

“Angels Among Us: Michael”
Daniel 10:10-14
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Matthew 24:36-44

36“But about that day and hour no one knows, neither the angels of heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father. 37For as the days of Noah were, so will be the coming of the Son of Man. 38For as in those days before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day Noah entered the ark, 39and they knew nothing until the flood came and swept them all away, so too will be the coming of the Son of Man. 40Then two will be in the field; one will be taken and one will be left. 41Two women will be grinding meal together; one will be taken and one will be left. 42Keep awake therefore, for you do not know on what day your Lord is coming. 43But understand this: if the owner of the house had known in what part of the night the thief was coming, he would have stayed awake and would not have let his house be broken into. 44Therefore you also must be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an unexpected hour.

Daniel 10:10-14

10But then a hand touched me and roused me to my hands and knees. 11He said to me, “Daniel, greatly beloved, pay attention to the words that I am going to speak to you. Stand on your feet, for I have now been sent to you.” So while he was speaking this word to me, I stood up trembling. 12He said to me, “Do not fear, Daniel, for from the first day that you set your mind to gain understanding and to humble yourself before your God, your words have been heard, and I have come because of your words. 13But the prince of the kingdom of Persia opposed me twenty-one days. So Michael, one of the chief princes, came to help me, and I left him there with the prince of the kingdom of Persia, 14and have come to help you understand what is to happen to your people at the end of days. For there is a further vision for those days.”

Let's talk about angels. It's Advent and there are angels all through the traditional Advent stories.

There's the angel that tells Zechariah that his wife Elizabeth is going to have a baby and to name him John. And of course there's the angel that appears to Mary to tell her that she is going to give birth to Jesus, and an angel also appears to the shepherds to tell them about the holy birth. And the angels that then appear and praise God, that multitude of the heavenly host. But who gets the most visits from an angel in the Christmas stories? Joseph. Mary just gets that one visit but Joseph gets three. An angel appears to him in a dream to tell him about Mary's pregnancy, but then an angel also appears to him in another dream to warn him to take the child and his mother and flee because his life is in danger from

King Herod. And an angel appears to him a third time to tell him that he can take his family home from Egypt. But we know that angels don't only appear to the Holy Family and the shepherds, but in many places in the Hebrew Scriptures we hear about angels appearing to Abraham and to Jacob and to Moses and Joshua and to many others.

So with all the accounts of angelic visits, we must know a lot about angels, right? Well, let's see if we do. I certainly didn't before I started reading up on these stories over the last few weeks. The Bible presents angels as spiritual beings that are part of God's creation and do God's will. But what are they like? So in the depictions on Christmas cards that I see and the statues around here, all the angels are female. Is that right? Are angels female? No they're not. We don't really know if angels have gender, but the angels that we have stories about in Scripture are presented as male. Sorry. And angels only wear white, right? Well maybe that's right. We don't know what the angels that appeared to Abraham or Joshua wore or the angel that appeared to Mary or Joseph. We do know that the angels that appeared to the women at the tomb at the time of the resurrection of Jesus were clothed in dazzling white. So maybe white is the traditional color for angels. Well, at least we know they fly, right? Well, not really. None of the scriptures that talk about angels speak of them as having wings or of flying. Angels just appear. And disappear. Even the heavenly host that appears to the shepherds we don't really know that they were up in the sky. It just says that there appeared with the angel and multitude of the heavenly host and then after they were done praising God they returned to heaven. We're never told how. And according to one tradition some of the angels have names. Tradition says that the chief angels are the archangels of the heavenly host. One tradition says there are four of these angels, another that there are seven. But even if there are seven, we don't know all their names. Of the four archangels of the heavenly host, in the New Testament we are told that one is named Gabriel, another is named Michael. The other two are not named in the New Testament, but in other books we are told that their names are Raphael and Uriel. Three of these angels are going to be our focus of discussion the next few weeks. Michael is an angel that is named not just in the New Testament but he is named as an angel in the Old

Testament also. Michael is supposed to be the highest in rank of the archangels and the name, “Michael” means, “Who is like God?” And he is the angel who is traditionally the protector of Israel. In ancient times people believed that each nation or people had its own special angel who watched over them, sort of like a patron saint angel, a protector. So in the book of the prophet Daniel that we read from, the prince the author speaks of is that angel Michael who is the protector of the people of Israel. That's the first things that angels do, they protect. The word angel means messenger, someone whom God sends with a message or a purpose and the first purpose of an angel is to protect. Michael is sent to protect the nation and the people of Israel. A guardian angel, so to speak.

Do you have a guardian angel? Do you ever feel like you have someone watching over you? Someone who cares about just you, who wants the best for you, who wants to protect you? Some people believe that like Michael was the guardian angel for the whole nation of Israel, that each one of us has an angel who is guarding us, protecting us, whispering in our ear the words of wisdom that we need to hear.

Now I will admit that no where in the Bible does it tell us that we each have a specific angel who is watching over us, but it does say that God is watching over us. So each of us may not have a Clarence like in “It's a Wonderful Life,” but then maybe we do, who knows? Who know what the means are that God uses to protect and guard us? Maybe he uses angels. Maybe he uses us. Maybe we are the guardian angels for each other. If angel means “messenger” and is a being that God send into the life of another person to protect like Michael protected Israel, then maybe God sends another person to show his love and to protect you and give you wisdom. Have you ever had someone show us just at the right time, exactly when you needed them? Or say the exact right thing? Or give a hug right when you most needed one. Maybe that was your guardian angel. And maybe it's someone you've known for years. Maybe we are guardian angels for each other. Who has been your guardian angel? Or maybe better yet, are you a guardian angel for someone else?