

THE SHEPHERDS: THE ROAD OF PROMISE

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Luke 2:1-7

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INTRO.

-- Throughout this Christmas season we have been traveling back to the first century Israel, where we are meeting the characters in the Christmas story.

Today, we will travel back to the road into Bethlehem on the night that Jesus was born, where we will encounter a group of shepherds who have left their flocks on the hillside and are walking - almost running - towards the village. Luke tells us what has prompted this unusual action in Luke 2:8-20.

Luke 2:8-20

I. The Promise to the Shepherds

-- This passage contains two promises made by God to the shepherds.

A. The First Promise (vv. 10-11)

1. The angel's message to the shepherds is actually an announcement about the fulfillment of a promise - not just any promise but the greatest promise of all time - God's promise to send a Savior, one who would overcome evil and who would make a way for us to find forgiveness for our sins and release from our guilt.

2. It was a promise first made by God in the Garden of Eden just after Adam and Eve's rebellion and fall that would pass on a sin nature to all their descendants.

Genesis 3:15 I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring; he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel.

3. Then for thousands of years God sent prophets who repeated the promise.

Isaiah 7:14 Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign. Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel.

Isaiah 9:6 For to us a child is born, to us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder, and his name shall be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.

Micah 5:2 But you, O Bethlehem Ephrathah, who are too little to be among the clans of Judah, from you shall come forth for me one who is to be ruler in Israel, whose coming forth is from of old, from ancient days.

3. Now, after those thousands of years of waiting, the angels appear to tell these shepherds that the promise was being fulfilled that very night.

B. The Second Promise (v. 12)

-- And that brings us to the second promise made to the shepherds.

v. 12

-- God promised the shepherds that they would find the Savior in the person of a newborn baby, wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger, a feeding trough for stable animals. And that's exactly what these shepherds that we have met on the road leading into Bethlehem are going to find.

II. The God of the Promises

-- The God who reveals Himself to us here and throughout the Bible is a God of promises, a God whose promises abound throughout Scripture. He makes countless promises to us even though He is under no obligation to promise anything to us. All His promises are prompted only by His love and grace.

2 Corinthians 1:20 For the Son of God, Jesus Christ, whom we proclaimed among you ... was not Yes and No, but in him it is always Yes. **20** For all the promises of God find their Yes in him.

-- It's through Christ that we find God's "yes" of acceptance, and we become His children, and the

precious promises of God become ours.

III. The Promises of God

-- Consider what it means for us to be the recipients of God's promises.

A. It means forgiveness of our sins and release from the burden of our guilt.

-- **1 John 1:8-9** If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. **9** If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

B. It means rest from the burdens of life.

-- **Matthew 11:28** Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.

C. It means God's provision whatever our circumstances.

-- **Isaiah 43:1b-2** "Fear not, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by name, you are mine. **2** When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and through the rivers, they shall not overwhelm you; when you walk through fire you shall not be burned, and the flame shall not consume you.

D. It means the assurance of eternal life.

-- **John 10:27-30** My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me. **28** I give them eternal life, and they will never perish, and no one will snatch them out of my hand. **29** My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all, and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father's hand. **30** I and the Father are one."

E. It means the hope that one day we will be reunited with loved ones who have gone to be with the Lord.

-- **1 Thessalonians 4:13-18** But we do not want you to be uninformed, brothers, about those who are asleep, that you may not grieve as others do who have no hope. **14** For since we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so, through Jesus, God will bring with him those who have fallen asleep. **15** For this we declare to you by a word from the Lord, that we who are alive, who are left until the coming of the Lord, will not precede those who have fallen asleep. **16** For the Lord himself will descend from heaven with a cry of command, with the voice of an archangel, and with the sound of the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. **17** Then we who are alive, who are left, will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we will always be with the Lord. **18** Therefore encourage one another with these words

F. It means the confidence that there is coming a time when there will be no more sorrow or suffering.

-- **Revelation 21:3-5** And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God. **4** He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away." **5** And he who was seated on the throne said, "Behold, I am making all things new." Also he said, "Write this down, for these words are trustworthy and true."

CONCLUSION

No matter how dark the night the promises of God break in to us as to the shepherds with the good news of God's promises that are ours through His Son. In Christ we too, like the shepherds, can find the joy in knowing that God always keeps His promises.