

**December 3, 2023**

**An Out of this World Christmas: Week 1**

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.

Question: How many of you have come across something and wondered, "How did these two unlikely things come together?!"

Fried eggs on a Hamburger?

French Fries and a Frosty?

Julia Roberts and Lyle Lovetts?

Let me give one more: The Son of God leaving the splendor of Heaven and coming down to Earth!

The epicenter of the story starts in a Stable. Someone asked, "Why was Jesus born in a Barn?" And the primary response is because from the very beginning, and maybe still like today, there was No Room for Jesus!

After a long and arduous journey from Nazareth to Bethlehem to participate in the census, Mary (about to give birth at any moment) and Joseph pull into town late. The Innkeeper can only offer Sub-Par accommodations to say the least, the stable, at the edge of the property.

While everyone else was tucked into a nice warm bed after having their bellies filled, the Son of God was about to make the most unnoticed of all appearances. In one divine moment, the great King of the universe stepped away from the Glory of Heaven, and stepped into the Gutter of Earth.

Can I take you back just One Second before we hear the cry of an infant child who now is being quickly wrapped in SWADDLING CLOTHES and then laid in an animal feeding trough. In that One Previous Second, we become enthralled by...

I. The Splendor of Heaven: the home, and culture of the King of the Universe

A.) A Room with a View: *Revelation 21:9-11*

I'm part of the Marriott Travel Club, and you might not know this, but I'm a pretty big deal. I'm a Titanium member! And one of the perks is I often get upgraded when I check in!

The person at the desk often tells me, "Mr Grove, we've upgraded you into one of our Suites!" If it's a really nice hotel I can't wait to see the room! But no room I've ever had compares to the view of Heaven! Here's how John describes it!

Revelations 21:10 (NIV)

And he carried me away in the Spirit to a mountain great and high, and showed me the Holy City, Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God.

B.) Walls and Gates of Splendor

The Foundations of the WALL OF THE CITY were adorned with all kinds of precious stones.

There were Twelve Gates, each made of twelve pearls: each individual gate was made of one pearl! And the Streets of the City were of pure gold, like transparent glass!

C.) More than a Place, a Perfect Presence

Hebrews 12:22-23 (NIV)

But you have come to Mount Zion, to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem. You have come with thousands upon thousands of angels in joyful assembly, to the church of the firstborn, whose names are written in heaven. You have come to God, the Judge of all, to the spirits of the righteous made perfect.

And, as one writer put it, Heaven will be “a place of unimagined blessing.” One that will bring...

D.) An Eternal Reunion: *Revelations 7:9-10*

The Splendor of Heaven will one day reveal this wonderful truth. Currently, we may look different, speak different, have different color skin, celebrate differently, grow up with different challenges, but look at Heaven...

Revelations 7:9-10 (NIV)

After this I looked, and there before me was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people and language, standing before the throne and before the Lamb. They were wearing white robes and were holding palm branches in their hands. And they cried out in a loud voice: “Salvation belongs to our God, who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb.”

II. The View of the Stable- This will be a sign to you: You will find the baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger.

Question: I think we've all faced the WHY questions in life. Maybe we were trying to answer someone else's Why, and sometimes our own...

- Why did this bad thing happen?
- Why didn't I get the job?
- Why did this person have to die?
- Why did I experience this pain or abuse?

If you think God doesn't care about you, then first answer me the question as to WHY God was willing to come to us the way He did?!

Instead of coming to earth as a pampered, privileged ruler, Jesus was born into the gutter of our world! It shows me he is approachable, accessible, available—no palace gates, no bars on the windows, no posse of bodyguards preventing our approach. Enduring the worst, to give us His best!

III. But Christmas isn't a story to Know, it's a story to Tell! The reason for Shepherds. They had no power or influence. They had nothing to bring the baby, the King of the world.

So why did God choose the lowliest members of society and entrust them with the greatest truth of the ages?

First, shepherds had the capacity to be humbled and amazed that God chose them to hear the news first.

Second, after they had seen the baby Savior, they "spread the word" concerning what they were told and what they saw! God in His infinite wisdom chose just the right group of people to entrust them with the greatest news of eternity!

This Christmas awakens two questions for us to consider again this year:

- 1.) Have you made Room for Jesus?
- 2.) The Need for more Shepherds, those willing to *Spread the Word* about the Savior of the World, who was willing to leave the Splendor of Heaven to enter even the most desperate parts of our lives, because we matter to Him!