

Shepherds Moved with Joy to Tell the World a Saviour Is Born

Before Joseph and Mary were married, they were told that God had a special mission for them regarding the birth of the Son of God.

It took great faith for Joseph and Mary to believe in God's plan for this special baby that was soon to be born in Mary's womb by God's miracle working power. Joseph and Mary would get into a lot of trouble from family and friends for taking on this mission to care for this specially planned child, who would become the Saviour of the world.

In obedience to God's word to them, Joseph and Mary, as future husband and wife, committed to caring for the baby to give the child a home and a heritage in Israel.

Joseph and Mary were in the little town of Bethlehem when the baby was born in a cattle shed, which was probably a cave cut out of a hillside nearby the town. They had no furniture and no baby equipment, so, in love, they wrapped the baby in swaddling clothes. Swaddling clothes are strips of cloth wound tight around the baby's little body to make it feel safe and secure, just as when it was inside its mother's womb.

Then they laid the child to go to sleep in a rough wooden cattle tray filled with hay. The Lord Jesus was born into poverty, with no home, no hotel, no luxuries apart from a mom and a foster-dad, who deeply cared for him. Joseph and Mary were willing to do anything to care for the child, because they knew he was more than an ordinary child. He was a miracle baby. He was God's gift soon to become the Saviour of the world.

In that little cave all was quiet, but out in the hillsides around Bethlehem shepherds were looking after their sheep. Shepherds have to keep watch in the night for the new-born lambs and to keep the flock safe from wolves, robbers and to keep the sheep being fearful in the darkness of the night.

These lambs which were born in the hills of Bethlehem were special from birth. Just like the Lord Jesus, they were born and raised to become sacrifices unto God. They were kept outside for a full year until they were offered in the temple as sacrifices. Because the sheep had to be outside, the shepherds had to live outside with them, even in the cold and the rain.

On that same night when the Lord Jesus was born in Bethlehem, shepherds, who watched their sheep in the nearby hills, were startled by a strange light in the sky. It was not a normal star or moonlight, for it was the glory of the Lord that shone around lighting up the fields, the rocks and the sheep, even the shepherds' frowning faces.

The Bible says that, **"The glory of the Lord shone round about them, and they were sore afraid."** The shepherds were faced with the wonder of God's awesome presence making them tremble with great fear. Then an angel of the Lord spoke up to reassure them all was well. The angel said, **"Fear not for I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people."**

Wow, the angel was about to tell of really good news. It would be news that all the people in the world would need to hear. It was news that would bring happiness to people drowning in their sorrows. It was good news for everyone that wanted freedom from the cares of this world and of their sins.

The shepherds were holding their breath waiting to hear what this good news might be. They were hunkered down anxious to know this great good news.

Then came the voice from the skies, **"For unto you is born this day in the city of David, a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord."**

These shepherds must have looked at each other in amazement. **“For us”**. A child is born *for us*. A child is born in the city of David, in Bethlehem, down here at the bottom of these hills so close by. A child is born who is a Saviour, and he is the Messiah, for whom our nation has been waiting hundreds and hundreds of years.

I can imagine the shepherds gathering around in a circle talking and talking about all this great good news of such a special child born so close by in Bethlehem. They would be surprised, happy, and yet still terrified by what this means.

Then the angel continued, **“And this shall be a sign unto you, Ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger,”**

What! Who would ever put a new-born baby in a manger? That’s strange. That’s not what we would expect, reasoned these shepherds, but that is what the angel said. **“Ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger.”**

And then there was a burst of song in the skies. Angels were floating overhead singing, **“Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, and good will toward men.”** It was as if all heaven was in total agreement with the message delivered by the first angel. The perfectly pitched sounds of multitudes of angels praising God were so loud; their songs were so harmonious and in such perfect unison that it was impossible to ignore the high importance of this great good news.

The next thing that moved the shepherds was the fact that they were invited to see this babe in a manger. The angel said, **“For unto you in born this day in the city of David a Saviour,”** and **“Ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes lying in a manger.”** This news made them responsible to check it out. They had heard with their ears, but they were invited to also see the new-born child lying in that cattle’s manger with their own eyes.

That manger should not be hard to find, one shepherd may have said. If the baby was in a home, we might never find him, nor know how to be sure it is the Christ-child, but if He is in a cattle shed lying in a cattle trough, then it will be easy to find him.

So, within minutes, these shepherds were running in their winter coats at full speed down the hillsides into the town of Bethlehem. They ran straight to the cave where animals were kept. As they tip-toed into that cave, sure enough, just as the angel had said, they saw a young man and woman gazing down at a new-born child lying in a manger and they too stood gazing down at the miracle child. Then they believed. For then they remembered the good news as it was told them by the angel. They remembered the angels words, **“For unto you in born this day in the city of David a Saviour which is Christ the Lord.”** And then they were totally excited to go and tell all the world about this child who was Christ the Saviour.

The shepherds went back to their sheep singing and praising God. Their hearts were bursting with this news which amazed them for it was all so wonderfully true. Their souls rejoiced within them and they praised God with the zeal of ready-made pent-up evangelists. They also retold to everyone they met, the very words of the angel that this child was, **“A Saviour, which is Christ the Lord.”**

It was not a time for the shepherds to go back to sleep. They were now privileged men. They were honoured with news that they could not forget. They could not cover it up, nor keep it to themselves. They were entrusted with glorious news straight from heaven. It was news that all men in all the world needed to hear.

All believers in the Lord Jesus are like these shepherds for they want the world to know that Jesus is “A Saviour, which is Christ the Lord.” And all believers want them to also believe on Him as their personal Saviour,

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