

Covenant Remembrance

by Thomas Bradbury

The Covenant Angel represents the ministry of the Lord of the angels, who is Christ Himself, and is a symbol of God's electing and predestinating grace.

Scripture: Genesis 8:1, Exodus 2:24, Exodus 20:24, Psalm 71:20, Psalm 106:4, Jeremiah 31:4, Zechariah 4:1, Malachi 3:1, Matthew 18:20, Luke 9:32, John 4:23, John 4:34, Philippians 3:12, Hebrews 3:1, Revelation 1:5

Topics: "Covenant Theology", "Christ Presence"

Description

Thomas Bradbury preaches on the significance of being awakened by the Angel of the Lord, emphasizing the need for spiritual motives in worship and the desire for God's presence. The sermon delves into the meaning of the name Zechariah, highlighting God's remembrance of His people throughout history. It explores the presence of Christ in the book of Zechariah, revealing His defense, delight, and grace towards His people. The sermon also reflects on various Old Testament appearances of the Covenant Angel, symbolizing Christ's role in redemption and guidance.

Transcript

"And the Angel that talked with me came again and waked me, as a man that is wakened out of his sleep."
(Zechariah 4:1)

We may well ask the question in all solemnity, Why am I here? Various motives prompt those who assemble together for the professed purpose of worshipping God. But may we hope that all of us here present are moved by spiritual, and free from fleshly, motives. In answer to the question I can truly say that I am here for the glory of God, the exaltation of God's Christ, the honour of His Blessed Spirit, and the good of God's chosen. Those of you who are spiritually one with me are longing for the fulfillment of the Father's promise, "In all places where I record My name I will come unto thee, and I will bless thee." (Exod. 20:24) You are also desiring the fulfillment of the Master's promise, "Where two or three are gathered together in My Name, there am I in the midst of them." (Matt. 18:20) May He give us to enjoy the reality of His own sweet words to the Samaritan woman, "The hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth; for the Father seeketh such to worship Him." (John 4:23)

The prophecy to which I have directed your attention is full of God's glorious gospel. The very mention of the meaning of the name of the writer causes the heart of the spiritual worshipper to quiver with strange delight. Notice the meaning of the name Zechariah in these four words, "HE WHOM GOD REMEMBERS."

It is the most precious to know that we are remembered of God. "God remembered Noah," (Gen. 8:1) and though the waters of judgment prevailed on every hand, yet Noah must come forth from them all. "God remembered Abraham," (Gen. 19:29) and Lot was not forgotten but sent forth of God from the midst of the overthrow of the guilty cities of the plain. When Israel was groaning in Egypt, "God remembered His covenant with Abraham, with Isaac, and with Jacob," (Exod. 2:24) and in His own time and way, wrought their deliverance. This truth is spiritually blended with the prayers of God's exercised people in all ages. Look at that cluster of precious truths in Ps. 106:4,5: Remember me, O LORD, with the favour that Thou bearest unto Thy people. O visit me with Thy salvation, that I may see the good of Thy chosen, that I may rejoice in the gladness of Thy nation, that I may glory with Thine inheritance." You see it also in the prayer of the forgetful servant in Ps. 119:49, "Remember the word unto Thy servant upon which Thou hast caused me to hope." And none of us can forget the prayer of the dying thief to his loving Saviour expiring by his side, "Lord, remember me when Thou comest into Thy kingdom." (Luke 23:42) All such pleaders shall not be forgotten of Him, but shall all be taught willingly to confess "He remembered us in our low estate: for His mercy endureth for ever." (Ps. 136:23) Mark well here the three M's MEMORY "Who remembered us;" MISERY "In our low estate;" MERCY "For His mercy endureth for ever."

