

A MINISTRY FOR HUNGRY SAINTS

THE GOSPEL OF LUKE

✝ THE BOOK OF LUKE

WHAT WE MOST ASSUREDLY BELIEVE

WORD OF TRUTH MINISTRIES, ASSOCIATED

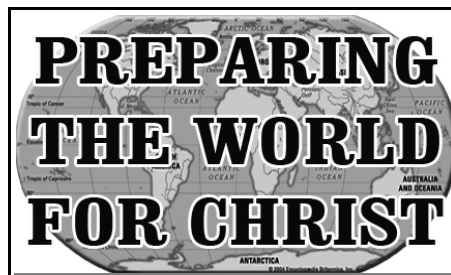
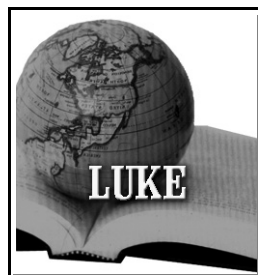
An overview of the Gospel of Luke, by Given O. Blakely

Lesson #7

COMMENTARY ON: 2:1-20

THE BIRTH OF JESUS

The birth of Jesus is the most significant birth that has ever, or will ever, take place. This was God *"manifest in the flesh"* (1 Tim 3:16), *"the Word"* being made flesh (John 1:14), and the commencement of *"God with us"* (Matt 1:23). He was *"born"* a *"Savior"* (Lk 2:11), and a *"King"* as well (Matt 2:). In order for this birth to take place, the Word had to *"humble Himself,"* in order to become *"obedient unto death,"* take upon Himself the form of a servant, and lay aside the prerogatives of Deity (Phil 2:7-8). This is the only person every born that *"came into the world"* (1 Tim 1:15). Although this was the most significant birth, it was attended with hardship and inconvenience. The announcement of the birth was private, restricted to a group of shepherds who were keeping watch over their flocks during the night. Holy angels were involved, even a multitude of heavenly hosts. The world has made this a sentimental scene, but it was actually the time when Satanic aggression was unleashed against this little child.

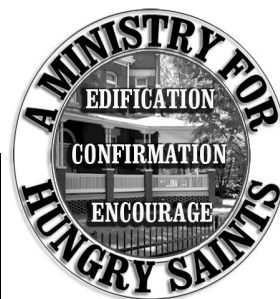


Since May, 1993, a ministry instituted for the encouragement of believers in Christ



The Book of Luke 12/12/2014

Lesson Number 7



A MINISTRY INITIATED IN MAY 1993, AND DEDICATED TO STRENGTHENING THOSE WHO ARE IN CHRIST, BY BUILDING THEIR FAITH, ENHANCING THEIR JOY, AND STABILIZING THEIR HOPE, ENABLING THEM TO WORK OUT THEIR SALVATION WITH FEAR AND TREMBLING.

TRANSLATION LEGEND: ABP=Apostolic Bible Polygot m(1992); ALT=Analytical-Literal Translation (2005), AMPLIFIED=Amplified Bible (1965), ABP=Apostolic Bible Polygot with Greek Interlinear (2003); ASV=American Standard Version (1901), BBE=Bible in Basic English (1949), BRENT=Brenton's English Septuagint; CEB=Common English Bible (2011); CEV=Contemporary English Version (1995); DRA=Douay-Rheims (1899), EMTV=English Majority Text (2002); ERV=English Revised Version (1885), ETRV=Easy to Read (1999), ESV=English Stand Version (2001), GENEVA=Geneva Bible (1599), GNB=Good News (1966), GSNT=Goodspeed (1923), GWN=God's Word (1995), IE=International English (1973), ISV=International Standard Version (1967), JPS=Jewish Publication Society (1917), JUB=Jubilee Bible (2003); KJV=King James Version (1611), LITV=Literat Translation of the Bible (1976), LIVING=Living Bible (1971), MESSAGE=The Message (1993), MKJV=Modern KJV (1962), MONTGOMERY=Montgomery's New Testament (2001), MRD=Peshitta-James Murdock Translation (1852), NAB=New American Bible (2002), NASB=New American Standard Bible (1977), NAU=New American Standard Bible (1995), NIB=New International Bible, NIV=New International Version (1984), NJB=New Jerusalem Bible (1985), NKJV=New King James Version (1979), NLT=New Living Translation (1996), NRSV=New Revised Standard Version (1989), PHILLIPS=J B Phillips New Testament (1962), PNT=Bishop's New Testament (1595), RSV=Revised Standard Version (1952), TNK=JPS Tanakj (1985), WEB=Webster Bible (1833), WEYMOUTH=Weymouth's New Testament (1903), WILLIAMS=William's New Testament (1937), TYNDALE=Tyndale's Bible (1526), WYCLIFFE=Wycliffe New Testament (1382), YLT=Young's Literal Translation (1862)

----- GREEK LEXICON LEGEND -----

LEXICON LEGEND: FRIEBERG = Friberg Lexicon, UBS = Barclay-Newman, LOUW-NIDA = Louw-Nida Lexicon, LIDDELL SCOTT

PERSUADED OF THE NECESSITY OF KNOWING THE CERTAINTY OF THE THINGS WE BELIEVE, LUKE MAKES US MORE FIRM BY BUTTRESSING OUR FAITH, AND CONFIRMING WE HAVE NOT EMBRACED FABLES.

DISCLAIMER: The quoting of other translations is not to be taken as a condoning of them. My purpose is rather to show the remarkable diversity, and sometimes outright contradictions that exist among these various versions of Scripture. Our understanding of the Word of God ultimately depends upon our comprehension of the Lord Himself and His eternal purpose. Where this understanding is not present, we are shut up to scholasticism and conjecture, both of which are of the world, not of God.

THE BIRTH OF CHRIST THE LORD

..Luke 2:1 And it came to pass in those days, that there went out a decree from Caesar Augustus, that all the world should be taxed.² (And this taxing was first made when Cyrenius was governor of Syria.)³ And all went to be taxed, every one into his own city.⁴ 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:)⁵ To be taxed with Mary his espoused wife, being great with child.⁶ And so it was, that, while they were there, the days were accomplished that she should be delivered.⁷ 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.⁸ And there were in the same country shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night.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.¹⁰ And the angel said unto them, Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people.¹¹ For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, which is Christ the Lord.¹² And this shall be a sign unto you; Ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger.¹³ And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God, and saying, ¹⁴Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men.¹⁵ 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.¹⁶ And they came with haste, and found Mary, and Joseph, and the babe lying in a manger.¹⁷ And when they had seen it, they made known abroad the saying which was told them concerning this child.¹⁸ And all they that heard it wondered at those things which were told them by the shepherds.¹⁹ But Mary kept all these things, and pondered them in her heart.²⁰ And the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things that they had heard and seen, as it was told unto them."

Luke 2:1-20

INTRODUCTION

A BRIEF SUMMARY OF THE TEXT

The birth of Jesus is the most significant birth that has ever, or will ever, take place. This was God "manifest in the flesh" (1 Tim 3:16), "the Word" being made flesh (John

1:14), and the commencement of "God with us" (Matt 1:23). He was "born" a "Savior" (Lk 2:11), and a "King" as well (Matt 2:). In order for this birth to take place, the Word had to "humble Himself" in order to become "obedient

unto death," take upon Himself the form of a servant, and lay aside the prerogatives of Deity (Phil 2:7-8). This is the only Person every born that "came into the world" (1 Tim 1:15). Although this was the most significant

The birth of Jesus was attended with inconvenience, the need for creativity, and the announcement of holy angels – Given O. Blakely

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birth, it was attended with hardship and inconvenience. The announcement of the birth was private, restricted to a group of shepherds who were keeping watch over their flocks during the night. Holy angels were involved, even a multitude of heavenly hosts. The world has made this a sentimental scene, but it was actually the time when Satanic aggression was unleashed against this little child.

SCRIPTURALLY HIGHLIGHTED BIRTHS

There are several births in Scripture that are highlighted – i.e. more is said about them, and more circumstances attended their births.

⇒ **NOAH.** *"And Lamech lived an hundred eighty and two years, and begat a son: And he called his name Noah, saying, **This same shall comfort us concerning our work and toil of our hands, because of the ground which the LORD hath cursed.**"* (Gen 5:28-29)

- Born in preparation for the

coming flood. God would save the human race through Noah.

⇒ **ISHMAEL.** *"And the angel of the LORD said unto her, Behold, thou art with child, and shalt bear a son, and shalt **call his name Ishmael**; because the LORD hath heard thy affliction. And he will be a wild man; his hand will be against every man, and every man's hand against him; and **he shall dwell in the presence of all his brethren**"* (Gen 16:11-12).

- This offspring of Abraham would be the progenitor of some of Israel's premier enemies. They would also be among the nations ultimately impacted by the Savior.

⇒ **ISAAC.** *"And God said, Sarah thy wife shall bear thee a son indeed; and **thou shalt call his name Isaac**: and I will establish My covenant with him for an everlasting covenant, and with his seed after him"* (Gen 17:19).

- The offspring through whom the Messiah would come.

⇒ **MOSES.** *"And there went a man of the house of Levi, and took to wife a daughter of Levi. And the woman conceived, and bare a son: and when **she saw him that he was a goodly child**, she hid him three months. And when she could not longer hide him, she took for him an ark of bulrushes, and daubed it with slime and with pitch, and put the child therein; and she laid it in the flags by the river's brink. And his sister stood afar off, to wit what would be done to him."* (Ex 2:1-4)

- The one through whom God would deliver Israel from Egypt, and through whom He would give the Law, which defined sin and is a Schoolmaster to bring men to Christ.

⇒ **SAMUEL.** *"Wherefore it came to pass, when the time was come about after Hannah had conceived, that she bare a son, and called his name*

*Samuel, saying, **Because I have asked him of the LORD . . . For this child I prayed; and the LORD hath given me my petition which I asked of him: Therefore also I have lent him to the LORD; as long as he liveth he shall be lent to the LORD.** And he worshiped the LORD there."* (1 Sam 1:20, 27-28)

- The last of the Judges, and the greatest of them, for he was a significant prophet.

⇒ **SAMSON.** *"Then the woman came and told her husband, saying, A man of God came unto me, and his countenance was like the countenance of an angel of God, very terrible: but I asked him not whence he was, neither told he me his name: But he said unto me, Behold, thou shalt conceive, and bear a son; and now drink no wine nor strong drink, neither eat any unclean thing: **for the child shall be a Nazarite to God from the womb to the day of his death.**"* (Judg 13:6-7)

- The Judge through whom God delivered Israel from the Philistines.

