



Luke 2:8-20

Christmas: It is Time to Celebrate

Christmas is a time when we celebrate the birth of Jesus the Savior of the world.

He is the anointed of the Lord, the Messiah.

The first to celebrate were some shepherds outside of the town of Bethlehem. "An angel of the Lord suddenly stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them; and they were terribly frightened" (Luke 2:9). Angels joined them announcing the birth of "a Savior, who is Christ the Lord." Suddenly the whole heaven were praising God. They were singing, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among men with whom he is pleased" (v. 14).

Heaven is still worshipping Him. The apostle John was permitted to peek in and see what was taking place around the throne of the LORD God. "They sang a new song, saying, 'Worthy art Thou to take the book, and to break its seals; for Thou wast slain, and didst purchase for God with Thy blood men from every tribe and tongue and people and nation' (Revelation 5:9). They are still singing "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power and riches and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing" (v. 12).

Are you celebrating His coming today? Come, let's celebrate.

GOD SAYS IT'S TIME TO CELEBRATE (2:8-20)

Shepherds worship

The first to celebrate were some poor, despised and downtrodden shepherds. In the same region there were *some* shepherds staying out in the fields and keeping watch over their flock by night (v. 8). They were looked down upon, and excluded from society. The rabbis despised them as next door to heathen. ”

They were involved in the mundane, the routine, keeping the woollies in the night. These shepherds were probably Temple shepherds, making sure there would be unblemished lambs to be sacrificed to God in the morning and evening sacrifices in the Jerusalem Temple not far away. The Temple flock was pastured near the town of Bethlehem. Did these shepherds perceive that they were worshipping the "Lamb of God who would take away the sin of the world" (John 1:29)?

James Kelso, an archaeologist, observed the landscape one year while working in this area of Israel. He thinks, "The best season for the shepherds of Bethlehem is the winter when heavy rains bring up a luscious crop of new grass. After the rains the once-barren, brown desert earth is suddenly a field of brilliant green. . . . One shepherd stayed with his flock at the same point for three weeks, so lush was the grass. But as soon as the rains stopped in the spring, the land quickly took on its normal desert look once again. He concludes, "December or January would be the most likely months the shepherds came to see the child Jesus.

God passed over the self-important, the High Priest, Herod the Great, the Jewish religious leaders, the Pharisees, the theologians, the politicians, Rome and Jerusalem. Wait, does God have His values misplaced? The Son of God is lying in an animal's feeding trough.

The Shekinah glory (v. 9)

These Temple Shepherds saw the *Shekinah* glory of God for the first time in centuries. The Lord God announced the arrival of the Good Shepherd to these bone tired shepherds who were tending the lambs for the Temple sacrifices.

And an angel of the Lord suddenly stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them; and they were terribly frightened. But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid; for behold, I bring you good news of great joy which will be for all the people; for today in the city of David there has been born for you a Savior, who is Christ the Lord" (v. 9-11). The Greek does not say "the angel of the Lord" but "an angel of the Lord." It is not a Christophany as in the Old Testament. It is not a certain specific angel as "the Angel of the Lord" who was the Lord Jesus Christ Himself. This was a regular angel sent to announce the coming of the Messiah.

Phillips translates "the splendor of the Lord blazed round them." All is quiet in the night, and suddenly it happened. The glory of the Lord flashed all around them —heavenly brightness, manifestation of God's presence and power like at the burning bush and the Tabernacle.

The glory of the Lord shone around them. The idea is "to encircle, encompass with light." The shepherds were completely encompassed in light, the light of "the glory of the Lord." This light "was the *Shekinah*, the brilliant white light of God's eternal glory. It represented the holy presence of Yahweh (Ex. 24:16-17). This was the same light that would be seen later at the transfiguration of Jesus (Matt. 17:5).

For over 500 years the people of Israel had not seen the visible manifestation of Yahweh's presence with them and now He revealed Himself to these humble shepherds, not the high priest, the Pharisees or Sadducees.

The message of the angel (v. 10-11)

Angels always have something funny to say. Imagine your being startled by a heavenly messenger, and then he says to you, "Stop being afraid." These poor shepherds were "terribly frightened," terror stricken, seized with fear so the angel calms them down so they can hear the true meaning of Christmas.

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We've come with some "good news." It is good news of great joy which will be for all the people. " Literally the angel said, I've evangelize to you a great joy. And it is not just for you but also for all the people. The implication is —now you go and tell what you know.