But I said to you that this book was full of Christ. In every chapter He appears. In the first chapter we see Him standing "among the myrtle trees that were in the bottom." Israel as low as it could be, yet delightful in the eyes of the Lord. Enemies were ready to crush, foes were on the alert to destroy, Israel itself would have none of Him. But He Who is ever mindful of His own, condescends to share His people's misery, and will see to it that they are sharers of His victories and eternal glory. Read through the second chapter and there you will see Him just as you like Him, "For I, saith the Lord, will be unto her a wall of fire round about, and will be the glory in the midst of her." Christ is the Defence and Delight of His people. We notice also the tender delight that Christ has in His own "He that toucheth you toucheth the apple of His eye." But come along to the third chapter where gospel grace shines most gloriously. Joshua the high priest is revealed. The man above all others privileged with the right to enter into the holiest of all to commune with God, and for God to commune with him. Yet here he appears in a sorry plight, resisted by Satan but defended by his God. Satan rebuked, Jerusalem chosen, the brand plucked. Joshua is clothed with filth, yet before the Redeeming Angel he stands. The filthy garments are taken away, iniquity is passed from him, he is clothed in the spotless garment of his Redeemer's righteousness. Still more, he is crowned with a priestly crown, while "the Angel of the LORD stood by," to see that all was perfectly done. How blessed it is to find ourselves one with Joshua singing with the priestly company, "Unto Him that loveth us, and washed us from our sins in His own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God and His Father; to Him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen." (Rev. 1:5,6) We are thus brought to consider the precious truths of the text in the order in which they are written, and may the Blessed Spirit make them precious and powerful to the instruction and encouragement of our waiting souls.

"And the Angel that talked with me came again." The first and chief object of these words is "the Angel." The ministry of angels is a blessed subject, but the ministry of the Lord of the angels exceeds in blessedness. "He came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give His life a ransom for many." (Matt. 20:28) Throughout the Book we see Him on His errands of redeeming love. He was emphatically the SENT OF GOD for the accomplishment of the purpose of electing and predestinating grace. As God and Man in One Person, He was the Father's Christ. He was made Man to obey, suffer, bleed and die, for all these were outside the Being of Jehovah. God could not suffer. God could not die. God could not obey, only His own voluntary obligations. Christ as God-Man did all these, and thus brought glory to God in the highest, and full salvation to all those for whom He was sent. "When the fullness of the time was GOD

SENT FORTH HIS SON, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons. And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father." (Gal. 4:4-6)

Now all this is shadowed forth and revealed in the appearances of the Covenant Angel in Old Testament Scripture. The first we will notice is that to Jacob, recorded in Gen. 32:24-32: "And Jacob was left alone; and there wrestled a Man with him until the breaking of the day." Were you ever left alone? Wrapped in weird loneliness, with none to help or deliver but the God against Whom you have sinned in thought, word and deed. But Jacob was not left long in this state, for "there wrestled a Man with him." Have you not noticed how men love to reverse God's order? Invariably you will hear of Jacob wrestling with the Angel, and not of the Angel wrestling with Jacob. Man would be first, and have God to come after him. Man will be up and doing, and then have Christ to supplement him, to be a kind of makeweight. But this can never be. Christ must be First, and Last, and All in all. This we learn from Paul's experience recorded in Phil. 3:12, "Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect: but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus." The Apostle knew that he was seized upon, and he needed not any to tell him Who held him in His gracious and loving grasp. But the longing of his whole soul was to grasp Christ as Christ grasped him. Knowing this, we may well sing:

"No sinner can be beforehand with Thee,

Thy grace is almighty, preventing and free."

Jacob learned afresh this salutary lesson by the brook Jabbok. He must feel his weakness and the Angel's touch put his thigh out of joint. The Angel requests to be let go, but Jacob answers, "I will not let Thee go, except Thou bless me." Then comes the change of name, from Jacob, the supplanter, to Israel, the prince. Notice the gradation, the pleader, the preveiler, the prince. O how blessed to notice the climax "And He blessed him there." May you and I be blessed in like manner though halting may be ours.

Now let us take a glimpse of the Covenant Angel at another period of Jacob's life. He is about to die, and Joseph would have him bless his two sons Ephraim and Manasseh. To them he gave his crosshand blessing, saying, "God, before Whom my fathers Abraham and Isaac did walk, the God Which fed me all my life long, unto this day, the Angel Which redeemed me from all evil, bless the lads." (Gen. 48:15,16) This portion has yielded untold sweetness to me. In it we gather that Jacob's God was the God of his progenitors, that Jacob's Provider was Jacob's God, that the Angel-Wrestler was Jacob's God, that the Covenant Angel was Jacob's Redeemer, that Jacob's Provider, Redeemer and God was all-blessing and all-blessed. O, how I could wish that we all here present could be brought under His gentle sway, His gracious reign, His blessing hand. But that is His business, not mine. To Him be all will, power and glory ascribed.

