

The Messenger

All of heaven was in an uproar. It was just about time for Mary's baby to be born on earth. She and Joseph were on their way down to Bethlehem and nearly there.

Nathan stepped back from the alterations he'd been doing on Gabriel's robe and grinned. It was a good job. It would be perfect for announcing the birth of the King. Not that it mattered any. Gabriel always looked great, no matter what robe he happened to wear.

"Well, Gabe," Nathan said, his dark eyes sparkling. "You're all ready." Gabriel looked at himself in the crystal lake and checked the fit.

"Excellent, Nate," he exclaimed. "The King'll be proud. All the best for Him alone!" The two of them turned and walked around the lake, past one of the many mansions. Strains of a glorious song echoed through the door as the Angel Chorus rehearsed the song that Sister Rebekkah had written just for this occasion. It sounded great. Nate wished he could be part of it, but it was not all angels who sang. Some would be needed elsewhere. Perhaps with the child called John.

"Hey, Gabe," Nate said. The big angel merely nodded.

"You think the Lord is planning something extra special for the birth of His Son?"

"I guess, Nate. He hasn't told me anything." Suddenly Gabriel came to a halt. "He's calling. Got to go." With that he turned and vanished.

"Well, Gabriel," the Lord said when the messenger angel stood before him. "I have seen all the preparations you have made. But they are not necessary."

"But, Lord!" the angel answered, spreading his hands toward the Throne. "He's Your Son. We should welcome Him. Let all the world know that He's born. We've prepared the Angel Chorus for the past 2000 years. I've been working on the wording of the message ever since I visited Daniel..."

"Yes, Gabriel, I know," the Lord returned. "I have seen it all. But it is not necessary. My Son will be born as any baby. There will be no acclamation. No worship, not until His Task is complete."

"But, Lord! Can't we just sing once. Tell the people. They've *got* to know!" There was a touch of unbounded joy when the Creator spoke again.

"They will, Gabriel. They will. Just not yet." And the audience was ended.

Gabriel sat by the sea, dejected. All that work gone to waste. The choir that was handpicked from among the best of the angels. The great anthem that had taken 1000 years to write and 2000 to learn. The message he'd been preparing for nearly 500 years would not be given in triumph. He'd not be able to worship the God-Man the way he'd dreamed from the day the Lord had announced His Plan. Strange to have all those dreams shattered. It hurt. But the Lord knew what was best. He'd do the right thing.

The mighty messenger looked at the crystal sea and then reached out and touched its surface. Staring down through it he saw the night of the planet earth. There below him stood several men in outlandish clothing, gazing up at the heavens. The angel smiled sadly. They would not see anything out of the ordinary he knew.

"Hey, Gabe, whatcha doin'?" The question made him jump and for an instant his hand slipped through the crystal water and touched a star before he could pull it back. He stared as the star flashed brightly and began to glow with an unearthly light. Gabriel turned to see who'd startled him. It was little Elimelech. His bright eyes shone and his smile disappeared at the shock he saw on his friend's face.

"What is it?"

"I think I just made a mistake," Gabriel stuttered and reached back to extinguish the star.

"No, Gabriel, leave it." The Lord's voice was unmistakable.

"But, Lord, it's unusual. They'll see it," the messenger protested.

"That they will. And they will know that my Son is born." There was something tender in the Lord's Voice. "Look, and you'll know that He is." The two angels looked through the sea and saw a young woman carefully wrapping a baby in strips of cloth and they laying him in a manger while her husband got the straw stained from the birth out of the stable.

"Tell me, Elimelech," the Lord asked with a laugh, "is the Angel Chorus still ready?"

"Yes, Lord!" the little angel cried. "I'll get them." He bowed, turned and ran off to alert Sister Rebekkah.

"Who are we to tell?" Gabriel asked excitedly. "The kings of the earth? All the mighty rulers? Caesar? The kings of the east?"

"No, just the shepherds in the fields of Bethlehem." Gabriel was about to question, but then decided it wiser not to.

"Your will be done, Lord," he answered, bowing his head.

"Good, Gabriel. You have learned that My expectations are bigger. Now give them the best news ever. They will spread it."

"Yes, Lord!"

And there were shepherds living out in the fields nearby, keeping watch over their flocks at night. An angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified.

But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid. I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is Christ the Lord. This will be a sign to you: You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger."

Suddenly a great company of the heavenly host appeared with the angel, praising God and saying, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to men on whom his favor rests."

Luke 2:8-14

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