

The Birth of Jesus Christ (Luke 2:1-20)

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In 1988, Anissa was sixteen years-old and diagnosed with a rare form of Leukemia. The doctors said that if she did not receive a bone marrow transplant after chemotherapy and radiation treatment she would die. Neither her parents nor her brother was a match, and they could not find a donor elsewhere. Her parents, both in their forties, conceived another child and hoped that its bone marrow would be compatible with Anissa's. To their great delight it was determined that this new baby was a compatible donor, and when Marissa was fourteen months-old they took some of her marrow and gave it Anissa. Anissa made a full recovery from the Leukemia and both sisters lead healthy lives today.

In a very real sense Marissa saved her sister's life. She says, "Without me being a perfect match for my sister, she would not be here." In a similar way, Jesus was born into this world for the express purpose of saving us. Without Him, none of us would be Christians who were saved and prepared to enter eternity. Jesus is the one and only Savior that can save all those who put their trust in Him. Christmas marks the day we celebrate His birth for without His entrance into the world and death upon the cross we would not have the hope of salvation.

We must remember that Christmas is not about worshipping Christmas but worshipping Christ. It's all about the birth of Jesus Christ and why He has entered this world. We need to get back to the original meaning of Christmas which is to remember the Biblical reason for the birth of Jesus Christ or why He entered the world. In this study, we want to reflect upon the birth of Jesus Christ and the true meaning of Christmas. We will see some practical and doctrinal teachings that surround the birth of Jesus Christ from Luke chapter two.

John MacArthur said:

"This chapter, which provides the most detailed look at the events of the first Christmas, is perhaps the most widely known chapter in the Bible. Its familiar

story has inspired music, cards, books, and pageants over the centuries. But the world celebrates the birth of Jesus Christ for all the wrong reasons. Christmas has become an excuse for self-indulgence, materialism, and partying; it has degenerated into a secularized social event that misses entirely its true meaning.”

Of course, the tradition of December 25 was developed long after the New Testament period. But it’s the day that most Christians have agreed to celebrate the birth of Jesus, but the exact day of His birth is unknown.

The Birth of Jesus Christ is the most profound event of history.

Christ’s birth can be remembered in seven exciting ways.

I. The story that was explained (Luke 2:1-7)

In the first seven verses of Luke’s account of Christ’s entrance into the world, we discover the general story of Christ’s birth.

A. It was a story of destiny.

Luke 2:1-4

“And it came to pass in those days, that there went out a decree from Caesar Augustus, that all the world should be taxed. (And this taxing was first made when Cyrenius was governor of Syria.) And all went to be taxed, every one into his own city. And Joseph also went up from Galilee, out of the city of Nazareth, into Judaea, unto the city of David, which is called Bethlehem; (because he was of the house and lineage of David:).”

In these verses we see that Joseph and Mary went to Bethlehem for the Roman census. Joseph was a descendant of David (Luke 1:27). Since Joseph was a descendant of King David he needed to go back to David’s birth place for the census. The word “taxed” (vv. 1, 5) speaks of a census where a person would record their present residency and total income. It was a registry of a person’s place of dwelling that included their annual income. The purpose of a Roman census was to provide statistical data so the government could levy taxes. Some have argued that it seems strange

that people were not registered in the places where they currently lived. However, other historical instances of the same practice are known. Rome took a census every fourteen years for both military and tax purposes, and each Jewish male had to return to the city of his fathers to record his name, occupation, property, and family.

Mary accompanied Joseph for several reasons. First, they both knew that Mary would give birth to the Christ Child during the time Joseph was gone and they most likely did not want to be separated when she gave birth. Second, Mary had made the commitment that she would be a part of the fulfillment of this divine prophecy about Christ's birth. When Mary said "Be it unto me according to Thy word" (Luke 1:38), it meant that from then on that her life would be a part of the fulfillment of divine prophecy. She was dedicating herself to God's Word and the fulfillment of this prophecy. In a similar way, we too should commit ourselves to God's will and purpose for our lives. We should be ready to say, "I am willing Lord."

Third, both of them knew that the Child was the Messiah of Israel and they would certainly want to share together this wonderful moment of the Savior's birth. Fourth, both Joseph and Mary also knew that the Messiah was to be born in Bethlehem. Destiny was written all over the movements of Joseph and Mary to Bethlehem in order to give birth to the Christ child. God's plan was coming to fruition just as He had outlined centuries before in the great prophecies surrounding the birth of His Son.

Destiny was also written over the place where Christ was to be born ("the city of David, which is called Bethlehem" (Luke 2:6). Both Joseph and Mary knew that the Messiah was to be born in Bethlehem. They knew they were coming to the place where the ancient prophecy said Christ was to be born.

Micah 5:2

"But thou, Bethlehem Ephratah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall he come forth unto me that is to be ruler in Israel; whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting."

Jesus was born in Bethlehem but the Bible teaches He came out of eternity ("whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting"). In reality,

there really is no B.C. for Jesus existed prior to His entrance into the world. The Bible says that Bethlehem was “little among the thousands of Judah.” In those days Judah has 1,000 family towns. As the song says, Jesus was “one small child in a land of a thousand dreams.” Every mother wanted to bring forth the Messiah. It was her hope and longing to give birth to the long-awaited Messiah. Mary was chosen by God to be the mother of the Messiah which would be born in Bethlehem.

“O little town of Bethlehem
How still we see thee lie
Above thy deep and dreamless sleep
The silent stars go by
Yet in thy dark streets shineth
The everlasting Light
The hopes and fears of all the years
Are met in thee tonight.”

We know from the Old Testament record that David was also born in Bethlehem. Bethlehem was the place where King David was born. This is why it was called the “city of David” (1 Sam. 16:1, 18-19; 17:12; 20:6). Luke 2:4 verifies this by also calling Bethlehem the “city of David.” In I Samuel 20:6 Bethlehem is actually called “David’s city.” It was here that David was born. It was in the fields around this town that he tended the sheep (I Sam. 17:15). This is very interesting for Jesus Christ (the Messiah and Savior of the world) was to come from the same line or lineage of David. Luke connected Bethlehem with David to show that Jesus was qualified to be the Messiah and that He was a true physical heir of David.

Matthew 1:1

“The book of the generation of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham.”

In this statement is hidden all the wealth of 1,000 years of history and prophecy. David would bring forth the King who would eventually rule over his people forever on a throne in Jerusalem! He was born in David’s *line* (Luke 3:31) and born in David’s *city* (Luke 2:4) and will one day reign on David’s *throne*.

Luke 1:32

“He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest: and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David.”

Remember that history is His story! God was providentially moving Joseph and Mary at the right time to the right place! They came to this little obscure place where God’s Son was to be born. The movements and miraculous birth of Christ was the result of them fulfilling the destiny that God had designed for this family and child. Destiny was written all over the events of this Christmas scene. Christmas did not come by chance. It was destined to come according to God’s plan and in God’s way. We see this in the movements to Bethlehem and the birth of God’s Son.

This was an amazing story of providential destiny in every way, from the movement of Joseph and Mary, to the city where Christ was born, and to the birth of the Christ Child. It was the decree of Augustus which had brought Joseph and Mary to Bethlehem (Luke 2:1). It was also given at exactly the right time in order that the Messiah might be born in Bethlehem in fulfillment of prophecy. It involved Jesus being born in the same place as his ancestor David and it involved remarkable timing to bring forth this birth which was predicted over 700 years before it happened (Isaiah 7:14).

The virgin pregnancy was at the right time, the Roman census and taxation was at the right time, their journey was at the right time, they were in the place of Bethlehem at the right time so Christ could be born according to prophecy.

What a story! This was indeed a story of destiny!

- ✓ Are you willing to fulfill the destiny that God has marked out for your own personal life?
- ✓ Have you been open to God’s direction and leading?
- ✓ Have you surrendered to God’s plan for our life?
- ✓ Will you be at the right place at the right time to receive God’s blessing?

In his book, "Science Speaks," Peter Stoner applies the modern science of probability to just eight prophecies regarding Christ. He says, "The chance that any man might have ... fulfilled all eight prophecies is one in 10 to the 17th. That would be 1 in 100,000,000,000,000,000." (one hundred quadrillion). Stoner then suggests that "we take 10 to the 17th in silver dollars and lay them on the face of Texas. If we would do this, they will cover all of the state 2 feet deep. Now mark one of these silver dollars and stir the whole mass thoroughly... Blindfold a man and tell him he can travel as far as he wishes, but he must pick up [that one marked silver dollar.] What chance would he have of getting the right one?"

My friend, when you put all the prophecies regarding Christ together and see how they were meticulously fulfilled, one can only come to one conclusion. Their fulfillment was a miracle and this is certainly true in regards to the Christ's birth. It was a providential destiny coming to pass and it was a miracle for it all happened according to God's meticulous pattern.

B. It was a story of deity.

Luke 2:5

"To be taxed with Mary his espoused wife, being great with child."

The fact that Mary was "espoused" to Joseph protects Christ's deity and reminds us that Jesus was the God-man and God incarnate (in human flesh) when He entered this world of humanity. In verse five we read how "Mary his espoused wife." Luke the doctor and evangelist calls Joseph's and Mary's relationship a betrothal. This is significant for in Jewish custom the betrothal period was a time when the two partners were married legally by contract (Deut. 20:7; 22:23, 25, 28) but they were not sexually or physically tied together which was the consummation of the marriage (Matt. 25:1-12). This physical union came six months after betrothal. During the betrothal period Mary was Joseph's legal wife (Matt. 1:20, 24). However, even though the two were husband and wife the betrothal relationship was continuing and the marriage was not yet consummate by sexual relations (Matt. 1:18 – "before they came together").

