

“The Glory Of Christmas”

Luke 2:8-20

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Lesson Aim: To understand the role of the shepherd and why they were visited by the angels on this special occasion. To recognize the connection between the sheep being prepared for sacrifice at the temple in Jerusalem and the birth of the real “*Lamb of God*” in Bethlehem, in close vicinity to these flocks. To realize the birth of the Lord Jesus Christ is the real glory of Christmas, He is the greatest Christmas gift of all!

DIGGING DEEPER INTO GOD’S WORD (*BIBLE STUDY*)

Part I: An unexpected meeting at night with a holy angel (Luke 2:8-12)

1. Do we know the exact date that Jesus was born? Why was December 25th picked? Were sheep sacrificed only during specific times of the year or was this a daily event at the temple? Using **verse 8**, many have claimed that the birth of Jesus Christ could not have occurred in December because it was too cold outside. Do you agree with this assumption? Why or why not?

2. What startled the shepherds as they guarded their sheep at night (**vs. 9**)? What do you think “*the glory of the Lord*” must have looked like? How did the visible manifestation of this glory and the appearance of the angel affect the shepherds? Is fear a common reaction when people come into the presence of the holy? Why? (See **Matt. 17:5-8; Luke 1:12; 29**) Is it good to have a healthy “*fear of the LORD*?” Why or why not?

3. What did the angel say in an attempt to comfort the frightened shepherds (**vs. 10**)? What message for the ages was shared with the shepherds that night (**vv. 10-11**)? According to **verse 10**, was this promise a promise for the Jews only, or was it for people of every tribe and nation?

4. There are two different cities in the Bible that are called “*the city of David*”, what cities are they? Which city is referred to in **verse 11**? What three titles did the angel give to the Baby Jesus in **verse 11**? What can we learn about Jesus from each title?

5. The sign given in **verse 12** is actually twofold; what is it? What are “*swaddling cloths*” and why were they used on babies? What is “*a manger?*” What is the significance of the newborn Jesus being placed in a feeding trough? (See **Luke 1:7**) What were the Jews expecting when the Messiah comes? According to **Isaiah 52:13-53:12**, what did the Jews miss?
6. What can we learn about the Baby Jesus’ upcoming ministry from the humble circumstances surrounding His birth? Why do you think this message was given to lowly shepherds and not to the religious leaders in Jerusalem? (See **John 10:1; 1:29b**) How did the Jewish religious leaders view shepherds in this time period? Why were shepherds not allowed to testify in Jewish courts?

Part II: The heavenly host and the “*Gloria in Excelsis Deo*” (Luke 2:13-14)

1. What suddenly appeared to the shepherds along with “*the glory of God*” (**vs. 13**)? What is the meaning of the word “*host?*” (See Dictionary) How does this term relate to the angels?
2. Although many people claim the angels were singing, Scripture does not indicate so. According to **verse 14**, what message did this army of angels bring to the lowly shepherds? An army is often used for war, but what message did this army bring? (See **Matt. 25:31-33**)
3. Did Jesus come into the world to bring peace to “*all men*” (See NIV), or only to those who by grace through faith trust in Him (**vs. 14**)? (See **Isa. 48:22; Matt. 10:34-36**) What kind of peace did Jesus bring? (See **Rom. 5:1, 8-9**) What is the only way we can receive this peace today? (See **John 3:16; Eph. 2:8-9**)

Part III: The shepherds visit the Baby Jesus in Bethlehem (Luke 2:15-20)

1. What did the shepherds do as soon as the heavenly host left (**vs. 15**)? According to **verse 15**, did the shepherds believe the message they had received from the angel? Who should have been anticipating the arrival of the Messiah in Bethlehem? (See **Mic. 5:2; Matt. 2:1-6**) Why didn’t they? Do you think some so-called churches and some “Christians” will miss the rapture? Why?

2. What word in **verse 16** points us to the excitement of the shepherds? Are you excited to share the good news of Jesus Christ with others? Why do you think so many Christians struggle with the concept of being involved with evangelism? Do you come to church in excitement anticipating the Lord will meet you there, or do come only because you feel like you have to? Why do many people not want to go to church? Should church be boring?

3. Bethlehem was a tiny town in the days of Jesus and likely only had one small inn. (See **2:7**) Do you think the shepherds had a hard time tracking down the newborn Jesus, or was it relatively easy to find Him (**vs. 16**)? Why? How did meeting Jesus change the lives of these shepherds forever (**vs. 17**)? Has meeting Jesus changed you forever? If so, how?

4. Shepherds were looked down upon in Jewish society and not even allowed to give testimony in Jewish courts. Why? What group of people did God call to be the first human evangelists following the birth of Christ (**vs. 17**)? How are these lowly shepherds a picture of each of us today? (See **Rom. 3:10-12, 23**)

5. According to **verse 18**, how motivated were the shepherds to share the good news of Jesus Christ with others? How did the people respond to their message? Do you share Christ faithfully with family, friends and the people you come into contact with? If not, why not? What are some steps you can take to more effectively share Jesus with others?

6. How did Mary respond to meeting the shepherds and the news that they brought (**vs. 19**)? Do you ponder the wonders of God and the miracle of new life today?

7. In what way is the response of the shepherds in **vs. 20** similar to the response of the heavenly host in **verses 13 & 14**? How is the response different? Have you praised God and brought glory to Him by sharing what the Lord has done in your life with others?

8. Why should we as Christians celebrate Christmas? What does the birth of Christ mean to you personally? (See **Isa. 7:14; 9:6-7; Rom. 3:21; 5:1,8-9; 10:9-11; John 3:16**)

9. Have you received Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord? If not, why not receive *“the greatest Gift of all”* by receiving Jesus in prayer right now?

MINER’S CORNER ~ *Manna to live by!*

- Shepherds were considered the lowlifes of Jewish society; they were looked down upon as unclean, unworthy to even testify in a Jewish court – yet God chose them to be the first human witnesses of the birth of Jesus!
- It is significant that the birth of *“the Lamb Of God”* was first announced to shepherds keeping watch over the very sheep that were being prepared for sacrifice at the temple in Jerusalem; the sacrificial lambs were a picture of what the baby Jesus would ultimately do for us on the cross at Calvary!
- The angel brought *“good news”* to the shepherds that in the city of David (Bethlehem), a Savior who is Christ the Lord had been born – the Messiah had arrived!
- Upon the angel’s announcement, a heavenly host (or army) appeared to proclaim glory to God in the highest (meaning, *“glory to God in Heaven”*).
- The religious leaders of Israel should have been looking for the Messiah in Bethlehem, they didn’t; religious leaders are not always men of God – always test their words and actions!
- The greatest Christmas *“Gift”* ever is Jesus Christ; He is available to all who receive Him as Savior and Lord by grace through faith! (See **John 3:16; Eph. 2:8-9**)