

# The Shepherds at Christ's Birth

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Now in the Book of Luke chapter 2, he says from verse 1, he says that, *"And it came to pass in those days that a decree went out from Caesar Augusta that all the world should be registered."* Verse 2 he says, *"The census first took place while Quirinius was governing Syria."* Verse 3 he says, *"So all went to be registered, everyone to his own city."* Verse 4 he says, *"Joseph went up to Galilee out of the city of Nazareth into Judea, to the city of David which is called Bethlehem because he was of the house and lineage of David to be registered with Mary his betrothed wife who was with child. So it was that while they were there the days were completed for her to be delivered."* Verse 7 he says, *"And she brought forth her first born son and wrapped Him in swaddling clothes and laid Him in a manger because there was no room for them in the inn."* In the motel there.

Again, Luke chapter 2 verse 8, Glory in the highest. Verse 8 he says, *"Now there were in the same country shepherds living out in the field keeping watch of their flock by night. And behold an angel of the Lord stood before them and the glory of the Lord shone around them and they were greatly afraid."* Verse 10 he says, *"Then the angel said to them, 'Do not be afraid for behold I bring you good tidings of great joy which will be to all people.'" And I repeat, "To all people. For there is born to you this day in the city of David a Saviour who is Christ the Lord."* Verse 12 he says, *"And this will be the sign to you; you will find a babe wrapped in swaddling clothes lying in a manger."* Verse 13 he says, *"And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of heavenly host praising God and saying, 'Glory to God in the highest and on earth peace, good will towards men.'" Verse 15, "So it was when the angels had gone away from them into heaven that the shepherds said to one another, 'Let us now go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has come to pass which the Lord has made known to us.'" Verse 16, "And they came with haste and found Mary and Joseph and the babe lying in a manger. Now when they had seen Him, they made widely known," which means they evangelized; they broadcast it; *"...they made widely known the saying which was told them concerning this child. And all those who heard it marvelled at those things which were told them by the shepherds. But Mary kept all these things and pondered them in her heart. Then the shepherds returned glorifying and praising God for all the things they had heard and seen as it was told them."**

And then of course further on you see later on when Simeon also identifies the LORD JESUS when He was presented to the temple. Now the important message that I want to lay forth regarding this time of the year to the nations of the earth and to the blessed saints, the believers of the faith of the CROSS is this: It has never ceased to puzzle me, to marvel me

and to surprise me that when the time arrived for the LORD JEHOVAH to bring forth the most important announcement to the nations of the earth, the announcement that was coming to mankind regarding the coming of the SAVIOUR of all men, the Redeemer of all men that was coming to the nations of the earth, to the world to save the world, it has never ceased to amaze me and surprise me that when the Lord was bringing forth this very tremendous and most important announcement to the nations that the MESSIAH, the SAVIOUR, the CHRIST was now born, that the Lord, He chose to use a certain channel of communication that would be least expected of this time, of this planet, that the Lord chose to use the very lowly people.

I've always wondered because these people, the shepherds that the Lord used, He uses the shepherds to bring forth this announcement to all humanity, to all mankind that, "Look, behold THE SAVIOUR has been given unto you, a REDEEMER has been born unto you, a child, THE CHRIST is His name, CHRIST THE KING;" and that when the time to make that announcement from heaven to the earth, to the nations of the earth had arrived, the Lord did not use any other people, but He chose to use the shepherds. And that surprised me very much because I know in those days there were people who were very sophisticated; there were wealthy people; there were educated people, in fact there were scholars, people that spent all their time just reading the Torah, reading The Word, schooling The Word; studying The Word; there were very learned people; there were lawyers, teachers of the law; they were the ones practicing the law, the custodians of the law, the keepers of the law, the observers; they were the ones who were the commentators; they were making commentaries on the law - the law on food; the law on dressing; the law on sacrifice; the law on worship. There were very educated people in those days who devoted and dedicated their lives to studying the law; they were the scholars of the day; the Pharisees, the Sadducees; people that had set themselves apart and aside to simply study the law; the Law of God and to advice, to give counsel to the nation of Israel on how to live, how to eat, how to observe sacrifice, how to worship, how to walk before the Lord.