Matthew 1:25 finally states:

“And (Joseph) knew her not till she had brought forth her firstborn son: and he called his name Jesus.”

Joseph did not have any physical relations with Mary until she had given birth to Jesus. This is the reason Luke mentions Mary as only being “betrothed” to Joseph. This careful description speaks to us of the virgin birth of Jesus Christ. It points to the divinity (deity) of Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ was not born of man. The blood of sinful man did not flow through His veins. It was the blood of God (Acts 20:28). Although this was human blood, at the same time, it was God’s blood for He has supernaturally kept the blood of Christ from being tainted with Adamic sin. Apparently sin is passed down through the bloodline of the man and therefore God had to provide a miraculous birth and bloodline that was untainted by sin.

Jesus was not birthed with sin or a sin nature. He was miraculously conceived and born and His blood was free from Adam’s sin. This means that Jesus was one hundred percent God while living in the body of a man. His divinity or deity is protected by Luke’s statement of betrothal. There can be no mistake about it. Jesus was pure and free from the taint of man’s sin, so that He would one day become a pure and holy sacrifice for our sins, and provide a satisfying sacrifice (1 John 2:1-2; 4:10) that the Father would accept as payment for our sins.

The pure and undefiled sacrifice of Jesus Christ on the cross (Heb. 9:14; 1 Pet. 1:19) is based upon the pure and undefiled virgin conception and birth of Christ. You cannot have the one without the other. Only the God-man could die the sinner’s death and make man right before God. If you take away the virgin birth of Jesus Christ as the liberals and modernists do, you take away God’s plan for Christ to be the Savior of the world. Jesus cannot be a Savior from hell unless He was virgin born which means He was born free from the taint of man’s sin. It’s as simple as this! And if you don’t believe in the virgin birth of Jesus Christ then you are going to hell!

“Who is He in yonder stall,
At whose feet the shepherds fall?
Tis the Lord, O wondrous story!

Tis the Lord, the King of glory;
At his feet we humbly fall,
Crown Him, crown Him Lord of all.”

Luke 1:30-37

“And the angel said unto her, Fear not, Mary: for thou hast found favour with God. And, behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son, and shalt call his name Jesus. He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest: and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David: And he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end. Then said Mary unto the angel, How shall this be, seeing I know not a man? And the angel answered and said unto her, The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee: therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God. And, behold, thy cousin Elisabeth, she hath also conceived a son in her old age: and this is the sixth month with her, who was called barren. For with God nothing shall be impossible.”

The virgin birth of Christ was the supernatural work of God! I do not think that Mary doubted the angel’s words (Luke 1:34) but merely wanted to know how such an event would be accomplished. After all, no person was ever born in the world apart from human conception of both sperm and egg. In Luke 1:35 we find the answer to Mary’s dilemma. The Holy Spirit would bring about the physical conception of Jesus. There was no human element attached to the virgin birth of Jesus Christ! The Holy Spirit would create a supernatural conception in the womb of Mary through the power of the Highest (God Himself). God Himself, through the person of the Holy Spirit, would break the natural law of birth which He had made for the human race. Only God can break His own laws. This is because He is God! Miracles occur when God breaks His natural laws. By the way, I believe in miracles! For I believe in God!

Luke 1:37

“For with God nothing shall be impossible.”

The virgin birth of Christ is not impossible since God is the God of the impossible! Liberals say, “It can’t be!” But the Bible says, “It can be and was

true!" The Bible teaches that the virgin birth did take place by the miraculous power and intervention of God. There is no Christmas without a virgin birth! There is no salvation without a virgin birth. This is because the virgin birth signifies that Jesus was God who was free from the taint of sin.

The virgin birth protects Christ's deity, His sinless sacrifice on the cross, and our salvation. No wonder the liberals, Christ deniers, and cults want to get rid of it. Yes, this miraculous conception and virgin birth of Jesus Christ was necessary to protect Christ's deity and preexistence as the Eternal God.



Isaiah 7:14

"Therefore the Lord himself shall give you a sign; Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel."

The liberals on the committee of the Revised Standard Version (RSV) of the Bible actually translated the Hebrew the word virgin ("almah") as "young woman." Of course, this gives the impression that Mary may not have been a virgin. They admittedly followed the lexicons of Gesenius

who rejected the miraculous. The word "almah" actually means a young woman who was a virgin (a maiden who was a virgin). This is why the translators on the RSV should have translated is this way as they did in other instances (Isa. 23:12; 37:22; 47:1; 62:5). The Hebrew word "almah" represents those who are eligible for marriage and was always referred to as a "maiden" with whom no man had had relations. (Vine's Expository Dictionary of Biblical Words).

In fact, "There is no instance where it can be proved that this word designates a young woman who is not a virgin" (Thayer's Greek Lexicon and Brown Driver & Briggs Hebrew Lexicon). The Theological Workbook of the OT also signifies this.

Matthew 1:23 gives us the right translation and real understanding of this word when it translates it properly as a “virgin.” The Revised Standard Version translation of Isaiah 7:14 does a great injustice to the Word of God and in particular to the virgin birth of Christ. It’s an attack of modern and unbelieving scholarship to take out the virgin birth and miraculous from the Bible. I would not use the Revised Version for this reason alone among many other reasons. If you carry the Revised Version, you are carrying a Bible that is in some ways a perversion. Jesus was born of a virgin not merely of a young woman.

God’s human and earthly existence as a man cannot be created by the involvement of another man since the Bible suggests that sin is transmitted through the line of man. Romans 5:12 teaches that in Adam “all have sinned.” The message is clear. Because of man sin has come upon the human race. Furthermore, since Adam sinned man continues to be born a sinner by being linked to Adam’s original sin. Therefore, a miraculous birth had to take place! Jesus could not be connected with Adam’s sin in any way. There could be no physical linkage to any male within the human race. God has to step into history and into the womb of a virgin woman and make something supernatural happen. He had to bring forth a conception in the darkness of a mother’s womb that was untainted, unaffected, and unparalleled to all other human conceptions.

Matthew 1:23 speaks of the fulfillment of Isaiah’s prophecy at Christ’s birth: “Behold, a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us.”

Mark this down. The baby that was born in Bethlehem was God incarnate (John 1:14, 18). This means Christ shared the divinity or deity of the Godhead with the Father. The deity of Christ is based upon the virgin conception and birth of Christ. This is why we sing:

“Christ, by highest heaven adored;
Christ, the everlasting Lord!
Late in time behold Him come,
Offspring of the virgin’s womb.”

Luke 1:35 states:

“And the angel answered and said unto her, The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee: therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God.”

The “holy thing” is a general reference to the virgin birth and what the Holy Spirit produced by supernatural means. The virgin conception and birth of this baby was a holy thing. It was a birth that would result from a supernatural conception where no sin was transmitted through the line of man. It was free from the taint of sin! There was no sin in Jesus.

This too is why we sing the beloved words:

“Silent night, holy night!
All is calm, all is bright, Round yon virgin Mother and Child!
Holy infant so tender and mild,
Jesus Lord at Thy birth,
Jesus Lord at Thy birth.”

This holy birth was the physical entrance of God or Emmanuel into the world (Matt. 1:23) who was free from the infusion of man’s sin and sinful nature. There was no involvement with man in this birth.

“Gentle Mary laid her Child, Lowly in the manger;
There He lay, The Undefined, to the world a stranger.”

"In July of 1978, a little girl named Louise Brown was born in England. At five pounds 12 ounces, Louise was a tiny baby, but what made her birth truly extraordinary was that she was conceived outside the human body. Little Louise Brown was the first 'test-tube baby.' Man touted this great accomplishment. Why? It's because man thinks that he is pretty smart. Well, I want to convey to you that man is a dunce when it comes to what God has done. God alone gives life. Man can only play around with it in test tubes. Furthermore, man cannot produce a virgin birth in the womb of a woman. Only God can do it and only God has done it!

C. It was a story of delivery.

We also read in the Christmas story how Christ was delivered or born.

Luke 2:6-7

“And so it was, that, while they were there, the days were accomplished that she should be delivered. And she brought forth her firstborn son, and wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger; because there was no room for them in the inn.”

There are two important facts related to the delivery of God’s Son.

- The birth came in God’s time.

Luke 2:6 speaks of “the days were accomplished that she should be delivered.” We really don’t know how long Mary was in Bethlehem before the baby was born. Tradition says it was a short time but tradition is not always correct. The point is this, God’s timing was perfect concerning the arrival of this baby.

Galatians 4:4 declares:

“But when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law.”

God supernaturally and miraculously conceived this baby in the womb of Mary but He also triggered the baby to come forth from her womb at just the right time. Doctors still do not know what actually triggers the baby to come forth from the mother’s womb. They have suggestions but they have no concrete answers. Why can’t we just believe that God is behind the birth of a baby? Many people are too humanistic to believe this! Jesus arrived on earth at just the right time – God’s time. We must remember that God is never late. His timetable is often different than ours. We think that we have everything figured out and then God comes along and changes our plans, but in changing them, He aligns them to His plan.

Jeremiah 29:11

“For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, saith the LORD, thoughts of peace, and not of evil, to give you an expected end.”

The “expected end” refers to God’s plans that He wants to come to pass in our lives. It is His plan that is important – not our own plans and goals. We often want God to be our life coach rather than our Lord and Master. This means we don’t surrender to His plan for our life as Joseph and Mary did.

The story is told of the pioneer days in our country. A man was making his way west when he came to the Missouri River. It was winter and the ice covered the river from bank to bank. But how could the man be sure it would hold his weight? He knew people often drowned in that river when the ice broke. Yet he had to cross. He walked out a little way, then gripped with fear he crawled on his hands and knees. He looked back and saw how far the bank was now behind him and knew he would drown if the ice broke and the frigid water swallowed him up.

