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A Shepherd's View

The shepherds were business men. When the angel said, "You will find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes and lying in a manger," they knew exactly what it meant.

by George Woodward

The birth of Jesus Christ has been written about, spoken of and even acted out ever since the day it occurred. There are facts we know, some we think we know and others that are just legends. The truth is, however, that the conception was immaculate; the birth was natural and God the Son was born in Bethlehem 2000 years ago.

He came to earth for a purpose and that was to pay the price that we could not ever have any hope of paying. It was hopeless and mankind was completely vulnerable. Death was our due and the blood of sacrificial animals could at best only cover sin but never eradicate it.

They were not just any shepherds....they were ones that had a very unique purpose...

The Father had a perfect solution and it was in His heart from before time began. He created us but knew we couldn't make it. The consequence of our sin was eternal separation from Him. His yearning however, was for fellowship, a family and an eternal love relationship.

The only possibility would be for someone without sin to become sin and pay the price for us all. It could only be the Spotless Lamb of God, Jesus the Christ.

So, He was born to destroy the works of the enemy, redeem a hopeless humanity, demonstrate the love of the Father and open the way for, "whosoever will" to have direct access to Him. At Jesus' physical death the separation curtain was removed because the Son of God had satisfied the payment for sin. The Father so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son...

On the night of the birth, all heaven was standing and in awe. A group of angels had been dispatched to speak to a small number of shepherds. These were not just any shepherds however, they were ones that had a very unique purpose and business endeavour. As things are with God, everything was perfect and dovetailed together fulfilling Scripture and establishing the platform for a spectacular event to occur, ... "and God was made flesh and dwelt among us."

In Matt. 2: 1-6 we are told that Herod, who was power hungry and would kill anyone that he thought threatened his rule or position, when he heard that a "King" was born in his region, was determined to obliterate Him before He could ever establish any following or authority. He said

with a sinister plan in mind, "Where is He to be born?"

The priests, who knew the Old Testament prophecies, replied, "In Bethlehem of Judea." They

were confident of this because they quoted the Scripture from Micah 5:2 which said, "But you Bethlehem in the land of Judah, are not the least among the rulers of Judah, for out of you shall come a Ruler who will shepherd my people Israel."

So our focus is now centered on this small town that was situated just a few kilometers from Jerusalem. Ah, Jerusalem! God's city! It was the location of the temple. The place where day after day and year after year, unblemished lambs were sacrificed for the sins of the nation, thousands of them each year: but never

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In the fourth chapter of Micah it is revealed who those "shepherds abiding in the fields by night" were. Verse 8 of Micah 4, begins prophetically addressing these shepherds and their location: "And you, oh tower of the flock, the stronghold of the daughter of Zion, to you shall it come."

The "tower of the flock" was a location just outside Bethlehem. It referred to a hilled area that was highly regarded by the Israelites. It was the location where the sacrificial animals were bred and raised. These of course were not for domestic consumption. They were to be sacrificed at the temple.

These shepherds were business men. They were very particular about the breeding of the animals, and then the protecting of the new-born lambs so they would never be injured or marked because if they were, they then were not fit for sacrifice. The shepherds would take the new-born lamb and wrap it tightly in cloth to protect it. They would often lay it in the feeding trough until it was steady on its new legs to insure it didn't get injured. They knew the lamb had a very special purpose.

So, when the angel came and spoke to these ordinary men and said, "You will find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes and lying in a manger," they knew exactly what it meant. I'm sure a light went on inside them. They probably exclaimed, "This must be the one!"

When they said, "let us go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has come to pass, which the Lord has made known to us," they were acknowledging that God Almighty had revealed Himself to these ordinary men. They were likely running as fast as they could, shouting at anyone they passed.

The Father is still revealing Himself today. He reveals His love, His compassion and His mercy to ordinary humanity; ordinary, everyday people just like you and me. He opens His arms and says, "Whosoever will, let Him come."

At this Christmas season, let's refocus on the wonder, the majesty, the hope and the future we have in Him. He loves us with an everlasting love and with loving kindness has He drawn us to give us a future and a hope. That hope and trust is centered on the One who is the spotless Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world.

Have a blessed and joyous Christmas Season!

George Woodward is the president of 700 Club Canada.

Originally published in Evangelical Christian, December 2009.

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