

## **“The Announcement”**

*December 11, 2022*

*Luke 2:8–20*

### **I. Introduction**

Like birthdays, anniversaries, and other important milestones in a person’s life, because of its great importance, we take time every year to remember the events surrounding the miracle birth of Jesus Christ. The birth of God’s one and only Son is significant to each one of us individually for our salvation; it is also significant to the world as a whole—among other things, Christianity led to the founding of schools and hospitals, it led to the downfall of slavery and the lifting up of the place of women in society and the home. But the telling of the Christmas story can become such a familiar and common experience that we lose the significance of it all. For example, with yearly repetition, the story of the shepherds can become so familiar that we overlook just how amazing this was. As we consider Luke’s account of the angels’ announcement of the birth of “*a Savior, who is the Christ the Lord,*” let’s begin by reminding ourselves of the recipients or audience of this historic announcement.

### **II. The Audience**

We’ve heard announcements all of our lives. We hear announcements on the radio and TV; we are bombarded with them on the internet. Announcements are usually rather boring and unimportant, but not this announcement. Of all the announcements that have ever been made, this announcement about the birth of the Messiah was the most important one. How one responds has eternal significance.

God often doesn’t do things the way we would; it was in *Isaiah 55:8* that God said, “*My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways.*” In our human wisdom, we might have chosen to announce the birth of the Savior of the world to Herod the king or to the powerful and influential people in Israel. This would include the high priest, the priests & Levites, the Pharisees, or the members of the Sanhedrin. But no - the only invitation from God to anyone to come and visit Mary and Joseph and the baby Jesus was to a group of shepherds—one of the last groups of people that you’d expect God to take notice of. God chose shepherds over Pharisees.

Why didn't God send the angel to the chief priests or to the elders and religious leaders of Israel—men of respect; men who daily studied the Word of God; men who would be able to reach many people? Turn to Jesus' evaluation of the Pharisees and teachers of the law, [turn to Matthew 23:23-28](#). The Pharisees and the religious leaders of Israel saw no need for a Savior or for repentance; they knew they were righteous enough; they were good enough. They wanted nothing to do with any so-called "Savior."

It was because of this attitude that the angels were sent to shepherds—men who, because of their occupation, were outcasts. Since they were out with sheep and often had to kill predators, they were almost always "unclean." They were seldom (if ever) allowed to worship in the temple. Even back in Joseph's day in [Genesis 43:32](#), we read that shepherds were "**detestable**" to the Egyptians. And they were poorly thought of by their own people, too. One historian wrote that "*shepherds were despised people. They were suspected of not being very careful to distinguish 'mine' and 'thine; ' for this reason, too, they were debarred from even giving evidence in court.*" Basically, shepherds were pretty close to the bottom rung of the social ladder. But, unlike the Pharisees, they knew that they were sinners and needed a Savior and they were ready to respond to God's call.

There is another reason why they were chosen over many other groups in the Israelite culture. [Turn to 1 Corinthians 1:25-29](#). God doesn't call many of the rich and mighty, He calls the poor and the lowly. He doesn't call those who will rely on their education or their position in life or in their own strength; He calls those who will rely on Him. Peter wrote in [2 Peter 3:9](#) that God "**is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance,**" but, as is seen throughout the New Testament, only those who see their need and respond will be saved. This announcement to the common, despised shepherds was an example of just that. The shepherds may have been outcasts, unclean, and unreliable, but God chose them, and they responded in a positive way. They answered God's call.

### **III. The Announcement**

Can't you just imagine the scene that night? The shepherds were probably sitting around a campfire eating and talking about the events of the day. And as they were talking, suddenly, they were

blinded by a painfully bright light as angel appeared with “**the glory of the Lord.**” This wasn’t normal and, as Alden/Karen read, “**They were sore afraid.**” I’m sure their first thought was, “*This can’t be good!*” These men who would fight thieves, bears, lions, and wolves—these brave men—were scared stiff! They were in the presence of God’s glory and God’s holiness—who wouldn’t be terrified.

Instead of bad news, the angel brought them good news: God had sent a Savior for mankind. Not a soldier or a judge or a reformer but a Savior to meet man’s greatest need—salvation from God’s wrath; salvation from an eternity in hell. The angel said that this Baby was the Christ—the Messiah, the sent One. And just as prophesied in the Old Testament, the Messiah was of the lineage of David, and He was born in Bethlehem. According to the angel, this Baby wasn’t just someone sent by God like Moses had been; He was and is the **LORD**. Not just any run-of-the-mill lord, He was the Lord God; He was Immanuel—*God with us*. As prophesied, this miracle Baby was the Savior, Jesus the Christ, the Son of God.

The angel went on to tell them how to find this Baby. Contrary to what they might have expected, the Baby wasn’t dressed in the finest of clothes and living in the finest house in Bethlehem with many people attending to His needs. Writing of this One—Immanuel, Jesus the Christ, **John 1:3** says, “**Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made;**” this One would be found wrapped in strips of cloth and lying in a manger—an animal feeding trough in a barn.