⇒ **MAHERSHALHASHBAZ.** *"And I went unto the prophetess; and she conceived, and bare a son. Then said the LORD to me, **Call his name Mahershalhashbaz.** For before the child shall have knowledge to cry, My father, and my mother, the riches of Damascus and the spoil of Samaria shall be taken away before the king of Assyria."* (Isa 8:3-4)

- During his times God would execute some major judgments that confirmed His Sovereignty.

⇒ **JEZREEL.** *"And the LORD said unto him, **Call his name Jezreel**; for yet a little while, and I will **avenge the blood of Jezreel upon the house of Jehu**, and will cause to cease the kingdom of the house of Israel. And it shall come to pass at that day, that I will break the bow of Israel in the valley of Jezreel."* (Hosea 1:4-5)

- His time would be one in which Israel would be judged.

⇒ LOAMMI. *"Then said God, Call his name Loammi: for ye are not my people, and I will not be your God."* (Hosea 1:9)

- This was a time when God would forsake a generation of Israel.

⇒ JOHN THE BAPTIST. *"But the angel said unto him, Fear not, Zacharias: for thy prayer is heard; and thy wife Elisabeth shall bear thee a son, and thou shalt call his name John. And thou shalt have joy and gladness; and*

many shall rejoice at his birth. For he shall be great in the sight of the Lord, and shall drink neither wine nor strong drink; and he shall be filled with the Holy Ghost, even from his mother's womb. And many of the children of Israel shall he turn to the Lord their God. And he shall go before him in the spirit and power of Elias, to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just; to make ready a people prepared for the Lord." (Luke 1:13-17)

- This would begin an interim period between the Law and the New Covenant, and provide

preparation for the coming Messiah.

These births, as well as other births and key events, confirm that God is governing the world. He is, in truth, *"the Governor among the nations."* Now, in the birth of Jesus, we are being introduced to the One to whom God will allocate the kingdoms of the world. All authority and judgment will be given to Him, as He will be charged with bringing many sons to glory – in the midst of sinfulness and anarchy, and the aggression of Satan and his principalities and powers. That is why He will be given *"all power in heaven and in earth"* (Matt 28:18).

THERE WENT OUT A DECREE

¹Luke 2:1 *And it came to pass in those days, that there went out a decree from Caesar Augustus, that all the world should be taxed. ²(And this taxing was first made when Cyrenius was governor of Syria.)"*

IT CAME TO PASS

"And it came to pass in those days . . ."

This phrase is mentioned seven times in Scripture (Ex 2:11; Judges 19:1; 1 Sam 28:1; Mk 1:9; Lk 2:1; 6:12; Acts 9:37). In all of the texts the purpose of God was being worked out. None of them was a mere news report of the times. Attention is being drawn to something God is doing, and the surrounding in which it is being done. **It confirms that there is no circumstance that can circumvent the work of God – no situation that can negate His purpose, neutralize what He is doing, or cause some delay of the execution of His purpose.**

These things are recorded in order that we might become more familiar with the Lord, in order that we may effectively work out our own salvation with fear and trembling, as well as with *"the full assurance of "understanding"* (Col 2:2), *"hope"* (Heb 6:11), and

"faith" (Heb 10:22). We will behold how the Lord uses personalities and circumstances. This includes men, women, kings, shepherds, a time of taxation, the night, and available resources. It will become apparent to those who believe that this entire occasion was managed from beginning to end by the Lord from heaven.

THERE WENT OUT A DECREE

" . . . that there went out a decree from Caesar Augustus . . ."

Textual critics have great difficulty with this text, for, they say, there is no record of a world-wide taxation at this time. Thus, pitting one record against another inspired record, they conclude that the Scriptural record – an inspired record – is false, while the purported records of men are true. Of course, worldly records are also lacking accurate information on the flood, scattering of the human race at Shinar, the lives of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, the priesthood of Melchisedec, the reign of Joseph, the deliverance of Israel from Egypt, the parting of the Red Sea, the Israelites conquest of Canaan, the details of the reigns of David and Solomon, the Babylonian captivity, and a whole lot more.

Men have to decide whether or not Scripture, seeing it was given by the inspiration of God (2 Tim 3:16), has the greater weight of testimony. Is it really wise to attempt to harmonize the writings of Josephus and

other historians with those of the apostles. Why would the world make any kind of attempt to delineate the works of God?

We do understand that "Caesar Augustus" was the second Emperor of Rome, commencing his reign in 27 B.C., and continuing until A.D. 14. The month of "August" (formerly called "Sextilis") was named after him. "Caesar" was a common title for all of the Roman monarchs, equating to the Egyptian title Pharaoh. The first name of the ruler is said to have been "Octavianus." **Whatever may be said of this historical figure, he is incidental in this record, which means we must not spend a lot of time gathering information about him.**

What we should note is that this was a ruler God drew into His own purpose, like He drew the Pharaoh of Abraham's time (Gen 12:15-20), Abimelech king of Gerar (Gen 20:2-10), the Pharaoh of Moses' time (Ex 9:16; Rom 9:17), Sihon king of the Amorites

That simply means that the Lord uses kings, they do not and cannot use Him! Thus, in this text, we have the record of God employing an earthly ruler to draw those Divinely determined to be associated with the entrance of His Son into the world, to Bethlehem, where the purpose of God would begin to take overt form.

(Num 21:1-23), Og king of Bashan (Num 1:33-35), the Pharaoh of Joseph's time (Gen 41:1), Kadesh king of Edom (Num 20:14-21), Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon (Jer 27:6-7), Darius king of the Medes (Dan 6:25-28), Cyrus king of the Persians (Ezra 1:1-2), Artaxerxes king of Persia (Neb 2:1-8), and others. This is involved in what is said of the Lord in several places: He is a "Lord of kings" (Dan 2:47). The Lord Jesus, to whom the government and dominion have been given, is referred to as "the King of kings" (1 Tim 6:15; Rev 17:14; 19:16).

That simply means that the Lord uses kings, they do not and cannot use Him! Thus, in this text, we have the record of God employing an earthly ruler to draw those Divinely determined to be associated with the entrance of His Son into the world, to Bethlehem, where the purpose of God would begin to take overt form. The "Believer's Study Bible" (BSB) well says, "THE REIGN OF AUGUSTUS (27 B.C.-A.D. 14) WAS A TIME OF RELATIVE PEACE ON EARTH. LUKE'S ACCOUNT DEPICTS AUGUSTUS AS GOD'S AGENT, WHO, BY HIS EDICT OF CENSUS, SETS THE STAGE FOR THE MESSIAH TO BE BORN IN BETHLEHEM."

ALL THE WORLD WAS INVOLVED

"... that all the world should be taxed. (And this taxing was first made when Cyrenius was governor of Syria.)"

Other versions read, "all the inhabited earth," ^{NIV} "the entire Roman world," ^{NIV} "throughout the empire," ^{CEB} "the Roman Empire," ^{GWN} "the people of his dominion," ^{MRD} "throughout the nation," ^{LIVING} "throughout the nation," ^{MONTGOMERY} "all the people," ^{CEV} "all people

in the countries that were under Roman rule," ^{ERV} and "the whole Roman Empire." ^{AMPLIFIED} The majority of the versions do read "the whole world," "or all the world." The phrase "the inhabited world" is foolish, and is a feeble concession to worldly wisdom. Who would ever think of taking a census of the uninhabited world. The translators using that expression just could not find it in their hearts to say what the text actually says: "all the world."

Lexically, the word translated "the world (oikoumene) means "THE INHABITED EARTH." ^{THAYER} Some Greek philosophers and writers did apply it to the Roman empire – but that is not the root meaning of the word. Further, the Greek word that precedes this expression is "pas," which means "ANY, EVERY ONE." ^{THAYER} The Greek-English Interlinear gives the following English rendition: "every, the being-homed," or "entire inhabited-earth."

The Sense of the Text

We must not view this text as students of history, but as a follower of Christ, and one that believes "God is, and that He is a Rewarder of those who diligently seek Him." Ponder the universal, or global, realities associated with the salvation that is going to now be implemented.

⇒ "All" men had sinned, and therefore required a Savior.

⇒ The Abrahamic promise involved the blessing of "all families of the earth" (Gen 12:3).

⇒ The "True Light," which was Jesus, was intended to lighten "every man" (John 1:9).

⇒ Jesus would "draw all men" to Himself (John 12:32).

⇒ Jesus is described as "the Savior of all men" (1 Tim 4:10).

⇒ The grace of God which brings salvation "hath appeared unto all men" (Tit 2:11).

⇒ Later a holy angel will say to some appointed shepherds, "Fear not, for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people" (Lk 2:10).

How does a provincial mandate fit into that scheme of things? This was a matter that involved the whole world, and it makes good sense that something of a global nature was taking place at that time.

THE TIME OF THE TAXATION

"... that all the world should be taxed. . ."

Other versions read, "should be registered," ^{NKJV} "a census should be taken," ^{NASB} "should be enrolled," ^{RSV} "a numbering," ^{BBE} "be listed in record books," ^{CEV} and "everyone's name must be put on a list." ^{ERV}

This was a universal census, or counting of the people. It would be used to determine the amount of tax paid, which would no doubt be gathered at the time of the census. Thus it is referred to as "this taxing." Men understand that the Romans enrolled the names of men, their property, and their income. This would be used to levy taxes upon them.

As the holy scene develops, we find that while the world is taking, God is giving. While men were determined what the populous had, God was determining what they needed – something that He Himself would supply. It was a fitting time, indeed.

THE TIMING OF THE TAXING

. . . (And this taxing was first made when Cyrenius was governor of Syria.)”

The Believer’s Study Bible notes, “QUIRINIUS IS PUBLIUS SULPICIUS QUIRINIUS, A PROMINENT ROMAN GOVERNOR OF SYRIA (A.D. 6) WHO WAS IN CONTROL OF THE MILITARY IN SYRIA UNDER VARUS (6 B.C.) AND WOULD HAVE DIRECTED THE CENSUS. RECENT ARCHAEOLOGICAL DISCOVERY INDICATES THAT QUIRINIUS MAY HAVE BEEN TWICE GOVERNOR OF SYRIA, THE EARLIER DATE BEING ABOUT 6-4 B.C. AND THE SECOND A.D. 6-9. THE FIRST TERM OF QUIRINIUS WOULD FIT LUKE’S ACCOUNT WELL AT THIS POINT. LUKE IS A CAREFUL HISTORIAN AS WELL AS AN

ACCOMPLISHED THEOLOGIAN.”

