

December 10, 2023

An Out of this World Christmas: Week 2

What's so amazing about the Christmas story is how diametrically opposed this incredible story plays out in front of us!

Think about it, the Christmas story introduces us to this amazing event: God leaving HIS world, and coming into OUR world.

Luke 2:8-17 (NIV)

And there were shepherds living out in the fields nearby, keeping watch over their flocks at night. An angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid. I bring you good news that will cause great joy for all the people. Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is the Messiah, the Lord. This will be a sign to you: You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger." Suddenly a great company of the heavenly host appeared with the angel, praising God and saying, "Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace to those on whom his favor rests." When the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, "Let's go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has told us about." So they hurried off and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby, who was lying in the manger. When they had seen him, they spread the word concerning what had been told them about this child.

I. The Declaration of Heaven

Luke 2:10-11 (NIV)

"Do not be afraid. I bring you good news that will cause great joy for all the people. Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is the Messiah, the LORD."

You know the Christmas story is important because this was NOT the ONLY declaration, it was the 4th!

A. The Angelic Announcement to Zechariah

Luke 1:11-14, 17 (NIV)

Then an angel of the Lord appeared to him, standing at the right side of the altar of incense. When Zechariah saw him, he was startled and was gripped with fear. But the angel said to him: "Do not be afraid, Zechariah; your prayer has been heard. Your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you are to call him John. He will be a joy and delight to you, and many will rejoice because of his birth... And he will go on before the Lord, in the spirit and power of Elijah, to turn the hearts of the parents to their children and the disobedient to the wisdom of the righteous—to make ready a people prepared for the Lord."

John was to be a SIGN, a messenger that the Messiah, the LORD, was coming!

B. The Angelic Announcement to Mary

Luke 1:26-27, 30-33 (NIV)

In the sixth month of Elizabeth's pregnancy, God sent the angel Gabriel to Nazareth, a town in Galilee, to a virgin pledged to be married to a man named Joseph, a descendant of David. The virgin's name was Mary... But the angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary; you have found favor with God. You will conceive and give birth to a son, and you are to call him Jesus. He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his father David, and he will reign over Jacob's descendants forever; his kingdom will never end."

C. The Angelic Announcement to Joseph

Weddings for Israelites took place in a different way than today. First, the couple was betrothed, and were considered married, but did not live together for up to a year while the husband established their new home.

Matthew 1:20-21 (NIV)

Behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, "Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take to you Mary your wife, for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit. And she will bring forth a Son, and you shall call His name Jesus, for He will save His people from their sins."

The Angel announced two truths to Joseph.:

- 1.) The baby was conceived by the Holy Spirit, not another man!
- 2.) The Angel revealed that the baby's name was to be Jesus, that he would save his people from their sin. The Angel helped Joseph realize that through this Son there would be a Future!

D. The Angelic Announcement to the Shepherds

In the Announcement to each of these four characters, there are three Declarations that are GIFTS that God wants us to receive by way of this incredible Christmas story!

1.) Fear Not

If there is ever a time in which we need to be reminded to Fear Not, it's today! Our world seems to be unraveling before our very eyes!

But hear me today: The currency of Heaven is not Fear, but Peace!

To operate in the Supernatural, to do great exploits for the Kingdom, to receive the Hope of Heaven will challenge us to move out of Fear, and into Faith!

Question: What message, what hope, are you letting those around you know?

Luke 21:25-28 (NKJV)

"And there will be signs in the sun, in the moon, and in the stars; and on the earth distress of nations, with perplexity, the sea and the waves roaring; men's hearts failing them from fear and the expectation of those things which are coming on the earth, for

the powers of the heavens will be shaken. Then they will see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory. Now when these things begin to happen, look up and lift up your heads, because your redemption draws near."

2.) Great Joy

I bring you good news that will cause great joy for all the people.

What brings you Joy? How many know it's different from Happiness? Happiness is based on Happen-Stance. Joy isn't temporary, it's not based on circumstances.

God doesn't want you to just have Christmas JOY, He wants you to have DAILY Joy, Eternal Joy!

The Last, and maybe greatest Declaration is...

3.) The LORD has Come!

Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is the Messiah, the LORD.

A. Influence, not Inundated

The View of the Messiah: Israel wanted a World Leader, a Military General, someone to lead them to Political prominence.

But think of it when we were born, hardly anyone showed up!

When John declared, Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world, no one followed Him. Some of John's disciples sought him out, but instead, Jesus went after the disciples.

It's true, he did draw some crowds, but once they heard his message, what he was asking them to do, they began to leave in droves!

Things haven't changed much in the last 2,000 years. Churches will be filled or even overflowing on Christmas Eve, but not the following Sunday.

Question: What are we to do? We follow the LIGHT, just like the Shepherds did!

II. The Decision of the Shepherds

Believe, go and see what seems unbelievable.

Zachariah & Elizabeth were old and she was barren. Mary was a YOUNG, virgin girl, but she pondered all these things in her heart! Joseph would have been the laughing stock of the city, but he didn't divorce her, he protected her.

The Shepherds could have easily said, "Are we being punked?" How is it that WE have been given the task of declaring the arrival of the Messiah? It seems too unbelievable!

1.) He's looking for a Heart to Believe

The truth is, the religious people would have never believed/accepted that the Messiah would be born in the way he came, but it made sense in the world to Shepherds!

This will be a sign to you: You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger. When they had seen him, they spread the word concerning what had been told to them about this child.

FEAR.

JOY.

SOON COMING KING.

There may not have been a lot coming to see him the FIRST time he came, but the Bible is really clear that He'll be seen the next time He comes!