Lord" to distinguish it from the *אֱלֹהִים* of the Old Testament which is sometimes used to denote God Himself.<sup>1</sup> However, in the New Testament it appears that the same angel was employed on all these high occasions, and most likely he to whom in Luke is given the name "Gabriel" (Luke 1:19.26). Thus, Brown suggests, "perhaps it should, in every instance except

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<sup>1</sup>Alan Hugh McNeile, The Gospel According to St. Matthew (London: MacMillan and Co., Limited, 1949), p. 8.

the first be rendered 'the angel.'<sup>2</sup>

Wherever this expression is used, it is employed at the beginning as an introduction. If there is reference to the angel again in these passages, ὁ ἄγγελος is usually used alone, always with the article.

Once we find ἄγγελος alone without the article referring to "an angel." This is in reference to an angelic appearance to Christ to strengthen Him in the Garden of Gethsemane (Luke 22:43). It should be noted that this verse does not appear in many of the manuscripts.<sup>3</sup>

The individual angel is also referred to as νεανίσκου, a young man or youth.<sup>4</sup> Here the angel is described in these terms because of his external appearance.<sup>5</sup> Yet, we know that Mark is referring to an angel, because he says concerning this

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<sup>2</sup>David Brown, A Commentary, Critical, Experimental, and Practical, on the Old and New Testaments, edited by Robert Jamieson, A. R. Fausset, David Brown (Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott and Co., n.d.), V, 8.

<sup>3</sup>Eberhard Nestle, Novum Testamentum Graece, edited by Erwin Nestle (19th edition; Stuttgart: Privilegierte Württembergische Bibelanstalt, 1949), p. 219.

<sup>4</sup>Joseph Henry Thayer, A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament (Corrected edition; New York: American Book Company, c.1889), p. 423.

<sup>5</sup>John Peter Lange, "The Gospel According to Mark," A Commentary on the Holy Scriptures, translated from the German, and edited, with additions, by Philip Schaff, revised from the Edinburgh translation, with additions, by William Shedd (4th edition; New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, c.1864), p. 156.

ΓΑΒΡΙΕΛ what Matthew ascribes to the angel.<sup>6</sup>

### Gabriel

The ἄγγελος κυρίου is several times directly identified as Γαβριήλ, Gabriel. This is particularly evident in Luke 1:19, where the angel identifies himself by saying ἐγὼ εἰμι Γαβριήλ, I am Gabriel. This same Gabriel was the angel who was sent from God to the Virgin Mary for the Annunciation.

Γαβριήλ is from the Hebrew גַּבְרִיֵּל, and means a strong man or hero of God.<sup>7</sup> He is usually referred to as vir dei, the man of God.<sup>8</sup> Gabriel is one of the two heavenly beings whose names are given in Scripture; the other being Michael. Other names were given to heavenly beings in later Jewish tradition, but they are not Scriptural.<sup>9</sup> The fact that New Testament angelology is not based on the sources of

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<sup>6</sup> John A. Broadus, An American Commentary on the New Testament: Commentary on the Gospel of Matthew, edited by Alvah Hovey (Philadelphia: American Baptist Publication Society, n.d.), p. 585.

<sup>7</sup> Thayer, op. cit., p. 107.

<sup>8</sup> Heinrich A. W. Meyer, Critical and Exegetical Hand-book to the Gospels of Mark and Luke, translated from the fifth edition of the German by Robert E. Wallis, the translation revised and edited by William P. Dickenson (New York: Funk and Wagnalls, c.1884), p. 238.

<sup>9</sup> Alfred Plummer, The International Critical Commentary: A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel According to St. Luke (7th edition; New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1906), p. 16.

this Jewish tradition is brought out by Edersheim.<sup>10</sup>

The use of the name by the angel had a purpose. Zacharias, being a priest well instructed in Holy Scripture, was bound to recognize, by this name, the heavenly messenger, revealed to Daniel (Dan. 8:16; 9:21) as one admitted to the very relations with the Godhead.<sup>11</sup> In Scripture Gabriel is the angel of mercy.<sup>12</sup> By his position on the right side of the altar of incense this fact was also brought out (Luke 1:11-13). Thus, Zacharias would be rendered more ready for the message.

In order to make himself further known to Zacharias, Gabriel added ὁ παρεστῆκώς ἐνώπιον τοῦ Θεοῦ (Luke 1:19). παρεστῆκώς, standing before, implies ministering.<sup>13</sup> ἐνώπιον τοῦ Θεοῦ, in the presence of God. Here Gabriel identifies himself as "the angel of His presence" (Of. Is. 63:9).<sup>14</sup> Thus he presents the credentials for his mission.

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<sup>10</sup> Alfred Edersheim, The Life and Times of Jesus The Messiah (New York: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1917), I, 141 f.

<sup>11</sup> J. J. Van Oosterzee, "The Gospel According to Luke," A Commentary on the Holy Scriptures, edited by J. P. Lange, translated from the second German edition, with additions, by Philip Schaff and Charles C. Starbuck (6th edition; New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, c.1868), p. 16.

<sup>12</sup> Plummer, op. cit., p. 16.

<sup>13</sup> Alexander Balmain Bruce, The Expositor's Greek Testament: The Synoptic Gospels, edited by W. Robertson Nicoll (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, n.d.), I, 461.

<sup>14</sup> Plummer, op. cit., p. 16.

## The Groups of Angels

The angels also carried out their activities in groups in the ministry of Jesus. The first example that we have of this in the Gospels is at the announcement of Christ's birth to the shepherds (Luke 2:13). After the individual angel made his announcement to the shepherds, there was with the angel *πλήθος στρατιῶν οὐρανόων*, a multitude of the heavenly host. This expression is equivalent to the Hebrew  $\square' \square \psi \square$   $\text{אלוהים}$ . It is equal to a multitude of angels.<sup>15</sup> Van Oosterzee<sup>16</sup> describes it as "a usual appellation of the angels, who are represented as the body-guard of the Lord." Thayer<sup>17</sup> suggests, troop of angels. Plummer<sup>18</sup> indicates that *στρατιῶν* is a partitive genitive and would refer to "a multitude (no art.) forming part of the host." To underline this he proposes that the whole host of heaven was praising God and not merely that portion of it which was visible to the shepherds. Yet this would not allow the conjecture which some propose, that among the multitude spoken of, the spirits of the Old Testament saints, as well as angels, were included.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> Meyer, op. cit., p. 274.

<sup>16</sup> Van Oosterzee, op. cit., p. 38.

<sup>17</sup> Thayer, op. cit., p. 590.

<sup>18</sup> Plummer, op. cit., p. 57.

<sup>19</sup> Van Oosterzee, op. cit., p. 38.

In the Garden of Gethsemane, our Savior referred to a vast number of angels when He was seized and Peter tried to defend Him with a sword. He said, "Thinkest thou that I cannot now pray to my Father, and He shall presently give me more than twelve legions of angels?" (Matt. 26:53). *πλεῖω*, even more than that vast number. This was a way of saying that His divine resources are boundless.<sup>20</sup> *δώδεκα*, twelve, the number corresponding to the number of the developed perfection of life.<sup>21</sup> *λεγιῶνας* means legions. "The legion is the symbol of a great fighting host."<sup>22</sup> A legion numbers more than six thousand men. Christ here numbered the angels by legions, as a counterpart of the Roman power leagued against Him.