The difficulty Scriptural critics have with this verse is that Quirinius was not the governor of Syria at the time Jesus was born. Of course, the text does not say that he was. Rather, it means that he was known as governor at the time Luke wrote this book. Tertullian writes, “SENTIUS SATURNINUS WAS NOW GOVERNOR OF SYRIA, WHEN CYRENIUS WAS SENT INTO JUDEA, TO MAKE THIS REGISTER, OR TAXING; AND WHICH IS MANIFESTLY DISTINGUISHED FROM THAT, WHICH WAS MADE DURING HIS BEING GOVERNOR OF SYRIA, WHEN ARCHELAUS WAS BANISHED FROM JUDEA, TEN OR

ELEVEN YEARS AFTER HEROD’S DEATH; WHICH JOSEPHUS GIVES AN ACCOUNT OF, AND LUKE REFERS TO, IN (ACTS 5:37).” CONTR. MARCION, 50:4. C. 19 JOHN GILL

As a passing thought, one of the keys to arriving at satisfactory conclusions concerning difficult texts is to **begin with the persuasion that the Scriptures themselves are absolutely true, and trump all other writings.** It simply is not possible to clarify or confirm Scripture by appealing to human wisdom and expression. Woe to that person who attempts to prove that Scripture is true or valid.

JOSEPH ALSO WENT UP FROM GALILEE

“³ And all went to be taxed, every one into his own city. ⁴ 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:) ⁵ To be taxed with Mary his espoused wife, being great with child.”

At this point it is important to again emphasize that this is the record of the birth of Jesus, not of the status and activities of the world at that time. **This record is being considered from a global point of view because it is the fulfilment of a global promise, and is a global provision.** Everything will be from that point of view. Therefore we will not merely read of Joseph and Mary, and a particular city, but of the lineage of Joseph and Mary, and the promise concerning the city.

AND ALL TO BE TAXED

“And all went to be taxed, every one into his own city. . .”

The census was being taken region by region, and city by city – the same way census’ are still taken. The “tax” was paid at the time of the registration, because the basis for the taxation was gathered at that time. This occasion would serve as a comparison with the government of the Lord Jesus

when He was exalted. It would be a time of giving, gracious outpouring, and abundant provision – as compared with being “taxed.”

JOSEPH ALSO WENT UP FROM GALILEE

“. . . And Joseph also went up from Galilee . . .”

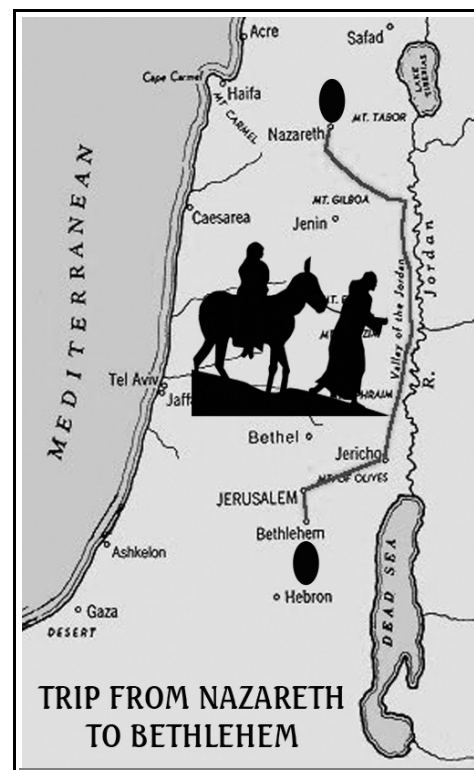
Galilee was the region (Mk 1:28; Lk 4:14). So far as the birth of Jesus was concerned, it will be confirmed that it was the city appointed by God in which Jesus was to be born.

It is estimated that the distance from Nazareth to Bethlehem is seventy miles as the cross flies, and about ninety miles by ground. The most direct way was through Samaria, but that was hilly country, and dangerous for travelers. Under the circumstances, we are talking about a journey of about one to two weeks. If going through Judea, which they probably did, much of the journey would have been through desert terrain.

Perhaps you have thought of doing the will of God as something that is easy, convenient, and always attended with rejoicing. However, this is not always the case. Sometimes the will of the Lord requires extraordinary effort, the aggressive subduing of contrary notions, and passing through

dangerous terrain. So it was with Joseph and Mary.

We see in Joseph a living out of the situation revealed by Paul: *“Wherefore ye must needs be subject, not only for wrath, but also for conscience sake. For this cause pay ye tribute also: for they are God’s ministers, attending continually upon*



this very thing. Render therefore to all their dues: tribute to whom tribute is due; custom to whom custom; fear to whom fear; honor to whom honor" (Rom 13:7). Those chosen to participate in this blessed event will not be engaged in insurrection, like Barabbas (Mk 15:7), when the Prince of Peace enters into the world.

UNTO THE CITY OF DAVID

" . . . out of the city of Nazareth, into Judaea, unto the city of David, which is called Bethlehem . . ."

Ordinarily, Bethlehem is not called *"the city of David."* That was a name affixed to Zion after David had conquered it. As it is written, *"Nevertheless David took the strong hold of Zion: the same is the city of David"* (2 Sam 5:7), which was finally associated with Jerusalem (1 Kgs 8:1; 2 Kgs 19:31; Psa 51:18; Isa 2:3).

Why, then, is Bethlehem referred to as *"the city of David?"* Because that is where he was raised, and there referred to it as *"his city"* (1 Sam 20:6).

proper place of registration was not where Joseph was living, but rather where his progenitor lived, according to the promise of God (Micah 5:2). That remarkable particularity is important to note.

The Particularity of Salvation

In the matter of salvation, it is the One to whom you are related that is the most critical matter – not what you did. The thing God looks for is your association with His Son. Jesus told His disciples that the Father loved them, *"because ye have loved Me, and have believed that I came out from God."* (John 16:27). An individual may have gone through all of the outward mechanics of salvation, but never been put into Christ (1 Cor 1:30), or made a new creation (2 Cor 5:17), or *"born again"* (1 Pet 1:23). Is that person *"in Christ?"* – that is the question. If we wonder what that means, it is written, *"Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new"* (2 Cor 5:17). If a person is not really a *"new creation,"* they are not *"in*

basis for the judgment of others, but to discern our own acceptance by God. **The birth of Jesus met all of the requirements specified by prophecy. Your own new birth should also meet all of the requirements specified for the same in Scripture** (John 10:27; 2 Cor 5:17; Gal 5:24; Phil 3:3; Tit 2:11-12; Tit 3:3-5; 1 John 5:1,18, etc.).

TO BE TAXED WITH MARY

" . . . To be taxed with Mary his espoused wife . . ."

Other versions read, *"betrothed wife,"* ^{NKJV} *"was engaged to him,"* ^{NASB} *"pledged to be married to him,"* ^{NIV} *"his future wife,"* ^{BEB} *"promised to him in marriage,"* ^{CEB} *"his fiancée,"* ^{NLT} *and his espoused (married) wife."* ^{AMPLIFIED}

Some of the versions complicate this text, imposing western culture upon it like, *"engaged," "promised," "future wife,"* and *"fiancée."* In our culture, a Christian cannot be engaged, yet live with the proposed spouse. A *"fiancée"* has no conjugal privileges, and therefore is not yet considered a *"wife."*

Mary, although she was Joseph's wife, was considered *"espoused"* because the marriage had not been consummated in the marriage *"bed"* (Heb 13:4). It is written of Joseph, *"Then Joseph being raised from sleep did as the angel of the Lord had bidden him, and took unto him his wife: And knew her not till she had brought forth her firstborn son: and he called his name JESUS"* (Matt 1:25). Had Joseph *"knew"* Mary, in the marriage sense of the word, he would **not** have committed fornication, for he did **take** her unto himself as *"his wife."* However, in such a case, the Word of God would have been violated, for Jesus was to be *"born of a virgin"* (Isa 7:14; Matt 1:23; Lk 1:27). Therefore, Joseph deferred to the will of God, forfeiting his own rights until the word of God was fulfilled.

In this, Joseph is a noble example for us all. There are times when we technically have a right to do this or that. Yet, there are also circumstances when it is correct to forego those rights

In the matter of salvation, it is the One to whom you are related that is the most critical matter – not what you did. The thing God looks for is your association with His Son.

It was associated with his *"lineage"* as well as his person. Jerusalem, or Zion, is associated with David's reign, not his birth and lineage.

BECAUSE HE WAS OF THE HOUSE OF DAVID

" . . . (because he was of the house and lineage of David) . . ."

Other versions read, *"the house and family,"* ^{NASB} *"house and line,"* ^{NIV} *"because David had been born there,"* ^{GWN} *"because Joseph was a descendant of King David."* ^{NLT}

In the Divine arrangement, the

Christ." It is really just that straightforward.

From another point of view, the accepted ones are the ones who have the same Father as Jesus: *"For both He that sanctifieth [Christ Jesus] and they who are sanctified [the saved of the Lord] are all of one [God the Father]: for which cause He [Jesus] is not ashamed to call them [the saved] brethren"* (Heb 2:11). If that condition is not really met – having the same Father as Jesus – then Jesus is ashamed to call such a person *"brother,"* and will not do so.

This is not intended to become a

in favor of others. That is why Paul wrote, *"Wherefore, if meat make my brother to offend, I will eat no flesh while the world standeth, lest I make my brother to offend"* (1 Cor 8:13). That cannot be done if self is seated on the throne of the heart.

BEING GREAT WITH CHILD

" . . . Mary . . . being great with child."

Other versions read, *"who was with child,"* NKJV *"expecting a child,"* NIV *"was about to become a mother,"* BBE *"who was now obviously pregnant"* NLT and *"soon going to have a baby."* CEV

The word translated *"great with child"* [egkuos] means, **"BIG WITH CHILD,"** THAYER or **"VERY NEAR HER TIME."** JOHN GILL

This was at the beginning of their 90-100 mile journey. You see how they did not even think of inconvenience, or of Mary being excused from the trip because she was near the end of carrying the miraculous Child.

I think it is worthy of some thought to consider why the saints of old thought as they did – **without** all of the remarkable conveniences we have. For example, how many people would go to the assembly of the saints if they

had to walk to get there? I can personally tell you of one. My beloved wife, before I was acquainted with her, was often noted for walking several Florida-miles to get to the assembly. She did this because she could not afford other means. Having held several revival meetings at that church, I remember how I had a godly respect for her. It never occurred to me that some day she would be my wife – but, some time after the passing of my first wife. She did become my spouse. She is still an exceptionally virtuous woman, whom take this moment to applaud.

THE DAYS WERE ACCOMPLISHED

"⁶ And so it was, that, while they were there, the days were accomplished that she should be delivered. ⁷ 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."

AND SO IT WAS WHILE THAT THEY WERE THERE

"And so it was, that, while they were there, the days were accomplished that she should be delivered. . ."

Other versions read, *"the days were completed,"* NKJV *"the time came,"* NIV and *"the days were fulfilled."* ASV

We do not know how long they were in Bethlehem before she brought forth her firstborn son. Considering the birth occurred in an inn, they obvious had not yet settled there, which they did later. I assume, therefore, that it was a relatively short time. Add to that the fact that when Joseph and Mary traveled to Bethlehem, it was when she was *"being great with child"* (Lk 2:5).

