

## Christmas Story, Part 2

December 10, 2016

### I Prophecy

#### A) Wednesday night

- 1) Started a study on prophecy
- 2) One of the spiritual gifts given to us by Jesus when He rose into heaven
- 3) We study not just to learn about how to prophesy but also how to understand prophecy
- 4) Through prophecy, God gives us a glimpse of what is to come so we can prepare, so that we can repent, so we can change our ways
- 5) **SLIDE Amos 3:6-7 (NIV)** <sup>6</sup> When a trumpet sounds in a city, do not the people tremble? When disaster comes to a city, has not the LORD caused it? <sup>7</sup> Surely the Sovereign LORD does nothing without revealing his plan to his servants the prophets.
- 6) God announces His decisions, His judgments, etc.

#### B) Christmas

- 1) The most important event in the history of creation
- 2) Before, everything looked forward to this event; after, everything looks back to it
- 3) Therefore, for thousands of years, God foretold this event because He wanted the world to know His Son
- 4) So, let's take a closer look at those prophecies.

### II Closer look

#### A) Email

- 1) Last August, Caitlin sent me an email about the prophecies surrounding the birth of Jesus
- 2) Much of this information comes from Dr. Jimmy DeYoung and other scholars.
- 3) Adds a great deal to "the story" and shows us just how awesome God is

## B) Traditional story

- 1) Mary and Joseph had to go to Bethlehem
- 2) No room in the inn so they slept in a stable
- 3) Jesus born in a manger
- 4) Shepherds, the despised people of their time, get a visit by the angels
- 5) They spread news
- 6) Two years later, the Magi (probably more than 3) come to see the King of the Jews
- 7) Herod kills all the male children under age of two

C) **SLIDE** Luke 2:6-12 (NJB) <sup>6</sup> Now it happened that, while they [Mary and Joseph] were there, the time came for her to have her child, <sup>7</sup> and she gave birth to a son, her first-born. She wrapped him in swaddling clothes and laid him in a manger because there was no room for them in the living-space. **SLIDE** <sup>8</sup> In the countryside close by there were shepherds out in the fields keeping guard over their sheep during the watches of the night. <sup>9</sup> An angel of the Lord stood over them and the glory of the Lord shone round them. They were terrified, <sup>10</sup> but the angel said, 'Do not be afraid. Look, I bring you news of great joy, a joy to be shared by the whole people. **SLIDE** <sup>11</sup> Today in the town of David a Saviour has been born to you; he is Christ the Lord. <sup>12</sup> And here is a sign for you: you will find a baby wrapped in swaddling clothes and lying in a manger.'

- 1) This is part of what is called The Christmas Story.
- 2) Look more closely at verse 12
- 3) The sign that the Christ child has been born was not the angels or the virgin birth
- 4) The sign that the Savior had been born was this: you [the shepherds] will find a baby wrapped in swaddling clothes and lying in a manger.
- 5) Have you ever wondered why that was the sign?
- 6) Jesus wasn't the only child wrapped in swaddling clothes
- 7) Why was this the sign God gave to the shepherds?

#### D) Micah

- 1) **SLIDE Micah 5:2 (NIV)** <sup>2</sup> "But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, though you are small among the clans of Judah, out of you will come for me one who will be ruler over Israel, whose origins are from of old, from ancient times."
- 2) **SLIDE Micah 4:8 (NIV)** <sup>8</sup> As for you, O watchtower of the flock, O stronghold of the Daughter of Zion, the former dominion will be restored to you; kingship will come to the Daughter of Jerusalem."
- 3) Two prophecies:
  - a) Savior will be born in Bethlehem
  - b) The "watchtower of the flock" would announce the Savior and the establishment of His kingdom
  - c) We all know about the first prophecy
  - d) But, honestly, I never paid any attention to the second