Without mentioning any particular number of angels, Matthew (Matt. 4:11) speaks of ἄγγελος ministering to Jesus after the temptation. Likewise, Mark (Mark 1:13) describes the οἱ ἄγγελοι as ministering to Jesus and he also makes no indication as to the number. Lange holds that οἱ ἄγγελοι were not merely fortuitous individual angels, but that by the individuals which ministered to Him, the angel world is

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<sup>20</sup> Bruce, op. cit., p. 317.

<sup>21</sup> John Peter Lange, "The Gospel According to Matthew," A Commentary on the Holy Scriptures, translated from the German edition, with additions, by Philip Schaff (4th edition; New York: Charles Scribner, and Co., c.1864), p. 487.

<sup>22</sup> ibid.

represented.<sup>23</sup>

In several of the accounts of the Resurrection (Luke 24:4; John 20:12) and in the account of the Ascension (Acts 1:10), the angels appeared in pairs. In the Gospel account of Luke and in the Acts account, they are introduced as *ἄνδρες δύο* two men. In the John account, they are referred to as *δύο ἄγγελος* two angels.

#### Description and Details of the Forms of Angels

The Evangelists do not go into any lengthy details to describe the forms of angels. Even Gabriel is not described to the extent that he is in Daniel (Dan. 10:5,6). However, there are details given which provide us with a good idea as to the form of their appearance.

Whenever the Gospels mention details as to the appearance of angels, they are always described as being clothed.<sup>24</sup> From the Easter accounts we gather the information as to this phase of their appearance, *ἦν δὲ ἡ εἶδὲς αὐτοῦ ὡς ἰστροπῆ, καὶ τὸ ἔνδυμα αὐτοῦ λευκὸν ὡς χιὼν* (Matt. 28:3). *εἶδὲς αὐτοῦ*, his form, external appearance, aspect, or look. This word is used solely here in the New Testament.<sup>25</sup> The appearance aspect

<sup>23</sup>Lange, "The Gospel According to Mark," p. 17.

<sup>24</sup>A. S. Joppie, The Ministry of Angels (Grand Rapids 6, Michigan: Baker Book House, c.1953) p. 20.

<sup>25</sup>Thayer, op. cit., p. 296.

of his countenance is meant.<sup>26</sup> With *ὡς ἑστραπὴ* the meaning is not actually in reference to his having the form of lightning, but as shining with the brightness of lightning.<sup>27</sup> This is taken to express the glory of the celestial abode from which the angel came.<sup>28</sup> *τὸ ἔνδυμα* refers to his garment, or raiment,<sup>29</sup> as distinct from his face.<sup>30</sup> *λευκὸν ὡς χιῶν* white<sup>31</sup> as snow.<sup>32</sup> The whiteness of his raiment is said to express the purity of the celestial abode from which the angel came.<sup>33</sup> The comparison of the angel's appearance to lighting and his raiment to snow recalls the Transfiguration.<sup>34</sup>

The Resurrection accounts in the other three Gospels and the Ascension account of Acts have similar descriptions. Mark describes the angel as clothed in *στολὴν λευκὴν*, a white loose outer garment for men, which extended to the

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<sup>26</sup>Bruce, *op. cit.*, p. 336.

<sup>27</sup>Heinrich A. W. Meyer, Critical and Exegetical Handbook to the Gospel of Matthew, translated from the fifth edition of the German by Peter Christie, translation revised and edited by Frederick Crombie and William Stewart (New York: Funk and Wagnalls, 1884), p. 521.

<sup>28</sup>Brown, *op. cit.*, V, 132.

<sup>29</sup>Thayer, *op. cit.*, p. 214.

<sup>30</sup>Bruce, *op. cit.*, I, 336.

<sup>31</sup>Thayer, *op. cit.*, pp. 376 f.

<sup>32</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 869

<sup>33</sup>Brown, *op. cit.*, V, 132.

<sup>34</sup>Broadus, *op. cit.*, p. 584.

feet.<sup>35</sup> Similarly, John (John 20:12) describes the two angels in white, ἐν λευκοῖς. That ἑμάτια are meant here is a matter of course.<sup>36</sup> Luke (Luke 24:4) used slightly different terminology to describe the two angels when he said that they stood ἐν ἐσθῆτι ἀστραπούση, in shining or dazzling apparel.<sup>37</sup> In Acts (Acts 1:10) they are described ἐν ἐσθήσεσι λευκαῖς, in white clothing or apparel.<sup>38</sup>

The descriptions here given remind us of several phases of the description given of Gabriel in Daniel (Dan. 10:5.6).<sup>39</sup> There Gabriel is described as "clothed in linen" with "his face" as "the appearance of lightning," and "his eyes" as "lamps of fire." In associating this with Luke 1:19, Joppie says:

A fine linen robe was worn by the High Priest when he entered the Holy of Holies each year. This robe had to be without spot or wrinkle when he went into the presence of God. This "fine linen robe" signifies access to God's presence. The fact that Gabriel wore a robe like this suggests his access to God's holy presence at all times.<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> Thayer, op. cit., p. 589.

<sup>36</sup> Heinrich A. W. Meyer, Critical and Exegetical Hand-book to the Gospel of John, translated from the fifth edition of the German by William Urwich, translation revised and edited by Frederick Crombie (New York: Funk and Wagnalls, Publishers, c.1884), p. 521.

<sup>37</sup> Thayer, op. cit., p. 82.

<sup>38</sup> Thayer, op. cit., p. 252.

<sup>39</sup> Alfred Plummer, An Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel According to St. Matthew (London: Elliot Stock, 1909), p. 417.

<sup>40</sup> Joppie, op. cit., p. 20 f.

Further insight might be given us from Luke's description (Luke 2:9) of the angel's appearance to the shepherds to announce the birth of Christ. Here we are told that as angels appeared to the shepherd *δόξα κυρίου περιέλαμψεν αὐτούς.* *δόξα κυρίου* as a translation of the Hebrew *אֵלֹהִים* is a use foreign to Greek writing and means splendor or brightness. This was a term used of the heavenly brightness by which God was conceived of as surrounded. The same term was used of the sun, moon, and stars (1 Cor. 15:40). It was also used of the brightness by which heavenly beings were surrounded when they appeared on earth (Luke 9:31; Rev. 18:1), and the brightness with which the face of Moses was once made luminous (2 Cor. 3:7). This term was likewise employed to describe Christ in His Transfiguration (Luke 9:32).<sup>41</sup> God's glorious radiance had streamed down with the angel.<sup>42</sup> This *δόξα περιέλαμψεν*, shone around, a word used only here and in Acts 26:13 in the New Testament.<sup>43</sup>

The form of the angel or angels was also likened by several of the Evangelists unto the form of men. The *νεανίσκος* young man, (Mark 16:5) or the *ἄνδρες* men, (Luke 24:4; Acts 1:10), was the form in which they were recognized by

<sup>41</sup>Thayer, op. cit., p. 156.

<sup>42</sup>Meyer, Gospels of Mark and Luke, p. 273.

<sup>43</sup>Thayer, op. cit., p. 503. See also Meyer, Gospels of Mark and Luke, p. 472.

the women. There they were described in these terms because of their external appearance.<sup>44</sup> To this might be added the fact that to the angels were ascribed certain actions which are common to men. They are pictured as standing (e.g., ἐπέστησαν, Luke 24:4; ἑστῆς, Luke 1:11) and as sitting (e.g., καθεζομένους, John 20:12; ἐκίθιστο, Matt. 28:2). In many instances the angels are portrayed as speaking (e.g., εἶπεν, Luke 2:10; ἀποκριθεὶς ... εἶπεν, Matt. 28:5). In the Easter account, an angel is described as rolling away the stone from the entrance of the tomb (e.g., ἔπεκύλισεν τὸν λίθον, Matt. 28:2).