From the Scriptural point, this all occurred when *"the fulness of the time was come"* It was at that time that *"God sent forth His Son, made of a*

woman, made under the law" (Gal 4:4). Sufficient time had elapsed to confirm beyond all doubt that men needed a Savior from another realm. It was not possible for men to be saved by the Law, for it was *"weak through the flesh"* (Rom 8:3), requiring more than man was capable of doing. Humanity had, fro, Adam, lapsed into a condition appropriately called *"dead in trespasses and sins"* (Eph 2:1), *"alienated from the Life of God"* (Eph 4:18), and *"having no hope, and without God in the world"* (Eph 2:12).

SHE BROUGHT FORTH HER FIRSTBORN SON

" . . . And she brought forth her firstborn son . . ."

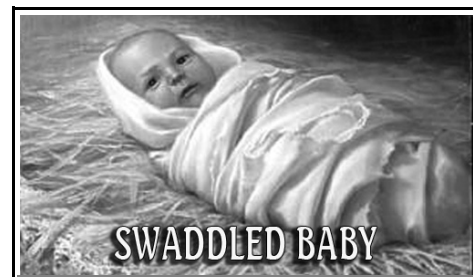
When Israel was in bondage in Egypt, there were some *"mid-wives"* to assist them in giving birth (Ex 1:15-21). However, Mary apparently did not have such assistance – at least there is no indication of such a help in the Scriptures.

SHE WRAPPED HIM IN SWADDLING CLOTHES

" . . . and wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger . . ."

Other versions read, *"swaddling*

cloths," NKJV *"in cloths,"* NASB *"bands of cloths,"* NRSV *"folding Him in linen,"* BBE *"wrapped Him snugly,"* CEB *"In bandages,"* MRD *"wrapped Him up,"* YLT *"wrapped Him in a blanket,"* LIVING *"swaddled Him,"* ABP *"wrapped him up well."* ERV



The word from which *"swaddling clothes"* is translated [spargonoo], has e following lexical meaning: **"A SWATHING BAND; TO WRAP IN"** **"SWADDLING-CLOTHES: AN INFANT JUST BORN,"** THAYER **"AS PROVIDING INITIAL CARE FOR NEWBORN CHILDREN BY WRAPPING THEM IN LONG STRIPS OF CLOTH SWATHE, WRAP UP IN SWADDLING CLOTHS."** FRIBERG McClintok and Strong's Cyclopedia reads: **TO SWATHE AN INFANT WITH CLOTHS IN ORDER TO KEEP ITS TENDER LIMBS FROM INJURY, A PRACTICE COMMON IN THE EAST (EZEKIEL 16:4).**



Having swaddled the newborn Lord, Mary “laid Him in a manger” – a place in which cattle were fed, also called a “CRIB,” ^{THAYER} OR “FEED TROUGH.” ^{FRIBERG} “FEED BOX.” ^{LOUW-NIDA}

You see the creativity of Joseph and Mary. Having no convenient place, they used what was available to them. There was certainly no available precedent for doing this, and the text gives no indication that the couple panicked. They simply proceeded with the best arrangements available to them – like Jacob finding a stone on which to lay his head (Gen 28:11), or Samson finding the jawbone of an ass with which to fight (Judges 15:15-17). The prophet Elisha directed a certain woman who needed to pay a debt to start with a “*pot of oil*” that she had in her house (2 Kgs 4:1-7). They all used what they had.

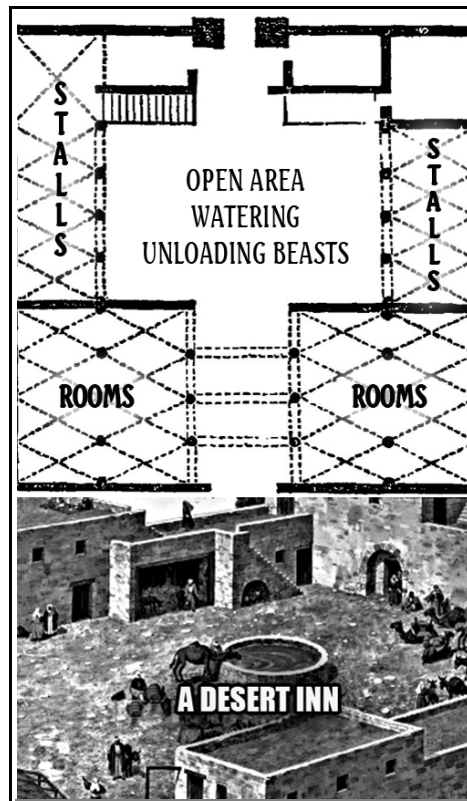
THERE WAS NO ROOM FOR THEM

“ . . . because there was no room for them in the inn.”

Other versions read, “no place,” ^{NRSV} “no space,” ^{CJB} “no place where they could lodge” ^{MED}, “no lodging available for them,” ^{NLT} and “not for them a place in the guest-chamber.” ^{YLT}

This may have been the dwelling place mention by Jeremiah: “*And they departed, and dwelt in the habitation of Chimham, which is by Bethlehem, to go to enter into Egypt*” (Jer 41:17).

These inns were not like a hotel, with individual rooms for individual families. They were provided for travelers to refresh themselves, feed and care for their animals, etc. Above is an example of the kind of place this was. As I understand it, there was not



a lot of privacy.

Once again, even if this is a very limited view, you can see the near-total absence of convenience and ease. Of course, to this day, a major percentage of the undeveloped nations still live in this manner.

As we would consider things, this would be difficult enough, but add to the scenario that Mary is expecting a child – the Christ-child – at any time. On top of that, they are going to pay a tax, and an incident that takes place less than two months later confirms they were poor. Then, there is the matter of just having traveled 90-100 miles.

Of course, these are people of faith, so we should not expect them to think like the world. **We are beholding in Joseph and Mary how faith calms the soul, provides for a sound and resolute manner of thinking, and does not allow those possessing it to be turned aside to fret and worry.** You can see this manner in other trips recorded in Scripture – trips that required some serious decision making, responses, and

wisdom. There was Abraham’s trips from Ur to Haran (Gen 12:4; 15:7), from Haran to Canaan (Gen 12:4-6), from Canaan to Egypt (Gen 12:10), and from Egypt to Canaan (Gen 13:1-11). There was Isaac’s travel to Gerar (Gen 26:1-6), where he faced hostile Philistine herdmen (Gen 13:7-8). There were Jacob’s travels from Canaan to Padanaram (Gen 28:5), from Padanaram back to Canaan (Gen 31:18-55), and from Canaan to Egypt (Gen 46:5-28).

All of these travels were attended by some form of hardship and challenge. Travelers faced famines, hostilities from other people, family deaths, inconveniences of staggering proportions, and much more. Yet, when they pondered on their experiences, they told what the Lord had done, not of the adverse experiences they had faced (Gen 26:22; 30:30; 32:10; 48:3). Their path was a prelude to the path to glory, of which Jesus said, “*Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it*” (Matt 7:14). O, how much is said of this that is being hidden from multitudes of professing Christians!

⇒ “*If ye were of the world, the world would love his own: but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you*” (John 15:19).

⇒ “*In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world*” (John 16:33).

⇒ “*Confirming the souls of the disciples, and exhorting them to continue in the faith, and that we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God*” (Acts 14:22).

⇒ “*As it is written, For thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter*” (Rom 8:36).

⇒ “*That no man should be moved by these afflictions: for yourselves*

know that **we are appointed thereunto**" (1 Thess 3:3).

⇒ "For verily, when we were with you, **we told you before that we should suffer tribulation; even as it came to pass, and ye know**" (1 Thess 3:4)

⇒ "Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus **shall suffer persecution**" (2 Tim 3:12).

⇒ "Whom resist steadfast in the faith, **knowing that the same afflictions are accomplished in your brethren that are in the world**" (1 Pet 5:9).

Although Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob experienced trouble, inconvenience, and even opposition, they held out the promises of God to

their progeny, even though they themselves did not realize their fulfillment while they were in the world. Their lives did not center in themselves, but in the promises of God, and they effectively taught that manner to their children. That is the way of life with those who have believed God, are trusting in Christ, and preparing to participate in those promises.

SHEPHERDS IN THE SAME COUNTRY

"⁸ And there were in the same country shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night. 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."

THERE WERE IN THE SAME COUNTRY
"And there were in the same country shepherds abiding in the field. . ."

This entire matter is being orchestrated from heaven, and the angels of God have been commissioned to participate in the events taking place. I do not doubt that at some point Satan attempted to intrude into these things, but was not allowed to do so.

With the entire world at His disposal, and the ability to manage time down to the finest detail, God determined to make known that He had brought *"the Firstbegotten into the world"* (Heb 1:6), doing it on the very night it occurred. We do know from this appearance that the Lord Jesus was born during the period of darkness – the night. Thus, the *"day of salvation"* commenced like the natural creation, when *"darkness covered"* it (Gen 1:2).

KEEPING WATCH OVER THEIR FLOCK

" . . . keeping watch over their flock a watch, guard by night . . ."

Other versions read, *"watching over,"* ^{BBE} *"guarding,"* ^{CEB} *"keeping guard,"* ^{NET} *"watching and keeping,"*

DOUAY *"taking care of,"* ^{GNB} and *"watching [in shifts] over."* ^{AMPLIFIED}

The words *"keeping watch"* are translated from two different words.

⇒ The first (*"keeping"* [phulasso]) means *"TO WATCH, GUARD, DEFEND,"* ^{THAYER} *"OF THE ACTIVITY OF A WATCHMAN; (A) GUARD, PROTECT, WATCH (OVER)."* ^{FRIBERG} *"TO GUARD*

sheep. Further, the protection took place in an area that was conducive to protection – **interested shepherds in the right place at the right time.**

The Lord does not awaken anyone from sleep to announce the birth of *"a Savior, which is Christ the Lord."* **The news will be given to someone who is awake and alert.**

This entire matter is being orchestrated from heaven, and the angels of God have been commissioned to participate in the events taking place. I do not doubt that at some point Satan attempted to intrude into these things, but was not allowed to do so.

