



Devotions

Advent 2005



The Angels' Candle

Fourth Sunday of Advent

Each day light four candles, repeating their names, and say together: "Jesus said, 'I am the light of the world. Whoever follows Me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.'"

The Angel's Candle tells us that just as the angels were messengers proclaiming Christ's birth to the shepherds, we are God's messengers proclaiming Christ's presence in our world.

HARK THE HERALD ANGELS SING

*Hark the herald angels sing, "Glory to the newborn King;
Peace on earth, and mercy mild, God and sinners reconciled.
Joyful, all ye nations, rise, join the triumph of the skies,
With the angelic host proclaim, "Christ is born in Bethlehem!"
Hark the herald angels sing, "Glory to the newborn King."*

*Christ, by highest heaven adored: Christ the Everlasting Lord
! Late in time behold Him come, to the earth from heaven's home;
Veiled in flesh the God-head see; hail the Incarnate Deity;
Pleased as man with men to dwell, Jesus, our Emmanuel.
Hark the herald angels sing, "Glory to the newborn King."*

*Hail, the heaven-born Prince of Peace! Hail, the Son of Righteousness!
Light and life to all He brings, risen with healing in His wings.
Mild He lays His glory by, born that man no more may die,
Born to raise the sons of earth, born to give them second birth.
Hark the herald angels sing, "Glory to the newborn King." Amen.*

Charles Wesley wrote over 6,000 of our hymns. He was inspired to write this carol as he walked to church on Christmas morning in 1793 and heard the ringing of the church bells. An organist, William Cummings, in 1856, set the words to music that Felix Mendelssohn had composed in 1840. This is a familiar song—but look again at the words. Jesus Christ is King. He came to reconcile us to God. He is adored in Heaven and certainly should be adored in our lives. He laid aside His glory to come to live as man in order to give us new life. What a



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King! Other appropriate carols for this week are: "Angels We Have Heard on High;" "Angels From the Realms of Glory;" "It Came Upon the Midnight Clear."

Sunday—Luke 2:8-14

Throughout this Advent study, we have seen the angels doing many important tasks. The Herald Angel, Gabriel, was God's messenger to Zechariah to tell him of the birth of John, to Mary to announce Christ's birth, and to Joseph to let him know of God's plan. Then the angel came to tell the shepherds to go to Bethlehem to see the Savior. When the multitude of angels appeared, they were praising God and giving Him glory for Jesus' birth. In a similar way, we are to be God's messengers telling the people of our needy world that the Savior has the power to work miracles in their lives. This is a wonderful opportunity to share the real meaning of Christmas. Who can you tell about Jesus this week? Let us also say that the Savior, Christ the Lord, is born in our lives—"Glory to God in the highest."

Monday—Luke 2:7

Jesus was born in a stable, which was probably a cave "because there was no room for them in the Inn." Bethlehem was crowded. King David had many descendants, and they were all there for the census. Because Mary was pregnant, she and Joseph probably had to travel slowly so that by the time they arrived, there was a "No Vacancy" sign on the Inn. This is the way many people go through life. Their lives are so crowded with things that there is no room for Christ the King. If the innkeeper had known who Jesus was, you can be sure he would have made room for Him. Yet, today, years later, when people *do* know who Christ is, they still crowd Him out. We make Him King in our lives by taking out whatever shouldn't be there. Let us be sure there is room in our hearts for Him. What things in your life "crowd Jesus out?"

*"O come to my heart, Lord Jesus!
There is room in my heart for Thee.
My heart shall rejoice, Lord Jesus!
When Thou comest and callest for me."*



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Tuesday—Luke 2:1-7

Do you believe that God's timing and God's planning are always perfect? Remember that Micah prophesied 700 years before the Messiah was born that He was to be born in Bethlehem. Mary and Joseph lived in Nazareth, but they had to travel to Bethlehem to pay taxes right at the time Jesus was to be born. "That's tough," we say, "to have to walk (or ride a donkey) those long hundred miles when you're about to have a baby." But it was part of God's perfect plan. He made sure that all the pieces fit together.

"And surely a stable is no place to have a baby. A modern hospital, yes . . . but a dirty stable—and for the Son of God?" God even used man's selfishness for His purpose (remember our discussion yesterday). One of the themes that comes up over and over again throughout Jewish history is that the Messiah was to be the perfect Lamb—the ultimate, perfect sacrifice. From the time sin entered the world, people had to sacrifice lambs without spot—as perfect as they had—to pay the penalty for their sin. All this was to point to the perfect Lamb of God. A stable is just the right place for a lamb to be born. It was a perfect place for God to demonstrate from the beginning that His Son was the Lamb of God, the One sent to make a way for us to be children of God.

God's place and timing were perfect; and today, almost two thousand years later, they are still perfect. Even when things don't go as we might plan them, we can know that God is completely trustworthy. Will you choose to commit your way to Him? Can you think of anything that God has done in your life that wasn't what you wanted, but that turned out better than you hoped for?

(The idea of Christ's birth in the stable to point to His position as the Lamb of God is from Schaeffer's *Everybody Can Know*, chapter 3).

Wednesday—John 1:1-14

Here Jesus is called The Word and The Light. Today, let's think about Christ The Word. What characteristics of the Word do we find here? Jesus is the Living Word, one with God, equal with God, Creator of all that is, Source of light, and Giver of salvation. Have you thanked the Lord for each of these aspects of His character? This Word (Jesus) willingly became a man and came to earth as a human baby to grow up in an actual home with brothers and sisters. After 33 years He took upon Himself the sins of the entire world. Let God stretch your mind to comprehend as much of this incredible love for you as you can. What



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does it mean to you personally that Jesus Christ is the Word? Let's thank and praise Him for who He is.

Thursday—John 1:1-14

Yesterday we talked about Jesus being the perfect Word of God. In verses 4-9 He is called The Light. If you turn off the lights for a few minutes you will see how much light the Advent candles give. They give a lot, but they are easily blown out. Christ is The Light. He is able to bring light to our entire life, and all the powers of evil have never been nor will ever be able to put Him out of business. Jesus has promised (John 8:12): "I am the light of the world: he who follows Me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life." Jesus is The Word and The Light in our lives when we receive Him as Savior and submit our lives to Him as Lord. What areas of your life need the light of The Light? What can you do to have more of His light in your life? John 1:12 says that if we believe and receive Him, He makes us His children. Are you in His family?

Friday—Matthew 2:1-10

There is much folklore and speculation regarding these Wise Men who came from the east to worship the Christ child. For us today, the important thing is not how many there were, where they came from, or how old Christ was when they got there. Let us concentrate on what Scripture says about these Wise Men. They followed the light which they had. They did so at great cost to themselves. They did it because they wanted to find Jesus. How much more should we who have God's special, revealed Word—the Bible—faithfully and expectantly follow what we read there! The wise men followed a star and asked questions until they found Christ Himself. It has been said, "Wise Men today still seek Him." They came to worship Christ and brought Him costly gifts. We also, as we see who Christ is, will worship Him and will bring Him our gifts. These gifts are ourselves, our time, talent, money, prayer, and worship. Verse 10 says, "When they saw the star, they rejoiced with exceeding great joy." As we come to Jesus, we too, can know exceeding joy. Let us all be Wise Men.

(To families with children: this is a great day to act out the Scripture passage. It will help the children remember more clearly exactly what happens.)