To evenly spread his weight even more, he lay out flat on his belly and slowly drew himself sliding across the river a few inches at time. All of a sudden from behind him he heard whistling. He whipped his head around and there saw a big man, a farmer, walking across the ice leading a team of horses drawing a heavy wooden sleigh full of hay. He was smiling and whistling and tipped his hat. The timid man stood and brushed off the ice crystals and managed a sheepish smile. That old farmer had crossed the ice many times and knew it could be trusted.

The same should be true for each one of us who are Christians. We must simply learn to trust in God’s purpose for our life, even if it means finding ourselves in some obscure place, our own manger or stable in life, awaiting God’s direction. We must have the confidence that God knows what He is doing even when things don’t work out the way we planned. We must go with God’s plan and let God work in the situation at hand.

“When peace, like a river, attendeth my way,
When sorrows like sea billows roll,
Whatever my lot, Thou hast taught me to say,
It is well, it is well, with my soul.”

- The birth came in God's way.

Luke 2:7 says:

“And she brought forth her firstborn son, and wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger; because there was no room for them in the inn.”

Nothing took place without God's providence and approval. The delivery came in the exact way God had planned.

1. It was a birth that spoke of superiority (Luke 2:7a).

Jesus is called “first born son” of Mary. This indicates that Mary would have other children (Matthew 13:55; Mark 6:3; Mark 3:31; John 7:3-4; 2:12; Matthew 12:46-50; Mark 3:31-35; Luke 8:19-21). Mary did not remain a virgin. The Bible is very clear on this. The first born son was always the son of inheritance and highest dignity (Gen. 25:31). Jesus was Mary's first Son and this made Him a son of highest dignity and honor. The firstborn received great honor and privileges within the family. The “firstborn” is a title of dignity and preeminence which portrays Christ's exalted status as God – the preeminent One.

We also read elsewhere that Jesus was God's only begotten Son (John 3:16). This also means Jesus was the Son of highest dignity and rank. In fact, the Scripture says that Jesus Christ is the “firstborn of every creature” (Col. 1:15). This is not a title that points to Christ's birth but is an expression that reflects *dignity* and *superiority*, which was the position of the firstborn son in a family. As the “firstborn” Son of Mary, the only begotten Son, and the firstborn of every creature, Christ could maintain His dignity and honor as the eternal God. Any way you see Christ's birth, you come to the conclusion that Jesus was the superior One, and One of highest dignity, the preeminent One. He was indeed King of Kings and LORD of LORDS (Rev. 19:16) when he was born and will one day demonstrate this before the world in His Second Coming.

2. It was a birth surrounded by sympathy (Luke 2:7b).

The birth of Jesus is filled with the sympathy and love of Mary for his firstborn son. Her actions of tenderness and love indicate her motherly care and sympathy she had for her child. Mary loved Jesus as any normal mother would love her child.



She “wrapped him in swaddling clothes” (strips of white cloth). Normally mothers wrapped their newborn babies in wide strips of cloth to keep them warm (Ezek. 16:4). With no midwife to help, Mary chose to personally wrap baby Jesus in long bands of cloth (“swaddling cloth”) after giving birth to him. This was an expression of her sympathy and

tenderness toward baby Jesus. Being wrapped in strips of cloth was important, for this was the way the shepherds would recognize the infant (“Ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger” - Luke 2:12). Some infants were actually bound up in this way to keep their limbs straight and unharmed.

Luke 2:7 also states that she “laid him in a manger.” This too was an action of love and care. The “manger” was actually a crib where animal fodder was poured and where animals fed. A manger was a feeding trough used for cattle, sheep, donkeys, or horses. Archaeologists have discovered stone mangers in the horse stables of Ahab at Megiddo. They were cut out of limestone and were approximately three feet long, eighteen inches wide, and two feet deep.

The Christ Child was placed in a manger from which livestock fed. Jesus, the Lord of Glory, the eternal God, was born on the backside of Bethlehem in an animal stall or enclosure where animals lived and was placed on a trough where animals fed. You can see ancient stone troughs even today as you travel in the Holy Land. It is probable that such a trough cradled the Infant Jesus.

Many times a stall would be linked to an inn. Some tradition suggests that the manger was actually a cave. However, most homes in Israel had two parts, one for the family and another for the household animals. The same was true for an inn. It's quite possible that this was the location of the manger. So we sing today:

“Away in a manger no crib for a bed
The little Lord Jesus laid down His sweet head
The stars in the bright sky looked down where He lay
The little Lord Jesus asleep on the hay.”

3. It was a birth portraying several spiritual truths.

These are important spiritual truths that we need to touch upon in this Christmas story.

Life was tough for Datha and her family. At age 39, she had a heart attack and bypass surgery and learned that she had coronary artery disease. A year later, her 15-year-old daughter Heather became paralyzed as the result of a car accident. Datha quit her job to take care of Heather, and the bills started piling up. Soon they would be facing eviction. Datha was so angry with God that she stopped praying.

Then came Christmas Eve 2004. A young girl knocked on Datha's door. The girl wished her a “Merry Christmas,” gave her an envelope, and left quickly. Inside was a gift that would cover Datha's housing needs for the next year. The attached note read, “Please accept this gift in honor of Jesus Christ whose birthday we celebrate on this holy night. Long ago, His family also had a shelter problem.”

Luke 2 tells the story of Joseph and Mary as they searched for a shelter for Mary to deliver her baby. They found a place with the animals.

Christ's birth reminds us of two important spiritual truths.

a. Humility

Joseph and Mary humbled themselves by allowing their first child to be born in a secluded smelly animal stable where the animals ate. This is the wonder of the ages. It must have broken Mary's heart to give birth to her first son in such a place as this. She certainly must have had dreams of a normal birth in pleasant surroundings. However, her dreams did not come to pass.



This means that we cannot always follow our dreams as the world tells us. We must follow God's will for our lives. It was God's purpose that came to pass instead of the dreams and hopes of Mary. God is not interested in our dreams but His decisions! God wants to bring His sovereign purposes to pass in our lives. Many times we must humble ourselves and relinquish our dreams for His plans and goals, even when this means humiliating circumstances.

The fact that Jesus was born in a stable suggests poverty, lowliness, humility, and even rejection. This too is emphasized in Scripture.

2 Corinthians 8:9

“For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich.”

There was no room for Joseph and Mary in the inn. Therefore, they had to settle for the humble surroundings of a stable. For many at this Christmas season there is no room for Christ in their hearts and lives. They are not willing to humble themselves, repent of their sins, and receive Christ as their Savior. The Bible says, “God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace to the humble” (James 4:6). If we will humble ourselves before God and cast our faith upon His Son, then we too can be saved.

In spite of the humble surroundings of animals and their stink, Mary lovingly cared for her firstborn baby. Once again, it was love! It was sympathy! It was humility! Of course, Christ Himself also expressed His own humility when He was born into this world in a manger. The Bible says in Philippians 2:7 that Christ “made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men.” The expression “made of no reputation” (kenoo – the kenosis) speaks of the emptying of Christ’s glory in coming to earth.

Christ relinquished His glory (not His deity) as the eternal Son (John 17:5) to come and be born in a smelly stable. This is the greatest act of humility the world will ever know! Jesus, the great God of wonders, the God of eternity, the Creator and Sustainer of the Universe, humbled Himself by coming to this earth to live among His creation. He was born in a smelly animal stable in order to ultimately die upon the cross alone, to be separated from His beloved Father, as He paid the penalty of judgment for your sins and mine. This is humility and love that is beyond all human comprehension.

“He left the splendor of heaven
Knowing His destiny
Was the lonely hill of Golgotha
There to lay down His life for me
If that isn't love
Then the ocean is dry.
There's no stars in the sky
And the little sparrows can't fly.
If that isn't love
Then heaven's a myth.
There's no feeling like this
If that isn't love.”

God did not give us a Christmas gift with flashy paper and bows. But He gave us the greatest gift of all – His only begotten Son.

“He did not use a silvery box
Or paper green and red;
God laid His Christmas gift to me
Within a manger bed.”

Martin Luther confessed:

"When I am told that God became man, I can follow the idea, but I just do not understand what it means. For what man, if left to his natural promptings, if he were God, would humble himself to lie in the feedbox of a donkey or to hang upon a cross? God laid upon Christ the iniquities of us all. This is that ineffable and infinite mercy of God which the slender capacity of man's heart cannot comprehend and much less utter—that unfathomable depth and burning zeal of God's love toward us.... Who can sufficiently declare this exceeding great goodness of God?"

"All praise to Thee, eternal Lord,
Clothed in a garb of flesh and blood;
Choosing a manger for a throne,
While worlds on worlds are Thine alone."

b. Rejection



The Bible once again says there was "no room for them in the inn." Because so many had returned to Bethlehem for the census, the small city was overflowing with people. There was no room for Mary and Joseph in the inn, which forced them to take refuge in the only place available - a shelter for animals. The fact that there was no room available speaks of rejection.

What a remarkable revelation this is. Bethlehem was crowded when the time for Christ's birth was ready to take place. The only place they could find to stay was the stable of an inn. The people of that day and time had no time for the birth of the Christ Child. They had no time for Jesus Christ. They had not time for the Messiah and Savior. From the beginning to the ending of Christ's life people rejected Him as the Savior and the Lord of Glory (Acts 2:23). Christ's rejection by the innkeeper is typical of His rejection by the people of that day. John W. Peterson wrote:

“No room, only a manger of hay,
No room, He is a stranger today,
No room, here in His world turned way,
No room, no room.

No room, here in the hearts of mankind,
No room, no cheery welcome could find,
No room, surely the world is blind,
No room, no room.