CLOSELY." ^{LOUW-NIDA} **THIS EMPHASIZES THE ACTIVITY.**

⇒ The second (*"watch"* [phulake]) means, *"PERSONS KEEPING WATCH, A GUARD, SENTINELS,"* ^{THAYER} *"A PERSON KEEPING WATCH AT A GUARD STATION OR POST SENTINEL, GUARD,"* ^{FRIBERG} *"A PLACE,"* ^{LOUW-NIDA} *"OF PLACE, A WATCH, STATION, POST,"* ^{LIDDELL-SCOTT} **THIS EMPHASIZES THE PERSONS AND PLACE.**

The watching of the sheep was primarily protecting and guarding them from harm by thieves and night time predators. The ones doing this were devoted to, and interested in, the

The Lord Had Been Keeping His Sheep

While these shepherds were keeping their flocks safe during the night, the *"Shepherd or Israel"* (Psa 80:1) had been protecting His flock, guarding them until, so to speak, the dawning of the day.

The Parallel of Spiritual Shepherds

This also is the Lord's manner in the care of His people. Only those who care for His people, protecting and feeding them, will be given to see great things from God. The rest of the people will have to learn from such souls, until they too have a mind for the

sustenance and protection of the saints of the Most High God. In my opinion, this is why there is such a poverty of spiritual understanding among professional pastors –or “hirelings” (John 10:12-13). **They do not truly care for the sheep, and therefore there is an Divinely imposed ceiling on their learning capacity.**

THE ANGEL OF THE LORD CAME UPON THEM

“ . . . And, lo, the angel of the Lord came upon them . . . ”

Other versions read, “stood before them,” ^{NKJV} “appeared to them,” ^{NIV} “Stood by them,” ^{ASV} “came to them,” ^{BBE} “was there by them,” ^{DARBY} “suddenly appeared to them,” ^{GWN} “suddenly stood before them,” ^{NAS} “stood over them,” ^{NJB} “appeared among them,” ^{NLT} “stood hard by them,” ^{PNT} “stood in front of the shepherds.” ^{IE}

The phrase “came upon them” signifies a sudden appearance, or one that was not expected, and was instantaneous, not gradual. “Came upon” is translated from a single word (ephistemi), which means “TO PLACE AT, PLACE UPON, PLACE OVER; OF PERSONS COMING UPON ONE SUDDENLY,” ^{THAYER} “APPEAR (SUDDENLY; HAPPEN WITHOUT PREVIOUS WARNING,” ^{FRIBERG} AND “TO COME UPON BY SURPRISE.” ^{LIDDELL-SCOTT}

Several things may be noted from this expression.

- ⇒ The angel had been dispatched from heaven, and instantly appeared on location.
- ⇒ This appearance occurred without any forewarning.
- ⇒ Having occurred, the shepherds were able to instantly ascertain what was happening.

This Greek word (ephistemi) occurs twenty-two times in Scripture, and is translated as follows.

- ⇒ “Came upon” (Lk 2:9; Lk 20:1; Acts 4:1; 6:12; 12:7)
- ⇒ “Coming in” (Lk 2:38)

- ⇒ “Stood over” (Lk 4:39)
- ⇒ “Came to” (Lk 10:40)
- ⇒ “Come upon” (Lk 21:34)
- ⇒ “Stood by” (Lk 24:4; Acts 23:11)
- ⇒ “Stood before” (Acts 10:17)
- ⇒ “Come unto” (Acts 11:11)
- ⇒ “Assaulted” (Acts 17:5)
- ⇒ “Stood” (Acts 22:13)
- ⇒ “Standing by” (Acts 22:20)
- ⇒ “Came” (Acts 23:27)
- ⇒ “Present” (Acts 28:2)
- ⇒ “Cometh upon” (1 Thess 5:3)
- ⇒ “Instant” (2 Tim 4:2)
- ⇒ “At hand” (2 Tim 4:6)

In each of these instances we find both suddenness and apparency – always unexpected, whether for good

There is such a marked difference between the nature of God and the nature of man, that exposure to His glory will induce fear. This especially occurs when the hand of God is particularly evident.

or evil.

When things determined in heaven occur on the earth, it is always suddenly, never gradually. The person or event breaks into the consciousness of the people, provoking fear, gladness, and sometimes consternation. **The people of God are to learn to live knowing that these sudden occurrences take place.**

THE GLORY OF THE LORD SHONE ROUND ABOUT THEM

“ . . . and the glory of the Lord shone round about them . . . ”

Other versions read, “the glory of the Lord was shining round about them,” ^{BBE} “The glory of the Lord filled the area with light,” ^{GWN} “the radiance of the Lord’s glory surrounded them” ^{NLT} “the landscape shone bright with the glory of the Lord,” ^{LIVING} “the brightness of the Lord’s glory flashed around them,” ^{CEV} “The glory of the Lord filled the area with light,” ^{GW} “the clarity of the Lord shone round about them,” ^{JUB} “God’s glory blazed around them,” ^{MESSAGE} and “the glory of the Lord flashed and shone all about them.” ^{AMPLIFIED}

The glory of God is of greater strength and brightness than anything of this earth – anything that has been created. When it appears, it eclipses everything else. This is the light of which it is written, “in Thy light shall we see light” (Psa 36:9). Without this glory, the shepherds would not have been aware of the presence of this angel. **It is the glory that made him apparent.**

We also ought to note that this was not the glory of the angel, but “the

glory of the Lord.” It accompanied the angel because he had come from the presence of the Lord, and what leaves heaven to come to us has glory about it. **Anyone or anything that has been in presence of the Lord will carry some evidence of that Presence.**

THEY WERE SORE AFRAID

“ . . . and they were sore afraid.”

Other versions read, “greatly afraid,” ^{NKJV} “terribly frightened,” ^{NASB} “terrified,” ^{NIV} “filled with fear,” ^{RSV} “badly

frightened," ^{LIVING} "filled with terror,"
^{WEYMOUTH} "fearfully frightened," ^{WILLIAMS} and
"feared with a great fear." ^{MONTGOMERY}

These were not sinful shepherds, but faithful ones, granted the privilege of being among the first to see the "Savior, Christ the Lord." Yet, the appearance of a holy angel, and the surrounding prevalence of the glory of God, caused them to be "sore afraid." When flesh and blood is sure the Lord is near, it invariably begins to quake.

There is such a marked difference between the nature of God and the nature of man, that exposure to His glory will induce fear. This especially occurs when the hand of God is particularly evident. When Jesus drove the demons out of the Gadarene demonic, there was not rejoicing among the citizens of that area, who had been terrorized by this man. Instead, "Then the whole multitude of the country of the Gadarenes round about besought Him [Jesus] to depart from them; for they were taken with great fear: and he went up into the ship, and returned back again" (Luke 8:37). This is how the knowledge of One more powerful than the former daemonic was among them impacted them.

When Ananias the liar heard the condemning words of Peter, and fell dead, "great fear came on all them that heard these things" (Acts 5:5). When the same thing happened to his wife, Sapphira, "great fear came on all the church" (Acts 5:11).

The casual spirit that presently

Since the church has commenced preaching a powerless and tolerant God, there is no fear of Him. Men are not afraid to sin right in the face of God, for they are blissfully unaware of His presence.

dominates the professing church, its sleepy attitude, and slow spiritual manners, confirms it is oblivious to the presence of the Lord. The awareness of the very real presence of the Lord, or the perception of His glory, will cause people to do things they would not do under any other circumstance.

Isaiah once expressed what happens when sinners people among God's people are made aware of His presence: "The sinners in Zion are afraid; fearfulness hath surprised the hypocrites. Who among us shall dwell with the devouring fire? who among us shall dwell with everlasting burnings?" (Isa 33:14).

After he had sinned, the very first response of Adam to the voice of the Lord was, "I was afraid" (Gen 3:10). When the Lord made known to Abraham that Sarah was going to have the promised child, Sarah "laughed," because "she was afraid" (Gen 18:15). When God appeared to Jacob in a special dream, he woke up and "was afraid" (Gen 28:16). When God appeared through an angel to Moses "he was afraid to look upon God" (Ex

3:6). When Moses came out from the presence of the Lord, and his face was aglow with that glory, the people "were afraid to come nigh him" (Ex 34:30). When the Philistines thought God had come into the camp of the Israelites, they "were afraid, for they said, God is come into the camp. And they said, Woe unto us! for there hath not been such a thing heretofore" (1 Sam 4:7). When king Saul was certain God was with David, it is written, "And Saul was afraid of David, because the LORD was with him, and was departed from Saul" (1 Sam 18:12). And again, "Wherefore when Saul saw that he behaved himself very wisely, he was afraid of him" (1 Sam 18:15).

Since the church has commenced preaching a powerless and tolerant God, there is no fear of Him. Men are not afraid to sin right in the face of God, for they are blissfully unaware of His presence. If ever the glory of God gets into the professed church, it will cause an unparalleled stirring among the people, just as surely as the glory of the Lord caused the shepherd to be "sore afraid."

AND THE ANGEL SAID UNTO THEM

"¹⁰ And the angel said unto them, Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. ¹¹ For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, which is Christ the Lord. ¹² And this shall be a sign unto you; Ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger."

FEAR NOT

"And the angel said unto them, Fear not . . ."

Before good words from God can be received, distracting fear and trembling must stop. Therefore, whenever there is a blessing to be experienced, these words were often

spoken: "fear not." These are not the words of a commandment addressed to men that is to be obeyed. These are powerful words that caused debilitating fear to cease – like "pick up your bed and wall," or "stretch out your [withered] hand."

These calming words were first

spoken to Hagar (Gen 21:17), then to Isaac (Gen 26:24), Jacob (Gen :3), Israel (Deut 20:3; 31:3; Judges 6:10; Jer 46:27; Zech 8:13), Gideon (Judges 6:23), Jehosaphat (2 Chron 20:17), Ahaz (Isa 7:4), God's people who were of fearful heart (Isa 35:4), Daniel (Dan 10:19), and Joseph [Mary's husband] (Matt 1:20).

Jesus said to His disciples when He came to them walking on stormy waters, *"be not afraid"* (Matt 14:27; Mk 6:50; John 6:20). He said the same to Peter, James and John, on the mount of transfiguration (Matt 17:7). The presence of Deity induces fear.

I will reiterate, when the purpose of God is to bless, He will quiet the fears of those who are aware of His presence. The point to be perceived is simply this: the flesh is so alienated from God, that even the saints fear the presence of the Lord as long as they are in the body. Were it not for the mercy of Go the very presence of Deity would consume us all.

I BRING YOU GOOD TIDINGS

This expectation will eventually be traced back to the preaching of John the Baptist, who prepared the way for the Lord. It is His word that would make this message joyful. But for the people living at the time of this announcement, it could be traced back to the declaration of Moses and the prophets.

