

## **MING AND THE ANGEL**

*Ming, a Chinese peasant who died around 1000 BC, arises at the judgment and is met by an austere, frowning angel.*

MING: Where am I?

ANGEL OF VENGEANCE: You are at the great judgment!

MING: The great what?

ANGEL: Judgment. You are being judged – well, condemned really – for your life in the flesh.

MING: Why condemned? I led a good life! At least, I think I did.

ANGEL: You are not good!

MING: Why not? I was just a humble peasant in China. I loved my wife and kids, worked an honest living, and was good to my neighbors.

ANGEL: Well, have you ever lied?

MING: Not that I can remember specifically.

ANGEL: Have you ever stolen?

MING: No! Oh, hang on. There was that great famine, when I stole a loaf from the storehouse of the rich ruler who was oppressing my people and starving us. I did it to keep my family alive another day, though my poor son did not make it.

ANGEL: Then you are a thief! And a breaker of the law.

MING: A bit strong, don't you think? One instance does not make a habit. If a dog eats a piece of lettuce it does not make him a rabbit, as they say in my town.

ANGEL: Nevertheless, even one transgression is enough to sentence you.

MING: This is very harsh! Who makes the decisions around here?

ANGEL: The vengeful God. He was the God of the Jews only in your time, at least so they thought, and ultimately the God of everyone when He sent His Son to die for the transgressions of all. If you had believed in Jesus, His Son, you would be forgiven your thievery and other transgressions.

MING: I would love to believe on him, especially now I know the penalty, but I never heard of him until now! When did He come to die?

ANGEL: About a thousand years after you died.

MING: a THOUSAND years? How was I supposed to believe in someone who came to a different people a thousand years after I died?

ANGEL: Here is a Bible, the true holy book. Turn to Romans 1 and you will see that you should have looked at the birds and the trees and known Him by His attributes. Either way, you have no excuse.

MING: So what am I condemned to?

ANGEL: Eternal agony by fire.

MING (sighing): Not much mercy around here huh? So when was this horrible thing decided, and how does it fit my crime?

ANGEL: God warned Adam about the consequences of the original sin right there in the first book, Genesis. The rest of the book has similar warnings.

MING (turning to Genesis): Er, it just says that Adam would die in the day he ate the fruit. I don't see the torture part.

ANGEL: Death in this case is separation from God forever.

MING: Ohhh. Well that is heartbreaking!

ANGEL: Indeed. Though it is too late for you to be tender hearted now.

MING: No – not for myself. I mean it is heartbreaking that this Jesus had to be separated from His Father for all eternity to pay the sin debt for everyone. I lost my son, so I can only imagine.

ANGEL: You have it all wrong. Jesus died for all, and then went back to the Father.

MING (thoroughly confused): Hang on – so Adam's debt was to be separated from God forever and ever, and my debt is the same, yet Jesus paid for it by dying? How can you pay a debt without paying what is owed?

ANGEL: You are thinking too much.

MING: Let me guess – that is a sin too?

ANGEL: More than you realize, actually.

MING: Well what about my little son? I was hoping to see again, and the rest of my family. He died of starvation at eight years old, as I mentioned previously. Surely he is not going to be tortured forever?

ANGEL: Oh no – he is under the age of accountability.

MING: Oh that's good anyway. How old is that?

ANGEL: Twenty, I think. I am not totally sure, as we just twisted something in the Old Covenant to make us feel better about the thought of babies being tortured. It is not actually mentioned in the gospels. We just like to assume there will be mercy.

MING (under his breath): Look where that assumption got me!

ANGEL: I heard that.

MING: So children cannot sin? I wish I had died younger! I feel for the chap who dies the day AFTER the age of accountability expires!

ANGEL: Yes – that is the very definition of bad timing.

MING: I wonder if such a man was from China, like myself – could he use Pacific Coast Time to get himself under the line?

ANGEL: Don't get your hopes up.

MING: Well anyway, I am glad there are two ways to God.

ANGEL: What do you mean? Jesus is the only way.

MING: Jesus is one of two ways. You told me the other.

ANGEL: What is the other?

MING: Dying young.

ANGEL (faintly embarrassed now): Ah.

MING: So I suppose anyone that kills a child is a hero, as they basically save them, right?

ANGEL (even more embarrassed): Not exactly. They are still in big trouble for murder.

MING: Even to save the young one's eternal soul?

ANGEL (muttering): So many questions!

MING (flipping through the Bible he is still holding, and opening it to a random passage): Now here's a thing!

ANGEL: What now?

MING: This Psalm 136 – every second line says His mercy endures forever.

ANGEL: It means it endures to His chosen people only.

MING (sighing again): is there any end to the small print?

ANGEL: Stop looking for a merciful God.

MING (smiling at last, as he comes across the story of Jesus, receives a revelation of the living God, and keeps reading the scriptures while walking away): It's okay, I've finally found him!