Angels, in heaven up yonder,
Watch with amazement and wonder,
To see the Son of the Highest treated so,
No room, no room, no room.”

Reflect on this once again. God visited our planet in the person of a helpless Baby and in the poverty represented by a smelly stable. Oh the wonder of it!

Darby expressed it like this:

“He began in a manger, and ended on the cross, and along the way had not where to lay His head.”

Jesus was born in a stable and he slept in the trough where cows and animals ate their food. Bethlehem went to sleep that night indifferent to the event that would take place in a stable and change the world of mankind forever. In a small place (Bethlehem), among the thousands of Judah, and in a small stable, in a small animal trough, the Savior was born. Jesus had come all the way from Heaven to rescue man from hell. And what did He get? A stable and a cross! There was no welcome. There was no party.

Now think of these words: No room! No room! These words and the whole experience were like an omen, or a preview, of how men would respond to the Savior who had come into the world.

John 1:11 says:

“He came unto his own, and his own received him not.”

“No Room” is written all over this verse. The majority of Christ’s own people had no room for Him in their hearts and lives when He arrived. The truth is that today people still don’t have room for Him. Even during the Christmas season many still do not have room for Christ. Many are dreaming of a white Christmas but they need to start dreaming of a right Christmas! The right Christmas is that a Savior was born who would one day die on a cross to take away the penalty for man’s sin and provide the way of salvation for the human race.

Think of this. This innkeeper may have said, "Come back tomorrow or some other day." So men today will say that they want Jesus to come back at a "more convenient season" and then they will receive Christ as their Savior. But that season never comes and they end up dying in their sins and going to hell. Maybe you are that person! You have not made room for Jesus Christ in your heart and life. You have not personally embrace Christ as your Savior.

John 1:12

“But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, *even* to them that believe on his name.”

The secular and unsaved world certainly had no room for Christ in their lives.

Not long ago a professor of psychology in one of our universities gave a “word suggestion” test to his class of 40 students. He instructed them to write the word "Christmas," and all the class did so. "Now," said the professor, "right after the word 'Christmas' write the first thought that flashes through your mind regarding that day." When the papers were turned in, such answers were given as "tree," "holly," "mistletoe," "presents," "turkey," "holiday," "carols," and "Santa Claus," but not one had written, "the birthday of Jesus."

As there was no room for the baby Jesus in the inn, there is still no room for Him today in the celebration of Christmas and the hearts of lost humanity. Many have lost sight of what Christmas is all about. Secular humanism disguises Christmas as giving to others or as kind acts rendered to others – goodwill toward other men. People talk about Santa Clause, Rudolph, Frosty the Snowman, and Christmas trees. These things do not represent

Christmas! Sadly, the vast majority of people in the world today still do not have room for Jesus Christ in their hearts and lives. They want Christmas without Christ. They want “Happy Holidays” instead of “Merry Christmas.” Why is this? It’s because they have no room for Christ in their hearts and lives.

There was no room for them in the inn! What a telling story this is of our generation today in which we live. Times have not changed. People have not changed. They still do not want Christ to be part of their lives. This is true of the unsaved who live all around us. John 12:37 says: “But though he had done so many miracles before them, yet they believed not on him.” 2 Thessalonians 2:10 speaks of those who “received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved.”

People still have no room for Him today. They do not want Jesus Christ and His salvation. They have no room for Him in the schools. They have no room for Him in government. They have no room for Him in the liberal media. They have no room for Him in Christmas. There is no room for Jesus Christ in the hearts of the lost today. How about you today? Do you have room for Christ in your life?

“Have you any room for Jesus,
He who bore your load of sin?
As He knocks and asks admission,
Sinner, will you let Him in?”

It’s equally true that God’s children sometimes do not give Christ room in their hearts and lives. Cannot we be guilty at times of not giving Jesus Christ room in our hearts and lives? We are too busy. We don’t have the time and room in our lives to fit Him into our schedules. No room! No room! We should be ashamed of ourselves. Do we make room for Him in our lives on a daily basis? Do we make devotional time in His Word? Do we pray to Him? Are we living out our personal dreams, our goals, and our wishes instead of God’s plan for our lives? There are many Christians who do not give Him room in their lives. No room. This becomes apparent in the lives of carnal and self-seeking Christians as they live for themselves and do not fellowship with Christ as they can and should.

Revelation 3:19-20 is actually directed to Christians and says:

“As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: be zealous therefore, and repent. Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me.”

If Christ is kept on the outside of our hearts, there's something wrong on the inside. God loves His children. He wants you to repent of your sin and give Him room and first place in your life today? There comes a time when even Christians must give Christ full control of their lives (Rom. 12:1-2). There comes a time when a Christian must fully yield to God and turn his life over to Him (Rom. 12:1-2). Will you give Him all the keys and rooms of your heart and life?

In Kansas City, during the great Gipsy Smith revival years ago, an old preacher came into the room where the Gipsy was sitting after the service. Thousands were being blessed and hundreds saved. The older minister placed his hands upon the evangelist's head and felt about it. 'I am trying to find the secret of your success,' he said. 'Too high! Too high! My friend, you are too high,' Gipsy said. 'The secret of whatever success God has given me is not up there but down here,' and he placed his hand upon his heart.

God is looking for our heart! He wants control of our lives at this Christmas season. His control of our hearts and lordship over our lives should be our goal in life.

“Thou didst leave Thy throne and Thy kingly crown
When Thou camest to earth for me
But in Bethlehem's home was there found no room
For Thy holy nativity
O come to my heart, Lord Jesus
There is room in my heart for Thee.”

II. The scene that unfolds

Luke 2:8-9

“And there were in the same country shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night. And, lo, the angel of the Lord came upon

them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them: and they were sore afraid.”

A. It was an earthly scene (Luke 2:8a).

“And there were in the same country shepherds abiding in the field.” In these verses we see a familiar earthly scene that is often relayed to us at the Christmas season. But it was also a common scene during these days. Shepherds would guard their flocks at night. The angel came to declare the message of Christ’s birth to the shepherds on the Judean hillsides, who were watching their flocks of sheep, protecting them from robbers and wild animals (“keeping watch over their flock by night”). The shepherds were lowly and poor people. They were not linked to royalty and riches. It’s interesting that God selected hardworking, down-to-earth, common people to be the first to hear about His Son’s birth and arrival into the world. This tells us that God is for the common person and that He came into the world to save those who were ordinary people.

Jesus proclaimed in Luke 4:18:

“The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised.”

I’m so thankful that Jesus came into the world to reach ordinary people! He is interested in those who are lonely, lowly, and lingering in the world without any hope of Heaven.

Someone said:

“So we have Royalty clothed in rags; Majesty emerging in the midst of the mundane; Eternity stepping into time; And the most prominent event of all human history being noticed by no one but...a handful of outcasts.”

Some people think that they are too bad for Jesus to save. They are beyond salvaging. Many people really believe this lie. But you must remember that Jesus came to shepherds, the outcasts of society, and revealed His plan of

salvation them. This means that Jesus came into the world to save the worst of sinners.

1 Timothy 1:15

“This *is* a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief.”

God’s announcement to the shepherds, those looked down upon in society, reminds us that God specializes in hopeless cases. He knows how to reach down and scoop us up from the bottom of the barrel, save us, and make something wonderful out of our lives. Jesus came to earth to connect with the lowest of the low, the worst of the worst, promising them a new way of life. This is good news! Someone wrote:

“Life was shattered and hope was gone,
Crushing the load that I bore;
Then out of the depths I cried, “O God, give me something worth living for!”
Something more than my yesterdays, more than I had before;
Something more than wealth or fame,
He gave me something worth living for!

This earthly scene causes many people to ask, “When was Jesus Christ born?” Some suggest that it could not be in the dead of winter or the shepherds would not have been out at night with their sheep. This would be true unless it was a warm winter evening. Matthew 2:19 makes it clear that Jesus was born near the time of Herod the Great. Josephus (a Jewish historian who lived shortly after the days of Christ) mentions that Herod’s death occurred between an eclipse and Passover. The only eclipse recorded in this period was in March 4 while Passover would have been mid-April.

So, Jesus was probably born at least a few months before spring. Actually, we will never know the exact time when the birth of Christ occurred. We probably won’t know until we get to Heaven. The date of His birth is irrelevant. The Scripture does not say *when* He was born; the important thing is that He was born! And He was born to die on Calvary’s cross for you and me.

B. It was an evening scene (Luke 2:8b).



Luke 2:8

“And there were in the same country shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night.”

It’s also interesting that the declaration of Jesus’ birth came at night (“by night”). Yes, this was physical darkness. However, the darkness that surrounded the

shepherds reminds us that there was also spiritual darkness which overshadowed the world during this same time. Man was lost in sin and needed a Savior to rescue him from hell. The evening scene and announcement of Christ being the Savior also reminds us how Jesus came into a world of spiritual darkness, a world of sin and blindness, in order to free mankind from the penalty and power of his sins.

Sadly, Jesus taught in John 3:19:

“And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil.”

Many in the world today still choose to live in the spiritual darkness of sin and unbelief. They do not want the light to shine upon them. They are like those bugs under the rocks. When you pick up the rock, they quickly move to try and find another dark spot to live.

Jesus said in John 8:12:

“I am the light of the world.”

He repeats the same analogy in John 12:36:

“While ye have light, believe in the light, that ye may be the children of light. These things spake Jesus, and departed, and did hide himself from them.”

Jesus came to earth in order to penetrate the spiritual darkness that was so everywhere in the world. The night scene reminds us of the spiritual scene of blackness (moral depravity) that was in the world at this time. But it also reminds us that Jesus came into the world to penetrate through this spiritual darkness by providing illumination and salvation for mankind through His life-giving message.

“The whole world was lost in the darkness of sin;
The light of the world is Jesus;
Like sunshine at noonday His glory shone in,
The light of the world is Jesus.
Come to the light, 'tis shining for thee;
Sweetly the light has dawned upon me;
Once I was blind, but now I can see;
The light of the world is Jesus.”

There are people all around us who are living in darkness. The good news is that we have the message of light that we can take to them. It is the Gospel light of Jesus Christ. You see, Jesus is still the light of the world through the message of the Gospel. His light of grace and mercy shines when the message of the Gospel is proclaimed to others. This is why we must take the Gospel light to others who are in a state of spiritual darkness, hopelessness, and blindness. The Christmas message began at night and it's the same message that we must continue to share with those who are living in the darkness or sin and blindness.

Stuart Briscoe shares this account:

“Years ago I was praying with one of my children at bedtime, and I asked him if he had any problems we should pray about. He couldn't think of any, even though I could think of a number of them! Rather unwisely, I pressed the point and asked, ‘Don't you have any problems at school?’ ‘No,’ he replied quite firmly. ‘Don't the kids give you a hard time because you're a Christian?’ Again the answer was ‘No.’ Thinking back to my own traumatic school days, I said, ‘But kids always give you a hard time if you let them know you're a Christian.’ His reply was frank and beyond belief: ‘All the more reason you don't let them know!’ And quite happily he turned over to sleep.”

Briscoe then states: “With the refreshing candor of the very young, he had put into words the practical reasons why many Christians don't witness. They don't want to take the consequences.”

Christian friend, we must remember that have the message of light and people are going to hell who live all around us. We must stand up and be counted as one of Christ's followers. We must stand up in the darkness and share the Gospel light.

C. It was an eventful scene (Luke 2:9).

Luke 2:9

“And, lo, the angel of the Lord came upon them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them: and they were sore afraid.”

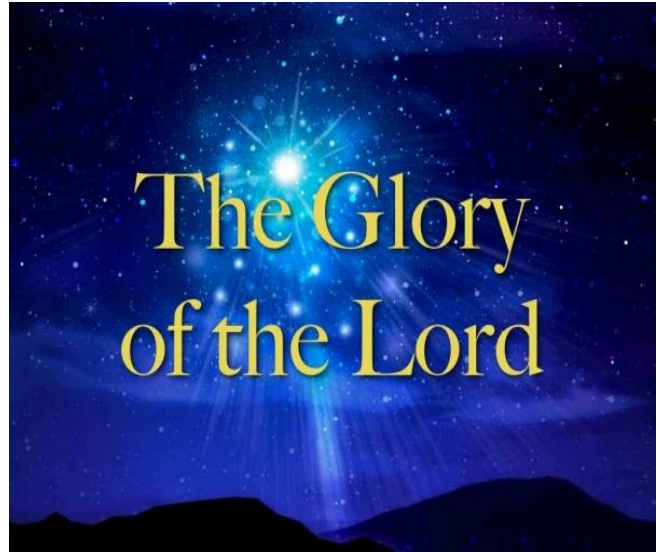
It must have been some spectacular scene when the radiating glory of God filled the sky. Jesus gave up this glory in His kenosis or self-emptying when He came into this world and was born in poverty within a stable.

Philippians 2:7

“But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men.”

As previously mentioned, Jesus did not give up His deity but the outward and visible display of His deity or glory that He once possessed in Heaven. However, the brilliance of God's holiness and deity was displayed at the birth announcement to indicate that God was entering the world in the person of the baby Jesus Christ. For this reason, a display of magnificent light occurred, which in some measure revealed God's glory and holiness. This light shown all around the shepherds in a spectacular display of magnificent splendor. What a scene this was! It must have been a sight to behold when God invaded the planet! These were not the Northern Lights, they were God's heavenly light, which displayed in some measure the magnificent splendor and glory of His person. This was God's fireworks display!

Yes, the heavenly visitation of this angelic being was accompanied with the radiance of God's divine glory (a bright light portraying God's matchless holiness, deity, and presence) which God had previously portrayed in the Shekinah glory of the Old Testament. God's light of glory appeared in a cloud and also within the holy of holies within the tabernacle and temple (Ex 16:10; 20:18; 40:34; II Chron. 7:1; Ezek. 1:27, 28).



Exodus 16:10

“And it came to pass, as Aaron spake unto the whole congregation of the children of Israel, that they looked toward the wilderness, and, behold, the glory of the Lord appeared in the cloud.”

Think of it. The Shekinah glory of God's presence shone out in the open fields beneath the Syrian stars! God manifested His presence at the birth announcement of His Son to show that God was coming into the world. The baby born in Bethlehem was none other than the Lord of Glory. He was the incarnation of God's very being and existence. Hebrews 1:3 speaks of Christ “being the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person ...”

On this eventful evening, God took away the curtain and displayed some of the brilliance of His holiness and deity. God's glory was put on display at the birth announcement to indicate that God had entered the world. The outward, visible display of God's glory must have been a sight to behold. Can you imagine how it must have been on this wonderful night when God's glory lit up the sky? At one moment the night was pitch black and then all of a sudden the sky was filled with the brilliant light of God's radiant glory! The outward visible display of God's radiant glory must have been breathtaking to witness.

“Angels sang about His birth;
Wise men sought and found Him;
Heaven's star shone brightly forth,
Glory all around Him:
Shepherds saw the wondrous sight,
Heard the angels singing;
All the plains were lit that night,
All the hills were ringing.”

You know, sometimes we need a fresh and new awareness of God's glory. We need God's glory to captivate our hearts and lives once again. We need to light up our lives once again with God's glory. We need to reflect on how great and wonderful God is in His eternal being, character, and the manifestation of His grace and mercy to our lives.

We need to live in God's presence and magnificent glory, which includes having a greater awareness of His holiness and greatness, allowing God (who He is) to recapture our hearts and souls once again. We may find ourselves living a mundane Christian life and finding that our Christian life has lost its meaning and luster. The reason for this is because we are not living in the presence of God's glory. Instead of reflecting on God and His life and ministry, we get caught up in our own life and have essentially left God out of it.

Living in the light of God's glory means that I meditate upon God, His greatness, power, holiness, righteousness, grace, mercy, and love that He extends to me, and I find in Him a daily sufficiency and sustaining power to live above the demands of life. When experientially living in God's glory, I find a meaningful life every day as God reveals Himself to me!

Maybe you must allow God to once again reveal His glory to you. You may have been ignoring His glory and missing out on the real significance of living the Christian life which is to experience the glory of His presence in your own heart and life.

The great cellist Pablo Casals, in the story of his life called Joys and Sorrows, recalls the first time he went to church on Christmas Eve. He was five years

old. He tells about walking to the church in a small village in Spain, hand-in-hand with his father, the church organist. As he walked, he shivered, not because the night was chilly, but because it was all so exciting and mysterious.

"I felt that something wonderful was about to happen. High overhead, the heavens were full of stars. In the narrow, dark streets there were moving figures, shadowy and silent. Then suddenly there was a burst of light flooding from the open doors of the church. We moved into that light silently. Then, just as suddenly, my father broke the silence with music from the organ. And we all sang. And when I sang, it was my heart that was singing, and I poured out everything that was within me."

Casals remembered that night, even in his old age. He remembered a time when a shiver ran the length of his backbone, and it had nothing to do with the chill of the air. It was a time when it went beyond his singing, but his heart was singing—a time of being grabbed by something that went beyond words, but not beyond feelings.

Exodus 33:17-23 reminds us of God's glory:

"And the LORD said unto Moses, I will do this thing also that thou hast spoken: for thou hast found grace in my sight, and I know thee by name. And he said, I beseech thee, shew me thy glory. And he said, I will make all my goodness pass before thee, and I will proclaim the name of the LORD before thee; and will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will shew mercy on whom I will shew mercy. And he said, Thou canst not see my face: for there shall no man see me, and live. And the LORD said, Behold, *there is* a place by me, and thou shalt stand upon a rock: And it shall come to pass, while my glory passeth by, that I will put thee in a clift of the rock, and will cover thee with my hand while I pass by: And I will take away mine hand, and thou shalt see my back parts: but my face shall not be seen."

Moses wanted to live in the light of God's glory. He wanted to see God and experience God's presence in His life like never before. He wanted to experience the glory of God's presence, the wonder of His person, the greatness of His power.

Friend, God is saying to us today, "Behold, there is a place by me" (Ex. 33:21), a place where we can live in His presence, a place where we can experience the wonder of God's personal glory, a place where we can lose ourselves in God and not be overcome with life's trials and difficulties. Some of us, if not all of us today, must let the glory of God shine all around us again, and captivate our hearts, so that we will once again live in His glory and rediscover that God is all we need, that God means everything to us, and that we can live in the place where we experience God's glory on a daily basis.

"I have walked alone with Jesus
In a fellowship divine.
Never more can earth allure me,
I am His and He is mine.
On the mountain I have seen Him,
Christ my Comforter and Friend
And the glory of His presence
Will be with me to the end.
I have seen Him, I have known Him,
And He deigns to walk with me;
And the glory of His presence will be mine eternally.
Oh, the glory of His presence,
Oh, the beauty of His face,
I am His and His forever,
He has saved me by His grace."

A man became so intoxicated one night that he stumbled and fell through the open door of a stable. He woke up the next morning bewildered by his strange surroundings. Finally, it dawned on him where he was. He was very hungry, and he tried to think of a neighbor who might give him a meal. "No," he muttered, "I'm afraid they'd say I've fallen too low."