⇒ **THE SERPENT'S HEAD TO BE BRUISED.** *"And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel."* (Gen 3:15)

⇒ **A PROPHET RAISED UP THAT WILL BE HEARD.** *"The LORD thy God will raise up unto thee a Prophet from the midst of thee, of thy brethren, like unto me; unto him ye shall hearken."* (Deut 18:15)

⇒ **A SALVATIONAL RULE.** *"For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counselor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father,*

THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS." (Jer 23:6)

⇒ **A PURIFIER.** *"And he shall sit as a refiner and purifier of silver: and he shall purify the sons of Levi, and purge them as gold and silver, that they may offer unto the LORD an offering in righteousness."* (Mal 3:3)

Only those who were familiar with these promises would see the announced message as one of great joy. These shepherds knew of those promises. That is why the announcement was made to them.

Men who do not know what is really needed, have no concept of the requirement for a Savior or Deliverer. In our time, there is a lot of unwarranted naivete about the need for a Savior. **Proportionately, very few people now associate Jesus Christ with deliverance from the guilt and power of sin.** This tragedy is largely owing to the unfaithfulness of the church, which is the appointed *"pillar and ground of the truth"* (1 Tim 3:15).

Allow me to say this emphatically. The news given by this angel is only good news to those who are aware of the need for it. This message was not to the scribes and Pharisees, the Sadducees, or the Sanhedrin. Nor, indeed, was it spoken to Felix, or Agrippa, or the Philosophers of Athens.

WHICH SHALL BE TO ALL PEOPLE
"...which shall be to all people..."

Other versions read, *"for all people,"* ^{NASB} *"will come to all people,"* ^{RSV} *"will bring great joy to all the people,"* ^{CJB} *"a message that will fill everyone with joy,"* ^{GWN} *"that brings great joy to all the people."* ^{NET} *"a joy to be shared by the whole people"* ^{NJB} *"That will bring great joy to all people,"* ^{NLT} *"It will make all the people very happy,"* ^{IE} and *"joy for all the People."* ^{WEYMOUTH}

The point here is not that all people will be made joyful, but that the message hat produces joy will be **DECLARED** to all people. The versions that represent this as an announcement

Allow me to say this emphatically. The news given by this angel is only good news to those who are aware of the need for it.

"... for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy . . ."

Other versions read, *"good news of great joy,"* ^{NASB} *"good news to you-- wonderful, joyous news,"* ^{CEB} *"Good News that will bring great joy"* ^{CJB} *"I have good news for you, a message that will fill everyone with joy,"* ^{GWN} *"news of great joy,"* ^{NJB} *"the most joyful news ever announced,"* ^{LIVING} *"to announce a great and joyful event."* ^{MESSAGE}

This was essentially a message – a report of something that had already occurred. It was a message that would induce great joy, because it would announce the fulfillment of a revealed expectation.

The Prince of Peace." (Isa 9:6)

⇒ **ONE WHO WILL ARE FOR GOD'S SHEEP.** *"He shall feed his flock like a shepherd: he shall gather the lambs with his arm, and carry them in his bosom, and shall gently lead those that are with young."* (Isa 40:11)

⇒ **A TENDER AND MERCIFUL SHEPHERD.** *"A bruised reed shall he not break, and the smoking flax shall he not quench: he shall bring forth judgment unto truth."* (Isa 42:3)

⇒ **A SOURCE OF RIGHTEOUSNESS.** *"In his days Judah shall be saved, and Israel shall dwell safely: and this is his name whereby he shall be called,*

of joy for all people are not correct. It is the message that is for all people, and if it is received, it will produce joy among them. The good new is the point, the great joy is what it causes when it is believed.

FOR UNTO YOU IS BORN

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

Other versions read, *"to you,"* NKJV *"born for you,"* NASB *"Your Savior."* CEB

Most of the versions include the words *"unto you," "for you,"* or *"your Savior,"* emphasizing that it He was born for the Jews, or in answer to the promises made to them. Other versions omit this view altogether reading, *"a Savior has come to birth,"* BBE *"The Savior -- yes, the Messiah, the Lord,"* NLT *"The Savior--yes, the Messiah, the Lord,"* LIVING and *"A Savior has just been born in David's town."* MESSAGE

The word *"you"* [human] is in the original text, and is to be included in the thought. **This is the Messiah that was promised to the Jews. No one else was given the promise of a Deliverer or Savior.** If the promise of Genesis 3:15 is cited, that was not a clear promise of a Deliverer or Savior, but was rather the announcement of the ultimate demise of the devil. While salvation would result from that, a Deliverer was not announced at that time.

The prophecies of a Savior pertained principally to Israel.

"For unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and His name shall be called Wonderful, Counselor, The mighty God, The Everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace." (Isa 9:6)

"But unto you that fear My name shall the Sun of Righteousness arise with healing in his wings; and ye shall go forth, and grow up as calves of the stall." (Mal 4:2)

"And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call His name JESUS: for he

shall save His people from their sins." (Matt 1:21)

"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." (Luke 1:32-33)

"For Moses truly said unto the fathers, A prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you of your brethren, like unto me; him shall ye hear in all things whatsoever He shall say unto you. And it shall come to pass, that every soul, which will not hear that prophet, shall be destroyed from among the people." (Acts 3:22-23)

"Unto you first God, having raised up his Son Jesus, sent Him to bless you, in turning away every one of you from his iniquities." (Acts 3:26)

"Then Paul and Barnabas waxed bold, and said, It was necessary that the word of God should first have been spoken to you: but seeing ye put it from you, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, lo, we turn to the Gentiles." (Acts 13:46)

"And so all Israel shall be saved: as it is written, There shall come out of Sion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob." (Rom 11:26)

If any Gentiles were expecting a

Other versions read, *"Here is how you will know,"* CJB *"This is how you will recognize him,"* GWN *"you will recognize him by this sign,"* NLT *"this is the token for you,"* WEYMOUTH *"this is proof for you,"* WILLIAMS *"This is what you're to look for."* MESSAGE

The angel tells the shepherds how they will be able to recognize the Babe who was *"a Savior, Christ the Lord."*

This is another Divine manner – directing those commissioned to do something concerning how to recognize they are fulfilling that commission. That is the reason for prophecy – not merely to provide some information to the people, but to enable them to recognize the thing God is accomplishing.

At this point we discover that men, by nature, prefer speculation to revelation. When details are provided by God, men tend to neglect them, and sometimes even reject them. For example, the Lord told the people how to recognize the Messiah when He came. Here are a few examples.

- ⇒ He would be a Shepherd to the people, guiding them (Isa 40:11).
- ⇒ He would be despised and rejected of men (Isa 53:3).
- ⇒ He would die (Isa 53:12).
- ⇒ The people of God would gather to Him (Gen 49:10).

This is another Divine manner – directing those commissioned to do something concerning how to recognize they are fulfilling that commission.

Savior, such as the woman at the well of Samaria (John 4:19), **it was owing to their contact with the Jews.**

THIS SHALL BE A SIGN UNTO YOU

" . . . And this shall be a sign unto you . . . "

- ⇒ The Gentiles would seek Him (Isa 11:10).
- ⇒ He would be a Leader and commander (Isa 55:4).

In this case, the heavenly messenger tells the shepherds precisely

how to know they have found their "Holy Child" (Acts 4:27).

YE SHALL FIND THE BABE

" . . . Ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger."

Other versions read, "folded in linen, in the place where the cattle have their food," ^{BBE} "wrapped in cloth and lying in a feeding trough," ^{CJB} "wrapped in bandages, and placed in a stall," ^{MRD} "wrapped in cloths and lying in a box where cattle are fed," ^{IE} "being swaddled, lying in a stable," ^{ABP} and "dressed in baby clothes and lying on a bed of hay." ^{CEV}

Remember, they were going to a town, probably filled with people, for there was no room left in the inn. How would they be able to find the newborn babe? The sign given to them decidedly narrowed down where they would look. **They would look some place where cattle were housed and being fed.**

Recognizing Christ Within

It is still necessary to define how people can recognize Jesus Christ. How are they to know He is dwelling in them? There are signs, and they are to be declared. **Unless these are preached, and the people are exposed to them, they can only hypothesize about whether or not Christ is dwelling in them.** The proof is not confined to ones obedience – and even that obedience must be from the heart (Rom 6:17).

This is one of the reasons Paul asked certain disciples from Ephesus, "Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?" (Acts 19:2). Notice, he did not ask them if they had been baptized. When they replied hey "had not so much as heard whether there is a Holy Spirit," Paul asked, "Into what, then, were ye baptized?" (Acts 19:2). When they replied "into John's baptism" (which was for the remission

of sins [Mk 1:4], he instructed them concerning Christ, and they were baptized in the of the Lord Jesus (Acts 19:1-5).

For professing Christians, there are evidences that will confirm Christ is really in them. This is not the kind of thing men can exploit, but it can be a great comfort and confirmation to those possessing such evidence. These things are to believers what the "sign" given to the shepherds was to their mission to find the Babe Christ Jesus.

⇒ **DEAD UNTO SIN AND ALIVE UNTO GOD.** "Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God **through Jesus Christ our Lord.**" (Rom 6:11)

⇒ **GRACE REIGNING THROUGH RIGHTEOUSNESS.** "That as sin hath reigned unto death, even so might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life **by Jesus Christ our Lord.**" (Rom 5:21).

⇒ **THE EXPERIENCE OF CONSOLATION.** "For as the sufferings of Christ abound in us, so our consolation also aboundeth **by Christ.**" (2 Cor 1:5)

⇒ **GLORY BROUGHT TO GOD BY THE CHURCH.** "Unto him be glory in the church **by Christ Jesus** throughout all ages, world without end. Amen." (Eph 3:21)

⇒ **BEING FILLED WITH THE FRUITS OF RIGHTEOUSNESS.** "Being filled with the fruits of righteousness, which are **by Jesus Christ,** unto the glory and praise of God." (Phil 1:11)

⇒ **ALL OF OUR NEED SUPPLIED.** "But my God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory **by Christ Jesus.**" (Phil 4:19)

⇒ **THE HOPE OF GLORY.** "To whom God would make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery

among the Gentiles; which is **Christ in you, the hope of glory:**" (Col 1:27).

⇒ **OLD THINGS PASS AWAY, AND ALL THINGS BECOME NEW.** "Therefore if any man be **in Christ,** he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new." (2 Cor 5:17).

⇒ **THE BODY IS DEAD BECAUSE OF SIN.** "And if **Christ be in you,** the body is dead because of sin; but the Spirit is life because of righteousness." (Rom 8:10)

⇒ **WORKING IN YOU THAT WHICH IS WELL PLEASING IN HIS SIGHT.** "Now the God of peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, Make you perfect in every good work to do his will, working in you that which is wellpleasing in his sight, **through Jesus Christ;** to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen." (Heb 13:20-21)

⇒ **GIVES AN UNDERSTANDING OF GOD.** "And we know that the Son of God is come, and hath **given us an understanding,** that we may know him that is true, and we are in him that is true, even in his Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God, and eternal life." (1 John 5:20)

⇒ **FREE FROM BONDAGE.** "If **the Son therefore shall make you free,** ye shall be free indeed." (John 8:36)

⇒ **THE KEEPING OF THE HEART AND MIND.** "And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds **through Christ Jesus.**" (Phil 4:7)

⇒ **STRENGTHENED TO DO ALL THINGS THAT ARE REQUIRED.** "I can do all things **through Christ** which strengtheneth me." (Phil 4:13).

