

R12.2 December 2021 Blog

The Shepherds

Luke 2:8-20:

2:8 And in the same country there were shepherds living in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night.

2:9 And lo, the angel of the Lord came on them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them. And they were grievously afraid.

2:10 And the angel said to them, "Do not fear. For behold, I give to you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people.

2:11 For to you is born today, in the city of David, a Savior, who is Christ the Lord.

2:12 And this is a sign to you. You will find the babe wrapped, lying in a manger".

2:13 And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host, praising God and saying,

2:14 "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men".

2:15 And it happened as the angels departed from them into Heaven, the shepherds said to one another, Indeed, let us go to Bethlehem and see this thing which has happened, which the Lord made known to us.

2:16 And hurrying they came and sought out both Mary and Joseph, and the babe lying in the manger.

2:17 And seeing, they publicly talked about the word spoken to them concerning this Child.

2:18 And all those who heard marveled about the things spoken to them by the shepherds.

2:19 But Mary kept all these sayings, meditating in her heart.

2:20 And the shepherds returned, glorifying, and praising God for all the things that they had heard and seen, as was spoken to them.

First Observations

1. The birth of Christ in Bethlehem had been prophesized over 700 years earlier (See Isaiah Chapters 7 and 9).
2. Bethlehem was to be the place of His birth. Biblical scholars believe Bethlehem, located in the "hill country" of Judah, may be the same as the Biblical Ephrath, which means "fertile", as there is a reference to it in the Book of Micah as Bethlehem. The Bible also calls it Bethlehem Judah. The New Testament describes it as the "City of David". It was the home of Jesse, father of King David of Israel, and the site of David's anointment by the prophet Samuel (1 Sam 16).
3. Through the birth of Christ, God sent the angels to the shepherds and not to the Jewish priests or other recognized religious leaders.
4. The shepherds heard and responded to the angels. They went to see the baby.

5. The Wisemen, who are probably men from Babylon, knew of a sign for a messiah from Daniel's writings. The Jewish leaders did not seem to know the sign. The following is my speculation: the Jewish leaders didn't respond to an obvious sign, the star, that was given to everyone.
6. The ruling king did not hear from the angels, and he killed the children (Matt 2:16).
7. The inn keeper was so busy with the overflow crowd for the census that he missed the greatest event in the birth of the Savior.

Second Observations

Remember, the time of Jesus' birth had been prophesized in the Old Testament. It was expected by some.

There are at least 8 humans (or groups of humans) in this story:

1. Jesus
2. Mary, who was told and accepted her job
3. Joseph
4. Wisemen
5. The King, who killed the children under the age of 2
6. The chief priests and scribes, who knew prophecy but weren't looking for a savior
7. The Inn Keeper, who was too busy
8. The Shepherds

Only Mary, Joseph, the Wisemen, and the Shepherds seemed to respond correctly:

- Mary responded like a mother.
- Joseph was off the stage at this time. He redeemed himself by leading the Egyptian escape and being a father to Jesus as a boy growing up.
- The Wisemen knew the prophecy and were searching for a savior.
- The Shepherds responded like men "who believed".
- Shepherds and Wisemen left to see the child. All the rest did not respond properly.

Therefore, for this blog, let us think on the lessons from the Shepherds.

The Shepherds have appeared throughout the Bible as a profession of many of the heroes in the Bible (David, etc.) It was a dirty profession that took courage and stamina. Note that David, as a shepherd, killed at least a lion and bear alone while at work. What does the scripture say about these shepherds in the Christmas story and history?

- They lived in the field.
- They heard the Angels and they immediately responded to their revelation. They went to the inn to see the Christ child.
- Most likely left their sheep.
 - "And the shepherds returned, glorifying, and praising God for all the things that they

had heard and seen, as was spoken to them.”

- They were not unbelieving. They seemed to expect a Messiah.
- They risked their livelihood.
- They responded to the message from the angels.
- They shared their revelation with all at the inn.
- They witnessed to others about this occasion. They didn't know a lot but spoke of what they did know. They went out and shared the “good news with others”.

Application

Be a shepherd. Most of you are still in the marketplace. You are the shepherds of this time. Are you telling others of the Messiah? I challenge you in the New Year to have a “going to Hell” list.

Something like the following:

Family

- This would be family members who to your knowledge are not believers in Christ.
- Include all the members down to your first cousins.

Work

- Fellow employees that you will try to get to know, serve in some way and witness to them.

Neighbors

- Neighbors that you will try to get to know, serve in some way and witness to them.

Worldwide

- People you know from school, old jobs, or old neighborhoods.

Pray regularly for everyone on your list. Review and adjust this list quarterly.

Merry Christmas!