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Angels Announce the Coming of Christ

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ANGELS ANNOUNCE THE COMING OF CHRIST

And it shall be made known unto just and holy men, by the mouth of angels, at the time of his coming, that the words of our fathers may be fulfilled, according to that which they have spoken concerning him, which was according to the spirit of prophecy which was in them. (Alma 13:26)

The pending birth of Jesus Christ was of such importance that God sent angels to declare the good news, or “gospel.” One such angel, Gabriel, came to the Savior’s earthly mother (Luke 1:26-31). After Mary became pregnant, an angel—perhaps the same one—was sent to reassure Joseph that “that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost. And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name Jesus: for he shall save his people from their sins” (Matthew 1:20-21). When Christ was born in Bethlehem, the good news was delivered to shepherds by an angel, joined by “a multitude of the heavenly host praising God” (Luke 2:8-14).

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This same pattern was followed when God announced the coming of Christ to Lehi and his descendants, as recorded in the Book of Mormon. Lehi saw God in vision, “surrounded with numberless concourses of angels in the attitude of singing and praising their God,” and Christ “descending out of the midst of heaven.” Because of this experience, Lehi was able to prophesy of the Messiah to come (1 Nephi 10:4-11, 17).

Lehi’s son, Nephi, had a similar vision of Christ and learned of him from an angel (1 Nephi 11:13-33). Another of

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Lehi's sons, Jacob, also testified of Christ, noting that he had learned about him from an angel (2 Nephi 10:3-5). Similarly, King Benjamin spoke of an angel who told him of Christ to come (Mosiah 3:2-10.).

Alma the Younger was visited by an angel (Mosiah 27:11) and remained paralyzed for three days. When he at length was able to speak, he testified of Christ to come (Mosiah 27:30-31). Some years later, as he explained to his sons what had happened when the angel appeared (Alma 36:5-10), Alma declared that during the time he was incapacitated, he had been rescued from hell by calling on the name of Jesus (Alma 36:17-20; 38:7-9). He declared:

Yea, methought I saw, even as our father Lehi saw, God sitting upon his throne, surrounded with numberless concourses of angels, in the attitude of singing and praising God" (Alma 36:22).

To his son Corianton, Alma said, "I would say somewhat unto you concerning the coming of Christ . . . to declare glad tidings of salvation unto his people" (Alma 39:15). Knowing that Corianton found it difficult to believe that the coming of a Savior could have been known so far in advance (Alma 39:17), Alma asked, "Is it not as easy at this time for the Lord to send his angel to declare these glad tidings unto us as unto our children, or as after the time of his coming?" (Alma 39:19).

During his mission to the city of Ammonihah, Alma told the people that angels had recently appeared to others to declare the message of salvation that would soon come through Christ (Alma 9:25-29; 13:21-25). Amulek, who accompanied him, testified that he had learned from an angel about God and the Savior to come (Alma 11:31-33). Alma subsequently recorded other instances of angels appearing to teach people during his lifetime (Alma 19:34-35; 32:23; 40:11).

Alma further stressed that the plan of redemption had been declared by angels shortly after the fall:

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God . . . saw that it was expedient that man should know concerning the things whereof he had appointed unto them; Therefore he sent angels to converse with them, who caused men to behold of his glory. And they began from that time forth to call on his name; therefore God conversed with men, and made known unto them the plan of redemption, which had been prepared from the foundation of the world...God did call on men, in the name of his Son, (this being the plan of redemption which was laid) saying: If ye will repent, and harden not your hearts, then will I have mercy upon you, through mine Only Begotten Son; Therefore, whosoever repenteth, and hardeneth not his heart, he shall have claim on mercy through mine Only Begotten Son, unto a remission of his sins; and these shall enter into my rest. (Alma 12:28-30, 33-35; see also Moses 5:57-59; 7:25, 27; D&C 29:42)

About a century later, an angel appeared to the Lamanite prophet Samuel and taught him of Christ and of the signs of his coming (Helaman 13:5-7; 14:28.). Samuel's teachings to the Nephites were supplemented by those of Alma's great-grandson Nephi, who worked "miracles among the people, that they might know that the Christ must shortly come—Telling them of things which must shortly come, that they might know and remember at the time of their coming that they had been made known unto them beforehand, to the intent that they might believe" (Helaman 16:4-5).

The prophesied signs of Christ's coming began to be fulfilled "and angels did appear unto men, wise men, and did declare unto them glad tidings of great joy" (Helaman 16:13-14). Within five years, Christ was born in Bethlehem. Nearly thirty years later, he appeared to the Nephites, who, thanks to the angels,

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had been expecting him.

For behold, God knowing all things, being from everlasting to everlasting, behold, he sent angels to minister unto the children of men, to make manifest concerning the coming of Christ; and in Christ there should come every good thing. And God also declared unto prophets, by his own mouth, that Christ should come... Wherefore, by the ministering of angels, and by every word which proceeded forth out of the mouth of God, men began to exercise faith in Christ; and thus by faith, they did lay hold upon every good thing; and thus it was until the coming of Christ.
(Moroni 7:22-23, 25)

ANGELS WILL ANNOUNCE CHRIST'S SECOND COMING

This pattern applies also to the second coming of Christ, for God has, in our day, again sent angels to declare the coming of his son to reign on earth (D&C 88:92; D&C 133:17). When Christ ascended to heaven from the mount of Olives after his resurrection, two angels appeared to tell the apostles that he would return to earth in the same manner (Acts 1:9-12). When he comes again, he will return to that same mount of Olives with all the saints (Zechariah 14:4-5; cf. D&C 133:20). D&C 45:44 interprets the Zechariah passage as referring to angels.