SUDDENLY, A MULTITUDE OF HEAVENLY HOST

¹³ ***And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God, and saying, ¹⁴ Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men.***

SUDDENLY

"And suddenly . . ."

Other versions read, *"instantly,"* MRD *"at once,"* NJB *"straightway,"* PNT *"immediately,"* and *"then."* Easy To Read All other versions read *"suddenly."*

The word translated *"suddenly"* [exaiphnes] means "OF A SUDDEN, SUDDENLY, UNEXPECTEDLY," THAYER "PERTAINING TO AN EXTREMELY SHORT PERIOD OF TIME BETWEEN A PREVIOUS STATE OR EVENT AND A SUBSEQUENT STATE OR EVENT - 'SUDDENLY, AT ONCE, IMMEDIATELY,'" LOUW-NIDA

It is though heaven could not keep silence at the announcement of *"a Savior, which is Christ the Lord."* There was an immediate response echoed from this great body of angelic spirits.

A MULTITUDE OF HEAVENLY HOST

" . . . there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God . . ."

The mighty host did not have an understanding of the Gospel, desiring to look into it (1 Pet 1:12). However, they evidently did know Who it was that came down, for one of their own number announced His conception (Luke 1:35).

The command mentioned in Hebrews must have gone forth: *"And let all the angels of God worship him"* (Heb 1:6).

GLORY TO GOD

" . . . and saying, Glory to God in the highest . . ."

They knew the Source of this

event – the God of heaven, who was driving everything connected with this Holy birth. Many of them had no doubt been active in setting the stage upon the earth.

Saying *"Glory to God"* is like shining the spotlight of attention upon God Almighty. Salvation is truly *"of the Lord,"* and they knew it. It is written of God, *"He hath made His wonderful works to be remembered: the LORD is gracious and full of compassion"* (Psa 111:4). However, before they are remembered by men, they are seen and declared by the citizenry of heaven.

How lamentable it is that men are so slow to behold the wonderful works of God. Often in earth's history, it has been centuries before God's works have been recognized for what they really are. **There is a sense in which the true spirituality of a person can be measured by how long it takes him to perceive the working of the Lord.** Some people have even been given to see the works, but knew neither their Source nor their purpose.

ON EARTH PEACE, GOOD WILL TOWARD MEN

" . . . and on earth peace, good will toward men."

Other versions read, *"on earth peace among men with whom He is pleased,"* NASB *"on earth peace to men on whom his favor rests,"* NIV *"peace among those He favors,"* NRSV *"peace among people of good will!"* CJB *"peace, good pleasure in men,"* DARBY *"peace to men of good will,"* DOUAY *"peace in earth, and towards men good will."* GENEVA *"peace to those who have his good will"* GWN, *"peace and good hope for men,"* MRD *"Unto men a good will,"* PNT and *"on earth peace among men with whom He is well pleased [men of*

goodwill, of His favor]." AMPLIFIED

Here there is another glaring difference in the various versions. One is that peace and Divine good will are toward those on earth – as compared with those in heaven. The other is that peace is specifically toward men who are *"of good will"* – or those especially favored by God.

There are distinctions in the administering of salvation, to be sure. Many are called, for example, but few are chosen. Only those who believe (Acts 13:39) and are obedient (Hebrews 5:9) are favored with salvation. **However, that is not the kind of thing that is being announced here.**

This is another way of saying *"I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people"* (Luke 2:10). This is *"the Gospel of peace"* (Rom 10:15), and it is preached indiscriminately to all men – *"every creature"* (Mk 16:15). This word does not refer to the experience of salvation, or the experience of peace, but to the message of salvation and peace. Both the *"peace"* and the *"good will"* inherently belong to God, not to men. **Whereas, in the days of Noah, the wrath of God was focused upon all men, now, with the appearance of the Christ, good Divine intentions are proclaimed to men.**

The experience of this peace is not realized by everyone, **but the message of it IS to be proclaimed to everyone** – and that is precisely what the *"heavenly host"* is announcing! **A Divine initiative of good will and grace was being proclaimed to a sinful race that sorely needed to hear it.** Salvation is in no way a reward to those who have excelled among the human race. It is rather a Divine provision of Him who would have **all men** to be saved (1 Tim 2:4).

LET US NOW GO EVEN UNTO BETHLEHEM

¹⁵ ***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."

AS THE ANGELS WERE GONE AWAY

" And it came to pass, as the angels were gone away from them into heaven . . ."

Having delivered their message, the angels returned to heaven, for the earth is not their native habitat. This is the kind of activity Jacob saw in his life-changing dream: a ladder set up on earth, reaching into heaven, *"with the angels of God ascending and descending upon it"* (Gen 28:12). They had descended on a Divinely appointed mission, and now they returned to heaven.

This is the manner of the Kingdom. Those who are in the presence of the Lord are commissioned to do this or that. Upon finishing their mission, they return to home base. This was lived out by Barnabas and Saul, while they were among those who were *"ministering to the Lord,"* they received a call to be separated for a particular work (Acts 13:2). Upon the completion of their mission, they returned to Antioch (Acts 14:26).

THE SHEPHERDS SAID TO ONE ANOTHER

" . . . the shepherds said one to another, Let us now go even unto Bethlehem, and see this thing which is

come to pass . . ."

The angel of the Lord did not tell them to go to Bethlehem. He told them *"A Savior who is Christ the Lord"* had been born *"unto you,"* and how they could recognize Him. He did not have to tell the shepherds to act upon that knowledge. **They just did so, for that is what faith moves a person to do.**

There are those who always have be told what to do. They are by no means the greatest in the Kingdom of

Lord hath told us about," ^{NIV} *"made clear to us,"* ^{BBE} *"revealed to us,"* ^{CEB} *and "the Lord hath showed to us."* ^{DOUAY}

When the angel appeared to the shepherds, he did not tell them he had been sent by God – but the shepherds knew it. There are some who promote the worship of angels (Col 2:18) – but the shepherds were not among that number.

The fact that the Lord had made this known to them compelled them to

O, that there was more of that spirit among professing believers. Retarded responses are like thieves that kill and destroy. While men linger their hearts grow cold and calloused.

God – if, indeed, they are even a part of it. The saved, having been made *"partakers of the Divine nature,"* react to the will of God like the One who is saving them: *"Lo, I come to do Thy will, O God"* (Heb 10:9).

WHICH HE LORD HATH MADE KNOWN UNTO US

" . . . which the Lord hath made known unto us."

Other versions read, *"which the*

act upon that knowledge immediately – while it was still night. Being faithful shepherds, I do not doubt that they made arrangements for the care of the flocks while they quickly went to see the Savior whose birth had been graciously announced to them.

And, blessed are those souls who, upon hearing of the Lord Jesus Christ, immediately set out to find Him. Such souls will not be disappointed. The Lord clear the way for them to find Christ.

THEY CAME WITH HASTE

" 16 And they came with haste, and found Mary, and Joseph, and the babe lying in a manger. 17 And when they had seen it, they made known abroad the saying which was told them concerning this child."

THEY CAME WITH HASTE

"And they came with haste . . ."

Other versions read, *"they hurried off,"* ^{NIV} *"came quickly,"* ^{BBE} *"went*

quickly," ^{CEB} *"having hasted,"* ^{YLT} *"they ran,"* ^{LIVING} *"went running,"* ^{ERV} *"came as fast as they could,"* ^{PHILLIPS} *and "hasted and [by searching] found."* ^{AMPLIFIED}

The word *"haste"* contains the idea of compulsion: *"URGE ON,"* ^{STRONG'S} *"TO DESIRE EARNESTLY,"* ^{THAYER} *"URGE ON, BE EAGER FOR, CAUSE TO HAPPEN SOON,"* ^{FRIBERG} *"TO DO SOMETHING HURRIEDLY, WITH THE IMPLICATION OF ASSOCIATED ENERGY,"* ^{LOUW-NIDA} *AND "TO SEEK EAGERLY, STRIVE AFTER."* ^{LIDDELL-SCOTT}

When Mary received word that she was going to conceive the Son of God, and heard about Elizabeth, she went to her *"in the hill country with haste"* (Lk 1:39). When Jesus saw Zaccheus in a tree He, *"Zacchaeus, make haste, and come down"* (Luke 19:5). When Peter wrote of the attitude of believers concerning the coming of the Lord, he wrote, *"Looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God, wherein the heavens being on fire*

shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat?" (2 Pet 3:12). David once said, *"the king's business required haste"* (1 Sam 21:8).

The shepherds wasted no time getting to Bethlehem to personally see the One identified as *"a Savior, which is Christ the Lord."* **O, that there was more of that spirit among professing believers.** Retarded responses are like thieves that kill and destroy. While men linger their hearts grow cold and calloused.

When the angels came to destroy Sodom, and Lot lingered, it is written *"the angels hastened Lot"* (Gen 19:15). And again one of the angels said, *"Haste thee, escape thither"* (Gen 19:22). On the eve of their departure from Egypt, when Israel was eating the Passover meal, the Lord's instruction was *"ye shall eat it in haste"* (Ex 12:11). Of their escape it is written they came *"out of the land of Egypt in haste"* (Deut 16:3). David, when speaking of the entrapments of the world, wrote, *"I would hasten my escape from the windy storm and tempest"* (Psa 55:8).

THEY FOUND MARY, AND JOSEPH, AND THE BABE

"... and found Mary, and Joseph, and the babe lying in a manger. . . "

The shepherds had to do some searching. They had been given enough information to know they had to look where there was housing for livestock. The time spent looking is not delineated. We do not know how far they traveled, or how long it took – but they found what they were looking for. **That, after all, is the point: to find what is being sought.** The Lord no doubt directed their steps, leading them to go

It is well past the time for the church to be announcing a Person who is both Savior and Lord – to be reporting the record God has given of His Son

this way or that way. As it is written, *"And thine ears shall hear a word behind thee, saying, This is the way, walk ye in it, when ye turn to the right hand, and when ye turn to the left"* (Isa 30:21). That is never more true than when a person is seeking the Lord.

