

“What A Strange Way To Save The World”

Luke 2:8-20

Message by Michael J. Barnard

December 24 & 25, 2022

Teaching Aim: To understand the significance of the angel’s visit to the shepherds who were watching over the temple flock. To see the relationship between the sheep being prepared for sacrifice at the temple and the birth of the true *“Lamb of God”* whom the temple sheep pointed towards. To understand God gave us the greatest Christmas *“Gift”* ever on that first Christmas Day in the person of His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ.

DIGGING DEEPER INTO GOD’S WORD (BIBLE STUDY)

Part I: An unexpected nighttime visit by an angel (Luke 2:8-12)

1. Using **verse 8**, many have tried to teach that the birth of Christ could not have happened during the month of December. Why? Does anyone know for sure the exact date that Jesus was born on? Why or why not? If the shepherds were caring for the sheep being prepared for the daily sacrifices at the temple, would there be any time of the year in which these sheep would not be needed? Does this mean that the shepherds would have to be in the field keeping watch over the sheep even during the cold and wet winter months?

2. What is *“the glory of the Lord?”* (Hint: Search online) What do you think this glory might have looked like (**vs. 9**)? How did the visible manifestation of the glory of God and appearance of the angel affect the shepherds? Is fear a common response when people come into the presence of the holy? If so, why? (See **Matt. 17:5-8; Luke 1:12; 29**) Have you ever experienced *“the fear of the LORD”* in your life? If so, when? How did it affect your behavior? How are *“fear”* and *“reverence”* at times connected?

3. How did the angel respond to the fear of the shepherds (**vs. 10**)? What communication did this unnamed angel bring to the shepherds that is a message for the ages (**vv. 10-11**)? According to **verse 10**, was this message for the Jews only or for people of all races and nationalities? Why is this important to us today?

4. Two different cities in the Bible are called *“the city of David.”* What are these two cities? Which of the two 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 description?

5. A twofold sign was given in **verse 12**, what was it? What are “*swaddling cloths*” and what are they used for? What makes a baby lying in “*a manger*” so unusual? Why did the baby Jesus end up laying here? (See **Luke 1:7**) What were the Jews expecting from their Messiah? In light of **Isaiah 52:13-53:12**, what did the Jewish establishment miss?
6. What can we learn about Jesus and His upcoming ministry from the humble circumstances surrounding His birth? Why do you think this message was given to humble shepherds and not to the Jewish religious leaders? (See **John 10:1; 1:29b**) How did the religious leaders view shepherds at this time? Where shepherds even allowed to testify in Jewish courts? Does it seem odd to you that God chose shepherds to be the first witnesses of the birth of the baby Jesus?

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

1. What suddenly appeared along with “*the glory of God*” (**vs. 13**)? What is the meaning of the Scriptural word, “*host*?” (See Dictionary) Why is that important here?
2. Although some people today claim the angels were singing, does Scripture ever affirm or even indicate this? What message did this army of angels bring to the shepherds in **verse 14**? Armies are usually used during time of war, but rather than bringing a message of death, this army brought a message of life. What was the essence of their message? (See **Matt. 25:31-33**)
3. Did Jesus come into the world to bring “*peace to all men,*” or only to those who by grace through faith place their 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 that we can receive this kind of peace? (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**)? Would you have done the same? According to **verse 15**, did they believe the message from the angel? Who should have been actively waiting for the Messiah to arrive in Bethlehem? (See **Mic. 5:2; Matt. 2:1-6**) Were they? Do you think some churches still aren’t waiting for Christ to return? Why?

2. What can we learn about the excitement of the shepherds in **verse 16**? Are you excited to share the good news of Jesus Christ with others? Why or why not? What is your biggest fear about sharing the gospel? If you were asked to share the fundamentals of the gospel in one minute, what would you say?

3. Bethlehem was a small town in the days of Jesus and likely only had one inn. (See **2:7**) Do you think the shepherds had a hard time finding the baby Jesus, or would it have been easy to track down a newborn baby in a town that small (**vs. 16**)? How did meeting Jesus change the lives of these unclean and despised shepherds (**vs. 17**)? What are some ways that coming to Christ has changed your unclean life?

4. As mentioned earlier, Shepherds were looked down upon by Jewish society and not even allowed to give testimony in Jewish courts. Who did God choose as His first evangelists following the birth of Jesus Christ (**vs. 17**)? How can Christians relate to these shepherds today? (See **Rom. 3:10-12,23**)

5. According to **verse 18**, how motivated were the shepherds to share 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 become better at reaching others with the gospel of Jesus Christ?

6. How did Mary respond to her meeting with the shepherds and the news they brought (**vs. 19**)? Do you ever ponder the wonders of God and the new life that is available by grace through faith in Jesus? How would you define the word “*worship?*” (See Dictionary) Are you excited about the possibility of coming to church and worshiping God? Why or why not?

7. How was the response of the shepherds (**vs. 20**) like that of the heavenly host in **verses 13 & 14**? How was their response different? Does your love for God lead you to praising Him and bringing glory to Him for what He has done in your life?

8. Should Christians celebrate Christmas? Why or why not? 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 Jesus (the greatest Christmas “Gift” ever) by repenting of your sin and receiving Him in prayer right now?

MINER’S CORNER ~ *Manna to live by!*

- Shepherds were considered to be the lowest of people in Jewish society, they were not even allowed to testify in court.
- The birth of “*The Lamb Of God*” was first announced to humble shepherds who were keeping watch over the temple sheep.
- The sacrificial lambs were a picture (or type) of what the baby Jesus would have to do once He grew up.
- “*The Good News*” the angel brought to the shepherds was that in the city of David (Bethlehem), a Savior, who is Christ the Lord had been born.
- Following the angel’s announcement, a heavenly host (or heavenly army) appeared to proclaim, “Glory to God in the highest,” which means, “Glory to God in Heaven.”
- While the religious leaders of Israel should have been waiting for the birth of Messiah in Bethlehem, they were not; it was humble shepherds who first sought and found Jesus.
- The greatest Christmas “Gift” ever is available to all who by grace through faith receive Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord.