

25 Days of Advent

Seeing Jesus Through the Eyes of the Christmas Story Characters

ADVENT DAY 19: Dec. 19 – Angel Gabriel, God's Protection

Devotional

Gabriel, the angel sent by God to be His messenger and coordinator of all His plans, had one more task to complete the Christmas season.

An angel appears to Joseph, again in a dream, letting him know his family was in danger and he needed to get out of town. Gabriel isn't specifically mentioned, but since this whole story started with Gabriel being the angel in charge, it's reasonable to assume that God had him complete the task. And given Joseph's response, it's equally possible Gabriel was the angel because the history of trust between them would help Joseph to respond quickly.

Joseph's response was what we've come to expect from this humble man of God – he obeyed, *immediately*. Scripture tells us he took Mary and Jesus *in the middle of the night* to Egypt and stayed there until Herod died. Don't read over that passage too quickly – he didn't wait until the next day; he woke his family up in the middle of the night and left right away.

The Magi story in Matthew 2 is part of a larger sequence that involves danger for the newborn child and his parents. When King Herod hears about the child, "King of the Jews", as a potential rival for his power, he seeks to have Jesus killed. As a result the family flees to Egypt, while Herod orders the execution of all boys under two years old in the area of Bethlehem. Only after Herod's death does the family return to the Land of Israel, though to Nazareth rather than Bethlehem. At each point in their itinerary, the family is guided by dreams and texts from the Jewish Scriptures.

Why was all that necessary? Scripture tells us in the rest of the story – don't skip over these familiar passages, they are rife with meaning and significance. Three times Matthew refers back to prophecies about the Messiah that were fulfilled in these parts of Jesus' life:

1. He would come from Egypt – "Out of Egypt I called my son." (Hosea 11:1)
2. There would be weeping over the loss of life – "Rachel weeping for her children and refusing to be comforted, because they are no more." (Jeremiah 31:15)
3. He would be called a Nazarene – a branch from the root of Jesse.

Three times an angel came to warn, protect, and guide Joseph and his family – to get them out of Bethlehem to avoid the mass murder implemented by Herod, to tell them it was safe to return to Israel, and to direct them to Galilee rather than Judea just to guarantee a safe childhood for Jesus.

Isn't it comforting to know there are angels all around us maneuvering the circumstances and guiding us to the paths God has called us to? May we hear them when they appear to us in whatever form.

Look Up – Connect with God

Read: Matthew 2:13-23

Key Verse: “When they had gone, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream. ‘Get up,’ he said, ‘take the child and his mother and escape to Egypt. Stay there until I tell you, for Herod is going to search for the child to kill him.’” (Matthew 2:13)

Pray: Father God, thank you for sending your angels to guide us, teach us, and protect us. Help us to hear them and see them...and most importantly, obey them, when you send them to us. Give us Joseph’s heart to obey *immediately*.

Look In – Family Memories

Discuss: Looking back over your life either pre or post conversion, can you see any times when there were angels working around you? If not, how do you think God would present an angel if he sends one to you in the future – in a dream, in the words of another person, through scripture? Do you believe angels still come to God’s people here on earth? This should be a lively discussion and give you insights into the hearts of your loved ones.

Activity:

- Advent Tree: make or select an angel or bed or sleeping person and put it on the tree. [Download Ornaments](#) or [Ornament Ideas](#)
- Advent Garland: put the key verse on a paper/card, assign #19, and attach it to the garland twine. [Key Verses](#)
- Advent Cards: select a card and see what the activity might be (i.e., cut out paper snowflakes). [Family Activities](#)

Look Out – Connect with Others

Offer to shovel the driveways and sidewalks/porches of elderly neighbors, or perform some other task that helps someone out.