WHEN THEY HAD SEEN IT

"...And when they had seen it. . . "

Other versions read, *"seen Him,"* NKJV *"seen this,"* NASB *"seeing them,"* CSB *"after seeing,"* DOUAY *"saw the child,"* NJB *"saw the Baby,"* LIVING *"beholding,"* ABP *"When the shepherds saw Jesus,"* CEV *"Seeing was believing."* MESSAGE

What was it they saw? Was it the scene with Mary, Joseph, and Babe, and a manger? Was it the Babe Himself? **I believe it was the sign that they saw** – that was the *"it"* of reference: *"And this shall be a sign unto you; Ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger"* (Luke 2:12). That this was *"the babe"* was not confirmed by the presence of Mary, or Joseph. **It was confirmed by seeing the Babe, wrapped in swaddling clothes, and lying in a manger** – just as the angel had said. Further, the *"sign"* pertained to the Babe Himself.

THEY MADE IT KNOWN

"... they made known abroad the saying which was told them concerning this Child."

Notice what the shepherds reported. It was not what they saw, although I do not doubt that this was mentioned at some point. However, what was told them concerning the *"Child"* was the critical thing to be made known. And what was that? Was it where they found the Child, or the circumstances of the *"swaddling clothes"* and the *"manger?"* Again, I do not doubt that this was mentioned. However, the unquestionable emphasis of their report was this: *"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 Savior, which is Christ the Lord"* (Luke 2:11) – **"WHAT WAS TOLD THEM CONCERNING THE CHILD."**

In the history of the world, no one had ever heard a report of something like that! Those who were informed had some idea of a Person that was promised who would deliver, announce liberty, and a place of safety and blessing. This was a report of a *"Savior"* who was also *"the Lord."*

It is well past the time for the church to be announcing a Person who is both Savior and Lord – to be reporting the record God has given of His Son (1 John 5:10-11). He is a Savior from sin, and has come to bring men to God (1 Pet 3:18). That is a message that must be proclaimed.

THEY WONDERED AT THOSE THINGS TOLD THEM

¹⁸ *"And all they that heard it wondered at those things which were told them by the shepherds."*

ALL THEY THAT HEARD IT
"And all they that heard it . . . "

Other versions read, *"to whose*

ears it came," BBE *"who listened,"* WEYMOUTH *"having heard,"* ABP *"Everyone listened."* CEV

The word translated “heard” [akouo] includes the ideas of consideration and understanding, not merely being subjected to the sound of words. Lexically the word means, “TO ATTEND TO; CONSIDER WHAT IS OR HAS BEEN SAID; TO UNDERSTAND, PERCEIVE THE SENSE OF WHAT IS SAID,” ^{THAYER} “TO HEAR AND UNDERSTAND.” ^{LIDDELL-SCOTT} This does not suggest that the hearers perceived all of the implications and depth of what was said. **It does mean that they grasped the import of what we declared** – O that it was significant, not like the news of the day, is apparent. The report involved God, holy angels, a Savior, and “Christ the Lord.” How could any message possibly have more weight than that?

In my judgment, the modern church needs to be subject to words that have greater weight, more

extensive implications, and is more conducive to meditation and cogitation. It is time to stop lisping to the people in infantile language.

WONDERED AT THE THINGS TOLD THEM

“ . . . wondered at those things which were told them by the shepherds.”

Other versions read, “*marveled,*” ^{NKJV} “*were amazed,*” ^{NIV} “*were full of wonder,*” ^{BBE} “*were astonished,*” ^{LIVING} “*expressed astonishment,*” ^{NET} “*were astounded,*” ^{WILLIAMS} “*was surprised,*” ^{ERV} “*were impressed,*” ^{MESSAGE} and “*astounded and marveled.*” ^{AMPLIFIED}

Keep in mind that in the religious circles of that time, people were not

accustomed to hearing such things. Religion had degenerated into a set of rules and opinionated applications. Nothing like this had been heard for centuGFries of time. The great promises of a Redeemer were largely confined to an imagined museum of religious thought. It probably had been a long time since any significant number of people had thought about a Savior, of an incarnate Lord. I imagine that the experience that occurred during the divisions of Reuben were found among those who heard the report of the shepherds: “*there were great searchings of heart*” (Judg 5:16). These were people familiar with the Scriptures, which were the backbone of the lives of those who believed. They were looking forward to the fulfillment of the promises.

MARY KEPT ALL THESE THINGS AND PONDERED THEM

“¹⁹ But Mary kept all these things, and pondered them in her heart.”

BUT MARY

“But Mary . . .”

Here, the Spirit makes an extended remark about the reaction of Mary to the report of the shepherds. The shepherds must have reported to her what they had been told. She had already been told:

- ⇒ She would bring forth a Son, and was to call His name “Jesus” (Lk 1:31).
- ⇒ The Son would be called “*The Son of he Highest,*” and God would give Him the throne of His father David (Lk 1:32).
- ⇒ He would reign over the house of Jacob forever (Lk 1:22a).
- ⇒ Of His kingdom there would be no end (Lk 1:22b).
- ⇒ The Holy Spirit would come upon her, and the power of the Highest

would overshadow her (Lk 1:35a).

- ⇒ Her relative, Elizabeth, had conceived a son in old age (Lk 1:36).
- ⇒ Being filled with the Holy Spirit, Elizabeth told her she was blessed among women, the Fruit of her womb would be blessed, and she was the mother pf Elizabeth’s Lord (Lk 1:42-43).
- ⇒ Mary was blessed because she believed, and there would be a performance of what was promised to her (Lk 1:45).
- ⇒ Joseph no doubt told her what he had been told, Jesus would “*save His people from their sins*” (Matt 1:21).

Note, that there is no record of the matter of Jesus having to do with “all people” being told to either Joseph or Mary – but it was to the shepherds (Lk 2:10). Neither was the Child referred to as “*a Savior which is Christ the Lord*” – which was also told to the

shepherds (Lk 2:11). There also is no record of the heavenly host praising God in the presence of Joseph and Mary, saying “*Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men.*” (Luke 2:14) – **but the shepherd heard those words.**

What will Mary’s response be to all of these things, which she doubtless integrated in her thinking.

KEPT ALL THESE THINGS, AND PONDERED THEM IN HER HEART

“ . . . kept all these things, and pondered them in her heart.”

Other versions read, “*treasured up all these things, pondering them in her heart,*” ^{NASB} “*gave much thought to them,*” ^{BBE} “*committed these things to memory and considered them carefully,*” ^{CEB} “*kept mulling them over in her heart,*” ^{CJB} “*treasuring up all these things in her heart and meditating on them,*” ^{CSB} “*always thought about them,*” ^{GWN} “*dwelling on them in her mind,*” ^{WEYMOUTH} and “*keeping within herself all these things (sayings), weighing and pondering them in her*

heart.” AMPLIFIED

The word translated “pondered” [sumballo] means: “CONSIDER, PONDER, DRAW CONCLUSIONS ABOUT,” ^{THAYER} “THROW TOGETHER,” ^{FRIBERG} “CAREFUL CONSIDERATION TO VARIOUS IMPLICATIONS OF AN ISSUE - ‘TO REFLECT ON, TO THINK ABOUT SERIOUSLY, TO THINK DEEPLY ABOUT,” ^{LOUW-NIDA} “COLLECT,” ^{LIDDELL-SCOTT} AND “CONSIDER, PONDER, DRAW CONCLUSIONS ABOUT.” ^{GINGRICH}

In the English language “ponder” means, “TO WEIGH IN THE MIND : APPRAISE; TO THINK ABOUT : REFLECT ON; TO THINK OR

CONSIDER ESPECIALLY QUIETLY, SOBERLY, AND DEEPLY.” ^{MERRIAM-WEBSTER}

Here is a fast-disappearing activity of our time. People are learning to think of one thing at a time, and are losing the ability to integrate various aspects of the truth, think about them, and come to a constraining conclusion that propels them into meaningful activity.

This is involved in the Scriptural words “meditate” (1 Tim 4:15) and “cogitate” (Dan 7:28). In spiritual life, various expressions of truth are thrown

into the hopper of thought, and blended with expertise by those who can handle aright the word of truth (2 Tim 2:15). It is like creating a savory dish by combining various sundry vegetables, meats, and spices.

This is precisely what Mary was doing with the truth to which she had been subjected. She sensed in her spirit that the God of truth spoke in an ordered and purposeful way, and that because of who He is, all of it could be blended together to form perspectives that honored God and edified men.

AND THE SHEPHERDS RETURNED

“²⁰ And the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things that they had heard and seen, as it was told unto them.”

THE SHEPHERDS RETURNED

“And the shepherds returned. . .”

That is, they returned to their shepherding – but what a return it was. It had been quite an eventful night that would impact them for the test of their lives. A messenger from heaven had spoken to them. They had heard a great heavenly host praising God. And they had seen the infant Savior, Christ the Lord. When the evening had begun, they had no idea such a thing would happen. In fact, they were caught by surprise as the monotony of night was suddenly shattered.

GLORIFIED AND PRAISING GOD

“...glorifying and praising God. . .”

Most all versions read “glorifying and praising.” Others read “praising and lauding,” ^{PNT} “praising God,” ^{LIVING} “singing to God and praising Him.” ^{IE}

Modern versions leave out the word “glorifying” – but it is in the text, and it is not a redundancy.

⇒ GLORIFYING. “TO THINK; TO HONOR, DO HONOR TO, HOLD IN HONOR.” ^{THAYER}

⇒ PRAISING. “TO SING PRAISES IN HONOR OF GOD.” ^{THAYER}

As used here, “honor” is an activity of the mind, while “praise” is an activity of the mouth. Putting the two together means offering insightful praise to God – that is, their minds and their mouths were coordinated.

FOR ALL THE THINGS

“ . . . for all the things that they had heard and seen, as it was told unto them.”

They had both seen and heard – the same thing Peter and John would later say they had experienced: “For we cannot but speak the things which we have **seen and heard**” (Acts 4:20). When John sent some of his disciples to Jesus to ask Him if He was the Christ, He told them, “Go your way, and tell John what things ye have **seen and heard**” (Luke 7:22). When He commissioned Paul, Jesus said to him, “For thou shalt be His witness unto all men of what thou hast **seen and heard**” (Acts 22:15). In his First Epistle John wrote, “That which we have **seen and heard** declare we unto you” (1 John 1:3). My desire is that you also may have that wonderful experience.

Our next Hungry Saints Meeting will be held on Friday, 12/26/14. We will continue our series of lessons in the Gospel of Luke. The eighth lesson will cover verses 21 thru 39 of chapter 2: “THE DEDICATION OF JESUS.” When Jesus was born, shepherds were brought in as witnesses. When Jesus was dedicated an aged holy man, and an aged prophetess were brought in by the Lord as witnesses. Certain revelations were given at that time that were conducive to extended thought. God was making known some of the involvements of the great salvation that was being unveiled. Our meeting will begin at 7:00 P.M. You are invited to bring your family and friends for fellowship around the Word of God. Refreshments are served afterward, with a time of extended fellowship for everyone.