#### III Watchtower of the flock

##### A) **SLIDE** Shepherds and their sheep

- 1) According to tradition, Bethlehem was surrounded by pastures where sheep were kept
- 2) In one of those pastures was a watchtower of the flock called Migdal Eder.
- 3) It was a two-story tower where the shepherds could watch over the sheep
- 4) Now comes something very interesting.
- 5) These were not ordinary shepherds
- 6) These shepherds were priests from the temple who were watching over the lambs to be used for Passover
- 7) **SLIDE** From the top of Migdal Eder the shepherds could see which sheep were going to give birth
- 8) The shepherds/priests would bring the pregnant sheep inside the tower.
- 9) When the sheep gave birth, they would inspect it for any defect

- 10) If it passed that test, the lambs were wrapped in swaddling clothes, usually old priestly garments.
- 11) The priests would then place the lambs in a manger to make sure they would not be hurt or get a blemish
- 12) So, the Passover lambs that were to be sacrificed at Passover would be wrapped in swaddling clothes and placed in a manger

B) **SLIDE** The sign!

- 1) <sup>10</sup> but the angel said, 'Do not be afraid. Look, I bring you news of great joy, a joy to be shared by the whole people. <sup>11</sup> Today in the town of David a Saviour has been born to you; he is Christ the Lord. <sup>12</sup> And here is a sign for you: you will find a baby wrapped in swaddling clothes and lying in a manger.'
- 2) Why did the angels speak only to the shepherds? Maybe they were speaking to the priests who knew better than anyone else the sign
- 3) The angels said it was a sign for them, for the shepherds
- 4) Those priests knew exactly what it meant when they saw a baby wrapped in swaddling clothes and lying in a manger
- 5) That baby was God's lamb set aside for Passover
- 6) **SLIDE John 1:29 (NIV)** <sup>29</sup> The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him and said, "Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!
- 7) That baby was the Christ child Who would take away the sins of the world.
- 8) Imagine you were one of this shepherd/priests who had taken lambs, examined them, gently wrapped them swaddling clothes, and placed them in mangers - knowing they would serve as sacrifices for sin
- 9) Happy, for God's salvation was here
- 10) Sadness, knowing what this baby's future held
- 11) These priests are the ones who ran through Bethlehem

C) **SLIDE** Luke 2:17-18 (NIV) <sup>17</sup> When they [the shepherds] had seen him, they spread the word concerning what had been told them about this child, <sup>18</sup> and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds said to them.

- 1) Again, look closely at this
- 2) They spread the word concerning all that had been told to them about the child
- 3) What had they been told? A child had been born? No, THE child had been born
- 4) They would find a child wrapped in swaddling clothes and lying in a manger
- 5) So, what did they tell the people of Bethlehem?
- 6) The same thing we are to be telling people: the lamb of God has been born in the town of Bethlehem
- 7) This child will die - did die - to take away the sins of the world

D) Even more

- 1) For Passover, it was vital that each family have a lamb without blemish
- 2) So, when a family's lamb had been born and pronounced pure, the family would place its name around the neck of their lamb
- 3) The name would let everyone know, this is our lamb

E) **SLIDE** The cross



- 1)
- 2) **SLIDE** Notice the sign on the cross: INRI

- 3) **SLIDE** These letters are the abbreviation of the sign that Pilate had placed on the cross, **John 19:19 (NIV)** <sup>19</sup> Pilate had a notice prepared and fastened to the cross. It read: JESUS OF NAZARETH, THE KING OF THE JEWS.
  - 4) The Latin translation reads "Iesus Nazarenus Rex Iudaeorum" (INRI)
  - 5) Scholar David Schiller went even further
  - 6) **SLIDE** That Latin name translated into Hebrew reads Y'Shua HaNatzri V'Melech HaYehudim.
  - 7) Taking the first letters of these words we get YHVH or YHWH
  - 8) That is the Tetragrammaton used to refer to God's name which was considered too holy to write or pronounce
  - 9) **SLIDE** YHVH is pronounced YAHWEH, God's name
  - 10) So, just as those Jewish families placed their name on their lambs, **SLIDE** God placed His name about His Lamb
- F) God wanted the people to know what He was going to do
- 1) God wants us to know what He is going to do
  - 2) That empty manger is our story
  - 3) People need to know that God is a God of details
  - 4) The details are important
  - 5) Just ask those shepherds.