The good news is the Savior, who is Christ the Lord has been born. The angel told them, for today in the city of David there has been born for you a Savior, who is Christ the Lord (v. 11). I wonder if the good news is that these humble shepherds are the ones God has prepared to hear the Word. Perhaps in the quietness of the night they have reflected on the destiny of the sheep that they have become attached to and are quietly awaiting the Lamb of God. A. T. Robertson tells us, This great word Savior is common in Luke and Paul and seldom elsewhere in the N.T. (Bruce). The people under Rome's rule came to call the emperor Saviour and Christians took the word and used it of Christ. "

Every word in that great statement in verse eleven is loaded with great truth. The city of David, the city of Bethlehem, the one that the prophet Micah spoke of, is the location of this marvelous event tonight. The Messiah, the Anointed One, the Messiah the Lord has to come from David's city. He cannot be born anywhere else and be the Messiah. If Jesus had been born in Nazareth and claimed to be the Messiah every Jewish scholar would have declared Him an impostor and rightfully so. Being born in Bethlehem, Judea is part of His credentials. The combination Christ the Lord occurs only here in the New Testament. It is best to take it in its fullest meaning. He is clearly the longed for expectation in the Old Testament of Christ —the Anointed of the Lord. The stress in the original language is on the character and the quality of this person's life. Christ (*christos*) is from the Greek word meaning the Anointed One. The word Messiah is from the Hebrew word for Anointed One. As the anointed of the Lord He is the Spirit-controlled man. It characterizes His nature.

This technical meaning of Messiah is found in Psalm 2:2. The kings of the earth take their stand, and the rulers take counsel together against the LORD and against His Anointed (Messiah). Luke has already stated the role of the Anointed One in 1:31-35. The emphasis on the fact that Jesus is a descendent of the house of David underscores this messianic character (1:27, 32, 69; 2:4).

The word Lord (*kurios*) is used here for Yahweh of the Old Testament. The Anointed One is also the embodiment of God, undiminished deity as Paul tells us, For in Him all the fullness of deity dwells in bodily form (Col. 2:9).

He has been born today! It is a paradox —a seemingly contradiction. He who was and is eternal God has been also born. He became flesh. Behold a virgin shall conceive and bear a son For a child will be born to us, a Son will be given When God became man and took upon Himself true humanity He became a baby. Yes, the Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Eternal Father, Prince of Peace has been born! The 400 years of silence was suddenly broken. God spoke! Today in the city of David there has been born for you as Savior, who is Christ the Lord. Today.

How do you know all that is true? Here is the objective evidence: This *will be* a sign for you: you will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger (v. 12). How will you be able to identify Him? Go to Bethlehem, the city of David, and find a newborn baby wrapped in swaddling cloths lying in a cow trough! Perhaps Jesus was not the only one born that night in Bethlehem. But there was not any other newborn baby found in a feeding trough that night.

Bring out the band (vv. 13-14)

If that was not enough to get those shepherds on the move suddenly a great army of heaven starts praising God and giving Him honor and glory for what is taking place. And suddenly there appeared with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying, Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among men with whom He is pleased (vv. 13-14). Call out the troops! Surprise follows surprise. All of a sudden an entire army of angels descends around those shepherds. Celestial brilliance blazed all around them.

Can you celebrate the true meaning of Christmas? Have you given Christ your whole heart? Do you have the integrity of heart? Do you know the deep, intimate, peace of God? Can you sing and praise and glorify His name?

The Christmas story tells us there is salvation in no one else; for there is no other name under heaven that has been given among men, by which we must be saved (Acts 4:12). It should cause our hearts to sing out the *Gloria in excelsis Deo*. It is a hymn of praise to the LORD God. The birth of the Savior brings glory to God. He is held in highest opinion and esteem and therefore praise, honor and glory. He alone receives the most exalted place in the universe. The chief end of man is to glorify God and enjoy Him forever. The shepherds weren't excited about meeting angels, but experiencing the glory of God's holy presence.

Let's see for ourselves (vv. 15-16)

The shepherds kept on saying to one another let's go with urgency and see for ourselves. When the angels had gone away from them into heaven, the shepherds *began* saying to one another, Let us go straight to Bethlehem then, and see this thing that has happened which the Lord has made known to us. So they came in a hurry and found their way to Mary and Joseph, and the baby as He lay in the manger (vv. 15-16).

The uniqueness of the Christian faith is that each individual must come to an intimate personal relationship with Jesus Christ. No one else's faith can count for your own. Your mother or father may have been faithful Christians, but their faith or good life will not save you. Even though Jesus Christ went to the cross and died in your place to pay your sin debt you can not have a right relationship with God until you acknowledge to Him that you are a sinner and believe on Him. Eternal life is a free gift but it is not automatic and it is not universal. It takes a personal faith in Christ to save you.