Now notice the discovery of the Angel-JEHOVAH to Moses in Horeb, at the backside of the desert "And the Angel of the LORD appeared unto him in a flame of fire, out of the midst of a bush: and he looked, and behold, the bush burned with fire, and the bush was not consumed." (Exod. 3:2) Israel was then in a low place, greatly oppressed, and in deep distress, but not forgotten of its God: for here He is, saying, "I have seen the affliction of My people, I have heard their cry, I know their sorrows." He saw to save, He heard to answer, He knew to succour and to sympathize. Jacob's Redeeming Angel here proclaims Himself to Moses as "I AM THAT I AM." Now turn to that precious promise in Exod. 23:20, "Behold, I send an Angel before thee, to keep thee in the way, and to bring thee into the place which I have prepared." This promise

was given to me in the year 1888 before I crossed the Atlantic the first time, to visit my Lord's loved ones in the States of New York and New Jersey, and blessed be His Holy Name, it has never been taken from me. It is mine. Is it brought to my remembrance? It is mine. It is no mean mercy to know that this Guiding and Keeping Angel is none other than God Himself Who preserves the going out and the coming in of His people until danger and death are past and gone for ever. There is not a spot of blessing designed for us in the eternal counsels but the Covenant Guide, JEHOVAH-JESUS, will bring us safely and surely into it.

"Tis Jesus the First and the Last,

Whose Spirit shall guide us safe home,

We'll praise Him for all that is past,

And trust Him for all that's to come."

That is an encouraging view of Him in Ps. 34:7, "The Angel of the LORD encampeth round about them that fear Him, and delivereth them." How does He encamp around them? As the Captain of the Lord's host His presence ensures that of an innumerable company of angels, which is the assurance that whatever may be our dangers and doubts He will take good care of us. Elisha encouraged his fearing servant thus, "Fear not; for they that be with us are more than they that be with them." (2 Kings 6:16,17) Then the LORD opened the eyes of the servant to behold the mountain filled with horses and chariots of fire round about Elisha. Jesus Who is exalted above all principality, power, might and dominion, has hosts of purposes, promises, attributes and means at His disposal for the defence and security of His people. He looks, and Egypt is overthrown. (Exod. 14:24) He smites, and the hosts of Assyria are all dead corpses. (2 Kings 19:35) Let us not forget that precious description of Him given in Isa. 63:9, "In all their affliction He was afflicted, and the Angel of His presence saved them: in His love and in His pity He redeemed them: and He bare them, and carried them all the days of old." Salvation, redemption, succour and sympathy are all found in Israel's Covenant Angel. Bring all the passages I have quoted together, and you will see from them that the presence of the Angel of the LORD is the presence of the LORD Himself. He, the Angel is the Brightness of the Father's glory and the Express Image of His Person. (Heb. 1:3) God's glory shines in His face. (2 Cor. 4:6) God's fullness dwells in His person. (Col. 2:9)

Now let us notice how He is set before us under different names with one and the same signification. We have found ample proof that Christ is the Angel of the LORD. Turn to Malachi 3:1, and there we see Him as the Messenger of the Covenant. "Behold, I will send My messenger, and he shall prepare the way before Me: and the Lord, Whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to His temple, even the MESSENGER OF THE COVENANT, Whom ye delight in: behold, He shall come, saith the Lord of Hosts." The person spoken of as "My messenger" is John the Baptist. The person speaking is Christ Himself. He is the Lord, our Lord, Lord and Christ, Lord of lords, Lord of all. To each and all of those who form part of His spiritual temple He shall come with messages of covenant love, sweetly and powerfully persuading them, and bringing them under His gentle and gracious rule. Look at the title given to Him in Heb. 3:1, "Wherefore holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling, consider the Apostle and High Priest of our profession, Christ Jesus; Who was faithful to Him that appointed Him." These words were addressed to the brethren in Christ who were holy in His holiness, and whose home was His home. Is this our relationship to Him? Is heaven our home? Then we may well consider Him as the Angel of the Lord, the Messenger of the Covenant, the Apostle of our profession. And here I would ask you to look through the Gospel of John, and mark well every portion where Jesus as the Sent of God appears, and there you will see Him doing,

according to His Father's will, all that is needful for your salvation, preservation, and glorification. To His disciples at the well of Samaria He said, "My meat is to do the will of Him that sent Me, and to finish His work." (John 4:34) Again, "I came down from heaven, not to do Mine Own will, but the will of Him that sent Me." (John 6:38) Again, "And He that sent Me is with Me: the Father hath not left Me alone; for I do always those things that please Him." (John 8:29) And to the Father He could say, "And this is life eternal, that they might know Thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ Whom Thou hast sent." (John 17:3)

"The Angel that talked with me." Has this Angel ever talked with you? If He has, you will never forget it. He knows how to win you over to Himself. There are all sorts of talk in the world, but none like His. There are vain talkers, foolish talkers, filthy talkers, and deceitful talkers. May the Lord graciously keep us far away from all these. Our national poet well describes the empty talkers thus: He "speaks an infinite amount of nothing, his reasons are as two grains of wheat hid in two bushels of chaff: you shall seek all day ere you find them; and when you have them, they are not worth the search." But the talk we delight in is that enjoined in Ps. 105:2, "Talk ye of all His wondrous works." These are His works of redemption, regeneration, restoration, and daily salvation. Of the saints the Psalmist says, "They shall speak of the glory of Thy kingdom, and talk of Thy power." (Ps. 145:11) To talk of His kingdom they must know something about it, and to know something about it they must be in it. To be in the kingdom we must be born again. To talk honestly of His power we must be one with Him in resurrection. That is a precious and solemn request of Jer. 12:1,2: Righteous art Thou, O Lord, when I plead with Thee; yet let me talk with Thee of Thy judgments: Wherefore doth the way of the wicked prosper? Wherefore are all they happy that deal very treacherously?" The prosperity of the wicked, and the adversity of the righteous frequently puts the saints to their studies, and they can find no true deliverance from their perplexities but in carrying them to the Lord and consulting with Him.

There is something very homely in the expression, "the Angel that talked with me." Look at that word "talk." What is its real meaning? It is familiar conversation. The mutual expression of the mind. This is beautifully seen in those conversational chapters found here and there in God's Holy Word. Such as Gen. 18, where God hides nothing from Abraham, and Abraham opens up his mind to God. Like Exod. 33, where "the Lord spake unto Moses face to face, as a man speaketh unto his friend." Look at ver. 9: "And the Lord talked with Moses" "and Moses wist not that the skin of his face shone while He talked with him." (Exod. 34:29) Another conversational chapter you have in Judges 6, where feeble, frightened Gideon acknowledges his helplessness and insignificance, and the Angel of the Lord, JEHOVAH-SHALOM, communicates His power and peace. Judges 13, reveals the secrets which passed between Manoah, his noble hearted wife, and the Angel of the Covenant. Then look at the chapter I read for our instruction, Luke 24. In it we see our blessed Lord and Saviour in the beauty and glory of His life taken up again for His people, seeking, not the company of the great and the noble, but walking along an out-of-the-way country road, and in the shades of evening, drawing out the fears and faith of two poor, forgetful, unbelieving disciples. After their confession of ignorance and unbelief He talked to them of what Moses and all the prophets had to say concerning Himself. He knew that there was nothing else worth talking about, and that all things else would fail to reach their heart. After their eyes were opened, and they knew Him, and He ceased to be seen of them, "They said one to another, did not our heart burn within us, while He talked with us by the way, and while He opened to us the Scriptures?" Here we learn that the only way to reach a redeemed sinner's heart, and make it glow with heavenly joy, is Christ revealed, known and enjoyed in the Scriptures of truth by the Holy Ghost.

The enjoyment of talk like this, creates the desire for its continuance. But this can never be down here. We see this in the fact that the Angel Who talked with the sinner whom He remembered, "came again." Ah! you may depend upon it, if Jesus has once talked to you He will talk to you again. If He has come to you with messages of electing and redeeming love, He will come again. His communications are not continuous. They never were so, they never will be so down here. Abraham knew this to his sorrow. You see this in Gen. 18:33, "And the Lord went His way, as soon as He had left communing with Abraham: and Abraham returned unto his place." This must have been a place of want, uncertainty, disappointment and discontent, without the company and converse of his God. You see the same in Gen. 17:22, "And He left off talking with him, and God went up from Abraham." Man's religion and religious tradition will have it that Abraham left off communing and talking with God; but the Word of God, which can never be overthrown, proclaims Him to be the first and last in all His communications and revelations. Turn with me to Gen. 35:1-13, where we shall see Jacob at Shechem, a place not in keeping with one who walked and talked with God. There, his daughter Dinah was humbled, and the folly and fierceness of his sons Simeon and Levi made him to feelingly stink among the inhabitants of the land. The inconsistency of Jacob kept not his God from him. God appeared in purest grace, and without even a rebuke, reminded him of old times, gracious dealings, the house of God, the gate of heaven, saying, "Arise, go up to Bethel, and dwell there; and make there an altar unto God, that appeared unto thee when thou fleddest from the face of Esau thy brother." Jacob was obedient and purged his household from their gods. God took care of His servant and appeared to him again, when he came out of Padan-aram, and blessed him. God reminded him of the gracious change of his name from Jacob, supplanter, to Israel, PRINCE: and renewed and confirmed His promises to him. "And God went up from him, in the place where He talked with him." Here you see the place of spiritual communion became the place of spiritual conflict and sorrow. This has been my frequent lot. The pulpit can abundantly testify to the truth of this. One moment blessed with the smiles of my God, the next grieving over my loss of them. But notice the direction God took. Up, not down. Why up? That Jacob might follow Him in faith, hope, longing and heaven-born desire. "Where the Treasure is, there will the heart be also."

"Came again." The deserted and desolate soul oftentimes cries, "O when wilt Thou come unto me?" (Ps. 101:2) And as surely as the cry ascends, the Inspirer of it will descend with gracious revelations of the Beloved Lord to the longing saint. A sight of Him by precious faith makes the heart glad, and the sound of His voice in His exceeding great and precious promises speaking pardon and peace to the contrite heart, is life, health and immortality. I like that word "again," as I find it dotted up and down in the pages of Divine inspiration. To me it speaks of resurrection, and of reviving grace and power. Look at it as it appears in the language of faith and assurance in Ps. 71:20, "Thou, which hast showed me great and sore troubles, SHALT QUICKEN ME AGAIN, and SHALT BRING ME UP AGAIN from the depths of the earth." Quickening grace is frequently needed, and as sure as it has once been experienced, it will be proved again and again, and again, however many our faintings, failings, or falls may be. Are we cast down to the depths of dreary doubt or dark despair? Do our souls cleave to the dust? or does earth with its ten thousand clods bury and hide us from the face of Him we love? His powerful arm will reach us, and He will love our souls from the pit of corruption, casting our sins where He can never see them BEHIND HIS BACK.

Mark well that blessed Scripture: (Jer. 31:4) "Again I will build thee, and thou shalt be built, O virgin of Israel: thou shalt again be adorned with thy tabrets, and shall go forth in the dances of them that make merry." This is true of the universal church, and of every individual member of it. As a chaste virgin she is espoused to Christ. His command to her is, "Thou shalt not be for another man." (Hosea 3:3) But often