Just then he heard some bells ringing, and he suddenly realized it was Christmas Day. What was that story again about the shepherds, the manager, and the angels' message? He thought, I'm not the first one to sleep in a stable. Recalling his early training about Christ who had come into the world to save the lost, he wondered if the reason Jesus first appeared in a stable was to remind the world that he could help a poor fellow like

him. Right there he knelt in the straw and prayed, "Lord, be merciful to me a sinner." That poor drunkard was saved. He had found God in a manger!

III. The Savior that was born

Luke 2:10-11

"And the angel said unto them, Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord."

The whole spectacular scene of God's radiant glory brought fear (terror) into the hearts of the shepherds which led to the great announcement of Christ entering the world as the Savior of mankind. The angel wanted to calm the hearts of the shepherds and therefore spoke the famous words, "Fear not." This is one of the "fear nots" of the Christmas story (Luke 1:30). These two words ("fear not") have provided calmness and peace to many weary Christian travelers. The reason the shepherds did not have to fear was because of the declaration that the angel shared with them about Christ coming into the world to be the Savior of lost mankind. This reminds us that God was in control of the first advent of His son into this world. They should not fear for God had not come to judge them but save them!

The old Scotch hymn sums up this point:

"While shepherds watched their flocks by night,
All seated on the ground,
The angel of the Lord came down,
And glory shone around.
"Fear not," said he for mighty dread
Had seized their troubled mind;
"Glad tidings of great joy I bring,
To you and all mankind."

You see, man needed a Savior and that is why Jesus born and entered the world. This was another exciting event associated with the birth of Christ. It revolved around Christ entering the world as the Savior of lost humanity. Jesus came to deliver us from the penalty of God's judgment for our sins.

This is why He is called “a Saviour” for He was the long-awaited Messiah that was prophesied to be the Savior of mankind.

“A Baby’s hands in Bethlehem
Were small and softly curled,
But held within their dimpled grasp
The hope of all the world.”

Matthew 1:21 states:

“And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name Jesus: for he shall save his people from their sins.”

Yes, Jesus came to save his people from their sins (Matt. 1:21). This is the real reason for Christmas. It was the mission behind Christmas. Christmas began God’s missionary outreach to the earth. Let’s reflect on Christ entering the world as our Savior.

In what way was Jesus the Savior?

- a. Jesus came to save us from the penalty of sin.

Jesus came to save us from sin’s penalty. Jesus Christ entered this world in order to rescue man from the required judicial penalty for his sins. Let’s set the record straight! Jesus Christ was born into this world in order to be man’s Savior. Man needed a Savior and Jesus was the only Savior that could deliver or rescue lost humanity from the consequences of their sins which is to be rescued from hell, the Second Death, or eternal damnation in the Lake of Fire.

Revelation 20:14

“And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death.”

Jesus was born physically so we might ultimately never die spiritually. This is because Jesus was born in the shadow of the cross. He was the Savior who came to rescue us from the penalty for our own



sins, taking the judgment associated with our sins upon Himself and being judged in our place. Jesus came to save us from the penalty or the “wages” that we deserved for our sins (Rom. 6:23). He did not come to rescue us from a low or negative self-image or from poverty! He came to save us from hell! Let’s get the salvation message right! Let’s stop beating around the bush! Jesus came to save us from hell fire and brimstone!

The angel gave a declaration of good news and great joy! It was a declaration of “good tidings” (good news) that the Savior had come into the world and a declaration that should bring “great joy” into the hearts of mankind who were in need of His salvation. The declaration revealed that Christ had come into the world and brought the promise of salvation to all of lost mankind. The Great Commission is seen in the Christmas story. Christ is said to have come into the world so He might be the Savior for all mankind for the Bible says this salvation would extend to all people - “which shall be to all people” (Luke 2:10). There is no Calvinism in this Christmas scene! There is no message of “limited atonement” or “particular redemption” in the angelic Christmas message.

Luke’s Christmas “joy” is associated with salvation. This news was to be proclaimed to “all the people” (Luke 2:10). Why? It’s because Jesus came to save all mankind. His plan was not to pick and choose but to reach out to all of lost humanity. The phrase “all the people” would not only included the people of Israel (Matt. 1:21) but Gentile people, the great masses of people living throughout the entire world (Mark 16:15). There was an obvious hint that the new born Savior and his salvation would extend to all people throughout the earth.

1 John 4:14

“And we have seen and do testify that the Father sent the Son (Christmas) to be the Saviour of the world” (Calvary).

This gives us the story from Christmas to Calvary! The angel messenger declared there was no reason to fear since the Savior had come into the world. This is a very wonderful message. When we express our faith in Jesus Christ, who came to be our Savior, we no longer must fear death and the afterlife. We no longer must fear God’s wrath and judgment – the penalty for

our sins. We no longer must fear that we will end up in hell. Christ's entrance into the world and His ultimate death on the cross means that we can be released from the fear of dying for we can know that Christ has saved or delivered us from hell and given us everlasting life in Heaven. Someone said:

“If our greatest need had been information,
God would have sent us an educator;
If our greatest need had been technology,
God would have sent us a scientist;
If our greatest need had been money,
God would have sent us an economist;
If our greatest need had been pleasure,
God would have sent us an entertainer;
But our greatest need was forgiveness,
So God sent us a Savior!”

Yes, Jesus came to be our Savior from sin's penalty. Let us not lose this important message behind all the gifts and marketing of the Christmas season.

b. Jesus came to save us from the power of sin.

We must also remember that Jesus came to save us from sin's power. He came to save us from the strongholds of sin.

Hebrews 2:14-15 reminds us of this:

“Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same (Christmas = the incarnation of Christ sharing humanity); that through death (Calvary = the substitutionary work of Christ suffering on the cross) he might destroy him (Conquering = take away the devil's authority – Col. 2:15) that had the power of death (the authority to keep people under the realm of God's penalty for sin), that is, the devil; And deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage” (the bondage of the devil's power and sin).

In these verses, we see that Jesus came to remove the fear of death from our hearts and lives. This is why the angel declared “Fear not.” Because of

Christ's entrance into the world and death upon the cross we no longer must fear death. By receiving Christ as our personal Savior we can know we are going to Heaven. But we are also reminded here that Jesus came to deliver us from the bondage of sin that the devil kept us under. Throughout our unsaved lives, we were "subject to bondage" which speaks of the bondage of sin's power which resulted from being energized by Satan himself.

Ephesians 2:1-2

"And you *hath he quickened*, who were dead in trespasses and sins; Wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience."

Jesus not only saves us from sin's penalty but also sin's power. He came to deliver us from the enslaving nature of our sins. People everywhere are living under the bondage of sin. Our society is now openly accepting and pushing homosexuality on the country. People everywhere are bound to their sins of lust, greed, anger, and hate. Jesus came to deliver lost humanity from the bondage of Satan and their sins.

Jesus is the great Savior! Because of Christ's birth and cross we can be saved from sin's penalty and power. The baby in the womb was born to die and destined to become the Savior of lost humanity.

Dr. Lewis Sperry Chafer, evangelist and founder of Dallas Theological Seminary, told a simple story from his life. It seems that one-day Dr. Chafer was walking along the street when he encountered a flagman sitting in a little house at a railroad crossing. He noticed that the man was reading a large family Bible. Though a sign on the door said, "No Admittance," Dr. Chafer went boldly through the door to greet the man. In reply to a question from Dr. Chafer, the man said that he read the Bible a lot. So Chafer asked a second question; one most people are too timid to ask these days; "Are you saved?"

The answer of the flagman carries the sentiments of many: "I never could be good enough to be saved." Dr. Chafer countered, "Friend, if God would make an exception of your case, and give you salvation outright as a gift, would you receive it?"

"Mister," the flagman replied, "I don't know what brand of fool you think I am that I wouldn't take a gift like that!" Chafer then asked the flagman to read John 10:28. It took the man awhile to find the passage, but then he read, "I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish..." Then Chafer directed him to Romans 6:23, where he read, "the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord."

The flagman was amazed. He said to Dr. Chafer, "Stranger, I don't know who you are, but you've done more for me today than any other man." Chafer crisply replied, "What have I done for you? I've got you in a trap. You told me that if it was a gift, you'd accept it. Now, what are you going to do about that?" "I will accept it right now," the flagman responded. And he did. Dr. Chafer prayed with him and the man was gloriously saved.

Friend, this is the simplicity of the Gospel ("the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ, our Lord").

Luke 2:11 declares:

"For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord."

Here we have a theological teaching in miniature form. The words "Savior ... Christ ... Lord" express very important theological teaching. These three titles together summarize the saving work of Jesus and His sovereign position.

The word "Saviour" is linked to the name of Jesus. The name Jesus actually comes from Hebrew origin meaning "Jehovah is Savior" (Matt. 1:21). It is a transliteration from the word Joshua which means "Jehovah is salvation." This was the name divinely chosen for the Son of God as His incarnation.

Matthew 1:21

"And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins."

The name Jesus means Savior. The point is this, Jesus is the Savior and He had to come into this world as a man in order to bridge the gap between God and man.

1 Timothy 2:5

“For *there is* one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus.”

A man traveled a great distance for an interview with a distinguished scholar. He was ushered into the man’s study, where he said, “Doctor, I notice that the walls of your study are lined with books from the ceiling to the floor. No doubt you have read them all. I know you have written many yourself. You have traveled extensively, and doubtless you’ve had the privilege of conversing with some of the world’s wisest men. I’ve come a long way to ask you just one question. Tell, me, of all you’ve learned, what is the one thing most worth knowing?”

Putting his hand on his guest’s shoulder, the scholar replied with emotion in his voice, “My dear sir, of all the things I have learned, only two are really worth knowing. The first is, I am a great sinner, and the second, Jesus Christ is a great Savior!” Friend, if you know those two things personally, you know the best news in the whole world, that a Savior has been born for you who is Christ the Lord!