The Savior is Christ the Lord. There is none other. He is no longer a baby, nor confined to a crib; He is now seated at the right hand of God, and aware of our attitudes and actions toward Him. We should store up in our memory His Word and ponder it in our hearts because one day we will each one stand before Him and give an account of ourselves to Him. When God spoke, Mary listened. God has spoken to us; have we listened to Him? What is our personal response to the demands of Jesus Christ upon each of us? The Great Shepherd has come; what is your response to Him?

The first missionaries in the New Testament (v. 17-18)

Luke tells us the first missionaries were some crusty old weather beaten shepherds who hastened to go and tell some good news. When they had seen this, they made known the statement which had been told them about this Child. And all who heard it wondered at the things which were told them by the shepherds (vv. 17-18). The shepherds kept on searching around that night until they found the baby in the manger and when they had seen this they spread the word concerning Him.

Martin Luther stood at the rebirth of Europe and declared, This age is Satan's own. John Green declared 200 years ago in England, Never had religion seemed at a low ebb; the Church had sunk to insignificance, the bulk of the clergy were indolent, lax and poor; statesmen are unbelievers and grossly

insignificance, the bulk of the clergy were indolent, lax and poor; statesmen are unbelievers and grossly immoral; purity and fidelity are sneered out of fashion; twenty young thieves are hung in one day in one prison. As White asked, Who could have guessed that in that age God was preparing the Wesleys and Whitefield for England, the Haldanes for Scotland, and Carey for the world? ”

It is ever so. God is at work all about us. Let s plead with Him to prepare our hearts to the place where He can feel free to invite us to come and join Him where He is ministering.

The baby book of the heart (v. 19)

What do mother s do when a baby is born? They start a baby book. Mary "treasured up all these things, pondering them in her heart" (v. 19). Mary was treasuring, carefully storing away, and putting them all together in her mind. The word means to keep in mind, to hold or treasure up (in one s memory). As she treasured these things in her mind she was pondering, reflecting upon and placing together for comparison all of these experiences. Imagine for a moment what it was like when Dr. Luke interviewed her forty years later for this Gospel. He knew the right questions to ask Mary. She is his source for this passage. I can hear her taking out the baby book in the treasury of her memory and walking him through each page. Will it not be wonderful when we get a chance to talk to her personally in heaven and ask all the questions that we want to ask? It will not be an invasion of her privacy. It will be the joy of that little mother s heart to tell about her family here on the earth.

What is in the treasury of your heart today? What are you storing up in the memory cells of your heart? Do you often reflect on what is there? Is there a growing experience with Christ? This is the only way Christ can ever settle down and make Himself at home. By doing the same thing as Mary you are able to "comprehend with all the saints what is the breath and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ which surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled up to all the fullness of God."

What kind of song are you singing? (v. 20)

The shepherds had the privilege of seeing it for themselves. They went back to their fields glorifying and praising God for all that they had heard and seen. Our response can be like the shepherds in v. 20. What song are you singing this Christmas? You can t sing unless you have a song. Those shepherds have just left the greatest worship service they had ever attended! They were full of song and message from God. They had no other song to sing but Jesus.

When a Jewish father had a son born to him they brought out the band and the local musicians gathered at the father s home and greeted him with music. When the heavenly Father s Son became flesh He gathered His celestial choir and they sang songs of praise to Him. The angels of heaven sang songs for Jesus when there were no earthly singers to sing. The heavenly Father is celebrating that night in Bethlehem.

Are you glorifying and praising God for all that you have heard and seen today? Has He put a song in your heart? Have you seen and heard things that cause you to go back from whence you came with a song of glorifying and praising God? The need to praise God is universal and this passage of Scripture should encourage us to join in the heavenly choir. We need to daily give verbal praise to the LORD God.

If you need help in becoming a Christian here is [A Free Gift for You](#).

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Series: Life of Christ

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Wil is a graduate of William Carey University, B. A.; New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary, Th. M.; and Azusa Pacific University, M. A. He has pastored in Panama, Ecuador and the U. S, and served for over 20 years as missionary in Ecuador and Honduras. He had a daily expository Bible teaching ministry head in over 100 countries for ten years. He continues to seek opportunities to be personally involved in world missions. Wil and his wife Ann have three grown daughters. He currently serves as a Baptist pastor and teaches seminary extension courses in Honduras.

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