And there were priests in the Temple of the Lord, people that were communicating with God, supposedly. But the Lord did not choose them; The Lord chose these shepherds. And The Bible says very clearly that the shepherds were watching, they were in the watch of the night. They were watching over their sheep, their flock and they were tending their flock in the night when all of a sudden the angel appeared to them to break this enormous, this unmanageable news; uncontainable news about CHRIST THE SAVIOUR; the coming of THE CHRIST; the coming of the Redeemer to redeem all humanity; that that has never stopped to surprise me, that the Lord could choose such a channel to communicate such a most important message to humanity. And what amazes me most is that even these shepherds when I look at the life we have today here on the earth, these are now your nomads; these are your pastoralists, the shepherds that you see roaming around with sheep, they don't have a permanent address, a mailing address where you can reach them; a physical address; the people that you see today they are here, they have found some pasture here, they tend their sheep here, they found some drinking water also for their sheep here; they have dedicated all their lives to the sheep.

Before they choose a venue, a location, a locality, a pasture they have to put several factors into consideration; "How safe is that place? Are there any leopards in that area? Are there any snakes in that area that could bite the sheep and is there any spring, any cold clean

water near there? Is it salty water or it's fresh water?" what in Israel they call, "Brackish water" if it is salty, brackish. And then if it is not salty, it's fresh water they call it, "Sweet water." In Israel they call it sweet water; either brackish water which is saline or sweet water. And that place is characterized by having saline water; you have places where the water coming out of the well is salty; in fact to the extent that today they even grow what we call, "The desert sweet;" they grow paprika, they grow these vegetables with brackish waters, meaning salty water; and that now becomes sweet. When you eat it, it is sweeter and they sell it at a very high price in the world market.

It's known as, "Desert sweet." It comes only from Israel. And that attests, it testifies to the fact that that land has springs of salty water. And so the shepherds whenever they would move their sheep, they would put so many factors into consideration. There would be some basic fundamentals that they would consider for a place to be suitable to move the sheep to, "Was the pasture fresh? Is it green? Is the water sweet water?" what they call sweet water in Israel, that is fresh water here, the water you drink here, "Or is it brackish water?" If it is brackish water, they call it brackish, salty water then he would not take the sheep there. So these shepherds are people that by birth right from when they were born they see their parents, their grandparents have devoted their lives to tending the sheep so they dedicated their lives totally, their entire lives even as up to death to tend the sheep, to defend the sheep, to protect the sheep, to take care of the sheep. And the Lord, the God of Heaven now sees it fit to choose these people, the people that today you would consider walking in dry places, the nomads, your pastoralists, going in places, they don't have toilets; these are primitive people.

The Lord chose primitive people through which to bring the wonderful news of the coming of THE SAVIOUR, CHRIST THE KING; primitive people. These were uneducated people, people that were not educated at all, the Lord uses them. He chooses them to be the special group, the elect through whom He comes to announce that, "Look CHRIST THE MESSIAH has come to redeem humanity."

I thought, that is very surprising to me that the Lord could choose people that are the most lowly of all people, they are primitive people. If you look at their way of life, it's primitive. If you look at their level of education, they are uneducated. If you look at their civilization, they are uncivilized; they have no toilets. They don't have your modern toilets that you have today. It is very amazing to me that The Lord Jehovah, The God of Heaven could choose this group through which to announce to us the wonderful tidings of the coming of CHRIST THE KING, THE MESSIAH, The Redeemer of the nations, the Redeemer of the world; Redeemer of mankind. And when you read these wonderful blessing of the Lord, about the shepherds being used, then you don't even hear the name of these shepherds mentioned. They are not even known. Their names are not even mentioned. When the Lord uses the lowly people, He does not use the people in New York City; the kind of people you see in Paris, in Nairobi, in Johannesburg, in Cape town, in Seoul, in Auckland, New Zealand, in Melbourne; the kind of people you see in Los Angeles; the kind of people you see in Chicago, in Toronto, in Montreal, the people you see in Edmonton, the people you see in Helsinki, you see in Stockholm; the kind of people you would see in Madrid. He does not use the sophisticated modern people that you see in this day. And these modern people you see in

these days, they were present in those days also; they were living in their cities, but the Lord chooses the people who have no housing.