But Jesus could not be the Savior if he was not the Christ!

The title “Christ” (Christos) literally means “anointed” and refers to the Messiah. The Hebrew word for Messiah (“anointed one”) refers to someone who has been consecrated by God. The Greek equivalent to the Hebrew word for messiah is “Christos” which means in English, the Christ (Matt. 16:16; John 20:30-31). This official title given to Jesus points to how He was the long-awaited Messiah. He was the One to whom Moses and the prophets declared should come. Jesus was the goal of Old Testament revelation.

The Bible clearly prophesies that the coming Messiah (the Christ) would actually be equal with God the Father, since He would share the same existence with the Father, as the One true and living God (Psalm 110:1-2;

Heb. 1:8-9). The Messiah (Christ) was revealed in the Old Testament Scriptures to actually be God incarnate when He arrives on the world scene.

Isaiah 7:14

“Therefore the Lord himself shall give you a sign; Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel” (God with us).

The fact that Jesus is the Christ points to the fact that He is indeed God in the flesh.

1 John 4:3 gives us this warning:

“And every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh (that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh, as a man, to reveal God to us) is not of God: and this is that spirit of antichrist, whereof ye have heard that it should come; and even now already is it in the world.”

So, Jesus could not be the Savior, if He was not the Christ, but Christ could not be God, if He were not the Lord! Jesus was not only the “Christ” who was sent by God and shared God’s existence. He was also the Lord who shared God’s existence. The title “Lord” (kurios) means supreme authority and ruler. This title indicates that Jesus was actually the sovereign ruler of the universe when He came on to the world scene. He was God incarnate - the supreme ruler of the universe for He shared with the Father the eternal existence of God (Heb. 1:3). Jesus is the Lord! He is Lord of all!

Now think of this. A helpless baby, and yet, Lord of all! What an amazing Savior we have. Here was a baby who was the Creator! Here was a baby who was the sovereign and sustainer of the universe! Of course, if Jesus was not the Christ and the Lord, then He was not the Savior. Jesus had to be both Christ and Lord to save our souls. The cults and liberal ministers of our day still deny that Jesus was the Christ who came in the flesh. They deny that He was Lord of all! They reject the notion that He was God.

Folks, we are saved because Jesus is the Christ and Christ is the Lord. And the Bible says, “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved” (Acts 16:31). Romans 10:9 says, “That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth

the Lord Jesus (Jesus as Lord), and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved.”

The key question at the Christmas season is this: Who is Jesus? Is Jesus merely “an Example,” “a good Man,” “a wonderful Teacher” or is He the Christ who has come in the flesh to reveal God to us? Is He the Lord who has come to dwell among us? Is Jesus really God who has come down in the flesh to save us? You can tell whether or not a person is for Christ or against Christ by asking them this question: “What do you think about Jesus Christ?”

“What child is this, who, laid to rest,
On Mary’s lap is sleeping?
Whom angels greet with anthems sweet,
While shepherds watch are keeping?
This, this is Christ the King,
Whom shepherds guard and angels sing:
Haste, haste to bring Him laud,
The babe, the son of Mary.”

IV. The sign that was given

Have you heard of the 3 stages in the life of a man?

1. He believes in Santa Claus.
2. He doesn’t believe in Santa Claus.
3. He LOOKS like Santa Claus.

One of the signs of aging is that if we are not careful, we can begin to look like Satan Claus. Especially after eating so much around the Christmas season! Well, we now come to the sign that was given to the shepherds. It was a significant sign that would help them identify the Christ child.

Luke 2:12

“And this *shall be* a sign unto you; Ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger.”

Swaddling clothes are bands of cloths used in the practice of “wrapping” an infant tightly. The idea behind swaddling is that it helps the baby transition from the womb (a very snug place) to the outside world. Swaddling clothes are still used today, but with some modifications. In general, swaddling has been proved to help infants sleep better, to prevent them from scratching themselves, and to reduce the risk of SIDS. In ancient times, like today, a swaddled infant was safe if wrapped and watched properly. Many cultures still practice swaddling today.

I will never forget the sign that I read while crossing south of the border, when entering South Carolina. It read, “Free air – everything else will cost you something.” This was an unusual sign. There was another unusual sign that took place in Bethlehem long ago. It was a sign that the shepherds would see when they arrived at Bethlehem.

What was the sign? Generally speaking, it was a sign of a lowly and humble birth for a king. The uniqueness of the sign was the rarity of finding a king wrapped in cloth strips, lying in a manger, instead of finding a king born in a palace of royalty, covered with expensive garments. This sign brought great amazement and wonder to the shepherds. It will be the wonder of the ages! It will be the wonder of eternity! Jesus as the Messiah and Savior came in the weakest way possible. He came as a baby.

George Macdonald put it this way:

“They all were looking for a King
To slay their foes and lift them high:
Thou cam’st, a little baby thing
That made a woman cry.”

This is the way the Savior entered the world. There should have been more than just a few shepherds and angels to welcome Him - all of creation should have been there! After all, Jesus was the Lord of Glory!

It is doubtful that the shepherds would have ever thought that the prophesied King of Glory and eternal God would be born in a stable. But this lowly place was reserved for the Lord when He came into our world. It truly was a sign

of wonder and amazement. That God of very God would be born in a stable and not a royal place of prominence and sophistication.

The Savior would be found in a stable surrounded by oxen and other animals. He would not be dressed in the robes of a royalty child but the traditional white cloths that babies were wrapped in (Ezek. 16:4). He would not be waited upon by numerous attendants but would only be with Mary and Joseph. The sign of this humble birth of the eternal God of Heaven was that He would be found in a stable wrapped in traditional white cloths.

It's interesting that these bands of white cloth were also used in wrapping the bodies of the dead. Perhaps the mention of these swaddling clothes at Christ's birth was a reminder and foreshadowing that He was actually born to die. He would one day be wrapped in these cloths after giving His life for our sins.

Matthew 27:59 says:

“And when Joseph had taken the body, he wrapped it in a clean linen cloth.”

The crib, cloth, and cross were all providentially ordained by God. The later gift of myrrh from the wise men (Matt 2:11) also indicated that Christ was born to die upon Calvary's cross. Myrrh was a bitter herb that portrayed Christ's bitter and harsh death on Calvary's cross. There could be no mistake about it. Jesus came into this world in order to die for sinners and save them from hell! Let's get back to the real meaning of Christmas! This indignity was reserved for the Lord of glory when He came into our world. It truly was a sign of wonder and amazement.

“Down from His glory, ever living story,
My God and Savior came, and Jesus was His name;
Born in a manger to His own a stranger,
A man of sorrows, tears and agony!”

In January of 1956, Jim Elliot and four other missionaries gave their lives in Ecuador in their effort to reach the Auca Indians. This fierce group was known to attack any outsiders, but the vision for reaching them with the gospel compelled these young men to take the risk. Not long after they set

up camp near the village they were attacked by warriors. Refusing to defend their lives with force, the missionaries were killed. The news flashed around the world, and the story of courage and sacrifice challenged many to take up the missionary cause. Even today Elliot's words live on: "He is no fool who gives what he cannot keep to gain what he cannot lose."

In a very real sense, Jim Elliot and his missionary friends were living the spirit of Christmas. They were willing to give up the comforts of home and promising careers and to ultimately lay down their lives to take the Gospel to those who had never heard. They could have fought back to defend themselves, but they chose not to. This is what Jesus did for us in coming to earth. He came to die on Calvary's cross. He could have come to destroy the earth and been just in doing it. But instead, He came down from His glory to give Himself for the world!

E. The sermon that was spoken

Luke 2:13-14

"And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God, and saying, Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men."

Another Christmas hymn was taken from this verse.

"It came upon the midnight clear,
That glorious song of old,
From angels bending near the earth,
To touch their harps of gold:
"Peace on the earth, goodwill to men
From heavens all gracious King!"
The world in solemn stillness lay
To hear the angels sing."

The angel's sermon had a three-fold message:

a. Praise of God

This was quite a sermon and one that was filled with praise. Praise and preaching should go together. Suddenly a multitude of the heavenly host (the angels) appeared praising God as they spoke forth specific words of praise. The text does not actually say that the angels were singing. They were “saying” something but not necessarily singing about it. We do know that the angels sang and praised God at the time of creation (Job 38:7). However, in this Christmas scene, the angels were apparently praising God as they spoke forth these wonderful words of praise.

The angels praised God at His first creation of the earth but now they are seen praising God for sending His Son into the world to make new creations out of sinners!

Their praise, known generally today by the title, *Gloria in Excelsis Deo*, catches the full significance of the birth of the Baby Jesus Christ. "Gloria in excelsis Deo" is actually Latin and means "Glory to God in the highest."

“Angels we have heard on high,
Sweetly singing o’er the plains,
And the mountains in reply
Echo back their joyous strains.
Gloria in excelsis Deo.
Gloria in excelsis Deo.”

The text says the angels were “praising God” (vs. 13) and saying, “Glory to God in the highest (highest Heaven).” The angelic choir was praising God who lived in the highest Heaven and was bringing glory to His name for His purpose of His plan of salvation which was coming to pass on the earth with the birth of the Savior.

God’s plan of salvation is cause for praise! We to should praise God for our Savior and salvation!

- ✓ Have you praised the Heavenly Father for allowing His Son to be born?
- ✓ Have you thanked Him lately for giving His son so that He might die upon the cross in your place?
- ✓ Do you personally praise and thank God for your salvation on a continual basis?

We need to concentrate on living our lives as “days of praise” to the One who came to set us free. The angels praised God for His Son and salvation. Certainly we should do the same today.

Ephesians 1:6

“To the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved.”

Ephesians 1:12

“That we should be to the praise of his glory, who first trusted in Christ.”

