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## A Joyful Host (Angels & Shepherds) and Jesus' Birth

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## THE PHYSICAL BIRTH OF JESUS CHRIST A JOYFUL HOST (ANGELS & SHEPHERDS) AND JESUS' BIRTH

### THE SHEPHERDS AND ANGELS FILE

- **The Scriptural Record**

*"Now there were in the same country shepherds living out in the fields, keeping watch over 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. 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. For there is born to you this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord. And this will be the sign to you: You will find a Babe wrapped in swaddling cloths, lying in a manger.' And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying: 'Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, goodwill toward men.' 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.' 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 the saying which was told them concerning this Child" (Lk. 2:8-17).*

- **In Regard to the Shepherds**

There is a direct correlation among three biblical words. These are: shepherd, sheep and lamb. Consider—

A. The men tending to their flocks in the passage were of course shepherds. But from a spiritual perspective they were looked upon as sheep. To explain:

1. Prior to their encounter with the infant Jesus, they were lost sheep:

*"All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the LORD hath laid on him the iniquity of us all" (Lk. 54:6).*

2. After this visit however they became redeemed sheep:

*"For ye were as sheep going astray; but are now returned unto the Shepherd and Bishop of your souls" (1 Peter 2:23).*

B. This baby named Jesus would become both a sheep and a lamb:

*"He was oppressed and He was afflicted, yet He opened not His mouth; He was led as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before its shearers is silent, so He opened not His mouth" (Isa. 53:7).*

C. Some thirty years later He would be introduced by John the Baptist as a Lamb:

*"The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him, and said, 'Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!'" (Jn. 1:29)*

D. Soon after this however the Lamb would refer to Himself as a Shepherd!

1. First, He would be the Good Shepherd, referring to His death:

*"I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd gives His life for the sheep . . . I am the good shepherd; and I know My sheep, and am known by My own"* (Jn. 10:11, 14).

2. Then the book of Hebrews declared Him to be the Great Shepherd, referring to His resurrection:

*"Now may the God of peace who brought up our Lord Jesus from the dead, that great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant"* (Heb. 13:20).

3. Finally, Simon Peter calls Him the Chief Shepherd, referring to His Second Coming:

*" . . . and when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory that does not fade away"* (1 Pet. 5:4).

E. But the story does not end here. In the book of Revelation He is introduced as the Lion of the Tribe of Judah, but is looked upon by John the apostle as a slain Lamb!

F. In fact, during the Great Tribulation the wicked will utterly panic at His appearance. And the reason?

*" . . . and said to the mountains and rocks, 'Fall on us and hide us from the face of Him who sits on the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb! For the great day of His wrath has come, and who is able to stand?'"* (Rev. 6:16, 17).

Here we read of something absolutely incredible – a wrathful Lamb! This is no ordinary Lamb!

G. Strange and marvelous indeed are the works of God!

H. Here it may be asked just why the shepherds were the first group to hear the glorious news. After all, most of the apostles were fishermen and both Jesus and His stepfather were carpenters. The answer is simple: What other earthly group than shepherds would better understand what God had just accomplished? These were men who raised lambs and later sold them for sacrificial purposes in the temple (Jn. 1:29; 10:11). Note: They would eventually understand that in the past the sheep had died for the shepherd, but soon the Shepherd planned to die for the sheep. See John 10:11.

I. Finally, observe how these shepherds came and how they left:

1. They came with haste!

Like many other Christians I did not accept Jesus as Savior upon hearing the gospel for the first time. But they did not tarry! The scriptures are replete with warnings, urging the unsaved not to delay in regard to this all-important decision. Note:

a. King Solomon

*"Do not boast about tomorrow, for you do not know what a day may bring forth"* (Prov. 27:1).

b. Paul

*"For He says: 'In an acceptable time I have heard you, and in the day of salvation I have helped you.' Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation" (2 Cor. 6:2)*

c. Author of Hebrews

*"Therefore, as the Holy Spirit says: 'Today, if you will hear His voice, do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion, in the day of trial in the wilderness'" (Heb. 3:7, 8).*

d. James

*"Come now, you who say, 'Today or tomorrow we will go to such and such a city, spend a year there, buy and sell, and make a profit'; whereas you do not know what will happen tomorrow. For what is your life? It is even a vapor that appears for a little time and then vanishes away. Instead you ought to say, 'If the Lord wills, we shall live and do this or that'" (James 4:13-15).*

The following are the penetrating words of author, Robert H. Smith:

*The clock of life is wound but once,  
And no man has the power  
To tell just when the hands will stop  
At late or early hour.*

*To lose one's wealth is sad indeed,  
To lose one's health is more,  
To lose one's soul is such a loss  
That no man can restore.*

*The present only is our own,  
So live, love, toil with a will,  
Place no faith in 'Tomorrow,'  
For the clock may then be still.*

Thus, the bottom line is as follows: God cannot save anyone yesterday, He is not obligated to save anyone tomorrow. So then, the only time is today!