God's building appears in ruins, and whatever havoc the world, death, hell and sin may work upon it, the Builder will see to it that Satan's designs shall be thwarted, and the Church of God, in every child, shall be built up and presented to Him most gloriously as the perfection of beauty in His eyes. O, how often we feel ourselves stripped of our comeliness and beauty. Sin mars our sweetest enjoyments, unbelief spoils our choicest comforts, Satan assaults our spiritual peace, yet our Living Head and Loving Husband will gladden our hearts with His own joy, and cheer our spirits with the exercise of His own faith. See how blessedly this appears in His cheering words to His sorrowing disciples on the night of His agony and bloody sweat, as recorded in John 16:22, "And ye now therefore have sorrow: but I will see you again, and your heart shall rejoice, and your joy no man taketh from you." The cause of this sorrow is the absence of Christ. He had told them that for a little while He would be absent from them and the thought of that "little while" gave them more concern and sorrow than all the afflictions and sufferings they were called to endure for His sake. But He had a sweet word of encouragement for them "I WILL SEE YOU AGAIN." This was to talk with them, commune with them, make them glad with the sight of Him, sweetly persuade them that His presence is salvation, and the enjoyment of it fullness of joy. This joy is everlasting upon their Head for them. With it a stranger cannot intermeddle, no one can take it from the favoured possessor. Do notice that blessed statement in the last clause of Mark 10:1, "As He was wont, HE TAUGHT THEM AGAIN." That is really a blessed thing to know. Jesus being responsible for the spiritual education of His people, will attend to it in spite of all their ignorance and forgetfulness. Do we forget the lessons He has taught us? I am sorry to say, I do. Well, blessings on His name, He is not affected against us by our stupidity, but reveals Himself to us through the kindly offices of the Covenant Remembrancer, the Holy Ghost. Knowing this we can joyfully sing,

"Thou canst discern from all the rest

The people Thou hast bought,

And this ensures that they alone

Shall be divinely taught."

We now come to notice why the Talking Angel came to Zechariah "and waked me." Though the prophet was "one whom God remembers," yet he, like the rest of us, was forgetful of his God. Though he was privileged with communications from the Angel he fell into a drowsy fit. He was not singular in this respect, for the most eminent saints have felt that the spirit indeed is willing to keep awake and watch at the Master's bidding, but the flesh is weak and sleep gains the mastery. Elijah in a fit of distrust and despondency, lay and slept under a juniper tree, but the Covenant Angel was mindful of him, touched him, provided for him, and strengthened him for his journey to the mount of God. (1 Kings 19:4-8) More than once did Daniel experience sleepiness at a time when it might be the least expected. See chap. 8:18, "Now, as He was speaking with me, I was in a deep sleep on my face toward the ground; but He touched me, and set me upright." Again in chap. 10:9,10: "When I heard the voice of His words, then was I in a deep sleep on my face, and my face toward the ground. And, behold, a hand touched me, which set me upon my knees and upon the palms of my hands." You read in the margin that the touch of the hand "moved" him upon his knees. I like that, and I can assure you, I greatly need it. O how sluggish, forgetful and absent I am at times when on my knees, so that I wonder at God's forbearance with me. Yet, I prove Him still to be "the God of all grace." And when the Covenant Angel, a precious Jesus, comes with His reviving touch with some sweet promise to my heart, then I am moved with hearty desire homeward, heavenward, Christward, Godward.

"Then if with lively faith we view

His dying toil and smart,

And hear Him say, 'It was for you!'

This breaks the stony heart."

You have noticed how the three favoured disciples were heavy with sleep when they saw Him transfigured in the holy mount and Moses and Elias talked with Him "of His decease which He should shortly accomplish at Jerusalem." (Luke 9:32) Within view of His agony and bloody sweat in dark Gethsemane, and with the words, "Watch and pray," fresh on their ears they were overpowered with sleep. Thrice He prayed. Thrice they slept. And when He came to them the third time He had no harder word for them than, "Sleep on now and take your rest." O Jesus! what tender love is Thine. No heart can feel for the weak and the weary as then did Thine. Very few ministers have mercy upon sleepy hearers. But Jesus had pity and due consideration for such. What a mercy to have Him and to know Him as the Awakener out of sleep. A sight of Him with the wounds in His hands, His feet, His side, His once thorn-crowned brow fills the heart with wonder and surprise, "as a man that is wakened out of his sleep," while the confession flows forth,

"Amazed to feel myself so vile

And Jesus smiling all the while."

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