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<sup>44</sup> Lange, "The Gospel According to Matthew," p. 156.

## CHAPTER IV

### METHODS OF APPEARANCE

From the previous chapter we have an insight as to the form in which the angels appeared. In further study of these appearances, we find that some of them were by the direct perception of the eyes while other appearances came through the medium of dreams.

#### Appearances in Dreams

Express visions in dreams in the New Testament are related solely by St. Matthew.<sup>1</sup> Such divine communications, in which angels appear, are mentioned in three different instances by Matthew (Matt. 1:20; 2:13; 2:19). In each occurrence Matthew uses *κατ' ὄναρ*. *κατὰ* serves to designate the manner and way, and yields to the adverbial meaning in a dream.<sup>2</sup>

Plummer regards the dreams as the Evangelist's own interpretation of what took place. He explains that Matthew knew that all that was done came to pass under divine guidance, and this guidance could be most easily understood as

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<sup>1</sup>Heinrich A. W. Meyer, Critical and Exegetical Hand-book to the Gospel of Matthew, translated from the fifth edition of the German by Peter Christie, translation revised and edited by Frederick Crombie and William Stewart (New York: Funk and Wagnalls, 1884) p. 49.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

operating through a dream.<sup>3</sup> On the other hand, referring to the difference between Matthew's account and those of the other Evangelists, this same commentator elsewhere writes, "But surely those are right who see in this difference the use of various means adapted to the peculiar state of the recipient."<sup>4</sup> Here he rejects any subjective influence of the writer's mind upon the narrative. To substantiate this point further he remarks that as St. Matthew recognized the ministry of angels, so also St. Luke related visions.

#### Appearances through Direct Perception of the Eyes

In contrast to these express visions in dreams, we have the appearances of angels to those who were awake and actually perceived the angels with their physical eyes.

That the angel was clearly visible to the bodily eye of Zacharias is evident in *ἀφ' οὐρανόθεν, ἦν ὁρατός*<sup>5</sup> (Luke 1:11). "It is against the context and the use of the expression in other places to suppose that internal perception of an invisible

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<sup>3</sup> Alfred Plummer, An Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel According to St. Matthew (London: Elliot Stock, 1909), p. 16.

<sup>4</sup> Alfred Plummer, The International Critical Commentary: A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel According to St. Luke (7th edition; New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1906), p. 20.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., pp. 509 f.

spiritual presence is intended."<sup>6</sup> Luke uses the expression often (Luke 1:11; 9:31; 22:43; 24:34; Acts 2:3; 7:2,28,30,35; 9:17; 13:31; 16:9; 24:16). The fact that the appearance is very particularly described, with the very position of the angel on the right side of the altar of incense indicated, is further evidence of the reality of the appearance.<sup>7</sup>

The question here has arisen concerning an objective or subjective appearance of the angels. To this question Plummer<sup>8</sup> demands that we must choose between admitting an objective appearance and rejecting the whole as a myth. To explain it as a "false perception" or optical illusion, for example, a purely subjective result of psychological causes, is not admissible. There are far too many similar appearances for this to be the case.<sup>9</sup> Lange throws further light on the subject when he says:

But although these angelic appearances are objective, real, and visible, the perception by the on-looking mortals of these heavenly spirits depends upon a state of soul resembling the angelic spirituality; and this disposition of soul depends again, upon the position

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<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

<sup>7</sup> Alexander Balmain Bruce, The Expositor's Greek Testament: The Synoptic Gospels, edited by W. Robertson Nicoll (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, n.d.), I, 461.

<sup>8</sup> Plummer. Gospel According to St. Luke, p. 11.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

occupied in relation to heaven and earth.<sup>10</sup>

Van Oosterzee<sup>11</sup> agrees with Lange in suggesting that the person must be ready for such an appearance before he can receive it. Of this Meyer<sup>12</sup> says that the angels communicate with and render themselves visible and audible simply and solely to him for whom they are real, while they are not perceptible to others. Van Oosterzee likewise maintains:

This power of perception, produced by God Himself, must be distinguished from the trance or vision, properly so called, wherein angels have sometimes, but by no means always, been perceived. . . . The angelic apparitions were by no means the fruit of an overstrained imagination, but objective revelations of God, by means of personal spirits; yet only capable of being received under certain subjective conditions.<sup>13</sup>

The cases of Zacharias and Mary can not be explained away to deny the actual appearance of the angel. *Ἐταράχθη* (Luke 1:12), was troubled, in the sense that he was struck

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<sup>10</sup> John Peter Lange, "The Gospel According to Matthew," A Commentary on the Holy Scriptures, translated from the German edition, with additions, by Philip Schaff (4th edition; New York: Charles Scribner, and Co., c.1864), p. 547.

<sup>11</sup> J. J. Van Oosterzee, "The Gospel According to Luke," A Commentary on the Holy Scriptures, edited by J. P. Lange, translated from the second German edition, with additions, by Philip Schaff and Charles G. Starbuck (6th edition; New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, c. 1868), p. 17.

<sup>12</sup> Heinrich A. W. Meyer, Critical and Exegetical Handbook to the Gospel of John, translated from the fifth edition of the German by William Urwich, translation revised and edited by Frederick Crombie (New York: Funk and Wagnalls, c.1884), p. 526.

<sup>13</sup> Van Oosterzee, op. cit., p. 17.

with fear,<sup>14</sup> describes Zacharias' reaction, while *διεταράχθη* (Luke 1:29) to be agitated or troubled greatly,<sup>15</sup> describes Mary's state. Neither Zacharias nor Mary were accustomed to such appearances and voices and, as a result, they are troubled by them.<sup>16</sup> The narrative in neither instance bears a trace of any ecstatic state.<sup>17</sup> Nor is there any evidence of hysterical excitement or hallucinations in either case.<sup>18</sup>

The presence of the angel before the shepherds in the field furnishes us with more evidence that the appearances were real. Luke uses *ἐπέστη* to describe this appearance (Luke 2:9). It is a word which he uses elsewhere in reference to angelic appearances. This word is used often in reference to those coming upon one suddenly.<sup>19</sup> The notion of suddenness is not inherent in the verb, but it is often derived from the context as here.<sup>20</sup> The suddenness with which the multitude of the heavenly host joined the angel (v. 13) is indicated by *ἐξαίφνης*. This suddenness and

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<sup>14</sup> Joseph Henry Thayer, A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament (Corrected edition; New York: American Book Company, c.1889), p. 615.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid., p. 142.

<sup>16</sup> Plummer, Gospel According to St. Luke, p. 22.

<sup>17</sup> Van Oosterzee, op. cit., p. 16.

<sup>18</sup> Plummer, Gospel According to St. Luke, p. 22.

<sup>19</sup> Thayer, op. cit., p. 265.

<sup>20</sup> Plummer, Gospel According to St. Luke, p. 55.

unexpectedness adds weight to the reality of the appearance to the eyes of the shepherds.

Other evidence is also found of this appearance to the bodily eyes of people. In Luke 24:4 ἑπέστησαν is used. This is another form of the verb just mentioned. In Acts 1:10 we find παραστηκέων which indicates that the angels stood beside or near<sup>21</sup> those present. In his account of the Resurrection, St. Mark (16:5) tells us that the women εἶδον saw<sup>22</sup> the angels. St. John (20:12) similarly says that Mary θεωρεῖ, beheld or looked at<sup>23</sup> two angels. St. Matthew (Matt. 4:11) records that the angels προσῆλθον, approached or came to<sup>24</sup> Christ.

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<sup>21</sup>Thayer, op. cit., p. 489.

<sup>22</sup>Thayer, op. cit., p. 451.

<sup>23</sup>Thayer, op. cit., p. 289.

<sup>24</sup>Thayer, op. cit., p. 545.

## CHAPTER V

### ANGELIC ANNOUNCEMENT OF THE BIRTH OF JOHN AND JESUS AND THE ANGELIC GUIDANCE

#### The Announcement of the Birth of John

The first activity of the angels in Christ's earthly ministry which comes before our immediate attention is the announcement of the birth of John (Luke 1:11-20). The angel Gabriel appeared (*ἄγγελος*)<sup>1</sup> unto the priest Zacharias in the temple. *ἑστῶς* shows us that Gabriel appeared standing, which is to indicate an attitude of service.<sup>2</sup> The angel was *ἐκ δεξιῶν τοῦ θυσιαστηρίου τοῦ θυμιάματος*, at the right side of the altar of incense, which stood in the sanctuary. This was the propitious side of the altar,<sup>3</sup> and Gabriel's position there could well have been symbolic of Gabriel as the angel of mercy.<sup>4</sup> Zacharias may have recognized this as

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<sup>1</sup>Supra, p. 19.

<sup>2</sup>David Brown, A Commentary, Critical, Experimental, and Practical, on the Old and New Testament, edited by Robert Jamieson, A. R. Tausset, David Brown (Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott and Co., n.d.), V, 216.

<sup>3</sup>Alexander Balmain Bruce, The Expositor's Greek Testament: The Synoptic Gospels, edited by W. Robertson Nicoll (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, n.d.), p. 461.

<sup>4</sup>Alfred Plummer, The International Critical Commentary: A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel According to St. Luke (7th edition; New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1906), p. 16.

a good sign.<sup>5</sup>

The appearance of the angel, however, caused Zacharias to be troubled (*ἐταράχθη*).<sup>6</sup> Gabriel, the "Man of God," as the representative of God's angelic ministry to man, speaks as the messenger of God,<sup>7</sup> *εἰκοῦσθη ἡ δέσσις σου, your prayer is heard*. There is a difference of opinion among some commentators as to what prayer is referred to. Some say that *ἡ δέσσις σου* cannot refer to the petition for offspring. They feel that it is not to be assumed from verse seven that Zacharias still continued now to pray for children. They rather take it to refer to the prayer just made by him at the priestly burning of incense,<sup>8</sup> which prayer may have had special reference to the coming of Messiah.<sup>9</sup> Other commentators hold that *ἡ δέσσις σου* refers doubtless to the prayer for offspring which, by some presentiment, perhaps, he had

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<sup>5</sup> J. J. Van Oosterzee, "The Gospel According to St. Luke" A Commentary on the Holy Scriptures, edited by J. P. Lange, translated from the second German edition, with additions, by Philip Scheff and Charles C. Starbuck (6th edition; New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, c.1864), p. 16.

<sup>6</sup> Supra, p. 21.

<sup>7</sup> Plummer, op. cit., p. 16.

<sup>8</sup> Heinrich A. W. Meyer, Critical and Exegetical Handbook to the Gospel of Mark and Luke, translated from the fifth edition of the German by Robert Ernest Wallis, the translation revised and edited by William P. Dickson (New York: Funk and Wagnalls, c.1884), pp. 235f.

<sup>9</sup> Van Oosterzee, op. cit., p. 16.

even till now been kept from completely abandoning.<sup>10</sup> Still others take it to refer to Zacharias' former prayers for offspring.<sup>11</sup> Nevertheless, a twofold answer is promised Zacharias by the angel: first, that Messiah shall indeed appear in his days, and secondly, that he shall himself be the father of the forerunner, who was to prepare His way (Mal. 4).<sup>12</sup>

When Zacharias in his want of faith asked for a sign, Gabriel disclosed his identity.<sup>13</sup> It is suggested that this was done as reason for faith on Zacharias' part,<sup>14</sup> and also by way of justifying the announcement of penalty which he has then to add. Besides identifying himself as him who stands in the presence of God, he also identifies his mission. ἀπεστάλην λαλῆσαι πρὸς σὲ καὶ εὐαγγελίσασθαί σοι ταῦτα, he was sent off<sup>15</sup> to speak unto<sup>16</sup> you, and to proclaim or instruct you concerning these glad tidings.

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<sup>10</sup>Brown, op. cit., p. 216.

<sup>11</sup>John Albert Bengel, Gnomon of the New Testament, edited by Blackley and Hawes (New York: Fleming H. Revell Company, n.d.), I, 354.

<sup>12</sup>van Oosterzee, op. cit., p. 16.

<sup>13</sup>Supra, p. 9.

<sup>14</sup>Bengel, op. cit., p. 355.

<sup>15</sup>Joseph Henry Thayer, A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament (Corrected edition; New York: American Book Company, c.1889), p. 67.

<sup>16</sup>Ibid., p. 369.

## The Annunciation of Jesus

The heavenly Father also used an angel to announce the approaching birth of the Savior. St. Matthew (Matt. 1:20-24), as we have already noted, relates that the angel of the Lord<sup>17</sup> appeared to Joseph in a dream.<sup>18</sup> The angel addressed him, *Ἰωσήφ υἱὸς Δαβὶδ*. Such a style of address was doubtless advisedly chosen to remind him of what all the families of David's line so eagerly coveted, thus preparing him for the wonderful announcement to follow.<sup>19</sup> The angel is charged with a message to dispel fear, and so he says, *μὴ φοβηθῆς* to Joseph. This message of the *ἄγγελος κυρίου* at the beginning of this Gospel brings to mind the similar message of the *ἄγγελος κυρίου* when he spoke to the women at the tomb, *μὴ φοβεῖσθε ὑμεῖς* (Matt. 28:5).<sup>20</sup> The angel then proceeds to proclaim to Joseph the events which shall come to pass in the birth of Jesus.

In the Annunciation to Mary (Luke 1:26-38), the angel Gabriel<sup>21</sup> is identified immediately by the Evangelist. He is again identified as being *ἀπεστάλη . . . ἀπὸ τοῦ θεοῦ*,

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<sup>17</sup> Supra, p. 71

<sup>18</sup> Supra, p. 18

<sup>19</sup> Brown, op. cit., p. 3.

<sup>20</sup> Alfred Plummer, An Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel According to St. Matthew (London: Elliot Stock, 1909), p. 417.

<sup>21</sup> Supra, p. 9.

sent from God<sup>22</sup> to speak as the messenger of God. We are told (v. 28) *καὶ εἰσελθὼν πρὸς αὐτὴν εἶπεν* and came in unto her. This further indicates the actual appearance of Gabriel before her. Although *ὁ ἄγγελος*<sup>23</sup> does not appear here in many manuscripts, yet it is nevertheless intended.<sup>24</sup> Some comment has been made to the fact that *ἴδουσα* is lacking in many manuscripts.<sup>25</sup> Godet thinks, on account of this, that Mary saw nothing and that it was only the word of the angel that disturbed her.<sup>26</sup> However, this conjecture is without foundation on the basis of other evidence from the text. *διεταρήχθη, καὶ διελογίζετο* give us an indication as to her reaction. She was troubled greatly<sup>27</sup> and reckoned up different reasons.<sup>28</sup> This is proof of her serenity and presence of mind at a critical hour.<sup>29</sup>

Then the Evangelist recounts for us the marvelous Annunciation which the angel spoke to Mary.

