

# THOUGHTS

By Douglas W. Schroeder

**SPEAKER ON THE WORD TODAY**

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**2015**

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## **BETTER THAN AN ACTION MOVIE!**

There is high drama surrounding the birth narrative of Christ. It contains a tempestuous love story, murder and “alien” encounters! That may sound a bit dramatic, but when you see the account in the Gospels those things are all present.

The love story is that of Joseph and Mary, who were engaged to be wed when Mary was found to be pregnant (Matthew 1:18-25). Couples at the time of Christ would be bound to each other by engagement, but they would live with their families until their wedding. Joseph and Mary were chaste, so the discovery of Mary’s pregnancy would have been a deal breaker for Joseph. The messages sent by the Lord through angels to Joseph (via a dream) and Mary saved their relationship.

The “alien” encounters were none other than the angelic appearances which happened fairly frequently at the time of Christ’s coming. The book of Hebrews in the New Testament tells us that angels are God’s messengers sent to the godly to minister to them (1:14). They are quite alien to us as they are a different genre of God’s creatures. Angels seem to appear as “messengers”, for that is the meaning of the word angel, when something is happening in the plan of salvation which would escape human perception.

This contradicts the common misunderstanding about angels, that they are always involving themselves in our everyday life. We have no indication that we would be aware of angels’ activities, but rather we are told they are active. When I was a teen I thought it would be great to see an angel, as there have been so many reports of angelic encounters. The more mature in faith I have become the wish to see an angel is less important to me. I know they are at the tasks God has assigned to them, but truthfully a human wishing to see an angel is usually due to a selfish motive, to impress us or have a great story to tell. These alien creatures do not seem to reveal themselves often normally, so I now do not anticipate that I will see one until I am received into the glory of the afterlife.

But, as I said, when things heat up in the plan of salvation angels get busy! Besides the two encounters mentioned previously, angels appear to Zechariah, the father of John the Baptizer (Luke 1:5-25) and the shepherds near Bethlehem (Luke 2:8-20). It seems the Lord may have intervened once again through an angel when Joseph received a warning in a dream to flee with Mary and Jesus to Egypt in order to escape the wretched plans of a paranoid King Herod (Matthew 2:13-18).



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This brings us to the topic of murder, specifically Herod's intent to murder all the young boys in the vicinity of Bethlehem, as he had ascertained from the Magi who had traveled from the East that a "king" was born there. Herod was a despicable human, murdering some of his own family out of fear of being overthrown, and building several mountain top fortresses such as the Herodian and Masada for security. Herod was heartless and ruthless in ordering the execution of babies out of fear that he would lose this throne. This event was prophesied by Jeremiah referencing Rachel, the wife of Jacob, who bore him the sons Joseph and Benjamin, who would become part of the tribes of Israel. Rachel went into a difficult labor bearing her second son, Benjamin, and died near Ephrath, which was on the road from Bethel to Bethlehem.

### **DO YOU REALLY WANT "EXCITEMENT" IN LIFE?**

Your life may seem quite dull compared to all this action, and you should praise God for it! We are told in the Word to live quiet and peaceful lives as we await our redemption (1 Timothy 2:1-3). It is a terrific blessing to avoid the type of turmoil associated with the coming of Christ. It was all necessary and powerfully dramatic as the Lord choreographed the entire event, but it was only necessary once.

I find that people seeking excitement in life often make poor choices. It is tempting to see the wicked/worldly people who seem to have fun and model ourselves after them. Don't do it! When you adopt a carnal lifestyle you get not just the "fun" they experience, but also *all the negative outcomes!* There is a price to be paid for foolishness, sensual indulgence and ungodliness. Sometimes the price is paid with money (as in fines and penalties), time (such as wasting it or jail time), relationships (broken and dissolved), or blood (bad health outcomes, injury or death).

There seems to be a correlation between being a disciple of Jesus, that is, an authentic student of the Word, and gaining wisdom. God shapes our thinking through our learning the Bible, and one of the blessings is wisdom. It helps us to stop and think about how our actions impact our relationship with God and others. Usually a person who begins to seriously learn the Word is changed to become less agitated, less emotionally driven and more driven by the Spirit of God. As Biblical examples, Samson strikes me as a more "out of control" person who didn't seem to internalize God's Word, while Joseph appears to have deeply connected with God's will.

I anticipate there will be plenty of excitement once again just prior to Christ's return! Angels figure prominently in that event as well. I look forward to it, and figure that through faith in Jesus I'm prepared. From the warnings in Scripture it seems things will get extremely chaotic before the Lord steps in to settle all matters by his final Judgment and the saints being ushered into eternal glory. *Now that will be exciting!*

Blessings!

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