

THE GOSPEL OF LUKE

A Message of Hope and Fulfillment For Those Longing For God

The Last Shall be First

Luke 2: 8-20

Introduction: If the birth of Christ occurred in a place least likely for a King, the birth announcement came to a group least likely to be recognized as worthy of such an honor. The visitation of the shepherds by the Angel of the Lord in the fields outside Bethlehem is proof that this King and His Kingdom will be like no other. It is not to the rich, the powerful, and the dignitaries of this world to whom God makes Himself known; it is to the poor, the weak, and the seemingly insignificant that He reveals Himself.

I. The Angelic Visit

- A. We often think of a company of angels hovering in the sky, but the Scripture states that:
 1. an angel of the Lord stood in front of them
 2. the Shekinah glory of God shone around them (the pillar & the cloud)
 3. after the announcement a multitude of angels appeared with the first angel
- B. This is the greatest manifestation of God's presence since, and perhaps eclipsing, the giving of the Law
 1. Luke is clear: the GLORY of GOD was all around them
 2. Despite their fear, there is no command to remove their sandals or fall down
 3. In itself this ushers in a new era of God coming near to His people
- C. The Gospel announcement by the angel
 1. The angel brings (1) good news (2) of great joy (3) for ALL people
 2. A Savior is born in Bethlehem
 3. You will find Him wrapped in cloths, lying in a manger
 4. The chorus of praise

II. The Identity of the Child

- A. A Savior—the message is for ALL people (not just the Jews) that a Savior has been born, one who rescues from the curse of the Law and the ravages of sin
- B. Christ (Messiah)—the expectation of the descendant of David, the Great King Whose rule will know no end, Who will deliver the oppressed and establish the reign of righteousness and justice
- C. The Lord (Kurios / Adoni)—in the context of Messiah this is without doubt the Lord of Glory and the God of the Ages, the Lord and Master Who has the right of rule in all people's hearts.
- D. There can be no doubt by the trifold description of the angel that this One Who is born is the very Lord Jehovah, Divine King and Savior of the whole world. *Glory to God in the highest, And on earth peace...*

III. The Shepherd's Visit and the Proclamation of the Message

- A. The shepherds left the sheep (!) and went in a hurry to see the Baby
- B. Even in birth, Jesus was for all the people (the shepherds came within hours)
- C. They quickly shared the things they had been told and all the people wondered at the meaning of this announcement
- D. Mary adds to her heart's journal and ponders the meaning of all she hears

Conclusion: Imagine if you were one of the shepherds. What would that experience be like?! How does it make you feel to know that God chose some of the lowliest of society to be the first recipients of the great news of Jesus' birth and the first (human) heralds of the Gospel message? Truly He is opposed to the proud but gives grace to the humble (James 4:6). All of us have access to God Who has taken the initiative to draw near to us.

⁸ In the same region there were some shepherds staying out in the fields and keeping watch over their flock by night. ⁹ And an angel of the Lord suddenly stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them; and they were terribly frightened. ¹⁰ But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid; for behold, I bring you good news of great joy which will be for all the people; ¹¹ for today in the city of David there has been born for you a Savior, who is Christ the Lord. ¹² "This will be a sign for you: you will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger." ¹³ And suddenly there appeared with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying, ¹⁴ "Glory to God in the highest, And on earth peace among men with whom He is pleased."

(Continued on Page 2)

Memory Verse

¹¹ For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, who is Christ the Lord.

Luke 2: 11 (KJV)

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- 1.) What place in society did the shepherds, as an occupation, have? How were they viewed by most people?
- 2.) What might they have been doing at the time the angel appeared?
- 3.) What is the distinction between the visit of the angel(s) and the Glory of the Lord which shone around them?
- 4.) What does the phrase mean: *and on earth peace among men with whom He is well pleased*?
- 5.) Name the things the shepherds felt and did in order (look for the verbs).
- 6.) What was the response of the people who heard their news?
- 7.) What was Mary's response? What do you think she might have been thinking?
- 8.) What is the conclusion regarding the identity of Jesus based on what the angel said?
- 9.) What is your personal reaction and response to this passage in Luke's Gospel?

NOTES

¹⁵ When the angels had gone away from them into heaven, the shepherds began saying to one another, "Let us go straight to Bethlehem then, and see this thing that has happened which the Lord has made known to us." ¹⁶

So they came in a hurry and found their way to Mary and Joseph, and the baby as He lay in the manger. ¹⁷

When they had seen this, they made known the statement which had been told them about this Child. ¹⁸ And all who heard it wondered at the things which were told them by the shepherds. ¹⁹

But Mary treasured all these things, pondering them in her heart. ²⁰ The shepherds went back, glorifying and praising God for all that they had heard and seen, just as had been told them.

Luke 2: 8-20 (NASB)