

Christmas: The Most Worshipful Time of the Year

Celebrating the Lord's Arrival to Save Us From Sin

The Night Some Shepherds Visited The Lamb Of God: The Most Unlikely Witnesses Are God's Chosen Witnesses

Luke 2:1–20

—Introducing today's message with some thoughts written by Warren

Wiersbe: "How amazed the angels must have been when they saw their Creator born as a creature, the Word coming as a speechless baby. The best commentary on this is from 2 Corinthians 8:9, 'For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for your sake He became poor, so that you through His poverty might become rich.' And the best response from our hearts is wonder and worship. 'Great is the mystery of godliness: God was revealed in the flesh' (1 Timothy 3:16).

The first announcement of the Messiah's birth was given by an angel to some anonymous shepherds. Why shepherds? Why not priests or scribes? By visiting shepherds, the angel revealed the grace of God toward mankind. Shepherds were really outcasts in Israel. Their work not only made them ceremonially unclean, but it kept them away from the Temple for weeks at a time so that they could not become clean. God doesn't call the rich and mighty; He calls the poor and the lowly (Luke 1:51–53; 1 Corinthians 1:26–29).

The Messiah came to be both the Good Shepherd (John 10) and the Lamb of God sacrificed for the sins of the world (John 1:29). It was fitting that the Good News about God's Shepherd and Lamb be given to humble shepherds." —from **Wiersbe's NT Bible Exposition Commentary**

Here are some additional comments & statements about the shepherds:

"The shepherds did not hear this great news and then sit around discussing it. With excitement and enthusiasm they told others!"

—**Steve Cole**

"When God opens your eyes, when God softens your heart, you will do as the shepherds did. You will proceed directly to the place where you might meet Him." —**Alistair Begg**

"That cluster of shepherds in the field near Bethlehem, they thought they were alone out there under the open skies that cold night, clear and crisp. Suddenly, they realized they weren't alone. An angel of God appeared, and they were surrounded by the glory of God. And what a message they received!" —**Charles Swindoll**

Luke 2:1–20

1 Now in those days a decree went out from Caesar Augustus, that a census be taken of all the inhabited earth. 2 This was the first census taken while Quirinius was governor of Syria. 3 And everyone was on his way to register for the census, each to his own city. 4 Joseph also went up from Galilee, from the city of Nazareth, to Judea, to the city of David which is called Bethlehem, because he was of the house and family of David, 5 in order to register along with Mary, who was engaged to him, and was with child. 6 While they were there, the days were completed for her to give birth. 7 And she gave birth to her firstborn son; and she wrapped Him in cloths, and laid Him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn.

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, "Don't 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."

15 When the angels had gone away from them into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, "Let's 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.

1 The Savior's ARRIVAL! {Luke 2:1–7}

- These verses provide the historical & political setting surrounding the birth of Jesus. They also establish the family connection between Jesus & David, clearly showing the Jesus was qualified to be the Messiah.
- One of the most important truths found in this passage relates to God's sovereign authority/control. Even though the decree that demanded the census was given by Caesar Augustus, it was used by God to fulfill the OT prophecies that the Savior would be born in Bethlehem. God was in control of every aspect of Christ's birth!

2 An AMAZING ANNOUNCEMENT! {Luke 2:8–14}

- God often chooses & uses insignificant people to accomplish significant work. It's not surprising that angels made this special announcement, but since shepherds weren't even able to enter the Temple or to be witnesses in court, no one would have ever imagined that they would be the first people on earth to hear that the Messiah had been born!

3 The shepherds' ACKNOWLEDGEMENT {Luke 2:15–20}

- The shepherds realized that the angels' message came from the Lord & they responded immediately by going to Bethlehem! After they saw Mary, Joseph, & the Baby Jesus, they reported this great event to others! They rejoiced by glorifying and praising God. They became the first ones to share the Good News about the Messiah!

—PERSONAL REFLECTIONS TO ENCOURAGE OUR FAITH—

- When God provided His message to the shepherds, they listened & responded with a sense of urgency by going to see firsthand what the Lord had made known to them! We have God's Word in written form. Do we sense an urgency to gain a greater understanding of what God has revealed to us in His Word?
- The shepherds were prompted to glorify & praise God because of what they had heard & seen. What motivates us to glorify & praise the Lord?
- Once the shepherds had personally seen what the Lord had made known to them, they began spreading the Good News to others! Do we sense an urgency to spread the Good News of God's message?

Some Personal or Discussion Questions to Help us Dig Deeper

Please carefully read Luke 2:1–20 & any other Bible passages included with each question!

- 1— The birth of Christ is the most prominent turning point of all history, or as some might suggest, **His Story** is the most fascinating event that has ever taken place! An interesting note: H. G. Wells, a famous British science-fiction author who lived from 1866–1946, claimed to be an atheist & was an out-spoken non-believer, once wrote, "I'm not a believer. I'm a historian. But applying my mind to it as it is, I am forced to conclude that Jesus Christ is the center of history." In Luke 2:8–20, there are several words that express emotion & personal reactions to took place. How did the shepherds react to having an angel suddenly stand in front of them? Why did they react in this way? Considering the surprising aspects of this happening in the dark of night, it seems as if the shepherds regained their composure relatively quickly. To what could we attribute this? How do you think you might have reacted?
- 2— In your own words, how would you summarize the angel's message to the shepherds? According to what the angels said, who would receive the great joy that was being promised? How is this relevant to our society/culture today?
- 3— Since Luke 2:8–20 emphasizes the fact that shepherds were the first ones to hear this amazing announcement, it's beneficial for us to recognize that shepherds were often despised in that society. They were simply responsible to guide, protect, & nourish their sheep. But Jewish leaders considered them ceremonially unclean. Socially they were outcasts! How does this impact the meaning of this passage? Why is it meaningful that the angel brought the message of Jesus to shepherds first? What does this teach us about God's view of social prestige?
- 4— How does the chorus of the host of angels in Luke 2:14 strengthen or support the message given by the first angel in 2:10–12? Why is the arrival of this baby Messiah good news that would bring great joy?
- 5— According to Luke 2:15–16, what did the shepherds do in response to what the angels revealed to them? From where or whom did the shepherds believe this message came? Why should it be important for us to know the true source of what we hear? According to Luke 2:17–18, what did the shepherds do after they met with Mary, Joseph, and baby Jesus? How is the shepherds' response to seeing the Messiah in Luke 2:17–18 instructive for those of us who know & trust Him today?