

I have a name, you just don't know it. God does. He called me by name to come meet him a little over two thousand years ago. Out of tens of millions of angels,¹ the Holy One called me to meet him. Called me, by name! Can you even begin to imagine how the thunder rumbled as the sound of my name reverberated through Heaven?

God told me that he had created me before he created the Earth,² and that he had been watching me just as he watched all the other angels. He told me that of all the angels, I had a special propensity to be thankful. I was dazed... God had noticed me, and certainly, all of the angels were as thankful as I was, weren't they? I was in God's presence every moment. How could it be any better than that?

He smiled as he watched my puzzled face, he told me that he had a special assignment for me. My mind raced. I knew he had sent other angels on special assignments in the past, but I always thought those were the Archangels and other angels of special merit. I was just an *ordinary* angel.

God told me that it was time to send Jesus to Earth, and that I was to be the messenger in charge of all things related to Jesus. I fell to my knees at the sound of that message. How could God send Jesus away from his presence? Why Earth? What could Jesus possibly need from me? How could Jesus be born? If I could have fainted from that news, I would have, but angels don't faint.

In heavenly terms, it was only moments later before the news circulated that Gabriel had been sent to earth to tell two people they were going to have a special baby. Zechariah and Elizabeth were informed that they were to have a son, and they were to name him John.³ This was a big deal because they were far past the age of having children. Nonetheless, Elizabeth and Zechariah were soon pregnant. God was always causing miraculous things to happen on Earth, so I didn't really take much notice other than being thankful that God is a God of Miracles.

A few more heavenly minutes passed and the heavens shook in a way that they never had before. Gabriel, a very special and powerful angel, left Heaven on a mission from God. I heard that Gabriel was sent to an ordinary Jewish girl to tell her that she was going to have a baby. It

¹ Psalm 103:20, Revelation 5:11

² Job 38:4-7

³ Luke 1:5-25

was a shock to her, to Mary, because she was a virgin. That night, the Holy Spirit came upon her, and she became pregnant. At that moment, I understood that my special task had started. I don't know how I knew, but I did.

Sure enough, I was soon on my way to Earth with my first message. It was nighttime when I arrived, so I delivered my message in a dream⁴ to a Jewish man named Joseph. I told him not to be worried about Mary being pregnant, because she conceived through the Holy Spirit. He should marry her and name the baby boy Jesus, because he would save his people from their sins.

Joseph had one special trait that qualified him to be the earthly father of Jesus. He obeyed God completely the first time, every time. He took Mary as his wife., Angels don't typically get anxious, but God gave me the grace to be a little bit that way while Mary was pregnant. I wasn't worried for her sake, but I was anxious to continue my special mission. I could hardly wait for what might come next.

Have you ever been in total darkness, like in a deep cave with no lights? Have you ever been in complete silence, like in a soundproof recording studio? If you have, you just have a tiny inkling of what we angels experienced. We were stunned –the entirety of Heaven went completely dark and completely silent. Then a flash of light brighter than the brightest star, and a sound louder than millions of angels shouting praise to God. It was the most joyful and at the same time, the saddest moment that Heaven had endured since the beginning of time. Jesus left Heaven. Jesus became a human on earth.⁵

Now on to my next mission. In the middle of the night, I appeared in the sky over the little town of Bethlehem, and announced the birth of Jesus to everyone who could hear it...a few lowly shepherds, in a field, taking care of their lambs that would soon be sacrificed in the Temple.⁶ "Don't fear," I said. We angels must appear terrifyingly powerful to humans.

I went on to tell the shepherds that I had joyful news for all humans. Jesus had just been born, and he would be a savior. I told them that they could find him in Bethlehem, lying in a manger wrapped in cloths. I suspect that if I hadn't been an angel they wouldn't have believed any kind of savior could be born in a manger. As I told them the message, millions of angels appeared in heaven praising God and announcing the Good News. Then, all of us went back to Heaven.

You probably know most of the rest of the birth story of Jesus. The shepherds went into town to see Jesus, they praised God and told people about their experience, eight days later, Mary and Joseph had Jesus circumcised. When it was time, they took Jesus to the Temple, and gave

⁴ Matthew 1:20-25

⁵ John 1:14

⁶ Luke 2:8-15

their sacrifice for a firstborn son. It was there that they met Simeon and Anna, who prophesied over Jesus.

Later, wise men showed up from the east and gave presents to Mary and Joseph. The men were from Babylon, the very place where the ancestors of Jesus had been exiled about six centuries before his birth. Babylon, the country that ended the earthly kingdom of David. These men most likely didn't know they were honoring the descendent of David.

My next mission was to tell Joseph that danger was imminent, and for safety, he should take Jesus and Mary to Egypt.⁷ At the time, Herod was king of the entire country, and no place in Israel would be safe. As always, Joseph didn't say anything...he just obeyed quickly and completely. In Egypt, they used the gifts of the wise men to live since Joseph could not get any work there.