Then, just in case someone thought he was dreaming or that this was a reaction to eating some bad food, God sent “*a multitude of the heavenly host praising God.*” Actually, Luke wrote that God sent a *plethora of angels*. In **Job 38:6 & 7** God told Job that the angels praised God at the 1<sup>st</sup> creation. Now, at the birth of the Savior, the angels praised God at this new beginning—a new covenant, a new beginning with mankind. **Hebrews 1:6** says, “**When God brings his firstborn into the world, he says, ‘Let all God’s angels worship him’”**

Jesus came to meet man’s greatest need—the angels sang that He came to bring “**peace to men on whom His favor rests.**” **Isaiah 9:6** called Him the “**Prince of Peace.**” In **John 14:27** Jesus said, “**Peace I**

leave with you; My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Do not let your heart be troubled, nor let it be fearful.” The Hebrew word for peace is שָׁלֹם Shalom. *Shalom* means more than peace from war and the battles of life. *Shalom* means an inner peace; peace from worry, grief, and fear—even peace with God. This is the peace Jesus brought—inner peace, peace between one another; peace between Jew and Gentile; peace between God and mankind. **Turn to Romans 5:1-2.** As well as peace with God, there is the peace of God—Paul wrote in **Philippians 4:7:** “The peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.”

But understand, being at peace with God doesn’t mean everything will be “hunky dory” and “peachy keen.” If we are at peace with God, we will be at war with Satan. **Ephesians 6:12** says, “Our struggle, i.e., our war, is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.” In **2 Timothy 3:12** Paul wrote, “Everyone who wants to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted.” **Turn to John 15:18-20.** Peace with God doesn’t lead to peace with the world.

Contrary to popular opinion, peace isn’t assured to all mankind. The angels said that God’s peace is only for those who please Him. **Romans 8:28** puts it this way, “We know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him.” So how does one please God? In **Romans 8:8** Paul wrote, “Those controlled by the sinful nature cannot please God.” The writer of Hebrews wrote in **Hebrews 11:6** “Without faith it is impossible to please God.” As Jesus told Nicodemus in **John 3:1-21** and Paul wrote in **1 Corinthians 15:1-5** and in **Ephesians 2:8-9**, the way of faith and the way to peace is to believe that Jesus’ life, death, and resurrection for one’s sins is all one needs to be saved from an eternity in hell. Then and only then will one be at peace with God and have the peace of God.

#### **IV. The Shepherds’ Response**

After “the angels had left them and gone into heaven,” we see the shepherds’ response. They wasted no time. We aren’t told if they left anyone behind to watch the sheep, but some of them, if not all of them, went to Bethlehem to see this Baby. As they approached Bethlehem, they certainly must have

gotten glares from the people. Because of their reputations, shepherds were not usually welcome in any town. I wonder if they walked up to people and said, “*We saw angels in the sky, and they told us that a Baby had been born who is the Messiah. We were told to look for Him in a manger. Do you know where we can find Him?*” I wonder how many people ignored them completely and walked right by them never slowing their pace at all. Some may have thought that these filthy shepherds were crazy or drunk. I wonder how many rejected them before someone finally pointed them in the right direction.

Eventually, they found the Baby just as the angel had said. They worshipped Him and no doubt marveled at God’s grace and goodness to them as they shared their experiences from that night with Mary and Joseph. They weren’t put off by the surroundings—a smelly barn and an animal feeding trough!! Their eyes were on Jesus and not on the things around them.

After worshiping the new-born Savior, they didn’t just have a benediction and a 3-fold amen and go back to their flocks as if nothing had happened. After they left the Baby, they “**spread the word concerning what had been told them about this child;**” they told everyone they met the good news—the Gospel—as they “**glorified and praised God.**” This was a day of good news, and they couldn’t help but tell others what they had seen. Since it was late at night or early morning, many probably thought that they *were* drunk. Others may have been amused by them, but some must have gone to see for themselves. But regardless of what others did or didn’t do, the shepherds continued glorifying and praising God. They took the place of God’s heavenly messengers—the angels!!

Luke wrote that when they finally returned to their flocks and their regular duties, these shepherds were changed men. They “**returned, glorifying and praising God**” as they shared their experiences with each other and anyone else who would listen to them.

## **V. What is your response?**

The shepherds are good examples for us to imitate today. By faith, they heard the message God sent them and they responded in obedience and joy. These social outcasts went to find the Christ child; they worshiped Him, and then went and told others.

In a similar manner, we have received a message and a command from God; the message is: “*Jesus loves you; He died for you and has risen from the grave for you.*” [Acts 16:31](#) says, “**Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved.**” Every person needs to make Jesus his or her Lord and Savior. And once you have “seen” this Baby of Bethlehem; once you have received Him as your Lord and Savior, the command, the Great Commission from Him, found in [Matthew 28:19-20](#), says to “**go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you.**”

For a plethora of reasons, shepherds weren’t allowed to give testimony in court. They definitely weren’t learned men who could speak with great eloquence (like the Pharisees), but God used these lowly shepherds to be the first human witnesses that prophesy had been fulfilled and that the Messiah had come. Angels can never experience the grace of God, but we, like the shepherds, can experience God’s grace and mercy. We can tell others what God means to us. Telling others about the Savior is a solemn obligation as well as a great privilege, and we, who are believers, must be faithful. As [Romans 10:14](#) says, “**How, then, can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them?**”

Each one of us—not just the pastor or church leaders—must pick up where the angels and the shepherds left off. We must tell others that the King of kings, the Lord of lords, the Son of David, has come to earth. He was sent from heaven to identify with us, to walk with us, to die for us, and to be raised for us—this is the story of Jesus, a story worthy of praise and worthy to be told—again and again.

The reason for our rejoicing starts with Jesus and the story of His birth, but it doesn’t stop there—it’s just the beginning. Through His Spirit—the Holy Spirit—Jesus’ presence continues to be with us and to shape us as we live on this earth. Now instead of being a meek baby in the manger, He is the Good Shepherd who watches over us in **our** weakness. Like the shepherds, we need to go forth glorifying and praising God, announcing to others that the Savior has come. We need to tell others that “Jesus is the Reason for the Season.”