They don't have homes; they simply pitch temporary shelters, tents, shepherding their sheep, dedicating themselves to shepherding the sheep, devoting their lives to the shepherding of the sheep, then the Lord now chooses them to bring forth this wonderful tidings, the news about the coming of CHRIST THE KING; CHRIST THE REDEEMER; the coming of salvation to mankind. And it's amazing to me that their names are not even mentioned. That is just how lowly they are; how unknown they were. And as the Lord sends the angel, the chief angel to speak with them and He gives them the wonderful news, he said, "GLORY to GOD in the highest." It's amazing to me when the angel stands before the shepherds and breaks the good news that, "Unto you is born a KING," then all of a sudden a huge multitude of angels of heavenly hosts appear and begin to sing this wonderful song, "GLORY to GOD in the highest," and they say, "And on earth peace, good will with men." And this becomes only the second time that such a huge multitude of heavenly hosts appear and speak words like this to mankind.

Isaiah had seen these words. Isaiah the Prophet had heard, had been spoken to; had received the news that CHRIST THE KING, CHRIST THE MESSIAH would come. Now the second one he speaks to, now look, He now speaks to these people; these lowly people, the shepherds.

And for those of you who have been to Israel, you know that the area, the area around which the shepherds, these shepherds were shepherding their sheep at night, the area and the time; I want to look at these two things; that area around their shepherding and the time at which the angels appeared to them, number 1: That time when the angels appeared around this time, this is the time when Israel observes; when Israel beholds their winter. The winter at time in Israel is this time. In fact very shortly as we move very close towards January when we enter the first few days of January, then you will hear Hanukkah, the celebrations of Hanukkah; Hanukkah.

So it was around this time that the angels appeared; the good news that the shepherds received was around this time of the year. And this is when Israel observes her winter. And it's a short winter. It's a Mediterranean winter. Those of you who have had the privilege of being or living in Israel, you will know that at this time it is winter, but the winter there is shorter. In fact whenever we got snow in Jerusalem it was a big news; big news that, "Snow has fallen in Jerusalem."

I know on Mount Hermon there's a constant snow; that is the peak of the mountain. But the winter in Israel around this time of the year is very short winter. In fact begins around December and ends around February; around February. And it's amazing to me that when the shepherds were tending their sheep in the winter, they did not leave the fields. They remained in the field even during the winter with the sheep; with the sheep. And if you ask other farmers, other shepherds, the people that farm sheep in Europe, in North America, the United States of America and Canada and wherever, they will tell you that when the winter comes they have to move the sheep in-house, indoors into their pens, into their shelters.

But in Israel it amazes me that these shepherds were out in the cold in the winter, tending their sheep in the heart of the night. And those of you who have been to Israel, you will know that that area near Bethlehem, that area, the kind of shepherds that shepherd

around there even when you're hosted by the Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Division for International Cooperation, **MASHAV**; they call it **MASHAV** they will take you around that area, they will give you the history of that area; they will give you tours and lectures and you will find that that area, the shepherds that used to tend the sheep around there were shepherds that were tending special sheep that were offered as sacrifice for the Temple of the Lord. Anybody that has been to Israel must have been told that; you know that; that the shepherds that tended the sheep, the sheep that they were tending around this area were not ordinary sheep, this exact area where the angel appeared to the shepherds and gave them the good tidings, the good news from the Lord that, "Behold now CHRIST THE SAVIOUR, CHRIST THE KING is born unto you; unto humanity."

This area around Bethlehem, this area, the shepherds here they tended special sheep and the sheep they tended were always for sacrifice. And they were required by Jewish law; they were required to tend the sheep in the winter for one month outside there before they bring the sheep now for selection, for the Passover feast, for the sacrifice at Passover. Now do you see the type of people for whom the angel appeared, to whom the Lord announced, the type of shepherds to whom the Lord announced that, "Look, behold CHRIST the Shepherd is born! Behold CHRIST the Lamb of God is born! Behold CHRIST the Passover Sacrifice, the One and Only sacrifice that will be now offered once for all is born!" the shepherds; the shepherds, the uneducated people, the lowly people, the uncivilized people, the unsophisticated people; so could it be that the Lord is speaking to the nations of the earth. He's speaking to us through this.