My mission after that was simple. I went to Joseph to tell him that Herod was dead and it was time to return to Israel. Joseph obeyed and returned to Israel. Upon arrival, Joseph learned that Herod's evil son reigned over Bethlehem. In another dream, I told Joseph to move to Galilee, a much safer place. Joseph did so, and ended up in the small town of Nazareth.⁸

Under the guidance of Joseph and Mary, Jesus grew up well-loved and strong in body. He loved the Scriptures, and spent untold hours talking to God. Frankly, there wasn't much for me to do while Jesus grew up and became an adult. I'm not saying Nazareth was dull, but there wasn't much danger there for sure.

That brings me to my next trip to earth, but I can't call it a special mission. When Jesus started his ministry, he immediately went to the wilderness where he fasted for forty days and was tempted by Satan. He withstood the temptation, and then we angels were allowed to minister to him.⁹ And that is when I, and the other angels, got a specific command from God.

While Jesus was on Earth, we were not allowed to give him special treatment. He had to be a man in all respects, and we had to allow that to happen. I didn't like it, but I was thankful to have God who always knows the right thing to do. **In the last years, I have come to learn that I don't know all the facts or the plans he has made.**

For the next three Earth years, we angels watched Jesus minister to other humans. He preached, healed, did miracles. He trained others to imitate what he did. Maybe his biggest career accomplishment was to teach humans how much God loves them, how much he wants to be reconciled to them. As much as we angels admired Jesus, we could not visualize God's

⁷ Matthew 2:13-15

⁸ Matthew 19-23

⁹ Matthew 4:11, Mark 1:8

end game. How was he possibly going to bring salvation to people who neither wanted to be obedient nor behave like children of God? When would he bring Jesus back to Heaven?

And...then...I got a call for my next mission. Jesus' time on Earth was irrevocably coming to an end, and I was now allowed to give him special comfort. I arrived in the garden on the west side of the Mount of Olives. I looked around, saw olive trees and an olive press. I heard Jesus', "Father, if you are willing, take this cup away from me." He was praying. "Not my will, but yours be done."¹⁰ He prayed so hard that his sweat was falling like giant drops of blood. His agony for all of mankind for all of time was almost more than he could bear. I strengthened him all that I could, but I cried for his agony all the while. When he had enough strength, he went back to his apostles and roused them from their sleep.

You know the rest of the story. Jesus was betrayed by Judas that night, he went through the unjust trials of the Jews and the Romans, was beaten, had nails hammered in his hands and feet before being lifted up on a cross, he died, and was buried. Satan, the Jewish leaders, the Romans, they thought the story of Jesus had ended

We were in total shock. Every angel in heaven, horrified. The God of the Universe had let some lowly human beings torture and kill his beloved son! God could have wiped out every human being on earth in the time of one of their heartbeats, but didn't. We almost began to question God. Was he sitting idly by as they killed his only son?! Jesus asked his father to forgive them because they didn't know what they were doing, and by not wiping them out, he did. He honored Jesus' request.

Later, I went on my most favorite mission. I arrived at the empty tomb of Jesus on Sunday morning before dawn. I knew the tomb was empty because Jesus had risen from the dead. I sat on top of the tomb. Looked to the left, and saw two women. I looked to the right and saw a guard of soldiers in front of the tomb. They had been placed there by the chief priests and Pharisees to make sure that Jesus' disciples did not steal his body.

For theatrical effect, I made the earth shake... an earthquake. After that, I appeared like a giant being flashing lightning and wearing blindingly white clothes. I reached over and rolled the stone from in front of the tomb as if it were a pebble. That was no small feat since the stone had been sealed to the tomb. The soldiers were paralyzed with fear¹¹. Wouldn't you have been.

And then I said what angels often say, "Don't be afraid." I was filled with joy, but **the women** were filled with fear and sorrow. I continued, "I know you are looking for the body of Jesus, but he isn't here. He is risen from the dead." I invited them to look at the empty tomb, and told them to go tell the disciples that he had risen from the dead and would meet them in Galilee. They turned and walked away in a stupor, but hadn't gone far before they actually met the

¹⁰ Luke 22:42-43

¹¹ Matthew 28:1-4

risen Lord Jesus. Guess what his first words were to them. Go ahead, guess. “Don’t be afraid!”¹² (she laughs) such a great line! Never gets old!

Over the next forty days, Jesus would appear to more than 500 disciples. At the end of that time, he gave some of them the directive to stay in Jerusalem until they received power when the Holy Spirit would come upon them. I noticed that those were the same words that Gabriel used with his announcement to Mary, the mother of Jesus! I no sooner¹³ heard those words than I got my final mission.

I traveled to the Mount of Olives in the time of a whisper. I watched as Jesus rose into the sky, and the disciples were standing as though paralyzed. I was still wearing the same white clothes that I wore on the day of Jesus’ resurrection. Joining with another angel, I said the last words that I would ever say on earth, “Galileans, why are you standing there just looking at Heaven? This Jesus, who just ascended into Heaven, will come back in the same way as you saw him go up into Heaven.”¹⁴ And with that announcement, the hope of his disciples will endure until the end of Earth time.

¹² Matthew 28:5-7

¹³ 1 Corinthians 15:6

¹⁴ Acts 1:8-11