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<sup>22</sup>Thayer, op. cit., p. 67.

<sup>23</sup>Eberhard Nestle, Novum Testamentum Graece, edited by Erwin Nestle (19th edition; Stuttgart: Privilegierte Württembergische Bibelanstalt, 1949), p. 140.

<sup>24</sup>Van Oosterzee, op. cit., p. 19.

<sup>25</sup>Nestle, op. cit., p. 140.

<sup>26</sup>Bruce, op. cit., p. 463.

<sup>27</sup>Supra, p. 22.

<sup>28</sup>Plummer, Gospel According to St. Luke, p. 22.

<sup>29</sup>Van Oosterzee, op. cit., p. 20.

## The Announcement to the Shepherds

Up to this time we have only evidenced an angel making an announcement to individuals. Now, at the birth of Christ, we see the news proclaimed to the shepherds. Of this event Van Oosterzee<sup>30</sup> says:

The whole narrative is evidently designed to impress us with the sudden and unexpected manner of the angelic apparition while, at the same time, it is not denied that the susceptibility of the shepherds for the reception of the heavenly message may have been enhanced by their waiting for the redemption of Israel, their mutual discourse, and their sojourn, in the quiet solemn night, beneath the starry heavens. Meanwhile, the first preacher of the gospel stands suddenly before them.

Luke's account leaves no doubt that the angel was visible to the shepherds. The angel of the Lord *ἔπέστη* came upon,<sup>31</sup> and *δὲ κυρίου περιέλαμψεν*.<sup>32</sup> The result of the angel's appearance is described by Luke in the words *ἔφροβήθησαν φόβον μέγαν*: they feared a great fear.<sup>33</sup> The exhortation of the angel was similar to that seen already elsewhere (Matt. 1:20; Luke. 1:13.30) *μὴ φοβεῖσθε*. The reason given is *εὐαγγελίζομαι ὑμῖν χαρὰν μεγάλην*. I bring you good news in the form of a great joy.<sup>34</sup> The speech of the angel is

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<sup>30</sup> Van Oosterzee, op. cit., p. 36.

<sup>31</sup> Supra, p. 22.

<sup>32</sup> Supra, p. 16.

<sup>33</sup> Thayer, op. cit., p. 656.

<sup>34</sup> Bruce, op. cit., p. 472.

actually composed of three parts after the brief introduction. First of all, universal joy is proclaimed; next, the birth of Christ is announced and its significance is pointed out; third, a sign is given by means of which the child can be identified.<sup>35</sup> The angel speaks in a manner suited to their (the shepherds') comprehension and to their need, and impresses on the first preaching of the gospel that character indelebilis of all its after announcements: "great joy."<sup>36</sup>

Edersheim<sup>37</sup> proposes that the ministry of angels may be divided into two parts, that of praising God and that of executing His behests. After the angel of the Lord has done the latter, he is joined by a great multitude to execute the former. As we have already mentioned,<sup>38</sup> Luke describes it as *πλήθος στρατιῶν οὐρανόων* a multitude of angels. *στρατιῶν*, being a partitive genitive, actually refers to a multitude forming part of the whole host of heaven.<sup>39</sup> Their activity is portrayed in the *ἄνωγντων τὸν θεόν*, praising God.<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> William F. Arndt, "St. Luke," Unpublished class notes, Concordia Seminary Mimeograph Co., St. Louis, Mo. n.d., p. 14. (mimeographed.)

<sup>36</sup> Van Oosterzee, op. cit., p. 37.

<sup>37</sup> Alfred Edersheim, The Life and Times of Jesus The Messiah (New York: Longmans, Green, and Co., Fourth Avenue & 30th Street, 1917), II, 752.

<sup>38</sup> Supra, p. 11.

<sup>39</sup> Plummer, Gospel According to St. Luke, p. 57.

<sup>40</sup> Thayer, op. cit., p. 16.

While there are a few who might claim that there is no passage of Scripture which indicates that angels sing, there are not many who would go along with them.<sup>41</sup> Often the same word used here for praise, is used also, especially with the dative of person, to mean, to sing praises.<sup>42</sup> A great number of commentators seem to take the praising of the angels as a song. There are some who also would regard the announcement of the angel to the shepherds (vv. 10-12) as a song and view the praises as a refrain sung by a celestial choir.<sup>43</sup>

In the song of the angelic choir, there is not a mere wish proclaimed, but rather a triumphant affirmation of the blessed state of things.<sup>44</sup> The angels say that through the birth of Christ, the glory of God, who keeps His promises and redeems men, is manifest. They also declare that thereby peace is established upon earth, peace between God and man, consisting in the forgiveness of sins.<sup>45</sup>

There has been some question as to the number of strains in the angelic gloria. The question arises from the variant readings of *εὐδοκία* and *εὐδοκίας*. There are important manuscripts on both sides of the issue. Those who hold to the

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<sup>41</sup>A. S. Joppie, The Ministry of Angels (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House, c.1955, p. 26.

<sup>42</sup>Thayer, op. cit., p. 16.

<sup>43</sup>Bruce, op. cit., p. 473.

<sup>44</sup>Meyer, op. cit., p. 274.

<sup>45</sup>Arnst, op. cit., p. 14.

reading εὐδοκία, the nominative, favor three clauses,<sup>46</sup> while those who hold to the reading εὐδοκίας, favor two clauses.<sup>47</sup> However, the external testimony is in favor of the reading εὐδοκίας.<sup>48</sup> This is a genitive of quality, limiting ἀνθρώπους, and would read, those men who are the object of the Divine εὐδοκία.<sup>49</sup> The two clauses would then read Δόξα ἐν ὑψίστοις Θεῷ — καὶ ἐπὶ γῆς εἰρήνη ἐν ἀνθρώποις εὐδοκίας.<sup>50</sup> The sense is then: Glory to God in the highest, and peace on earth among men of His good will.<sup>51</sup>

Εὐδοκία (ἦ ἱ ὕ) is always God's favor unsolicited by man. It thus does not limit the peace to those men who are disposed to accept the Messiah and to be saved, but it means here the good will or gracious pleasure of God toward men, by which He reconciles the world to Himself in Christ. Of this angelic song Schaff states:

I will only add that this angelic song is the keynote of the famous Gloria in excelsis, which was used as a morning hymn in the Greek Church as early as the second or third century, and thence passed into the Latin, Anglican, and other Churches, as a true catholic classical, and undying form of devotion, sounding from age to age and generation to generation.<sup>52</sup>

<sup>46</sup> Van Oosterzee, op. cit., pp. 38 f.

<sup>47</sup> Schaff in Van Oosterzee, op. cit., p. 39.

<sup>48</sup> Nestle, op. cit., p. 144.

<sup>49</sup> Bruce, op. cit., p. 473.

<sup>50</sup> Schaff in Van Oosterzee, op. cit., p. 39.

<sup>51</sup> Plummer, Gospel According to St. Luke, p. 57.