Could it be that the Lord is saying, "Look," There were people in the temple of the Lord, but He did not announce it there. He did not announce it there. Could it be that the Lord is now speaking about the people of this generation to whom also He shall reveal Himself to? Could it be that the modern people, the educated people at the temple did not have capacity to receive from the Lord; to perceive the things of heaven; the things of God? They would have subjected it to contestation, to debate, to analytical thinking, to processing and synthesis that you see happening today in the life of the church; in the life of modern men; in the lives of this generation.

Could that be the lesson the Lord is giving to people, to the nations at this time of the year that, look He went to primitive and lowly and uncivilized shepherds to announce forth the coming of CHRIST the Messiah, CHRIST the Redeemer, the KING that, "Behold He is born in Bethlehem? Could it be that the Lord is saying that the sophisticated people do not have the capacity to perceive the things of God? If you give it to them, they will waste it away; they will debate about it; they will argue about it; they will contest it. Isn't that the same Christian you see again today? Isn't that the same human being you see today? There are doctors; there are lawyers; there are philosophers; there are psychologists; they are very sophisticated; they will subject it to contestation.

They will tell you, "No! I need to test it first." Could it be that that is the reason the Lord chose the lowly, primitive, uneducated shepherds through whom now to make the announcement that, "Look, behold CHRIST THE SAVIOUR is born unto you; a child is born - CHRIST THE KING?" Because when you look at the kind of life then and the kind of life today, you see the same stratum of society, the different stratum, the strata of society - the elite, the educated and the primitive. Could it be that the Lord is saying that even on this

occasion of the coming of the Messiah that is near now, that He shall only reveal Himself to those who are lowly like these shepherds?

Their names are not even mentioned. We don't even know who they were, even how many they were. But they were such a treasure to heaven, to God in the highest, the shepherds that dedicated their life strictly to shepherding the sheep, the special kind of sheep that were being offered on Passover. And that was the critical time when they were now grooming the sheep because Passover is going to be near, during the Equinox in March. In March is the Passover Feast. Is there a message to the church? Is there a message to this generation? Could the Lord be saying, "Now you need to "down load" your sophistication that He may reveal to you the tidings of heaven?" Because at this time your average person is going to spend most of his time squandering it away - drinking, even Christians.

I still remember one Christmas Eve when the Lord told me that, "This is the moment when sin is highest on the earth." And He said, "If you want the Messiah to come, He can even come now!" And I remember that 24<sup>th</sup>, I was coming from Sigulu, Uganda, from a crusade, I fell asleep in the car when the Lord said this. And I said, "...And if the Messiah came today, then oh how He would catch the entire church out." Because even Christians fall into sin during this time; everybody is in sin. It's about eating, drinking, immorality, parties; they are now gathering in homes; they are observing Christmas parties. They are meeting in places at this time at this hour. And those are the places where they're sexual lusting; "there meet my sister; meet my wife's what; meet my husband's sister," whatever.

That is where the immorality is taking place now even among the Christians; at this hour it's the highest because of the sophistication of this hour. But the shepherds had dedicated themselves to a given code about the Temple of the Lord; about the sacrifice of Passover. Could it be that the Lord is saying that this is the moment at which now He's going to come unto those who have dedicated themselves unto the sacrifice of Passover? And then He came to them and He revealed to them that, "As you tend these sheep, the special sheep you are tending here, to be offered at Passover time in the temple, in the homes of these people, then unto you too now is born the perfect Passover Lamb of God that if a man be lowly enough; that if a man be unsophisticated enough, to them it shall be revealed, the good tidings of heaven and glory to God in the highest and on the earth peace, goodwill towards men." Those who have ears may you hear what The SPIRIT of the LORD is saying. Shalom.

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