2. They left witnessing everywhere. In essence it may be said that of all the 800,000-plus words in the Bible, two aptly summarize God's plan for us. One is directed to the lost, the other to the saved!

a. To the lost, the word is . . . *come!*

*"Then the Lord said to Noah, 'Come into the ark, you and all your household, because I have seen that you are righteous before Me in this generation'" (Gen. 7:1).*

*"'Come now, and let us reason together,' says the Lord, 'Though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red like crimson, they shall be as wool'" (Isa. 1:18).*

*“And the Spirit and the bride say, ‘Come!’ And let him who hears say, ‘Come!’ And let him who thirsts come. Whoever desires, let him take the water of life freely” (Rev. 22:17).*

b. To the saved, the word is . . . go!

*“And when He got into the boat, he who had been demon-possessed begged Him that he might be with Him. However, Jesus did not permit him, but said to him, ‘Go home to your friends, and tell them what great things the Lord has done for you, and how He has had compassion on you’” (Mark 5:18, 19).*

*“Therefore go into the highways, and as many as you find, invite to the wedding” (Mt. 22:9;*

*“Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit” (Mt. 28:19).*

- **In Regard to the Angels**

The question may be asked just why God chose angels to announce Jesus’s birth. Several reasons may be given:

A. Because angels are interested in the things of salvation:

1. According to Daniel

*“Then I, Daniel, looked; and there stood two others, one on this riverbank and the other on that riverbank. And one said to the man clothed in linen, who was above the waters of the river, ‘How long shall the fulfillment of these wonders be?’” (Dan. 12:5, 6).*

2. According to Jesus

*“Likewise, I say to you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents” (Lk. 15:10).*

3. According to Peter

*“ . . . to the intent that now the manifold wisdom of God might be made known by the church to the principalities and powers in the heavenly places” (Eph. 3:10).*

B. Because of God’s two greatest works

It may be said that everything God has ever done can be placed in one of two categories, that of *creation* and *redemption*. We are told that angels were present at God’s first great work when He created the world:

*“Where were you when I laid the foundations of the earth? Tell Me, if you have understanding. Who determined its measurements? Surely you know! Or who stretched the line upon it? To what were its foundations fastened? Or who laid its cornerstone, when the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy?” (Job 38:4-7).*

In this passage God reminds a suffering Job (who had been questioning His ways in dealing with men) that he, Job, had not been there when the earth was made, but angels

were! Thus it would seem very appropriate for angels to announce God's second great work, that of redemption.

By the way, two of the songs we will sing in heaven have as their theme worshipping God for His work in creation and redemption. Note:

1. The song of creation

*"You are worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honor and power; for You created all things, and by Your will they exist and were created" (Rev. 4:11).*

2. The song of redemption

*"And they sang a new song, saying: 'You are worthy to take the scroll, and to open its seals; for You were slain, and have redeemed us to God by Your blood out of every tribe and tongue and people and nation'" (Rev. 5:9).*

Consider:

In the annunciation the angels called Jesus a Savior (Lk. 2:11) They did not call Him an example or a great teacher, although He was both, but a Savior! Someone has observed:

If our greatest need had been information, God would have sent an educator.

If our greatest need had been technology, God would have sent us a scientist.

If our greatest need had been money, God would have sent us an economist.

If our greatest need had been pleasure, God would have sent an entertainer.

But since our greatest need was forgiveness . . . God sent us a *Savior*.

One final thought:

Although they probably were unaware of it, the annunciation to the shepherds would be but the first of several key events when these celestial creatures minister to the Son of God. Observe:

1. At His temptation (Mt. 4:11)
2. At Gethsemane (Lk. 22:43)
3. At His resurrection (Mt. 28:1, 5, 6)
4. At His ascension (?) (Psa. 24:7-10)

Some feel this passage has in mind both David's grand entrance into Jerusalem, but also predicted Christ's glorious ascension as the Lord of Hosts (angels) following His triumphal entry into the heavenly city!

5. At the Rapture (1 Thess. 4:16)
6. At the Second Coming (2 Thess. 1:7)