<sup>52</sup> Van Oosterzee, op. cit., p. 39.

### The Guidance of the Angel

The heavenly Father again employed an angel in the guidance of Joseph, for the protection of the Christ-child from the impending harm. When the life of the Christ-child was threatened by the search of Herod, an angel appeared to Joseph in a dream.<sup>53</sup> Through this angel, God directed Joseph to take the young child and Mary and flee to Egypt where they would be safe from Herod. After the danger passed, the same method was used to direct and guide them in their return to Israel.

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<sup>53</sup>Supra, p. 18.

## CHAPTER VI

### JESUS SPEAKS OF ANGELS AND THEIR ACTIVITIES

During His ministry upon earth, our Savior spoke occasionally concerning the angels and both their present and their eschatological activities. Some of the facts which He spoke of concerning their present ministry throw light upon their activities which were closely related to His ministry. A few of these, which give us such insights, are briefly examined in this chapter.

In the Gospel according to St. Matthew (Matt. 18:10), Jesus speaks of the angels that attend little children. He refers to these angels as *οἱ ἄγγελοι αὐτῶν*, their angels. While some commentators hold that this passage refers to the fact that each person has his own individual guardian angel,<sup>1</sup> others hold that such a conclusion cannot be drawn from such

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<sup>1</sup>Heinrich A. W. Meyer, Critical and Exegetical Handbook of the Gospel of Matthew, translated from the 6th edition of the German by Peter Christie, translation revised and edited by Frederick Crombie and William Stewart (New York: Funk and Wagnalls, 1884), p. 327.

See also John Peter Lange, "The Gospel According to Matthew," A Commentary on the Holy Scripture, edited, with additions, by Philip Schaff (4th edition; New York: Charles Scribner, and Co., c.1864), p. 525.

a passage.<sup>2</sup> Meyer maintains that the belief of a guardian angel for each individual, which was a post-Babylonian development among the Jews, is here confirmed by Jesus.<sup>3</sup> However, Bruce says that this cannot be considered a dogmatic endorsement of that belief by Jesus.<sup>4</sup> It is further observed by others that the plural *οἱ ἄγγελοι* renders it impossible to quote this passage in support of the belief that a guardian angel attends each individual.<sup>5</sup> While the passage does not definitely affirm that we have angels as attendants, no further definite conclusion in this sphere can be drawn from this passage.

Jesus does not give us additional insight into the activity of the angels when He says that these angels who attend little children *διὰ παντὸς βλέπουσι τὸ πρόσωπον τοῦ πατρὸς μου*

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<sup>2</sup>Alexander Balmain Bruce, The Expositor's Greek Testament: The Synoptic Gospels, edited by W. Robertson Nicoll (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, n.d.), p. 238.

See also John A. Broadus, An American Commentary on the Gospel of Matthew, edited by Alvah Hovey (Philadelphia: American Baptist Publication Society, n.d.), p. 385.

See also Alfred Plummer, An Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel According to St. Matthew (London: Elliot Stock, 1909), p. 251.

See also DeWette in Lange, op. cit., p. 325.

<sup>3</sup>Meyer, op. cit., p. 327.

<sup>4</sup>Bruce, op. cit., p. 238.

<sup>5</sup>Broadus, op. cit., p. 66.

τοῦ ἐν οὐρανοῖς . They see, βλέπουν, <sup>6</sup> the face, πρόσωπον, <sup>7</sup> of my Father which is in heaven. Seeing the face means that they stand in the immediate presence of God. <sup>8</sup> This they do always, perpetually, διὰ παντός. <sup>9</sup> By referring to this activity of the angels, Jesus would point out the high value of children and the importance of their spiritual welfare.

St. Luke records further words of our Savior which tell us of the angels' activity (Luke 15:10). Here Jesus refers to the rejoicing of the angels of God over the repentent sinner. The expression χαρὰ, joy, gladness, <sup>10</sup> ἐνώπιον, in the presence of, <sup>11</sup> τῶν ἀγγέλων τοῦ Θεοῦ may be explained as pointing to the joy which God Himself manifests in the presence of angels over the repentance and rescue of a sinner. <sup>12</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Joseph Henry Thayer, A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament (Corrected edition; New York: American Book Company, c.1889), p. 103.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., p. 551.

<sup>8</sup> Willoughby C. Allen, The International Critical Commentary on the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments: A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel According to St. Matthew, edited by Charles Briggs, Samuel Rolles Driver, Alfred Plummer (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1907), p. 196.

<sup>9</sup> Thayer, op. cit., p. 492.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid., p. 662.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid., p. 220.

<sup>12</sup> Heinrich A. W. Meyer, Critical and Exegetical Hand-book to the Gospels of Mark and Luke, translated from the fifth edition of the German by Robert Ernest Wallis, the translation revised and edited by William P. Dickson (New York: Funk and Wagnalls, c.1884), p. 451.

Van Oosterzee suggests that the Savior is not speaking directly of the gaudium angelorum, but rather coram angelis. He maintains that as the shepherd and woman, in the well-known parables, rejoiced before and with their friends, so God rejoices before the angels over the conversion of the sinner, but as the friends and neighbors rejoiced with the woman and the shepherd, so we can conceive the angels as taking part in this Divine joy.<sup>13</sup>

St. John also quotes Jesus in His discourse with Nathaniel as making mention of angels. We will not go into the question, fully, of what Jesus meant when He told Nathaniel that he would see heaven opened.<sup>14</sup> We do, however, want to note the significance Jesus gives to angels. He speaks of the angels of God ἀναβαίνοντας and καταβαίνοντας, ascending and descending, upon the Son of man. Here Jesus is not referring simply and specifically to actual appearances of angels in the course of Gospel history.<sup>15</sup> The Savior is

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<sup>13</sup> J. J. Van Oosterzee, "The Gospel According to Luke," A Commentary on the Holy Scriptures, translated from the second German edition, with additions, by Philip Schaff and Charles C. Starbuck (6th edition; New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, c.1868), p. 235.

<sup>14</sup> Edwin Clement Hoskyns, The Fourth Gospel, edited by Francis Noel Davey (London: Faber and Faber Limited, 1947), pp. 182-184.

<sup>15</sup> Heinrich A. W. Meyer, Critical and Exegetical Handbook to the Gospel of John, translation from the fifth edition of the German by William Urwich, translation revised and edited by Frederick Crombie (New York: Funk and Wagnalls, c.1884), p. 93.

here, rather, referring to the uninterrupted and living intercourse between the Messiah and God, an intercourse which the disciples would clearly and vividly recognize throughout the subsequent ministry of Jesus.<sup>16</sup> It is shown that the angels not only come down but go up. The Father not only communicates with the Son, but also the Son with the Father. The closeness of the Father and the Son is thus indicated by angels.

That an innumerable amount of angels were ready to carry out the Savior's will is referred to by Christ in the Garden of Gethsemane (Matt. 26:53). That He was going that way of the Cross of His own will, is clear from this reference. Upon His desire, the Father would send Him *πλείω δώδεκα λεγιῶνς ἄγγελων*. *πλείω*, more than<sup>17</sup> indicates that the divine resources are boundless.<sup>18</sup> *δώδεκα λεγιῶνς ἄγγελων*, twelve legions<sup>19</sup> of angels. The legion at the time of Augustus seems to have consisted of 6,826 men.<sup>20</sup> Lange notes that Christ perhaps numbered the angels by legions as the counterpart of the Roman power now leagued against Him with His enemies.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

<sup>17</sup> Thayer, op. cit., p. 515.

