







1 Now in those days a decree went out from Caesar Augustus, that a census be taken of all the inhabited earth.



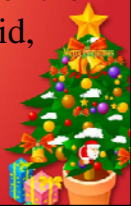
2 This was the first census taken while Quirinius was governor of Syria.



3 And everyone was on his way to register for the census, each to his own city.



4 Joseph also went up from Galilee, from the city of Nazareth, to Judea, to the city of David which is called Bethlehem, because he was of the house and family of David,



5 in order to register along with Mary, who was engaged to him, and was with child.



6 While they were there, the days were completed for her to give birth.



7 And she gave birth to her firstborn son; and she wrapped Him in cloths, and laid Him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn.



8 In the same region there were some shepherds staying out in the fields and keeping watch over their flock by night.



Shepherds Keeping Watch over Their Flocks 8

- Tending flocks, with agriculture, formed the basis of the Palestine economy, and sheep raised on the hillsides around Bethlehem may well have been destined for temple sacrifices in Jerusalem, only six miles to the north.



9 And an angel of the Lord suddenly stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them; and they were terribly frightened.




The Glory of the Lord 9


- One minute the shepherds are talking quietly in the blackness of the winter sky. The next, the hillside is ablaze with light and booming with the sound of an angel's voice.
- This appearance wasn't at a distance, but upfront and personal.
- "Appeared" is the verb *ephistemi*,



10 But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid; for behold, I bring you good news of great joy which will be for all the people;



11 for today in the city of David there has been born for you a Savior, who is Christ the Lord.




The Good News Angel 10-11

- The angel moves first to calm their fears....
- This Good News angel has the enviable task of being the first herald of Messiah's birth. "Bring good news" (NIV) or "bring good tidings" (KJV) is the Greek verb *euangelizo*




12 This will be a sign for you: you will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger."






At the Sign of a Manger 12


- How would the shepherds know that the angel's message is true?
- "Sign" is the Greek noun *semeion*, "a sign or distinguishing mark whereby something is known, sign, token, indication."
 - Wrapped in cloths
 - Lying in a manger



13 And suddenly there appeared with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying,




14 "Glory to God in the highest, And on earth peace among men with whom He is pleased."




Glory to God in the Highest 13-14


- The content of their praise is
 - to give glory to God
 - to offer a blessing of peace to men.




The crowd is described with two phrases:
(1) "great company" or "multitude"
(Greek *plethos*, "crowd, throng, host, assembly") and (2) "heavenly host." "Host" is the Greek noun *strateia*, a military term that means "army." God's heavenly army is mentioned several times in scripture (Joshua 5:14; 2 Kings 6:17; Psalm 34:7; 103:21; 148:2).



15 When the angels had gone away from them into heaven, the shepherds began saying to one another, "Let us go straight to Bethlehem then, and see this thing that has happened which the Lord has made known to us."



16 So they came in a hurry and found their way to Mary and Joseph, and the baby as He lay in the manger.



17 When they had seen this, they made known the statement which had been told them about this Child.



18 And all who heard it wondered at the things which were told them by the shepherds.




The Shepherd's Response 15-18


- The shepherds had a choice.
- Go and see? Ignore this bizarre! Wait for another to find out and then claim first.



“Christmas is based on an exchange of gifts, the gift of God to man – His unspeakable gift of His Son; and the gift of man to God – we present our bodies a living sacrifice.”
Vance Havner




19 But Mary treasured all these things, pondering them in her heart.




Mary Ponders the Shepherd's Report 19


- "Treasured up" - "to store information in one's mind for careful consideration, hold or treasure up in one's memory."
- "Pondered" - the Greek verb *sumballo* "to give careful thought to, consider, ponder,"



Let us not 'spend' Christmas or
 'observe' Christmas!
 Rather, let us 'keep' Christmas
 and 'ponder' Christmas this
 whole year!



20 The shepherds went back;
 glorifying and praising God for all
 that they had heard and seen, just as
 had been told them.



Joyful Shepherds 20

- **Appropriate responses to Good News**
- "great joy" 10
- praise 13-14, 20
- curiosity to confirm its truth 15-16
- amazement 18
- telling others 17
- thoughtful meditation 19
- No where do we see unbelief!

