



Reflecting on Faith

by Dale Fincher

www.soulation.org

The angels looked neither like the cute ones on the postage stamps nor like the little baby angels we often see fluttering about nativity scenes. These were obviously brilliantly bright and startling. They came to a field. They came at night. The glory of God shone from them. They terrified, without intention, the shepherds in the field. I'm sure if it happened today the late Carl Sagan's colleagues at SETI would be on the case.

Luke says sheep herders lived in that field. But Herod the Great lived in the local palace. However, God is not impressed by rank or role. God sees all humans alike, as image bearers with hearts, hands, and hair. He sees them for who they are, the choices they make, the character of soul they have become. He sees if they have a posture of humility or pride toward ultimate reality.

Herod (self-proclaimed, "the great") had no such posture. When he heard the headline from the Magi

that a Messiah was born, he said he wanted to know the location too so that he could demonstrate a posture of humility in worship. But as the story unfolds, we find that Herod's attitude was to eradicate the news with infant genocide, a quite common act in clinics across today's world. Songwriter Rich Mullins, echoing Matthew and Jeremiah, writes about the ancient event,

Rachel is weeping for her children that she thought she could not bear

And she bears a sorrow that she cannot hide...

(Footnote 1: Rich Mullins, "The World As Best As I Can Remember It.")

Imagine the heartache that ripped through the city as lives were taken by Herod in contempt of a man who bore the best spiritual, moral, political, and social good news. Herod not only wanted to rid Palestine of Jesus, but had he succeeded, he would have ridded the world of something Herod could have never given: a Savior who is Christ the Lord.

In contrast, the Magi were not threatened by an announcement of the Messiah, the Chosen of God. "Where is the one who has been born king of the Jews?" they asked (Matthew 2:2). Though they were

Gentile, they confess, "We saw his star in the east and have come to worship him." That is why the wise Magi traveled from the East in search of Jesus at the capital of Palestine. And Matthew says they engaged in the humble act of worshipping Jesus, the newborn king.

But the only formal birthday announcement came to some ordinary guys watching sheep in a field. The shepherds witnessed the most fascinating display of angels ever recorded: "Suddenly a great company of the heavenly host appeared with the angel" (Luke 2:13). As bewildered as the shepherds were with angels, they still ran to verify an even more interesting event. Luke says that after visiting the baby Jesus, they "returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things they had heard and seen, which were just as they had been told" (v.20). The shepherds found the babe wrapped in clothes lying in a manger just as the angel announced, and like the Magi, they bowed before him in humble worship. In so doing they met Jesus face to face. And they believed.

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