<sup>18</sup> Bruce, op. cit., p. 317.

<sup>19</sup> Thayer, op. cit., p. 373.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

<sup>21</sup> Lange, "The Gospel According to Matthew," p. 487.

## CHAPTER VII

### ANGELS MINISTERING TO CHRIST

We have several instances in the Gospels where direct mention is made of angels ministering to Christ during His earthly ministry (Matt. 4:11; Mark 1:13; and Luke 22:43). The reference in Matthew is to the angels who ministered to Jesus following His temptation, after the Devil had departed from Him. The Evangelist says, ἄγγελοι προσήλθον καὶ δευκόνουν αὐτῷ. Angels came, approached, προσήλθον<sup>1</sup>, and ministered unto Him, δευκόνουν.<sup>2</sup> However, the exact manner of this ministry has been taken into question. Thayer<sup>3</sup> likens the use of δευκόνουν here to the Latin ministrare, to wait at table and offer food and drink to the guests. Bengel<sup>4</sup> refers to this ministering by stating that it was, "Doubtless by supplying his (sic) immediate need, that of food." Also

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<sup>1</sup> Joseph Henry Thayer, A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament (Corrected edition; New York: American Book Company, c.1889), p. 545.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., p. 137

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> John Albert Bengel, Gnomon of the New Testament, edited by Blackley and Hawes (New York: Fleming H. Revell Company, n.d.), I, 55.

many other commentators take a similar view.<sup>5</sup> Broadus<sup>6</sup> maintains that *δυνατόν* here means to attend as a servant, wait on with particular reference to supplying food. He states, as comparison, the use of that word in Matt. 8:15; 25:44; 27:55; Luke 8:3; 10:40; and 12:37. Christ had refused to try an experiment upon the promise of angelic help (v. 6) and now angelic help came unsought. It is also the view of some that this word *δυνατόν* might be taken in a wider sense, as signifying that angels ministered constantly to one who had decidedly chosen the path of obedience in preference to that of self-pleasing.<sup>7</sup>

However, there are also those who see in *δυνατόν* only an extraordinary divine support intended.<sup>8</sup> Lange<sup>9</sup> proposes that when Jesus had undergone the temptations, He returned

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<sup>5</sup> Heinrich A. W. Meyer, Critical and Exegetical Hand-book to the Gospel of Matthew, translated from the 6th edition of the German by Peter Christie, translation revised and edited by Frederick Crombie and William Stewart (New York: Funk and Wagnalls, 1884), p. 98.

<sup>6</sup> John A. Broadus, An American Commentary on the Gospel of Matthew, edited by Alvah Hovey (Philadelphia: American Baptist Publication Society, n.d.), p. 68.

<sup>7</sup> Alexander Balmain Bruce, The Expositor's Greek Testament: The Synoptic Gospels, edited by W. Robertson Nicoll (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, n.d.), p. 91.

<sup>8</sup> Meyer, op. cit., p. 98.

<sup>9</sup> John Peter Lange, "The Gospel According to Matthew," A Commentary on the Holy Scriptures, translated from the German edition, with additions, by Philip Schaff (4th edition; New York: Charles Scribner, and Co., c.1864), p. 86.

from the wilderness into the company of men. For that reason, he holds there was no necessity for any such miraculous supply of food for the body by angels. He further states his view:

In our view of this passage, the Lord having conquered Satan, and established His glorious supremacy, not only over man, but also over the spiritual world, now entered into converse with ministering angels (John 1:51), realizing in the supernatural and heavenly support which He now enjoyed, in the fullest sense, His own declaration, that man lives not by bread alone.<sup>10</sup>

St. Mark (Mark 1:13) also makes reference to the ministering of angels to Jesus in the wilderness. The text uses a very similar expression to the Matthew account, οἱ ἄγγελοι δεικνόντων αὐτῷ. There are commentators who hold that the ministering here refers to sustaining support against Satan and the wild beasts that are also mentioned in this verse.<sup>11</sup>

Likewise, St. Luke mentions one instance of an angel coming to Jesus to strengthen Him. This took place in the Garden of Gethsemane where Jesus had gone to pray. That the angel here appeared visibly to Jesus is indicated by the words ἔφθη δὲ αὐτῷ ἄγγελος ἐπ' οὐρανοῦ. ἔφθη definitely indicates the visible appearance of an angel before Him.<sup>12</sup> Nothing is said about the manner in which Jesus was strengthened by the angel. The word ἐνισχύων is used. However,

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

<sup>11</sup> Ezra P. Gould, The International Critical Commentary: A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel According to St. Mark (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1905), p. 13.

<sup>12</sup> Supra, p. 19.

Thayer<sup>13</sup> notes that it is here used in the transitive sense with the meaning, to inspire, by strengthening one in soul. Of this verse Arndt<sup>14</sup> states, "Some commentators think of bodily aid. It is most natural to conceive of him as speaking to Jesus, as Moses and Elijah had done (Luke 9, 30 f.), pointing to God's plan for the redemption of the world."

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<sup>13</sup>Thayer, op. cit., p. 216.

<sup>14</sup>William F. Arndt, "St. Luke," Unpublished class notes, Concordia Seminary Mimeograph Co., St. Louis, Mo. n.d., p. 113. (mimeographed.)

## CHAPTER VIII

### THE ANGELS AT EASTER AND AT THE ASCENSION

#### The Easter Accounts

All four Evangelists assure us that the angels played a very active part in the Resurrection Day activities. It is especially from these accounts that we learn much about the form in which angels appeared.<sup>1</sup> We also become better acquainted with their activities through these accounts.

St. Matthew writes:

καὶ ἰδοὺ σεισμός ἐγένετο μέγας· ἄγγελος γὰρ κυρίου καταβὰς ἐξ οὐρανοῦ καὶ προσελθὼν ἀπεκύλισεν τὸν λίθον καὶ ἐκάθητο ἐπ' αὐτόν· ἦν δὲ πρὸ εἴσεως αὐτοῦ ὡς ἄστραπτι, καὶ τὸ ἐνδύμα αὐτοῦ λευκὸν ὡς χιών. ἀπὸ δὲ τοῦ φόβου αὐτοῦ ἐσείσθησαν οἱ τηροῦντες καὶ ἐγενήθησαν ὡς νεκροί· ἀποκριθεὶς δὲ ὁ ἄγγελος εἶπεν ταῖς γυναῖκιν· μὴ φοβεῖσθε ὑμεῖς· οἶδα γὰρ ὅτι ἰσοῦν τὸν ἐστυρωμένον ἴνα εἴτε οὐκ ἔστιν ὡδε· ἤγερθη γὰρ καθὼς εἶπεν· δεῦτε εἴδετε τὸν τόπον ὅπου ἔκειτο. καὶ ταχὺ πορευθεὶς ἐπάτε τοῖς μαθηταῖς αὐτοῦ ἐπὶ ἡγέρθη ἀπὸ τῶν νεκρῶν, καὶ ἰδοὺ προάγει ὑμᾶς εἰς τὴν Γαλιλαίαν, ἐκεῖ αὐτὸν ὄψεσθε ἰδοὺ εἶπον ὑμῖν. (ΜΑΤΤ. 28:2-7)

The ἄγγελος κυρίου is here described as καταβὰς ἐξ οὐρανοῦ καὶ προσελθὼν coming down<sup>2</sup> from heaven and approaching,<sup>3</sup> and further ἀπεκύλισεν τὸν λίθον καὶ ἐκάθητο

<sup>1</sup>Supra, pp. 13 f.

<sup>2</sup>Joseph Henry Thayer, A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament (Corrected edition; New York: American Book Company, c.1889), p. 329.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 545.

ἐπένω αὐτοῦ, he rolled away<sup>4</sup> the stone and seated himself<sup>5</sup> upon it (genitive of place). This entire description is peculiar to Matthew in this account. He alone pictures the angel descending from heaven, rolling away the stone, and sitting on the stone as guard. There are some commentators who would infer that the Evangelist here merely assumed the angelic agency as the best means of explaining how this happened.<sup>6</sup> There is, however, no need for such inference if we accept the divine inspiration of the writers of Scripture.

We have already studied the description of the angel as given here.<sup>7</sup> St. Matthew, in addition, mentioned the effect of the angelic appearance upon the soldiers who had been stationed to guard the tomb. He says they became ὡς νεκροί as dead, lifeless.<sup>8</sup> Through the fear of the angel they became stupified, helpless, totally incapacitated.<sup>9</sup>

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., p. 545.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., p. 313.

<sup>6</sup> Alfred Plummer, An Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel According to St. Matthew (London: Elliot Stock, 1909), p. 416.

See also Heinrich A. W. Meyer, Critical and Exegetical Hand-book to the Gospel of Matthew, translated from the fifth edition of the German by Peter Christie, translation revised and edited by Frederick Crombie and William Stewart (New York: Funk and Wagnalls, 1884), p. 520.

<sup>7</sup> Supra, pp. 13 f.

<sup>8</sup> Thayer, op. cit., p. 423.

<sup>9</sup> Alexander Balmain Bruce, The Expositor's Greek Testament: The Synoptic Gospels, edited by W. Robertson Nicoll (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, n.d.), I, 336.

The angel is then portrayed as speaking to the women who had come to the grave. He addressed them with that exhortation which we have seen was used often by angels in their approach to humans, *μη φοβεσθε υμεις*.<sup>10</sup> He then proceeds to give them the wonderful and joyous news of the resurrected Christ. He commands them to go and tell the news to the disciples. The angel is pictured as issuing a command as he charged the women *ταχυ πορευεσθαι ειπατε τον τονον ουτου εκελευ*: go quickly and tell the disciples.

St. Mark (Mark 16:1-7) mentions the experience of Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome as they came to the tomb to anoint the body of Jesus. They found the tomb opened and upon entering they saw *νεανισκον καθιμενον εν τοις δεξιαις*, a young man<sup>11</sup> sitting on the right side. Here the angel is designated according to that form of manifestation which he had in the view of the women.<sup>12</sup> He is described in these terms because of his external appearance.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>10</sup>Supra, p. 27.

<sup>11</sup>Thayer, op. cit., p. 423.

<sup>12</sup>J. J. Van Oosterzee, "The Gospel According to Luke," A Commentary on the Holy Scriptures, translated from the second German edition, with additions, by Philip Schaff and Charles C. Starbuck (6th edition; New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, c.1868), p. 386.

<sup>13</sup>John Peter Lange, A Commentary on the Holy Scriptures: The Gospel According to Mark, translated from the German, and edited, with additions, by Philip Schaff, revised from the Edinburgh translation, with additions, by William G. T. Shedd (4th edition; New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, c.1864), p. 156.

Mark also gives a further description of the angel.<sup>14</sup> and relates words spoken by the angel to the women similar to those recorded in Matthew's account.<sup>15</sup>

St. Luke's account (Luke 24:1-7) of this same event says that *ἄνδρες δύο ἐπέστησαν αὐταῖς*, two men stood by them. Here again the angels are described as men.<sup>16</sup> The angels address the women in the form of a question, *τί ζητεῖτε τὸν ζῶντα μετὰ τῶν νεκρῶν*, why do you seek the living among the dead? They then proceed to recall to the women the words that Jesus spoke when He was still in Galilee with reference to His resurrection.

St. John (John 20:11-13) mentions *δύο ἄγγέλους* two angels, visible to Mary in the tomb. One of these angels was *καθεζομένου*,<sup>17</sup> sitting at the head, the other at the feet, where the body of Jesus had lain. They, likewise, addressed Mary in the form of a question, *γύναι, τί κλαίεις*; Woman, why are you weeping?

There have been some who contend that there are discrepancies in the different accounts of the angelic appearances at the Resurrection. They take this view because Matthew and Mark make mention of only one angel, while Luke and John

<sup>14</sup> Supra, pp 13 ff.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

<sup>16</sup> Supra, p. 17.

<sup>17</sup> Thayer, op. cit., p. 513. Also supra, p. 45.

mention two of these heavenly beings.<sup>18</sup> Meyer<sup>19</sup> holds the view that there are divergent accounts, because the angelic manifestations are dependent upon individual observation and experience which, he infers, is very likely to err under such circumstances. On the other hand, Van Oosterzee maintains that such an explanation is out of place here. He states:

As respects the well-known controversy as to the number of the angels, we are satisfied, instead of occupying ourselves with all the harmonistic schemes that have been in earlier or modern times thought out, to remind the reader rather of the well-known word of Lessing in his "Duplik", where he with a liberality strange to most modern critics, wrote: "Cold discrepancy-mousers, do ye not then see that the Evangelists do not count the angels? The whole grave, the whole region round about the grave, was invisibly swarming with angels. There were not only two angels, like a pair of grenadiers who are left behind in front of the quarters of the departed general; there were millions of them; they appeared not always one and the same, not always the same two; sometimes this one appeared, sometimes that; sometimes on this place, sometimes on that; sometimes alone, sometimes in company; sometimes they said this, sometimes they said that."<sup>20</sup>

Despite the fact that Matthew and Mark mention only one angel seen by the women at the grave and Luke and John refer to two, there is really no contradiction here. Matthew and Mark do not say that only one was there. They could have in

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<sup>18</sup>J. H. Bernard, The International Critical Commentary: A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel According to St. John, edited by A. H. McNeile (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1929), p. 663.

<sup>19</sup>Meyer, op. cit., p. 520.

<sup>20</sup>Van Oosterzee, op. cit., p. 366.

mind that angel who was the main spokesman. Their emphasis is on the fact that the message was spoken by an angelic being. Luke and John, in addition, state that there were two such beings.<sup>21</sup> There need not be any discrepancy in these accounts unless we choose to put it there.

#### The Ascension Account

Angels played a role in the close of our Savior's earthly ministry just as they played such an important roll at its beginning. In the Acts of the Apostles (Acts 1:9-11), Luke shows us what part the angels played in the Ascension. As Christ's disciples gazed heavenward after their ascending Master, there appeared two angels beside them. *ἄνδρες εὐόπαι* *παρῳτῆκελον αὐτοῖς*; two men stood beside<sup>22</sup> them. This reminds us very much of the Lucan account of the Resurrection.<sup>23</sup> They sounded a note of comforting hope to those disciples at the end of Christ's earthly ministry as they proclaimed the promise of the Lord's return.

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<sup>21</sup>William F. Arndt, "St. Luke," Unpublished class notes, Concordia Seminary Mimeograph Co., St. Louis, Mo. n.d., p. 126. (mimeographed.)

<sup>22</sup>Thayer, op. cit., p. 489.

<sup>23</sup>Supra, p. 46.

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