

Reason 3: Angels Appeared

Our Daily Bread University
This course was developed by
Our Daily Bread University.



In the shepherds' fields of Bethlehem, another group of witnesses formed.

Mart De Haan (in shepherds' fields, Bethlehem): Now I wish I'd brought more water. It's getting hot, Jimmy.

Jimmy De Young: Why don't we stop here under the shade of this olive tree just for a few moments? You know, here in the Middle East we seek shade whenever we find it, especially on a hot day when you're walking through the shepherds' fields. We're just outside the city of Bethlehem in the shepherds' fields, with the terraces, the hills, the valleys, the olive trees. In fact, it was in these same fields that the second king of Israel, King David, when he was a boy would have watched his father's sheep.

Mart De Haan: You know what? This is what I came to see.

Jimmy De Young: The ancient watchtower.

Mart De Haan: Yeah, the watchtower. This is an old one, isn't it?

Jimmy De Young: Probably dates back to the time of King Solomon, maybe three thousand years ago.

Mart De Haan: That's a long time.

Jimmy De Young: You're not going to...?

Mart De Haan: Come on, follow me, Jim.

Jimmy De Young: Mart...

Mart De Haan: There's room.

Jimmy De Young: Wait a minute.

Mart De Haan: There's plenty of room.

Jimmy De Young: What's inside?

Mart De Haan: One dead dog.

Jimmy De Young: I'll let you do the discovery in there. This ancient watchtower probably does date back to the time of King Solomon. They were used at a time of harvest by the farmer. They would come and stay here during that time to watch over their crops and make sure nobody stole from them. But here in the shepherds' fields, I'm reminded of what the New Testament says about that special night. When the angels would have appeared here, right here in these same fields, to announce the birth of Jesus Christ.

Mart De Haan: Hey, how's this? Great view up here.

Jimmy De Young: Is it nice?

Mart De Haan: It is. I'll watch the sheep from here. But, you know, I was thinking, it could be that as you hear us talk about angels appearing in the sky over these shepherds' fields, you might find that difficult to accept. You might say, oh, a star in the sky, a bright light, that's easier to explain naturally. It may have been a comet. It may have been an alignment of the planets. But angels appearing over these hills and speaking to shepherds, you may have a hard time buying that.

Luke 2:11, 13–14 (NRSV)

Yet, according to the Gospel of Luke, an angel announced the birth of

a Savior who is Christ the Lord.

Again, according to the New Testament record,

And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying:

“Glory to God in the highest,

And on earth peace, good will toward men!”

Jimmy De Young: This is not just about angels. It's about

witnesses, those shepherds were the witnesses.

Gerry E. Breshears: When the angels appeared to the shepherds, they came to the lowest rank of Jewish society. Shepherds, because of the time they have of lambing and the contact with blood, being away from the city, are completely defiled and unable to keep the ceremonial law of the Jews. This is appropriate that the Lamb of God is going to come to a defiled, unclean, and sinful people to cleanse them. It probably also is appropriate because angels come as messengers of God bringing the message that the Lamb of God is coming. And He appears to shepherds to say that.

Jimmy De Young: These were priestly shepherds. Men who had been trained in the priestly duties of the temple, which is located about five miles from here. They would have been watching in these fields the lambs that were to be taken to the temple for sacrifice, because the shepherds' fields in Bethlehem were the holding pens for the sacrificial lambs. This evidence is not just about angels; it's about those witnesses.