Ephesians 1:14

“Which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of his glory.”

“Songs of praises
Songs of praises
I will ever give to Thee
I will ever give to Thee!”

b. Peace of God

The heavenly choir then made the declaration of peace on earth (“on earth peace” – vs. 14). The kind of peace the angels were singing about was the peace man could now have with God (before God’s presence) due to the Savior’s arrival. It was a peace related to salvation. It was not peace between nations and people, as so many talk about at the Christmas season, but a peace that the saved sinner could have before God because of the Savior who had come into the world.

Romans 5:1

“Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.”

The is talking about a peaceful standing before God. It means that before God we are acquitted of all of our sins, accredited the righteousness of God’s Son, and therefore we have a peaceful standing of acceptance before God.

This means that Jesus came to give us acceptance before God. The Bible teaches that before we were saved, we were considered to be God's enemies (Romans 5:6-10). But here is the good news. If we have received Jesus Christ as our personal Savior, we can know that God is now at peace with us. We can be sure that God's righteous wrath and anger will not be meted out against us. We can know that God accepts us forever!

Sometimes you will hear someone say, "I've made my peace with God." What they mean by this is that they supposedly confessed all of their sins or promised to change their life or something to God, so that He might accept them. However, we must remember that we do not make peace with God, God has made peace with us through Jesus Christ. Nothing we say or do can grant us a peaceful standing before God. It is what God has done for us through God's Son that gives us peace in His throne room (Eph. 1:3).

When Christ came the first time He brought salvation's peace which would come through the cross. When Christ comes the second time He will come as the Prince of Peace by putting down all unrighteousness and rebellion in the world (Isaiah 9:6). He will establish peace on the earth. However, the peace of Christ's first coming has nothing to do with world peace which is what many people relate with the Christmas season. The coming of Christ into the world (the birth of Christ) has to do with salvation's peace or the peace that a believing sinner can have before God.

c. Personal favor of God

The angel choir further spoke about peace and "good will toward men" (vs. 14). Today we are told to have the Christmas or yuletide spirit of good will toward men. Many think that Christmas is all about people doing acts of good will (kind favors) toward others, but this once again misses the whole point of Christmas. The message of Christ's entrance into the world speaks of God's good will or favor expressed toward a lost human race. It's not about man's good will, but God's good will or grace expressed toward people, who are going to hell! When Christ was born, God was stepping down to man so that sinners through God's grace could experience God's pardon and forgiveness.

The Biblical phrase “good will toward men” means that people are the objects of God’s goodwill and favor. This is the amazing grace of the Christmas story. God came down to save people through His Son (John 3:16). Sinners have become the objects of His goodwill, favor, or grace.

Ephesians 2:8

“For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God.”

This is the real Christmas story of good will! It is God’s good will which is actually grace beyond measure! Friend, it’s God who has been good, since He has expressed His grace to a lost human race going to hell.

A television interviewer was walking the streets of Tokyo at Christmas time. The interviewer stopped one young woman on the sidewalk, and asked, “What is the meaning of Christmas?” She responded, “I don’t know. Is that the day that Jesus died?” There was some truth in her answer. This is because Christ was born to die so we might be pardoned and saved from the awful plight and condemnation of our sins. Christmas was the expression of God’s good will toward mankind!

V. The searching shepherds

Luke 2:15-16

“And it came to pass, as the angels were gone away from them into heaven, the shepherds said one to another, Let us now go even unto Bethlehem, and see this thing which is come to pass, which the Lord hath made known unto us. And they came with haste, and found Mary, and Joseph, and the babe lying in a manger.”

I remember searching for many country churches when I was involved in a traveling music group. We traveled all over the east coast one summer and sang in many churches. Sometimes they were hard to find since they were stuck back in the rolling hills of the countryside and between the cornfields. I remember trying to find a little country church that was located way up in Main. I was driving the van and happened to see a sign that had fallen over which pointed me in the right direction. Those traveling days were a

wonderful part of my early Christian experience as a singer and preacher of the Gospel.

In this Christmas scene we find that the shepherds decided to travel to Bethlehem. But they did not have any church vans. They went by camel express! The Bible says “they came with haste” to find the Christ child. This tells me that they were greatly interested in Christ. They were excited to find Him and see the baby. I wonder how excited we have been about Jesus Christ? Do we make haste to get to church and hear about Jesus and from His Word? Do you make haste to do His bidding and serve Him? Do you make haste in living out his plan for our lives? They wanted to see Jesus! “We would see Jesus” (John 12:21) – His glory, grace, and greatness!

The verb “found” suggests that the shepherds were searching for the Christ Child. Apparently the shepherds knew what to look for since they were given the sign. There would be a newborn baby wrapped in swaddling clothes lying in a manger (Luke 2:12). So, eventually the shepherds found Him!

This was truly a sight to behold when they found baby Jesus. They had found Mary, Joseph, and the baby, the King of all the ages, the King of kings and Lord of lords, lying in a manger wrapped in swaddling clothes and lying in an animal trough in a stable. They had found the babe! They had found the Savior, the very One who would one day die on the cross of Calvary.

Let me ask you a question. Have you found Him? Do you know Him as your personal Savior?

Isaiah 55:6

“Seek ye the Lord while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near.”

VI. The sharing of the good news

Luke 2:17 goes on to say:

“And when they had seen it, they made known abroad the saying which was told them concerning this child.”

After seeing the sign and hearing what was spoken to them by the angels, the shepherds wanted to share this scene and saying with others, concerning the birth of the Christ child and Savior. They spoke of how they had found a baby in a manger wrapped in strips of white cloth. No doubt they spoke about the sign, the saying, and the Savior. It was such a wonderful message and glorious experience!

- ✓ Have you "made known" to others the true meaning and message of Christmas?
- ✓ Have you shared the true message of Christmas with someone this week?
- ✓ Are you ready to take this message to those who truly are in need of Christ?
- ✓ Will you pray for opportunities to share this message with others?

1 Timothy 2:5

“For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus.”

There is a message of missions in the Christmas story! It’s a message of personal evangelism. We are to share with others the true meaning of Christ’s birth. He was born to die upon Calvary. As we have mentioned already, the shadow of the cross was cast upon the cradle.

“He was born in the shadow of a tree, the shadow of a tree;
Ever present was the knowledge He would be
Hanging from a tree – the tree of Calvary.”

VII. The special responses

Luke 2:18-20

“And all they that heard it wondered at those things which were told them by the shepherds. But Mary kept all these things, and pondered them in her heart. And the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things that they had heard and seen, as it was told unto them.”

In this final section, we see the responses of those who were connected with this Christmas story.

a. A response of amazement (the people).

The Bible says “and all they that heard it wondered” (vs. 18). My friend, the message of the humble and humiliating birth of Jesus Christ is a message that should bring great wonder and amazement to our minds and hearts. Oh the wonder of it all! Oh the wonder of it all that God should love me!

“Oh, the love that drew salvation's plan!
Oh, the grace that brought it down to man!
Oh, the mighty gulf that God did span at Calvary.”

To think that God sent His only beloved and eternal Son to become a man, so we might be redeemed, should produce a sense of continual amazement in our hearts. We should never get over what God has done for us! We should never get over the wonder of it all! The message of Christmas should stir our hearts and never cease to amaze us. The lowly and humble advent of our Savior into the world should stir our hearts to love Him more and more.

“The cattle are lowing the Baby awakes
But little Lord Jesus no crying He makes.
I love You Lord Jesus; look down from the sky
And stay by my side until morning is nigh.”

b. A response of meditation (the mother Mary).

The Bible records these words: “But Mary kept all these things, and pondered them in her heart” (vs. 19). The story, sign, Savior, and saying caused Mary to reflect or meditate upon the most amazing message that the world has ever known. To think that the Savior had entered this world through her womb was something to meditate upon. There was much to ponder in Mary’s heart. Someone tried to capture her heart when they wrote:

“Mary did you know
That your baby boy has walked where angels trod?
And when you kiss your little boy

You've kissed the face of God?

Mary, did you know
That your baby boy is Lord of all creation?
That your baby boy will one day rules the nations?

Mary, did you know
That your baby boy is heaven's perfect Lamb?
This sleeping child you're holding
Is the Great I Am?

Mary did you know
That your baby boy has come to make you new?
This child that you've delivered
Will soon deliver you?"

That's a lot to ponder!

c. A response of rejoicing (the shepherds).

The text goes on to record: "And the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God" (vs. 20). The birth and entrance of the Savior into this world should bring great rejoicing and praise to our hearts at this Christmas season and all year round. We should send up praise and glory to God for His "unspeakable gift" (2 Cor. 9:15). Christ was born some 2,000 years ago in Bethlehem. However, this birth will mean nothing to you, it cannot produce true joy in your life, unless Jesus Christ is born in your heart through personal faith in Him.

Jesus said in John 3:7:

"Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again."

"Born to raise the sons of earth,
Born to give them second birth.
Hark the herald angels sing
Glory to the newborn King."

The beloved Christmas hymn is true. Jesus Christ was born into this world, so you could ultimately be born again, though the infusion of His life in yours. Jesus was born to die on the cross paying the penalty for your sin and mine

and He rose again the third (1 Cor. 15:3-4), so that He can enter your heart and give to you the gift of eternal life, through the new birth.

Do you want His gift of salvation and eternal life today? If so, express personal faith in Jesus Christ's death and resurrection and He will be born in your heart today, He will give you His own life and grant you eternal life with Him forever in Heaven.

“O holy Child of Bethlehem!
Descend to us, we pray;
Cast out our sin and enter in:
Be born in us today.
We hear the Christmas angels
The great glad tiding tell;
O come to us, abide with us,
Our Lord Emmanuel.”