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Things We Know For Sure

At Home With the Lord
II Corinthians 5:8

AND Why
WHEN JESUS CAME

GALATIANS 4:4

LAST WEEK WE CONSIDERED WHY JESUS CAME. TODAY WHEN JESUS CAME. IN 1972, OUR CHURCH ENGAGED A DEVELOPMENT COMPANY FROM INDIANA, TO ASSIST US IN A LONG-RANGE DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM. HOWEVER, BEFORE THEY WERE HIRED, WE MADE SEVERAL TRIPS TO INDIANA, PENNSYLVANIA AND OHIO CONFERRING WITH THEIR CLIENTS TO SEE IF WHAT THEY SAID THEY COULD DO THEY COULD DO! IN EVERY CASE, THE BUILDINGS COMPLETED LOOKED LIKE THE ARCHITECT'S DRAWING. IN OTHER WORDS, THEY FINISHED WHAT THEY PLANNED. WHAT IS TRUE OF A WELL-ORGANIZED, OPERATED COMPANY, IS ALSO TRUE OF GOD'S WORLD. THE WORLD IS NOT RUNNING OFF COURSE AND OUT OF CONTROL. GOD HAS A MASTER PLAN FOR THIS PLANET AND ITS PEOPLE. IT IS ON SCHEDULE AND HAS BEEN SINCE THE DAWN OF HUMAN HISTORY. ONE PART OF THAT BLUEPRINT INVOLVED THE INCARNATION OF CHRIST AND IS MENTIONED IN THE TEXT TODAY.

Present Ministry

I. WHEN JESUS CAME IT WAS THE RIGHT TIME

"THE FULLNESS OF TIME WAS COME...."

ALMOST 2000 YEARS AGO, IN AN OBSCURE TOWN IN PALESTINE, AN EVENT TOOK PLACE WHICH WOULD INFLUENCE HISTORY MORE THAN ANY OTHER SINGLE EVENT. A BABY WAS BORN IN A STABLE NEAR AN INN. THE PARENTS OF THE CHILD WERE NOT OF NOBLE BIRTH. THEY WERE NOT WEALTHY. BUT THE CHILD WAS DESTINED TO BE KING OF KING AND LORD OF LORDS. THE FOCAL POINT OF HISTORY WOULD CENTER IN THAT FOCAL PERSON. GOD HAD PREPARED THE WORLD FOR THAT MOMENT. SOMEONE HAS SAID THAT THE BIRTH OF CHRIST IS THE HINGE

OF HISTORY. HISTORY IS LITERALLY HIS STORY. THE VERY TERMS B.C. AND A.D. INDICATE THAT TRUTH.

(A) THE RIGHT TIME POLITICALLY

THE PEACE OF ROME PREVAILED OVER THE CIVILIZED WORLD WHEN JESUS WAS BORN. ROMAN LAW HAD ~~VIRTUALLY STOPPED~~ PIRACY ON THE SEAS AND ROBBERY ON LAND. JUSTICE IN THE COURTS TO PROTECT HUMAN RIGHTS AND PROPERTY OF ROMAN CITIZENS PREVAILED AS AT NO OTHER TIME IN HUMAN HISTORY. ROADS LINKED THE EMPIRE TOGETHER. A POSTAL SYSTEM THAT TRAVELED ON THESE ROADS IMPROVED COMMUNICATION.

(B) IT WAS THE RIGHT TIME CULTURALLY

THE BEAUTIFUL, FLEXIBLE GREEK LANGUAGE MADE IT POSSIBLE FOR MEN TO COMMUNICATE ON A BETTER AND BROADER BASIS THAN EVER BEFORE. GREEK PHILOSOPHY, ART, DRAMA AND ARCHITECTURE TOUCHED THE ENTIRE WORLD. ALEXANDER THE GREAT HAD CONQUERED THE KNOWN WORLD. Lxx

(C) IT WAS THE RIGHT TIME RELIGIOUSLY

JUDAISM WAS BANKRUPT. IT WAS AT AN ALL-TIME LOW EBB HAVING SUBSTITUTED FOR RIGHTEOUSNESS. THE WORLD WAS READY FOR THE SAVIOR'S ARRIVAL. CHRIST'S COMING WAS NO CRASH PROGRAM OR AFTER THOUGHT IN THE ECONOMY OF GOD TO DEAL WITH EARTH'S EMERGENCY. THE TEXT SAYS IT WAS "THE FULLNESS OF TIME." THIS IS THE BIBLICAL WAY OF SAYING THAT THE INCARNATION HAPPENED IN GOD'S APPOINTED TIME, AT THE VERY MOMENT OF HIS DESIGN, NOT ONE DAY TOO LATE. WHEN ALL OF THE HOURS, DAYS, MONTHS, AND YEARS HAD TUMBLED TOGETHER, IT WAS TIME FOR JESUS TO BE BORN. THE ETERNAL SECOND PERSON OF THE GODHEAD

STEPPED ONTO THE STAGE OF HUMAN HISTORY AND HE CAME TO EARTH THROUGH NATURAL BIRTH.

② "GOD SENT FORTH HIS SON." "HE SENT FORTH A PRE-EXISTING PERSON." (VINCENT) THE IDEA INVOLVED IN THIS VERSE IS TO DISPATCH ON A MISSION. THE TERM IS USED TO DESCRIBE JACOB'S ACTION WHEN HE SENT HIS SONS TO EGYPT WITH A SPECIFIC ASSIGNMENT OF RETURNING WITH GRAIN.

(ACTS 7:12) ALL MEN MUST DEAL WITH GOD'S SON WHOM HE SENT TO THIS PLANET. DR. JAMES MCGINLAY REMINDED HIS READERS THAT IT IS EASY TO HAVE A WRONG OPINION ABOUT OUR CHILDREN OR SONS AS WELL AS AN UNSCRIPTURAL OPINION CONCERNING GOD'S SON. HE TELLS THE STORY OF A MOTHER WHO ASKED HIM TO PRAY FOR HER SON. WHEN HE ASKED WHAT WAS WRONG WITH THE SON, SHE SAID, "NOTHING." "HE'S A GOOD BOY, HONEST, UPRIGHT AND HAS NEVER CAUSED ME A MOMENT'S ANXIETY." MCGINLAY THEN ASKED WHY HE SHOULD PRAY FOR THE BOY. THE MOTHER ADDED, "THE ONLY THING THAT IS WRONG IS THAT HE DOES NOT KNOW CHRIST." "IF HE IS SUCH A GOOD BOY, I SHALL NOT PRAY FOR HIM," SAID MCGINLAY. THE INDIGNANT MOTHER INQUIRED WHY THE PREACHER HAD RESPONDED SO NEGATIVELY. MCGINLAY EXPLAINED THAT GOD IS NOT IN THE BUSINESS OF SAVING GOOD BOYS BUT RATHER OF SAVING SINNERS. THE MOTHER DID NOT REALIZE THAT HER SON WAS GUILTY BEFORE GOD AND FOR REJECTING JESUS CHRIST. IT WAS NOT UNTIL SHE WAS WILLING TO RECOGNIZE THAT ALL OF THE NATURAL QUALITIES HER SON POSSESSED WERE NOT GOOD ENOUGH THAT SHE BEGAN TO MAJOR ON THE CENTRAL ISSUE, NAMELY, THE WELFARE OF HIS ETERNAL SOUL. HER LIFE CENTERED IN HER SON. WHEN IN FACT HER LIFE NEEDED TO BE CENTERED IN HIS SON!

1 Tim
1:15

✱

II. WHEN JESUS CAME IT WAS THE RIGHT WAY

"MADE OF A WOMAN"

Use Matt. 1:

SCHOLARS ARE DIVIDED AS TO WHETHER THE INTERPRETATION OF THIS VERSE HAS SPECIFIC REFERENCE TO THE VIRGIN BIRTH. HOWEVER, THE IMPLICATION IS THERE. THIS DOCTRINE STIRS SKEPTICS AS NO OTHER. FOR ~~SEVERAL~~ GENERATIONS, LIBERAL SCHOLARS HAVE BEEN SEEKING TO UNDERMINE THE SUPERNATURAL ELEMENT OF CHRISTIANITY. THE VIRGIN BIRTH OF CHRIST IS A DOCTRINE THAT WAS BELIEVED BY MANY DENOMINATIONS BUT NOW IN LARGE MEASURE IS DENIED. WE MEAN BY THIS DOCTRINE THAT BY A SPECIAL CREATIVE ACT, THE PERSONALITY OF THE ETERNAL SON WAS CLOTHED WITH HUMAN NATURE AND FORM IN THE WOMB OF THE VIRGIN MARY. THAT VERY ACT PRESERVED HIM UNIQUELY AMONG MEN FROM ORIGINAL SIN. IT WAS THE ONLY BIRTH SINCE ADAM WHEREBY A CHILD WAS BORN WITHOUT THE TAIN OF ADAM'S SIN.

(LUKE 1:35) THE SCRIPTURE IS VERY CLEAR ON THIS POINT, IT WAS JESUS, NOT MARY, WHO WAS FREE FROM ORIGINAL SIN. THE ROMAN IDEA OF THE IMMACULATE CONCEPTION IS NOT THE SCRIPTURAL DOCTRINE OF THE VIRGIN BIRTH! IF THE VIRGIN BIRTH IS NOT TRUE, CHRISTIANS HAVE TWO ENORMOUS PROBLEMS. (LUKE 1:33-35)

(1) THAT MARY LIED ABOUT HER CONDITION. SHE STATED CATEGORICALLY THAT JOSEPH WAS NOT THE FATHER OF HER CHILD. YET THE CHRISTMAS STORY IS A FAVORITE OF CHILDREN EVERYWHERE. ANY SUGGESTION THAT THIS IS A STORY OF A CHILD BORN OF WEDLOCK WOULD FOREVER VANISH IT FROM POPULARITY. (LK. 1:34)

(2) IF THE BIBLE IS NOT CORRECT AT THIS POINT, HOW DO WE KNOW IT IS RELIABLE AT ANY OTHER POINT? (COMPARE ISAIAH 7:14, MATTHEW 1:18-21)

CONCLUSION: THE VIRGIN BIRTH IS GOD'S WAY OF BRINGING A SAVIOR TO THE WORLD WHO IN FACT COULD SAVE ALL MEN. APART FROM THIS DOCTRINE, WE COULD HAVE NO SAVIOR FOR A SAVIOR WHO PARTOOK OF ADAM'S SINFUL NATURE BY BIRTH IS NO SAVIOR AT ALL. IN FACT, HE IS IN NEED OF A SAVIOR! A SAVIOR WHO IS NOT QUITE GOD IS NOT A SAVIOR! GOD'S ANSWER TO THE PROBLEM OF MAN'S SINFUL DISPOSITION THAT HAD BEEN PASSED ON FROM ADAM TO EVERY GENERATION WAS TO BRING HIS ETERNAL SON INTO THE WORLD BY VIRTUE OF THE VIRGIN BIRTH. HE WAS THAT PERFECT MAN, WITHOUT TAIN OF ADAM'S TRANSGRESSION, INDEED THE GOD-MAN.

III. WHEN JESUS CAME IT WAS FOR THE RIGHT REASON "TO REDEEM" — "SONS"

IN ANCIENT ISRAEL, BOTH PROPERTY AND PEOPLE COULD BE REDEEMED BY PAYING A PRICE. IF A PERSON LOST HIS POSSESSIONS OR EVEN HIS LIBERTY THROUGH DEBT, HE COULD BE REDEEMED BY HIS NEAR KINSMAN, HENCE THE TERM KINSMAN-REDEEMER. THE RICH OLD TESTAMENT BACKGROUND OF THIS WORD REDEEMED SET THE STAGE FOR DIVINE INTERVENTION ON OUR BEHALF AS REVEALED IN THE NEW TESTAMENT (MARK 10:45, ROMANS 3:24, EPHESIANS 1:7). THE BIBLE WORD REDEMPTION IS A TERM USED TO DESCRIBE PAYMENT OF A PRICE FOR SOMETHING. IT WAS OFTEN USED WITH REFERENCE TO SLAVE MARKETS WHERE PEOPLE WERE BOUGHT AND SOLD LIKE PROPERTY. IN HEBREW HISTORY, THE WORD REDEEM HAD TO DO WITH THE IDEA OF SACRIFICE IN THE SACRIFICIAL SYSTEM. PAUL HAD IT IN MIND WHEN HE SPOKE IN 1 PETER 1:18-19. ²⁵ THE TERM REDEMPTION IN THE BIBLE AS IT RELATES TO THE BELIEVER AND TO CHRIST SPEAKS OF CHRIST AS THE BELIEVER'S SUBSTITUTE, THAT IS ONE WHO GAVE HIS LIFE AS THE PRICE FOR THE FORGIVENESS OF OUR SINS. THE BOOK OF RUTH BEAUTIFULLY

ILLUSTRATES THE CONCEPT OF REDEMPTION. IF AN ISRAELITE WAS IN BONDAGE, PROVISION WAS MADE FOR HIM TO BE SET FREE. ONE WHO WAS KIN TO THE SLAVE COULD PAY THE PRICE AND THE SLAVE WOULD GO FREE. IN ORDER FOR THIS TRANSACTION TO TAKE PLACE, THERE MUST BE MORE THAN SYMPATHY INVOLVED BUT RATHER A FAMILY RELATIONSHIP. THE KINSMAN MUST HAVE THE NECESSARY FUNDS AND BE WILLING TO REDEEM. ALSO, HE COULD NOT BE A SLAVE HIMSELF. NOW NOTICE: RUTH, A GENTILE WHO WAS A TYPE OF THE CHURCH AND BOAZ - A KINSMAN REDEEMER, NAMELY A TYPE OF CHRIST ILLUSTRATE THIS GREAT BIBLICAL PRINCIPLE. THE PROBLEM IN OUR WORLD IS THERE IS A FALSE IDEA ABOUT REDEMPTION. MANY PEOPLE BELIEVE THAT THERE IS SOMETHING DEEP WITHIN MAN, SOME HUMAN ABILITY, SOME INNATE CHARM THAT CAN GAIN APPROVAL BEFORE GOD. IN THIS REGARD, MANY ARE LIKE THE ELDERLY WOMAN WHO LIVED DURING THE 1930's AND THE DEPRESSION IN THIS COUNTRY. SHE ENTERED AN INSURANCE OFFICE IN MINNEAPOLIS CARRYING A POLICY AND EXPLAINED THAT SHE WAS UNABLE TO CONTINUE MAKING THE PAYMENTS. SHE SAID SHE HAD WORKED HARD BUT HARDLY HAD ENOUGH FOR FOOD, CLOTHING AND SHELTER LET ALONE INSURANCE PAYMENTS. AFTER A QUICK SURVEY THE CLERK SAW THAT THE POLICY HAD ALREADY BEEN PAID UP IN FULL. STRANGELY ENOUGH THE POLICY WAS ON HER HUSBAND WHO HAD BEEN DEAD FOR THREE YEARS. AFTER A BRIEF CONSIDERATION, THE LADY RECEIVED FULL PAYMENT FOR THE VALUE OF THE POLICY AND APPROPRIATE REFUNDS FOR OVERPAID PREMIUMS. MANY PEOPLE ARE LIKE THIS WOMAN, TRYING TO MAKE PAYMENTS FOR SOMETHING THAT HAS ALREADY BEEN PAID! JESUS CHRIST MADE THE FULL PAYMENT FOR YOUR AND MY REDEMPTION ON THE CROSS. (RELATE STORY OF LITTLE BOAT TWICE OWNED - OLD BUT ACCURATE)

Save

CHRISTMASTIME

CHRISTMAS IS THE FAVORITE SEASON OF THE YEAR FOR KIDS AND GROWNUPS TOO. WE ALL COMPLAIN ABOUT THE "CRASS COMMERCIALISM" THAT GETS WORSE EVERY YEAR. FOR EXAMPLE, THIS YEAR "CHRISTMAS STUFF" WAS ON DISPLAY IN SOME STORES BEFORE HALLOWEEN! HOWEVER, EVEN WITH ALL OF THE ABUSES OF THE SEASON, IT IS STILL OUR FAVORITE. CHRISTMASTIME IS A MIXTURE OF MANY ELEMENTS: RELIGIOUS - BASED ON BIBLE TRUTH; CULTURAL - RELATING TO DECORATIONS AND FOOD; SUPERSTITION - "THE GODS WHO ARE GOOD TO MANKIND AT THAT TIME OF YEAR." SOME ARE SURPRISED TO LEARN THAT CHRISTMAS AS A FESTIVAL DID NOT COME INTO EXISTENCE UNTIL THE FOURTH OR FIFTH CENTURY. THEN THE DATE WAS SET AT DECEMBER 25, WHEREAS BEFORE THERE HAD BEEN A WIDE RANGE OF DATES FROM JANUARY 5, MARCH 25, APRIL 20, JUNE 24, AND SEPTEMBER 25, ALL SUPPOSED TO BE THE DATE OF CHRIST'S BIRTH! FAMILY, FRIENDS AND FOOD ALL MAKE THIS A VERY HAPPY SEASON FOR MOST. LET US EXAMINE SOME VERSES IN THE BIBLE TO SEE WHAT ELSE CHRISTMASTIME SHOULD SUGGEST:

I. CHRISTMASTIME FROM THE VIEWPOINT OF CHRONOLOGY - GAL. 4:4 (Calendar)

THIS VERSE TELLS US WHAT TIME IT WAS HISTORICALLY WHEN JESUS WAS BORN. A. T. ROBERTSON DID EXTENSIVE WORK TO SHOW THAT THE BIRTH OF CHRIST TOOK PLACE SOMEWHERE BETWEEN 4 AND 6 B.C. IN THIS PASSAGE, HIS BIRTH IS VIEWED FROM GOD'S HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE. ALMOST 2000 YEARS AGO, IN AN OBSCURE VILLAGE IN ISRAEL, A BABY WAS BORN IN A STABLE. HIS PARENTS WERE POOR AND IN

BUT NOT

SOME RESPECTS ORDINARY. SINCE THAT TIME, BILLIONS OF BABIES HAVE BEEN BORN YET THIS BABY WAS UNIQUE. HE WAS THE FOCAL PERSON OF HISTORY AND HIS BIRTH THE FOCAL POINT OF HISTORY. "HIS SON." THERE'S SOMETHING UNIQUE ABOUT GOD'S SON. COMPARE JOHN 1:14, JOHN 1:18, JOHN 3:16. "MADE OF A WOMAN" - THIS SUGGESTS THE INSTRUMENTALITY OF THE INCARNATION. IT IS INTERESTING THAT THE WOMAN AND NOT THE MAN IS MENTIONED. COULD THE REASON BE A VEILED REFERENCE TO THE VIRGIN BIRTH? HOWEVER, THE ARRESTING PHRASE IN THE TEXT IS "THE FULLNESS OF TIME". WHAT TIME WAS IT? IT WAS GOD'S TIME AND IT WAS ON TIME. JESUS' BIRTH WAS NOT AN ACCIDENT OF CHANCE BUT RATHER AN APPOINTMENT OF CHOICE. THE VAST ROMAN EMPIRE WITH ITS ROADS AND LEGAL SYSTEM DOMINATED THE WORLD. THE PEACE OF ROME PREVAILED. THE GREEK LANGUAGE MADE IT POSSIBLE FOR THE FIRST TIME IN HUMAN HISTORY FOR MEN TO COMMUNICATE ON A WORLD-WIDE BASIS THROUGH A COMMON LANGUAGE. ALEXANDER THE GREAT HAD MADE THE WORLD A GRECIAN WORLD AND GREEK WAS SPOKEN EVERYWHERE. THE LANGUAGE BARRIER HAD BEEN BROKEN BY A UNIVERSAL TONGUE. JUDAISM HAD PREPARED THE WORLD RELIGIOUSLY. THE WORLD WAS READY FOR A SAVIOR. THE TERM FULLNESS MEANS TO FILL UP OR BECOME FULL. ALL OF THE EVENTS IN GOD'S DIVINE PROGRAM WERE READY AND IT WAS TIME FOR JESUS TO COME ONTO THE STAGE OF HUMAN HISTORY. (BY THE WAY, THE TERM FULLNESS IS USED IN THE BIBLE IN OTHER SIGNIFICANT PHRASES SUCH AS THE "FULLNESS OF THE GENTILES", A REFERENCE TO THE RAPTURE OF THE CHURCH. IT IS THE NEXT SIGNIFICANT "FULLNESS" IN SCRIPTURE.

(Rom. 11:25)

II. CHRISTMASTIME FROM THE VIEWPOINT OF GENEALOGY - MATT. 1:1 *Family Tree*

IN THE BIBLE, THE FAMILY TREE IS MORE IMPORTANT THAN THE CHRISTMAS TREE. THE TEXT SAYS "THE BOOK OF THE GENEALOGY OF JESUS CHRIST...." FOR MANY FAMILIES, THE HOLIDAY SEASON IS A TIME WHEN BOTH SIDES OF THE FAMILY GET TOGETHER AND OFTENTIMES TALK ABOUT THEIR FAMILY TREE. THEIR IMMIGRATION TO AMERICA AND THE DETAILS OF SUCH HISTORY ARE GENERALLY WELL KNOWN AND PASSED ON FROM GENERATION TO GENERATION. QUESTION: WHY IS GENEALOGY SO IMPORTANT IN HISTORY? JEWS WERE INTERESTED IN GENEALOGY. FOR INSTANCE, A PRIEST HAD TO BE ABLE TO PRODUCE AN UNBROKEN RECORD OF HIS PEDIGREE OR GENEALOGY ALL THE WAY BACK TO AARON. IF HE MARRIED, HIS WIFE MUST TRACE HER GENEALOGY BACK AT LEAST FIVE GENERATIONS. THE SANHEDRIN KEPT THESE RECORDS. POINT: JESUS' TRUE GENEALOGICAL RECORD COULD BE TRACED BACK TO TWO OF THE MOST IMPORTANT PEOPLE IN THE OLD TESTAMENT - ABRAHAM (RACIAL LINE) AND DAVID (ROYAL LINE). MATTHEW TRACES THE LEGAL LINE THROUGH JOSEPH WHILE LUKE TRACES THE BIOLOGICAL LINE THROUGH MARY. SIMPLY STATED, JESUS HAD THE LEGAL RIGHT TO THE THRONE OF DAVID - THE GENEALOGICAL RECORD DECLARES THIS TO BE A FACT. IT IS IRONICAL THAT THE RECORD KEEPERS WERE THE VERY ONES WHO REFUSED TO ACCEPT JESUS AS THE KING OF THE JEWS! THERE IS A SENSE IN WHICH ONE MIGHT SAY THAT JESUS WAS CHEATED BY THE RELIGIOUS AUTHORITIES OUT OF THAT WHICH WAS RIGHTFULLY HIS! HOWEVER, HE WILL RETURN FROM THE DEAD TO RECLAIM HIS THRONE AND NO ONE WILL STOP HIM THEN. IN PETER'S PENTECOSTAL SERMON HE MAKES A CLEAR POINT ON THIS THAT CHRIST WILL TAKE HIS ROYAL THRONE AGAIN BECAUSE HE IS INDEED ISRAEL'S MESSIAH. (ACTS 2:24-36)

III. CHRISTMASTIME FROM THE VIEWPOINT OF GEOGRAPHY - MICAH 5:2 (map)

QUESTION: LEFT TO CHANCE, WHAT WOULD BE THE ODDS THAT A SPECIFIC COUPLE EXPECTING A CHILD WOULD LEAVE THEIR HOME IN NORTHERN ISRAEL AND TRAVEL TO JERUSALEM TO ENROLL THEMSELVES FOR TAX PURPOSES, STOPPING AT BETHLEHEM AT THE EXACT MOMENT THE BABY WAS SCHEDULED TO BE BORN. THEY DID NOT TRAVEL THE ADDITIONAL SIX MILES TO JERUSALEM EVEN WHEN THERE WERE NO ROOMS IN THE INN IN BETHLEHEM. ALL OF THESE SPECIFIC FACTS WERE RECORDED 700 YEARS BEFORE THE PROPHECY WAS FULFILLED. AS A MATTER OF FACT, BETHLEHEM WAS BOTH INSIGNIFICANT AND UNLIKELY AS A PLACE FOR A KING TO BE BORN. JERUSALEM WAS THE CAPITAL CITY AND THAT IS WHERE ROYALTY WOULD BE EXPECTED TO APPEAR. ALSO, THERE IS NOT USUALLY A PARADE OF PEOPLE FROM OTHER PARTS OF THE WORLD COMING TO WORSHIP A BABY BORN IN SUCH A REMOTE PLACE. COULD ALL OF THIS BE FATE OR LUCK, OR CHANCE? HARDLY. THIS LITTLE VILLAGE TOOK ON SPECIAL SIGNIFICANCE IN HISTORY BECAUSE JESUS WAS BORN THERE.

POINT: GOD IS IN CONTROL OF HUMAN HISTORY. WHAT HE PREDICTS WILL COME TO PASS. FOR EXAMPLE, WHY SHOULD ISRAEL AND JERUSALEM BE CONSTANTLY IN THE NEWS TODAY? THE ATTENTION OF THE WORLD IS FOCUSED ON THAT PART OF THE EARTH. IT IS AS IF HUMAN HISTORY WILL CULMINATE IN THIS UNLIKELY AND IN-SIGNIFICANT PART OF THE WORLD. IN OTHER WORDS, ISRAEL HAS A PLACE IN DESTINY BECAUSE JESUS WAS BORN THERE.

IV. CHRISTMASTIME FROM THE VIEWPOINT OF PROPHECY AND BIOLOGY - ISAIAH 7:14

THERE IS A FASCINATING PROPHECY IN JEREMIAH 22:28-30. GOD SAID THAT CONIAH ALIAS JECONIAH, ALIAS JEHOIACHIN THAT HIS SPIRITUAL

CONDITION AND MORAL QUALITIES WERE SO LOW THAT EVEN IF HE WERE A SIGNET RING ON THE RIGHT HAND OF GOD, GOD WOULD PULL IT OFF AND HAVE NOTHING TO DO WITH IT. ALSO, GOD SAID HE WOULD HAND THIS UNSAVORY CHARACTER OVER TO NEBUCHADNEZZAR, KING OF BABYLON, AS PUNISHMENT FOR HIS SIN. GOD SAID HE WAS LIKE A BROKEN POT, THAT IS AN OBJECT THAT NO ONE WANTS. FURTHER, GOD DECLARED THAT JECONIAH WOULD HAVE NO CHILDREN AS FAR AS THE GENEALOGICAL RECORD WAS CONCERNED, THAT IS, NONE OF HIS PHYSICAL DESCENDENTS WOULD OCCUPY A SPACE IN THE CHRONOLOGY OF ISRAEL'S KING. THIS IS A SIGNIFICANT PROPHECY AS IT RELATES TO JESUS CHRIST AND HIS RIGHT TO OCCUPY THE THRONE OF DAVID. JOSEPH COULD NOT BE JESUS' BIOLOGICAL FATHER BECAUSE HE WAS IN THE DIRECT LINE OF DESCENDENCY FROM CONIAH. THE PROBLEM WAS OVERCOME BY A VERY MAGNIFICANT WORK. JOSEPH BECAME JESUS' LEGAL, NOT HIS BIOLOGICAL, FATHER. ACCORDING TO LUKE 1:35 JESUS WAS BORN OF A VIRGIN. QUESTION: WHY DO MEN HAVE SUCH A PROBLEM WITH THE VIRGIN BIRTH? THEY LOOK UPON IT AS SOMETHING BORDERING ON FABLE OR MYTHOLOGY SUCH AS IS RECORDED IN GRECIAN HISTORY. HOWEVER, THERE IS NONE OF THE GROTESQUE ABSURDITY, SUCH AS GODS WHO WERE HALF MAN HALF HORSE, MERMAIDS, OR HALF WOMAN HALF FISH, NOTHING LIKE THAT. THE VIRGIN BIRTH IS A MYSTERY BUT IT IS FAR FROM ABSURD. B. B. WARFIELD PUT HIS FINGER ON THE PROBLEM WHEN HE COINED THE WORD "AUTOSALVATION." MAN HAS A DESPERATE DESIRE TO SAVE HIMSELF. THE REASON IS SIMPLE, IF MAN BECOMES HIS OWN SAVIOR HE DOES NOT NEED A DIVINE SAVIOR AND A VIRGIN BIRTH IS UNNECESSARY. THE DOCTRINE OF THE VIRGIN BIRTH CENTERS ON THE KIND OF SAVIOR MANKIND NEEDS. A SAVIOR WHO IS HIMSELF A SINFUL CREATURE IS NO SAVIOR AT ALL. BUT A SINLESS SAVIOR

*Detail of sexual
inference - - -
story we tell
children!*

IS ONE WHO CAN SAVE SINFUL MEN - HENCE THE DOCTRINE OF THE VIRGIN BIRTH IS A NECESSITY.

(IF) JOSEPH HAD BEEN JESUS' FATHER, JESUS COULD NOT INHERIT THE THRONE OF DAVID. THE MESSIAH MUST COME FROM THE ROYAL LINE OF SOLOMON YET NOT BE OF THAT SEED. SOLUTION: THE MESSIAH WOULD BE BORN OF A VIRGIN WHO WAS A DESCENDENT OF DAVID WHO MARRIED INTO THE ROYAL LINE OF SOLOMON MAKING JESUS' FATHER THE LEGAL YET NOT THE BIOLOGICAL FATHER OF JESUS. (COMMENT ON MATTHEW 1:16 WHERE THE "OF WHOM" IS THE GREEK FEMININE RELATIVE PRONOUN, A REFERENCE TO MARY NOT JOSEPH.)

V. CHRISTMASTIME FROM THE VIEWPOINT OF

THEOLOGY - MATTHEW 1:21

THE WORD THEOLOGY IS SOMETIMES MISUNDERSTOOD. TECHNICALLY, IT IS COMPOSED OF TWO WORDS - GOD AND TO SPEAK. THAT IS, THEOLOGY HAS TO DO WITH SPEAKING ABOUT GOD. TECHNICALLY, IT IS THE SCIENCE OF GOD AND THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN GOD AND HIS UNIVERSE. OUR GENERATION HAS CHOSEN TO FOLLOW IN LARGE MEASURE THE PATH SURROUNDED BY "THEOLOGICAL FOG." NOT MANY PEOPLE VIEW THEMSELVES AS LOST. THEY BELIEVE THAT SOMEHOW, SOME WAY, EVERYBODY IS GOING TO HEAVEN, NO MATTER WHAT! THE DIFFICULTY TODAY IS NOT GETTING PEOPLE SAVED BUT GETTING THEM LOST! THE BIBLE MAKES IT VERY CLEAR THAT EVERY PERSON HAS A MORAL CHINK IN HIS ARMOR, AN ACHILLES HEEL, A MORAL WEAKNESS THAT MAKES HIM UNFIT FOR HEAVEN. JESUS CAME INTO THE WORLD TO DEAL WITH THAT BASIC PROBLEM. THIS VERSE AND OTHERS LIKE IT SUCH AS LUKE 19:10 MAKE IT VERY CLEAR THAT JESUS CAME INTO THE WORLD TO SAVE SINNERS, SO THE WORLD MUST BE FULL OF SINNERS OR HE WOULD HAVE HAD NO REASON TO COME! SELF-DECEPTION IN THE REALM OF THE SPIRITUAL IS VERY EASY. INSTEAD OF

Our Salvation!

ACCEPTING GOD'S JUDICIAL PRONOUNCEMENT IN
ISAIAH 53:6, MAN SETS OUT WITH HIS DEFECTIVE
MORAL COMPASS TO FIND HIS WAY WHEN IN
REALITY HE IS ALREADY ~~TRAPPED~~ IN AN ORBIT
CALLED "SIN." LIKE EVE, MANKIND ASSUMES
THAT NO RESCUE IS NEEDED. FOR EXAMPLE, A
BLIND MAN WALKING TO THE EDGE OF THE CLIFF
MAY NOT BE AWARE OF HIS CONDITION BUT THAT
DOES NOT LESSEN THE DANGER. JESUS CAME INTO
THE WORLD FOR A THEOLOGICAL REASON - TO SAVE
SINNERS. CHRISTMAS AND EASTER GO TOGETHER.
THE EMPHASIS OF THE BIBLE IS NOT ON HIS
BIRTH BUT ON HIS DEATH.

"What Isaiah Saw and Said About Jesus"

ROBERT K. SPRADLING DECEMBER 15, 1991

"What Isaiah Said About Jesus"

"WHEN ISAIAH SAW JESUS" AND 1 century 70 decades

THE PROPHET ISAIAH STOOD ON THE MOUNTAIN TOP OF PROPHECY, LOOKED 700 YEARS INTO THE FUTURE, AND WROTE ABOUT THE BIRTH, DEATH AND RULE OF JESUS CHRIST OUR SAVIOR AND ISRAEL'S MESSIAH. TO UNDERSTAND THE SIGNIFICANCE AND ENORMITY OF SUCH A FEAT, COMPARE IT TO SOMEONE WHO LIVED 700 YEARS AGO PREDICTING EVENTS IN OUR TIME. FOR EXAMPLE, IF KING JOHN OF ENGLAND, WHO SIGNED THE MAGNA CHARTA THE DOCUMENTARY AUTHORITY FOR THE RULE OF LAW IN ENGLAND, HAD NAMED THE CURRENT QUEEN OF ENGLAND, ELIZABETH II AND HAD STATED THE FOLLOWING FACTS ABOUT HER LIFE: HAD HE SAID SHE WOULD BE BORN IN 1926, THE DAUGHTER OF GEORGE VI. SHE WOULD MARRY PHILLIP, DUKE OF EDINBURGH IN 1947, BEAR HER FIRST SON IN 1948 AND NAME HIM CHARLES PHILLIP ARTHUR GEORGE, ASCEND THE THRONE IN 1952, BEAR THREE OTHER CHILDREN - ANNE IN 1950, ANDREW IN 1960 AND EDWARD IN 1964. IF SUCH A THING HAPPENED WE WOULD BE UTTERLY ASTONISHED. WHAT ISAIAH SAID ABOUT JESUS WAS EQUALLY ASTONISHING! HOW COULD ISAIAH SEE JESUS? THE SAME WAY ABRAHAM "SAW" HIM. (JOHN 8:56) LET US EXAMINE SEVERAL PASSAGES OF SCRIPTURE WRITTEN BY ISAIAH DEALING WITH THE LIFE OF JESUS CHRIST. "Your father rejoiced to see my day: and she sanctity and was glad"

I. ISAIAH SAW AND SPOKE OF JESUS'

VIRGIN BIRTH - 7:14

THE DOCTRINE OF THE VIRGIN BIRTH AND THE DOGMA OF THE IMMACULATE CONCEPTION ARE NOT THE SAME. THE LATTER TEACHES THAT MARY WAS PRESERVED FROM ORIGINAL SIN. THE BIBLE CLEARLY STATES THAT HE NOT SHE WAS SINLESS.

I cannot think of a single major denomination that accepts this doctrine today! No, I don't. Bible states it's true. This was true - how religious or other points?

Beni here!

JUNE 15 1215

at 1797

Camilla Parker-Bowle

Mary Dineen Spradling

2 sons

1997

What did we do

in our

outgoing

Wm. In

2011

1:41

1:42

my source

It's useless a meaningless statement!

(2) A. Integrity of Scripture (omit)
B. Unbelievability of Mary (R.S.U.)
C. Degradation of Man - almost - Sinless!
Sinner!

WHEN I WAS A STUDENT IN SEMINARY THIS VERSE IN ISAIAH PROVIDED ONE OF THE GREAT DISPUTES BETWEEN LIBERAL TRANSLATORS AND FUNDAMENTAL BELIEVERS. THE REVISED STANDARD VERSION TRANSLATED THE WORD VIRGIN AS YOUNG WOMAN IN THE TEXT. ONE NEED NOT BE A HEBREW SCHOLAR TO KNOW THAT THERE IS A DIFFERENCE BETWEEN THE MEANING OF THESE TWO TERMS. THE TRANSLATORS WERE NOT CAREFUL IN MAKING THE DISTINCTION BETWEEN THE HEBREW WORD "ALMAH" WHICH IS THE WORD IN THE TEXT AND IS NEVER USED TO REFER TO A MARRIED WOMAN. ANOTHER WORD "BETHULAH" MAY REFER BOTH TO AN UNMARRIED OR MARRIED WOMAN UNDER THE TERM VIRGIN. THE ATTEMPT OF SCHOLARS TO DAMAGE THE DOCTRINE OF THE VIRGIN BIRTH IS NOT NEW. SUCH TRANSLATION WORK HAS ENORMOUS IMPLICATIONS. FOR EXAMPLE, THE VERY INTEGRITY OF SCRIPTURE IS AT STAKE BECAUSE THE BIBLE DECLARES THAT THE VIRGIN BIRTH IS A FACT. IF JESUS CHRIST PARTAKE OF ADAM'S SINFUL NATURE HE CANNOT BE OUR SAVIOR BUT IN FACT IS A HUMAN BEING WHO NEEDS A SAVIOR. A SAVIOR WHO IS NOT QUITE GOD IS NO SAVIOR AT ALL. THE OTHER IMPLICATION IS THE STATEMENT MARY MADE IN LUKE 1:34-35 TO DENY THE VIRGIN BIRTH OF CHRIST IS TO SUGGEST THAT MARY WAS NOT TELLING THE TRUTH! IT IS UTTERLY PREPOSTEROUS TO SUGGEST THAT THE LOVELY STORY WE TEACH OUR CHILDREN AT CHRISTMAS TIME COULD BE A STORY OF A SON BORN OF PARENTS OF QUESTIONABLE MORALS. NO CHILD BORN OUT OF WEDLOCK COULD EVER BE CALLED THE SINLESS SON OF GOD. AS A MATTER OF FACT, ALL MARY HAD TO DO TO SAVE JESUS' LIFE AT THE TIME OF CRUCIFICATION WAS TO ADMIT THAT HE WAS BORN OUT OF WEDLOCK - THIS SHE REFUSED TO DO BECAUSE IT WAS NOT TRUE. THIS DOCTRINE IS SO VITAL THAT WITHOUT IT WE HAVE NO SAVIOR. ONCE AGAIN, A SAVIOR WHO PARTAKE OF ADAM'S SINFUL NATURE BY BIRTH IS

McClain at student a Decadent College in Calif.
Lecture - not necessary doctrine - alternative
- what if ... his mother a man's face flushed
in anger?

Dr. Luke
Gabriel
Lk. 1:26-28

A
Matt. 1:22-23
B

of Mary

22

(2)

(3)

"THE SHEPHERDS WHO FOUND THEIR SHEPHERD"

LUKE 2:8-20

"Shepherds By Night"

ONE OF MY FAVORITE CHRISTMAS STORIES HAS TO DO WITH A SUNDAY SCHOOL TEACHER WHO ASKED HER STUDENTS TO TELL THE STORY THEY LIKED BEST ABOUT CHRISTMAS. ONE STUDENT SAID HE LIKED THE STORY ABOUT THE SHEPHERDS GOING TO THE LAUNDROMAT. "WHILE SHEPHERDS WASHED THEIR SOCKS BY NIGHT!" WHEN GOD APPEARED IN FLESH IN HUMAN HISTORY, HE DID NOT APPEAR TO THE ROMAN AUTHORITIES IN EITHER ROME OR JERUSALEM. HE MADE HIMSELF KNOWN TO ORDINARY PEOPLE AS THEY WENT ABOUT THE ORDINARY TASKS OF LIFE. TO BE SURE, THERE WERE MANY GREAT AND WEALTHY MEN LIVING IN PALESTINE AT THIS POINT IN HISTORY. HOWEVER, GOD DELIGHTS IN MANIFESTING HIMSELF, NOT THROUGH REASON OR RESEARCH, BUT BY REVELATION. I AM SURE THERE WERE MANY MERCHANTS AND SHOPKEEPERS, MANY OTHER ORDINARY PEOPLE GOING ABOUT THE ROUTINE PURSUITS OF LIFE, BUT THE LORD MADE THE COMING OF HIS SON KNOWN TO SHEPHERDS WHOSE OCCUPATION SPEAKS OF SOLITUDE AND REFLECTION. FROM THIS PASSAGE OF SCRIPTURE, LET US OBSERVE FIVE LESSONS FOR THE CHRISTMAS SEASON:

Out of 1. THE SHEPHERDS WERE SIMPLE FOLK DOING A SIMPLE JOB WHEN GLORY CAME DOWN - vs. 8-9

NONE OF THESE MEN WOULD HAVE MADE THE SOCIAL OR RELIGIOUS REGISTER IN JERUSALEM. THEIR OPINIONS WERE NOT SOUGHT, AND THEIR PRESENCE WAS TAKEN FOR GRANTED AS THEY PERFORMED AN ORDINARY SERVICE CONCERNING THE RELIGIOUS RITUAL SURROUNDING THE TEMPLE. THESE MEN WERE DOING WHAT THEY DID EVERY NIGHT IN THE ROUTINE OF LIFE. THERE WAS NOTHING OUT OF THE ORDINARY, OR UNUSUAL. « SOMEONE HAS SUGGESTED THAT HAD THESE SHEPHERDS LIVED IN AMERICA IN OUR TIME, SOME OF THEM MIGHT HAVE BEEN OVER AT THE LOCAL TAVERN, SOME ON SICK LEAVE, BUT UNLIKELY THAT 100% WOULD HAVE BEEN ON THE JOB ALL THE TIME. » MANY PEOPLE EXPECT GOD TO INVADE THEIR

LIVES IN SOME EXOTIC AND SPECIAL PLACE. SUCH IS NOT USUALLY THE CASE. IT IS IN THE ORDINARY AND ROUTINE THAT GOD OFTEN SPEAKS TO US. HE USUALLY BREAKS INTO OUR LIVES AS WE GO ABOUT THE ORDINARY PURSUITS OF LIFE. TO BE SURE, SOMETIMES IT IS DURING A CRISIS PERIOD. AN EXAMINATION OF THE TEXT IS INTERESTING, FOR IT SAYS THEY WERE "ABIDING IN THE FIELDS", AND IT LITERALLY MEANS TO REMAIN IN THE OPEN AIR. THIS IS NOT THE USUAL WORD FOR ABIDE. THIS PHRASE POINTS TO THE FACT THAT THESE MEN WERE NOT CITY DWELLERS BUT PEOPLE OF THE OUT-OF-DOOR VARIETY WHO WERE USED TO THE OPEN PLACES, CLEAR SKIES, FRESH AIR, SUN, MOON, AND STARS. IT MAY WELL BE THAT THESE ARE THE KIND OF PEOPLE WHO RECOGNIZE BOTH THE HANDS OF GOD IN CREATION AND THE VOICE OF GOD IN SPECIAL REVELATION. THE TEXT SPEAKS OF THEIR WATCHING OVER OR GUARDING THEIR FLOCKS, CONCERNED ABOUT THEIR SAFETY. SURELY GOD COULD ENTRUST THE GOOD NEWS OF HIS SON TO MEN WHO WERE DEPENDABLE AND TRUSTWORTHY AND KNEW WHAT IT WAS TO GUARD THE FLOCK OF SHEEP. WOULD THIS SIMPLE STORY SPEAK TO THE FACT THAT GOD AND HEAVEN WERE NOT IMPRESSED WITH THE SAME KIND OF PEOPLE WHO IMPRESS EARTH DWELLERS? SOMEONE HAS SUGGESTED THAT THE GREAT PEOPLE OF THE BIBLE WERE USUALLY ORDINARY PEOPLE WHO WERE ASKED TO DO AN EXTRAORDINARY TASK. (COMPARE MOSES, DAVID, GIDEON.) GOD CAME TO THESE MEN AS THEY WERE FAITHFULLY DOING THE TASK AT HAND. G.H. MORRISON HAS THE FOLLOWING OBSERVATION ABOUT THIS PORTION OF THE WORD OF GOD: "WE CRAVE FOR LIBERTY FROM COMMON DRUDGERY. WE SEEM TO BE MISSING SO MUCH IN THE ROUTINE. WE LONG FOR A LARGER LIFE. THE ANGEL MUSIC NEVER COMES THAT WAY. HEAVEN HAS NEVER A SONG FOR THOSE WHO SHIRK. IT WAS ON MEN WHO WERE FAITHFUL TO THEIR APPOINTED TASK THAT THERE BROKE THE GLORY OF THE LORD."

II. THE SHEPHERDS SAW AND HEARD WHAT FEW EYES AND EARS HAVE EVER EXPERIENCED - vs. 9-14

WHERE ONE RESIDES DETERMINES WHAT HE SEES.
(LOT'S RESIDENCE IN SODOM CHANGED THE WHOLE

COURSE OF HIS CAREER AND DOMESTIC LIFE. « I SHALL BE ETERNALLY GRATEFUL TO A FATHER WHO KNEW THE WORTH OF THE SOIL AND THE VALUE OF RURAL LIFE FOR A GROWING SON. »

Book A. AN ANGEL - VERSE 9. IT IS IMPORTANT TO OBSERVE THAT THE DEFINITE ARTICLE DOES NOT APPEAR IN THE ORIGINAL TEXT AND IS SO NOTED IN THE W.A.S.B. THIS IS AN IMPORTANT POINT, BECAUSE THE ANGEL OF THE LORD WAS A PREINCARNATE MANIFESTATION OF CHRIST IN THE OLD TESTAMENT. THE ANGEL OF THE LORD NEVER APPEARS AFTER THE BIRTH OF CHRIST. ONE COMMENTATOR HAS POINTED OUT THAT THE CHARACTER OF THESE SHEPHERDS IS REVEALED IN THEIR REACTION TO THE PRESENCE OF AN ANGEL. MOST PEOPLE WOULD HAVE BEEN SATISFIED WITH SUCH AN EXPERIENCE, NAMELY, TO HAVE SEEN AND CONVERSED WITH AN ANGEL. THINK HOW THAT WOULD HAVE GONE OVER AT THE LOCAL CHURCH AT TESTIMONY TIME, OR AT A CHRISTIAN RETREAT, TELEVISION TALK SHOW. THEY COULD HAVE MADE UP THEIR OWN "GOSPEL GROUP", PURCHASED SOME SOUND EQUIPMENT AND COSTUMES, AND MADE IT BIG TELLING OF THAT UNIQUE EXPERIENCE. PLEASE NOTICE THIS VITAL PRINCIPLE IN SCRIPTURE; ANY EXPERIENCE THAT DOES NOT GET PEOPLE TO JESUS CHRIST HAS NO LASTING VALUE.

B. AN ARMY - VERSES 13-14. THE WORD HOST IS A MILITARY TERM FOR A BAND OF SOLDIERS. THE ANGELS ARE REGARDED AS THOSE WHO FORM JEHOVAH'S HOST OR ARMY, AND HE HIMSELF IS THE LEADER. GOD WAS UNDERSCORING THE FACT THAT THE EVENT WHICH TOOK PLACE IN BETHLEHEM'S MANGER HAD AROUSED THE INTEREST OF INTELLIGENT BEINGS THROUGHOUT THE UNIVERSE. IT IS INTERESTING TO NOTICE THAT THIS ARMY HAD A PRIME OBJECTIVE TO PROCLAIM PEACE AND NOT WAR. (ISAIAH 9:6) FROM HEAVEN'S VANTAGE POINT, THIS WAS THE NIGHT IN ALL OF HUMAN HISTORY. MOST MEN GAVE JESUS BIRTH LITTLE OR NO THOUGHT, BUT, AS SOMEONE HAS SAID, HEAVEN THAT NIGHT THOUGHT OF NOTHING ELSE! ON THE DIVINE SCALE OF VALUES, MAN ALWAYS CONSIDERS INSIGNIFICANT WHAT HEAVEN CONSIDERS TO BE OF ETERNAL VALUE AND CONSEQUENCE.

C. AN ANNOUNCEMENT - VERSES 10B-12. THE ANNOUNCEMENT FROM THE ANGELS REGARDED GOOD NEWS AND GREAT JOY. THE FACT THAT JESUS IS CALLED A SAVIOUR IMPLIES THAT SOMEONE NEEDED SAVING. MEN TEND TO IGNORE THIS FACT, BELIEVING THAT ALL MEN ARE GOOD ENOUGH OR ABLE ENOUGH TO SAVE THEMSELVES. THIS THINKING IS FOREIGN TO SCRIPTURE. I AM IMPRESSED WITH THE FACT THAT THESE SHEPHERDS WERE IN THE RIGHT PLACE AT THE RIGHT TIME FOR GOD TO SPEAK TO THEM. IT SEEMS TO ME THAT THIS IS AN IMPORTANT PRINCIPLE IN LIFE. IF ONE IS LOOKING FOR A WIFE OR HUSBAND, HE OUGHT TO GO TO THE RIGHT PLACE TO FIND THE RIGHT KIND OF PERSON! SOME PLACES SEEM TO EXCLUDE ANYTHING THAT IS SPIRITUAL OR MORAL IN LIFE. (RELATE THIS ANNOUNCEMENT TO TELEVISION BREAK-IN BULLETINS.)

III. THE SHEPHERDS UNDERSTOOD THE GRAVITY AND URGENCY OF THE MOMENT - vs. 15-16

THE WORD NOW AND HASTE SPEAK OF THE FACT THAT THESE MEN WERE QUICK TO OBEY GOD. THEY DID NOT PONDER FOR SEVERAL WEEKS AND THEN MAKE A DECISION. THEY DID NOT ASK THEMSELVES HOW THE BIRTH OF A BABY WRAPPED IN SWADDLING CLOTHES IN A MANGER IN JERUSALEM COULD HAVE ANYTHING TO DO WITH THE REDEMPTION OF MANKIND. THE PHILLIPS TRANSLATION SAYS: "WE MUST GO STRAIGHT TO BETHLEHEM... WITH ALL SPEED." THERE IS ONE BIBLE FACT THESE VERSES UNDERSCORE; THAT IS, THE SOONER ONE SEES JESUS, THE BETTER OFF HE WILL BE! FAR TOO MANY PEOPLE ARE TOO CASUAL ABOUT THE LORD. LIFE AND ITS SPIRITUAL SIDE IS MADE UP OF MAYBE'S AND SOMEDAYS, ALL OF WHICH REVEAL LACK OF UNDERSTANDING CONCERNING THE URGENCY OF GETTING TO CHRIST. SPIRITUAL MEN ARE QUICK TO DO GOD'S BIDDING! (GENESIS 22:1) GEORGE MORRISON HAS A SERMON ENTITLED "WHERE TO GO AT CHRISTMAS". THE ANSWER IS, SIMPLY, GO TO JESUS, AND THE SOONER THE BETTER. G.K. CHESTERTON SUGGESTS THAT THIS IS THE ONLY "CAVEMAN" IN THE BIBLE. HE WAS A DIVINE CAVEMAN; THAT IS, BORN IN A CAVE IN A MANGER IN THE LONG AGO. THE URGENCY OF THE SHEPHERDS IS THE URGENCY OF EVERY MAN.

IV. THE SHEPHERDS TOLD OTHERS THE GOOD NEWS ABOUT JESUS - VERSES 17-18

THE SHEPHERDS DID NOT ~~KEEP~~ THE GOOD NEWS TO THEMSELVES. WHEN THEY SAW JESUS, THEY COULD NOT HELP BUT TELL WHAT THEY HAD HEARD AND SEEN. I HAVE OFTEN ASKED THE SAME QUESTION TO MYSELF ABOUT OUR RELATIONSHIP TO THE GOSPEL: WHY DO SO MANY PEOPLE KEEP THE MESSAGE TO THEMSELVES? THE ANSWER MAY BE MANY-SIDED. (1) SOME WHO SAY THEY HAVE IT MAY NOT HAVE IT. (2) SOME MAY BE AFRAID TO SPEAK THE MESSAGE FOR FEAR OF BEING ASKED ABOUT THEIR FAITH. (3) IT IS A MATTER OF PRIDE, AFRAID OF BEING EXPOSED CONCERNING A SHALLOW KNOWLEDGE OF SCRIPTURE OR CHRISTIAN FAITH. (4) IT COULD BE LACK OF CONCERN FOR OTHERS IN THE LIGHT OF THE URGENCY OF ETERNITY. I'M OKAY, AND THEREFORE I DON'T REALLY CARE ABOUT ANYONE ELSE. (5) IT MIGHT ALSO BE THAT WE UNDERSTAND WHAT THE BIBLE SAYS ABOUT THE URGENCY OF SALVATION BUT REALLY DON'T TAKE IT SERIOUSLY. (RELATE STORY REGARDING \$140 DRESS/\$17. THAT BARGAIN THE CONVERSATION FOR AN ENTIRE EVENING. ALSO, ELEVATOR IN CHATTANOOGA.) AT CHRISTMAS TIME, WE OFTEN SING THE SONG, "GO TELL IT ON THE MOUNTAIN". WE WOULD BE BETTER OFF TO SING, "GO TELL YOUR NEIGHBORS AND FRIENDS AND THE PEOPLE WHERE WE WORK AND EVERYWHERE THE GOOD NEWS OF THE GOSPEL." HAVE YOU NOTICED THAT NOTHING IS SAID IN THE BIBLE ABOUT THE INN-KEEPER SHARING THE GOOD NEWS OF WHAT HAPPENED IN HIS STABLE? AS A MATTER OF FACT, HE PROBABLY DID NOT KNOW WHAT WAS GOING ON RIGHT UNDER HIS NOSE. A KING WAS BORN IN HIS STABLE THAT NIGHT, AND HE WAS IGNORANT OF THAT FACT.

V. THE SHEPHERDS WERE CHANGED FROM THAT NIGHT FOREVER - VERSE 20

WHEN WE FIRST MET THE SHEPHERDS, THEY WERE ABIDING IN THE FIELDS, WATCHING OVER THEIR FLOCK BY NIGHT. NOW, THEY HAVE CHANGED FROM WATCHING SHEPHERDS TO GLORIFYING AND PRAISING THE SHEPHERD! NO PERSON CAN COME INTO THE PRESENCE OF JESUS AND REMAIN UNCHANGED. "FOR IF A MAN IS IN CHRIST, HE BECOMES A NEW PERSON

ALTOGETHER; THE PAST IS FINISHED AND GONE,
EVERYTHING BECOMES FRESH AND NEW." (II COR-
INTHIANS 5:17, PHILLIPS TRANSLATION) THESE
~~HUMBLE SHEPHERDS~~ HAD SEEN THE ONE WHO IS
CALLED THE ~~SHEPHERD AND BISHOP~~ OF OUR SOULS
IN I PETER 2:25. HE IS ALSO CALLED BOTH THE
~~CHIEF~~ AND ~~GREAT~~ SHEPHERD OF THE SHEEP. (I
PETER 5:4, HEBREWS 13:20) THE WORD ~~SHEPHERD~~
IS USED MORE IN LUKE 2 THAN IN ANY OTHER
CHAPTER IN THE BIBLE EXCEPT ~~JOHN 10~~, WHERE IT
IS USED ONE MORE TIME TO DESCRIBE THE LORD
JESUS AS THE ~~GOOD SHEPHERD~~. ~~IT IS MY~~
~~OPINION THAT EVERY MAN NEEDS A SHEPHERD~~. WE
ARE BORN WITH A BENT TOWARD THE PATH OF SIN,
AND ~~WE NEED SOMEONE TO TURN OUR WAYWARD STEPS~~
~~BACK TO GOD~~, AND THAT SOMEONE IS THE ~~LORD JESUS~~
~~CHRIST~~. ~~DAVID SPOKE OF THE LORD AS HIS~~
~~SHEPHERD~~. ~~QUESTION: WHO IS YOUR SHEPHERD~~
~~TODAY?~~ THE RESPONSIBILITY OF EVERY BIBLE
TEACHING CHURCH IS TO LIFT UP THE SHEPHERD
SO MEN MAY TURN TO HIM FOR FORGIVENESS AND
GUIDANCE. WHAT WAS TRUE OF THESE SHEPHERDS
MAY BE TRUE FOR EVERY MAN; THAT IS, ONCE
HIS LIFE HAS ~~TOUCHED YOURS~~, YOU MAY BE ~~CHANGED~~
IN TIME FOR ETERNITY.

"SHEPHERDS BY NIGHT" LUKE 2:8

ONE SUNDAY BEFORE CHRISTMAS, A SUNDAY SCHOOL TEACHER ASKED HER STUDENTS TO TELL THE STORY THEY LIKED BEST ABOUT CHRISTMAS. ONE STUDENT SAID HE LIKED THE STORY ABOUT THE SHEPHERDS GOING TO THE LAUNDROMAT. HE REMEMBERED SPECIFICALLY THE DESCRIPTION "WHILE SHEPHERDS WASHED THEIR SOCKS BY NIGHT!" EARLY WEDNESDAY MORNING, AMERICANS AWOKE TO LEARN THAT UNITED STATES TROOPS HAD INVADDED PANAMA. IT WAS NEWS THE WHOLE WORLD KNEW IN A MATTER OF HOURS. WHEN GOD APPEARED IN FLESH IN HISTORY ON THE EARTH HIS COMING WAS NOT MADE KNOWN TO SCHOLARS, SAGES, SOVEREIGNS OR SOCIALITES BUT RATHER TO HUMBLE SHEPHERDS. THAT NIGHT, WHILE THE WORLD SLEPT, SHEPHERDS WATCHED IN A FIELD NEAR BETHLEHEM AND HEAVEN SPOKE - THE MESSIAH IS HERE. THERE IS A SENSE IN WHICH THE WORLD SLEEPS TODAY AND HEAVEN SPEAKS AGAIN THAT MESSIAH IS COMING TO EARTH AGAIN. SOMEONE HAS SAID "THE WORLD IS DIVIDED INTO TWO REPRESENTATIVE GROUPS - INNKEEPERS WHO (1) HAVE NO ROOM FOR JESUS AND DO NOT UNDERSTAND WHO HE IS AND SHEPHERDS WHO KNOW WHO HE IS AND HURRY TO SEE HIM. (2) AT THIS TIME OF THE YEAR, WE SEE A PICTURE OF SHEPHERDS IN DISPLAYS AND ON CHRISTMAS CARDS, IN CHURCH PLAYS AND CHRISTMAS STORIES BUT TODAY LET US LOOK MORE CAREFULLY AT THE TEXT OF SCRIPTURE AND LEARN MORE ABOUT THESE PRIVILEGED PEOPLE.

Ordinary

I. THEY WERE SIMPLE SHEPHERDS - VS. 8

NONE OF THESE MEN WERE SOCIALLY OR POLITICALLY PROMINENT. THEY WERE "LIVING IN THE FIELDS" FLOCK FEEDERS AND PROTECTORS. WHEN GOD WAS WORKING THEY WERE WATCHING. THAT IS, GOD VISITED THEM IN THE ROUTINE OF LIFE.

MANY EXPECT GOD TO CRASH INTO OUR LIVES IN THE UNUSUAL AND SENSATIONAL BUT THAT IS NOT HIS MODE OF OPERATION. SOMEONE SUGGESTED THAT HAD THESE SHEPHERDS LIVED IN AMERICA ^{OUR TIME} 50% OF THEM WOULD NOT HAVE BEEN WORKING THAT NIGHT. SOME WOULD HAVE BEEN ON SICK LEAVE, SOME OUT OF TOWN, SOME ON VACATION, AND DOING MANY OTHER THINGS RATHER THAN THERE AT THEIR POST OF DUTY. THESE MEN WERE NOT CITY DWELLERS BUT OUTDOORS MEN WHO WERE USE TO THE OPEN SPACES, CLEAR SKIES, FRESH AIR, SUN, MOON AND STARS. IT MAY BE THAT THESE ARE THE KIND OF PEOPLE WHO RECOGNIZE THE HAND AND VOICE OF GOD IN CREATION. GOD COULD ENTRUST THE GOOD NEWS OF HIS SON TO MEN WHO WERE TRUSTWORTHY AND DEPENDABLE ENOUGH TO GUARD FLOCKS OF SHEEP. IT IS INTERESTING TO OBSERVE THE NUMBER OF PEOPLE IN TO WHOSE LIFE GOD CAME AS THEY WERE FAITHFULLY DOING THE TASK AT HAND. (COMPARE MOSES, DAVID, GIDEON, JACOB AND OTHERS.) G.H. MORRISON SAYS: "WE CRAVE LIBERTY FROM COMMON DRUDGERY. WE SEEM TO MISS SO MUCH IN THE ROUTINE. WE LONG FOR A LARGER LIFE. THE ANGEL MUSIC NEVER COMES THAT WAY. HEAVEN HAS NEVER A SONG FOR THOSE WHO SHIRK. IT WAS ON MEN WHO WERE FAITHFUL TO THEIR APPOINTED TASK THAT THERE BROKE THE GLORY OF THE LORD." (IN ANCIENT TIMES, SHEPHERDING WAS AN IMPORTANT OCCUPATION FOR SHEEP WERE USED FOR FOOD, CLOTHING AND SHELTER - TENTS. SHEEP ARE HELPLESS ANIMALS UNABLE TO FIND FOOD AND WATER ON THEIR OWN AND TEND TO WONDER ABOUT THE COUNTRYSIDE. THE SHEPHERD WAS ESSENTIAL FOR THEIR CARE AND PROTECTION. EVERY SHEPHERD HAD TO LOOK FOR PASTURE FOR HIS SHEEP AND THEY FOLLOWED HIM - HE DID NOT DRIVE THEM. IF THERE WAS NO SHEEPFOLD SHEPHERD HAD TO STAY AWAKE TO WATCH OVER THEM. PERHAPS THIS WAS THE CONDITION ON THAT FIRST CHRISTMAS NIGHT.)

overwhelmed

II. THEY WERE FRIGHTENED SHEPHERDS -VS.9-10

IN THE TEXT OF VERSE 9 THE WORD FEAR APPEARS TWICE IN OTHER WORDS, THEY FEARED, FEARED EXCEEDINGLY, A GREAT FEAR. THE WORD FOR FEAR IS THE GREEK PHOBOS AND THE WORD FOR SORE IS THE GREEK MEGAS. WE WOULD SAY THAT THESE SHEPHERDS WERE INVOLVED IN A "BIG SCARE!" THIS STATEMENT IS MADE IN LIGHT OF THE FACT THAT SHEPHERDS ARE NATURALLY COURAGEOUS MEN AND NOT COWARDS, THE NATURE OF THEIR OCCUPATION REQUIRED FEARLESSNESS, THIS FEAR WAS NOT BORN OUT OF UNGODLINESS AND UNBELIEF BUT OUT OF THE PRESENCE OF GOD. IN THE PRESENCE OF GOD, TOUGH MEN TREMBLE! THE WORD GLORY IN THE TEXT IS THE GREEK DOXA - DOXOLOGY. TERM GLORY RELATES TO THE EXHIBITION OF EXCELLENCE OR THE DISPLAY OF SPLENDOR. IN THE OLD TESTAMENT THE SHEKINAH GLORY WAS THE MANIFEST PRESENCE OF GOD AMONG HIS PEOPLE. IT MAY BE PHYSICAL OR SPIRITUAL IN NATURE. THE GLORY OF ANYTHING WHETHER IT BE PERSON, GROUP OR NATION IS THAT WHICH IS SPECTACULAR OR EXCELLENT ABOUT IT'S NATURE. FOR EXAMPLE ROMANS 3:23 SPEAKS OF MANS FAILURE WITH REFERENCE TO GOD'S GLORY. THAT IS, MAN HAS FAILED TO MANIFEST THE EXCELLENCE FOR WHICH HE WAS CREATED. (MATTHEW 6:29, MATTHEW 4:8, REV. 21:23-26) THE WORDS "FEAR NOT" ARE USED ON SEVERAL OCCASIONS IN THE CHRISTMAS STORY. ZACHARIAS WAS TOLD TO FEAR NOT - LUKE 1:13, MARY WAS TOLD TO FEAR NOT - LUKE 1:30, JOSEPH WAS TOLD TO FEAR NOT - MATTHEW 1:20 AND THE SHEPHERDS WERE TOLD TO FEAR NOT. THE REASON IS THAT MEN WHO KNOW GOD HAVE NOTHING TO FEAR IN HIS PRESENCE AND JESUS IS THE ANSWER TO THE FEARS OF MEN. THE FEAR WAS PROMPTED BY 2 INGREDIENTS.

(A.) AN ANGEL, - IT IS IMPORTANT TO OBSERVE THAT THE DEFINITE ARTICLE DOES NOT APPEAR IN THE ORIGINAL TEXT. THIS IS IMPORTANT BECAUSE THE ANGEL OF THE LORD IN THE OLD TESTAMENT WAS THE PRE-INCARNATE MANIFESTATION OF CHRIST. THE ANGEL OF THE LORD NEVER APPEARS AFTER THE BIRTH OF CHRIST. AN ARMY (B) VS. 13 AND 14. THE WORD HOST IS A MILITARY TERM REFERING TO A BAND OF SOLDIERS. THE ANGELS ARE REGARDED AS THOSE WHO FORM GOD'S HOST OR ARMY AND HE HIMSELF IS THE LEADER. GOD WAS UNDERSCORING THE FACT THAT THE EVENT TAKING PLACE IN BETHLEHEM HAD AROUSED THE INTEREST OF INTELLIGENT BEINGS THROUGHOUT THE UNIVERSE. IT IS INTERESTING TO OBSERVE THAT THIS ARMY HAD AS ITS PRIMARY OBJECTIVE PEACE AND NOT WAR. (Is. 9:6) FROM HEAVENS VANTAGE POINT, THIS WAS THE NIGHT IN ALL OF HUMAN HISTORY. MOST MEN GAVE LITTLE NOTICE OR THOUGHT OF JESUS BIRTH THAT DAY BUT HEAVEN THOUGHT OF NOTHING ELSE. ON THE DIVINE SCALE OF VALUES MAN CONSIDERS INSIGNIFICANT WHAT HEAVEN CONSIDERS TO BE LASTING AND ETERNAL VALUE. IT SEEMS TO ME, THAT TOO MANY PEOPLE ON EARTH ARE FRIGHTENED AT THE WRONG THINGS AND FOR THE WRONG REASONS. (CF. MATTHEW 10:28)

III. THEY WERE OBEDIENT SHEPHERDS VS. 15-16

WHEN THE ANNOUNCEMENT WAS MADE, THE SHEPHERDS ACTED! WHEN THEY HEARD THE MESSAGE, THEY MOVED. REVELATION PROMPTED RESPONSE. THESE MEN SOUGHT NO COMMITTEE ACTION, THEY DID NOT CONFER WITH A COUNSEL, THE WORD DEBATE, DIALOG OR DISCUSSION WERE ABSENT FROM THE TEXT. HOWEVER THE WORD NOW SUGGESTS THE IMMEDIACY OF THEIR OBEDIENCE. (GEN. 22:1) THE WORD HASTE - SUGGESTS THE ENTHUSIASM AND ENERGY BY WHICH THEY OBEYED. THE FACT THESE MEN WERE QUICK TO OBEY GOD TELLS YOU SOMETHING ABOUT THEIR CHARACTER. THEY DID NOT ASK

THEMSELVES HOW THESE THINGS COULD BE. THEY WENT STRAIGHT TO JERUSALEM WITH ALL SPEED. AN OVERRIDING FACT PREVAILS IN THE CHRISTMAS STORY AND THAT IS: THE SOONER ONE SEES JESUS, THE BETTER OFF HE WILL BE! FAR TOO MANY PEOPLE ARE FAR TOO CASUAL ABOUT JESUS CHRIST. LIFE AND ITS SPIRITUAL SIDE IS MADE UP OF SOMEDAYS AND MAYBES BUT THE URGENCY OF GETTING TO CHRIST SOMEHOW IS LACKING. SPIRITUAL MEN ARE QUICK TO DO GOD'S BIDDING. QUESTION: HOW DO MEN FIND JESUS? BY OBEYING HEAVEN'S DIRECTION. THOSE DIRECTIONS ARE RECORDED IN THE BIBLE.

IV. THEY WERE OUTSPOKEN SHEPHERDS - VS.17

THE SHEPHERDS DID NOT KEEP THE GOODNEWS TO THEMSELVES. WHEN THEY SAW JESUS, THEY COULD NOT HELP BUT TELL OTHERS WHAT THEY HAD SEEN AND HEARD. QUESTION: WHY DO SO MANY PEOPLE KEEP THE MESSAGE OF CHRISTMAS AND THE CROSS TO THEMSELVES. THE ANSWER MAYBE MANY SIDED. SOME WHO SAY THEY KNOW HIM DO NOT. SOME MAY BE AFRAID TO SPEAK THE MESSAGE FOR FEAR. OTHERS MAY BE TOO PROUD TO REVEAL THE SHALLOW KNOWLEDGE OF CHRISTIAN FAITH. SOME MAY HAVE A LACK OF CONCERN OR APPRECIATION FOR THE URGENCY OF THE HOUR. IF ONE IS O.K. SOMEHOW EVERYONE ELSE IS NOT IMPORTANT. AT CHRISTMAS TIME WE SING A CHRISTMAS SONG ENTITLED "GO TELL IT ON THE MOUNTAIN". WE MIGHT BE BETTER OFF TO SING "GO TELL YOUR NEIGHBORS AND FRIENDS, THE PEOPLE AT WORK AND EVERYWHERE AROUND THE WORLD THE GOOD NEWS OF THE GOSPEL. NOTHING IS MENTIONED IN THE BIBLE ABOUT THE INN KEEPER SHARING THE GOOD NEWS OF WHAT HAPPENED IN HIS STABLE! AS A MATTER OF FACT, HE PROBABLY DID NOT KNOW WHAT WAS GOING ON RIGHT UNDER HIS NOSE. A KING WAS BORN IN HIS STABLE THAT NIGHT AND HE WAS BOTH OBVIOUS AND IGNORANT TO WHAT WAS TAKING PLACE.

Overjoyed

V. THEY WERE SATISFIED SHEPHERDS -VS. 20

THESE MEN WERE CHANGED FROM WATCHERS OVER SHEEP TO WORSHIPPERS OF THE SHEPHERD. THEY HAD DISCOVERED THE SHEPHERD AND BISHOP OF THEIR SOULS. (1 PETER 2:25) HE IS ALSO CALLED CHIEF AND GREAT SHEPHERD OF THE SHEEP. (1 PETER 5:4, HEBREWS 13:20) THE BIBLE MAKES IT CLEAR THAT EVERY MAN NEEDS A SHEPHERD. WE ARE BORN WITH OUR BACKS TO GOD AND A BENT TOWARD SIN. WE NEED SOMEONE TO TURN OUR WAYWARD STEPS BACK TO GOD AND THAT SOMEONE IS THE LORD JESUS CHRIST. QUESTION; WHO IS YOUR SHEPHERD TODAY?

These shepherds found the Shepherd!

Overwhelmed - angels
Overwhelmed?

Optimistic
observed

"THE FIRST CHRISTMAS"

⊗ *Dan Rutter's auto Bio* = "I Remember..."

DO YOU REMEMBER YOUR FIRST MEANINGFUL CHRISTMAS? I DO. (RELATE COAL FIELDS OF MCDOWELL COUNTY - SHOE STORE, LACE UP BOOTS, SCABBARD ON THE SIDE, UNDER CHRISTMAS TREE CHRISTMAS MORNING - EXPLAIN.) MANY REMEMBER DOLLS, WAGONS, BIKES, SLEDS, COWBOY BOOTS, CAP BUSTERS AND BB GUNS! (COMMENT REGARDING O.A.S. TALK ABOUT ONE ORANGE AND PEPPERMINT CANDY AS A BIG CHRISTMAS IN A FAMILY OF EIGHT - BUT IT WAS ENOUGH!) CHRISTMAS HAS CHANGED. COMMERCE HAS REPLACED CHRIST AS THE UNDERLYING REASON FOR CHRISTMAS. IT IS THE SEASON TO "GIVE" AND "GET" BUT WORSHIPPING CHRIST IS SOMETIMES SOON FORGOTTEN AFTER DECEMBER 25. LET US EXAMINE THE VERY FIRST CHRISTMAS:

I. THE FIRST CHRISTMAS TRAVELERS -

LUKE 2:4-7

1-77/81

504

30

THIS WEEK USA TODAY, STATED THAT 27 MILLION AMERICANS WILL TRAVEL OVER 100 MILES AWAY FROM HOME ON SOME KIND OF CHRISTMAS OR HOLIDAY TRIP. MARY AND JOSEPH MADE THE 90 MILE TRIP FROM NAZARETH IN NORTHERN ISRAEL TO BETHELHEM IN THE SOUTH. IT WAS A DANGEROUS, DIFFICULT TRIP UNDER NORMAL CIRCUMSTANCES BUT MARY WAS IN THE NINTH MONTH OF HER PREGANCY WHICH INCREASED BOTH THE RISK AND THE STRAIN OF THE TRIP. THEY ALSO TRAVELED BY DONKEY. THE REASON FOR THE INCONVENIENCE WAS THE INSTITUTION OF ROMAN GOVERNMENTAL POLICY CALLED A CENSUS. HOWEVER, IN THOSE DAYS THE CENSUS WORKER DID NOT COME TO ONE'S HOUSE OR WORKPLACE BUT RATHER SUBJECTS WERE REQUIRED TO RETURN TO THE PLACE OF THEIR OFFICIAL ENROLLMENT AND IN THIS CASE BETHELHEM. BY THE WAY THE TERM "WENT UP" IS TRANSLATED ARISE IN LUKE 24:38.

(1)

(2) BUT IT MAY ALSO REFER TO THE FACT THAT BETHLEHEM WAS LOCATED ON A STEEP RIDGE AND LIKE JERUSALEM ONE "WENT UP" IN ORDER TO GET THERE. EVEN WHEN TRAVELING GEOGRAPHICALLY FROM NORTH TO SOUTH. PICTURE TWO WEARY TRAVELERS SEEKING OVERNIGHT SHELTER AFTER A HARD JOURNEY BUT FINDING NONE. EVERY PLACE OF ACCOMODATION WAS FULL - NOTHING WAS AVAILABLE. THE PHRASE "NO ROOM IN THE INN" - POINTS TO THE FACT THAT RESERVATIONS WERE UNKNOWN IN THAT DAY. THERE WERE "NO VACANCY" SIGNS IN EVERY HOTEL. THERE WAS NO TIME TO LOOK ELSEWHERE. A STABLE WAS BETTER THAN OPEN SKIES SO THEY STOPPED THERE. SOMEONE HAS SUGGESTED THAT THE GROUND FLOOR MAY HAVE BEEN THE STABLE IN THE INN WITH SLEEPING ACCOMODATIONS ABOVE. A MEDICAL EMERGENCY, THAT IS, MARY'S TIME TO DELIVER ARRIVED BUT GOD'S TIME ARRIVED TOO. (GALACIANS 4:4) A MANGER IS A FEEDING TROUGH FOR ANIMALS. A BARN IS NOT THE USUAL PLACE WHERE A KING IS BORN. A PALACE OR A MODERN HOSPITAL WOULD SEEM MORE APPROPRIATE HOWEVER, THE HUMILITY AND POVERTY OF JESUS' PARENTS DID NOT REDUCE THE GRACE AND RICHNESS OF THIS STORY AND THAT QUALITY NEVER DIMS OR IS DIMISHED.

I. Travellers

II. THE FIRST CHRISTMAS GREETING -

LUKE 2:8-9

THE GREETING WAS THREE-FOLD:

- (1) ANGEL TO SHEPHERDS - Vs. 8-9
- (2) SHEPHERDS TO EACH OTHER - Vs. 15
- (3) SHEPHERDS TO EVERYONE ELSE - Vs. 17-18

CHRISTMAS IS THE SEASON OF GREETINGS. FOR EXAMPLE, DID YOU KNOW THAT THE MODERN GREETING CARD NUMBERING IN THE BILLIONS SENT EACH YEAR BEGAN IN THE MID 1800S WHEN A

MUSEUM DIRECTOR NAMED HENRY COLE WHO USED TO WRITE SHORT NOTES TO HIS FRIENDS AT CHRISTMAS WAS UNABLE TO DO SO ONE YEAR AND COMMISSIONED A LOCAL ARTIST TO DESIGN A CARD FOR HIM AND HAVE IT PRINTED SO HE COULD SEND MORE GREETINGS TO MORE PEOPLE MORE CONVENIENTLY. INADVERTENTLY, THE CHRISTMAS CARD CAME INTO BEING - IT WAS A VERY POPULAR IDEA THEN AND STILL IS. ONE OF THE MOST EXTENSIVE LISTS OF CHRISTMAS GREETINGS BELONGS TO THE PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES NUMBERING SOMEWHERE OVER 50,000 NAMES. THE APPEARANCE OF THE ANGEL WAS SUDDEN, SWIFT, SUPER NATURAL AND IT SCARED THE SHEPHERDS! DON'T PASS THIS EVENT OFF TOO LIGHTLY - PLEASE REMEMBER THIS HAS NEVER HAPPENED TO ANYONE WE KNOW - EVER! (SOME FOLKS CLAIM TO HAVE TRAVELED TO OTHER PLANETS ON SPACE SHIPS BUT WE'RE TALKING ABOUT REALITY NOT FANTASY!) NOTHING LIKE THIS HAD EVER NOR HAS EVER HAPPENED IN BETHLEHEM. RUTH AND DAVID WERE FROM THIS TOWN AND NOTHING HAD EVER HAPPENED LIKE THIS BEFORE. SIMPLY STATED IT WAS GOOD, NOT BAD NEWS. IT BROUGHT JOY NOT SADNESS. IT WAS THE STORY OF A SAVIOR AND NOT A SLAVE OWNER. THE SHEPHERDS COULD NOT SUPPRESS THE DESIRE TO TELL OTHERS WHAT THEY HAD HEARD AND SEEN. (COMMENT REGARDING WWW "GREETINGS" A UNIQUE GREETING! THERE ARE GROUPS OF GREETERS TODAY:

(1) SAD - BROKE AND BROKEN. THE POET SAID IT LIKE THIS "CHRISTMAS IS A BITTER DAY FOR PARENTS WHO ARE POOR, THE WISTFUL EYES OF CHILDREN ARE DAGGERS TO ENDURE, THOUGH SHOPS ARE CRAMMED WITH PLAY THINGS ENOUGH FOR EVERYONE, IF THE PARENT'S PURSE IS EMPTY THERE MIGHT AS WELL BE NONE. MY PURSE IS FULL OF MONEY BUT I CANNOT BUY A TOY; ONLY A WREATH OF HOLLY FOR THE GRAVE OF

MY LITTLE BOY. IN THIS CONTEXT PERHAPS EVEN
THE BROKE HAVE SOMETHING TO BE THANKFUL FOR.

(2) MAD - THOSE WHO ARE NOT HAPPY WITH
THE SEASON OFTEN FOUND AMONG SHOPPERS AND
PARKERS WHO ARE CRANKS IN THE CROWD.

*Giving
folks
hard Time*

(3) GLAD - NO SEASON LIKE IT - SMILES,
HELPFUL, JOYFUL, GLAD TO BE ALIVE.

*I Travellers
II Greeting*

III. THE FIRST CHRISTMAS CAROL -

LUKE 2:13-14

THE TEXT DOES NOT USE THE WORD SING BUT
WHAT THE MULTITUDE SAID WAS BOTH EXCITING
AND EDIFYING. FIRST ONE ANGEL, THEN AN
ARMY OF ANGELS OR HOST OF THEM JOINED IN
THE CHORUS. THE WORDS MAY HAVE BEEN SPOKEN
AS IN A POEM OR SUNG AS IN A SONG BUT IT WAS
A MULTITUDE MAKING MUSIC AND IT WAS INDEED
MUSIC TO THE SHEPHERD'S EARS. WHO KNOWS IF
THE ANGELS SANG SOPRANO, ALTO, TENOR AND
BASS. WHATEVER IT WAS IT WAS A GREAT
FESTIVAL OF PRAISE, A GLORIOUS SIGHT AND
SOUND FOR SIMPLE SHEPHERDS - SOMETHING THEY
NEVER GOT OVER OR FORGOT. BY THE WAY, A
CAROL MAY BE A DANCE ACCOMPANIED BY SONG OR
A JOYFUL SONG OR HYMN - ALL OF THE ABOVE.

IV. THE FIRST CHRISTMAS GIFTS - MATT. 2:11

THE KEY TO THIS PASSAGE IS THAT OF WORSHIP.
THEY WORSHIPPED HIM NOT HER. THE WISE MEN
CAME LATER, PERHAPS AS MUCH AS A YEAR LATER,
AFTER THE SHEPHERDS. THEIR GIFTS WERE OF
SYMBOLIC SIGNIFICANCE:

(1) GOLD - THE METAL OF KINGS, WORTHY
OF ROYALTY. MATTHEW IS THE GOSPEL OF THE
KING.

(2) FRANKINCENSE - A RESIN FROM A CERTAIN TREE USED IN MAKING PERFUME. IT SPOKE OF THE SAVIOR'S FRAGRANT LIFE.

(3) MYRRH - A SPICE USED IN THE PROCESS OF EMBALMING THE DEAD. A REFERENCE TO HIS DEATH ON THE CROSS. THE WISEMEN GAVE HIM THEIR FINEST GIFTS. IRONICALLY THEY GAVE THESE GIFTS TO A BABY, SOMEONE WHO DID NOT RESPOND TO THEM WITH SPECIAL FAVORS. THEY GAVE IN FAITH BELIEVING THAT WHAT WAS SAID ABOUT THE BABY WAS TRUE AND THEY GAVE THEIR BEST GIFTS TO HIM BECAUSE HE WAS WORTHY.

I Travelling
II Gifts
III Carol
IV Gifts

V. THE FIRST CHRISTMAS LIGHTS - (MATT. 2:2, 9, 10)

THIS YEAR, IN OUR NEIGHBORHOOD, THERE HAS BEEN AN EXPLOSION OF LIGHTS - EVERYWHERE A FESTIVAL OF LIGHTS BLINKING, FLASHING, RUNNING, AND WHATEVER ELSE LIGHTS CAN DO. THESE MEN FOLLOWED THE "LIGHT" GOD GAVE THEM AND IT BROUGHT THEM TO JESUS. (A BIBLE PRINCIPLE - ACTS 10) THEY WERE ASTRONOMERS OF THE DAY - OR TECHNICALLY OF THE NIGHT! THEY DEVOTED TIME TO THE STUDY OF THE SKY. THIS INTEREST IN THE HEAVENS ALSO GAVE RISE TO ANOTHER STUDY CALLED ASTROLOGY - A SYSTEM OF SUPERSTITION NOT SANCTIONED BY SCRIPTURE NOR NECESSARILY PRACTICED BY THESE MEN. THEY WERE WISE ASTRONOMERS HONORABLY ENGAGED IN THE BEST SCIENCE OF THEIR DAY. I HAVE TROUBLE ACCEPTING THE IDEA THAT THEY WERE "HUDDLED OVER A HOROSCOPE!" "HE WHO SEES NO STAR NEVER COMES TO THE STABLE." ANY RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCE THAT DOES NOT GET MEN TO JESUS IS OF NO LASTING VALUE.

VI. THE FIRST CHRISTMAS RUSH - LUKE 2:15-16

THE WORDS "NOW" AND "HASTE" ARE SIGNIFICANT. PEOPLE WHO ARE IN NO HURRY OFTEN WIND UP WITH NO HEAVEN. (EXPLAIN) THE SOONER PEOPLE GET TO JESUS, THE BETTER OFF THEY WILL BE. (COMPARE LUKE 19 AND ZACHAEUS) (19:5-6)
OBEEDIENCE IS THE SECRET TO BEING SAVED.

"...HOW BEAUTIFUL ARE THE FEET OF THEM THAT PREACH THE GOSPEL OF PEACE, AND BRING GLAD TIDINGS OF GOOD THINGS. BUT THEY HAVE NOT ALL OBEYED THE GOSPEL..." (ROMANS 10:16)

II THES. 1:7-8 ARE VERSES SOME FOLK HAVE CHOSEN TO IGNORE "AND TO YOU WHO ARE TROUBLED REST WITH US, WHEN THE LORD JESUS SHALL BE REVEALED FROM HEAVEN WITH HIS MIGHTY ANGELS,

IN FLAMING FIRE TAKING VENGEANCE ON THEM-
(1) WHO KNOW NOT GOD AND THAT OBEY NOT THE (2)
GOSPEL OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST WHO SHALL BE PUNISHED WITH EVERLASTING DESTRUCTION FROM THE PRESENCE OF THE LORD AND FROM THE GLORY OF HIS POWER..." ONE MAY ANALYZE, APOLOGIZE, CRITIZE, MINIMIZE THE REASON WHY HE DOES NOT SEE CHRIST BUT IT IS ALL WORTHLESS IN THE LIGHT OF ETERNITY. NEW BABIES CREATE A SENSE OF EXCITEMENT AND URGENCY IN MOST HOMES. WHEN THEY ARE BORN, CASUAL IS OUT AND CRISIS IS IN! THERE IS NO RECORD THAT THE INN KEEPER KNEW OR DID ANYTHING ABOUT THE BIRTH OF JESUS. PEOPLE MAY KNOW ABOUT JESUS, SYMPATHIZE WITH HIS CAUSE AND STILL BE LOST. THE WORD "HASTE" IN THE TEXT IS HIGHLY SIGNIFICANT.
(EXPLAIN)

WHY JESUS CAME

THE PURPOSE FOR LIVING IS A PERPLEXING PROBLEM FOR MANY PEOPLE ON THIS PLANET. WHERE DID MAN COME FROM? WHY IS HE HERE? WHERE IS HE GOING? THESE THREE QUESTIONS HAVE BEEN THE BASIS FOR MANY BOOKS. SPACE EXPLORATION IS SEEKING TO FIND ANSWERS TOO. JESUS KNEW AND FULFILLED HIS PURPOSE ON EARTH.

(1) JOHN 10:10 - JESUS CAME TO MAKE LIFE WORTH LIVING. THE WORD ABUNDANT MEANS FULL, FULL-FILLED, SATISFYING, MORE THAN ENOUGH. ABUNDANT LIFE IS LINKED TO SHEEP WHO GRAZE IN THE SHEPHERD'S PASTURE. ANEMIC LIFE IS LINKED TO SWINE EATING AT THE TROUGHS OF SELFISH PLEASURE. IN THIS CHAPTER, THE GREAT SHEPHERD GAVE HIS LIFE FOR US IN ORDER THAT HE MIGHT GIVE HIS LIFE TO US. IN OTHER WORDS, THE GOD WHO MADE MAN KNOWS WHAT IT TAKES TO MAKE LIFE WORTHWHILE FOR HIM. BY CONTRAST, MANY UNBELIEVERS THINK THAT GOD IS A COSMIC "KILL-JOY" WHEN HE IS IN REALITY THE JOY GIVER! (PSALM 16:11) THE GOOD LIFE IS THE LIFE THAT IS GOD-HONORING. JESUS DID NOT COME TO RUIN OUR LIVES, HE CAME TO REDEEM THEM!

(2) LUKE 19:10 - THE WORD LOST IN THE TEXT IS THE SAME WORD AS DESTROY IN JOHN 10:10 AND "PERISH" IN JOHN 3:16 AND JOHN 10:28.

(3) MATTHEW 1:21, MATTHEW 9:13. *To a Dark World*
 I. HE CAME TO RADIATE LIGHT - JOHN 1:4,5,9

JOHN SPOKE OF JESUS IN TERMS OF LIGHT.

(1) JOHN 3:19-21 - MEN WHO ARE SPIRITUALLY BLIND HATE SPIRITUAL LIGHT. THEY ARE NOT PASSIVE BUT PASSIONATE IN THIS HATRED!

(2) JOHN 8:12, 12:35-36 - THESE STATEMENTS OF JESUS ARE EITHER TRUE OR THEY ARE WORDS OF A WACKO! WHEN JESUS APPEARED TO SAUL OF TARSUS IT WAS IN A LIGHT FROM HEAVEN THAT GOT HIS ATTENTION IMMEDIATELY! (11 COR. 4:8; EPH. 5:8, I PETER 2:9, I JOHN 1:5,7) LIGHT AND DARKNESS ARE TERMS USED TO DESCRIBE THE COSMIC CONFLICT BETWEEN GOOD AND EVIL. IN THIS CONFLICT, ~~MEN~~ ^{ANGELS} HAVE BEEN UNABLE TO OVERTAKE OR PUT OUT THE LIGHT! THE LIGHT SHINES IN THE DARKNESS STILL. THERE ARE VARIOUS INTERPRETATIONS OF VERSE 9 BUT THAT LIGHT IS CERTAINLY REVEALED IN NATURE, CONSCIENCE, THE BIBLE.

II. HE CAME TO REVEAL GOD - JOHN 1:18

STUDENTS OF THE GOSPEL OF JOHN HAVE STUDIED THE VARIANT READING OF THE WORD SON. EARLY COPIES OF SCRIPTURE WERE MADE IN A SCRIPTORIUM WHERE ONE READER AND SEVERAL WRITERS. THE WORD SON IS Uios ^{Θεός}. THE WORD FOR GOD IS THEOS. "THE TWO READINGS ARE OF EQUAL ANTIQUITY...." (WESCOTT) THE NASV PUTS GOD IN THE TEXT AND SON IN THE MARGIN - UNDERSCORING AND EMPHASIZING THE DIETY OF CHRIST! IN THE OLD TESTAMENT, ANYONE WHO SAID: "I HAVE SEEN GOD" REALLY HADN'T! THEY MAY HAVE SEEN SOMETHING, BUT THAT SOMETHING WAS NOT THE SOMEONE KNOWN AS GOD. QUESTION: IF GOD IS INVISIBLE, HOW COULD MOSES, JACOB OR ISAIAH DECLARE THEY HAD SEEN GOD? ANSWER: GOD PERMITTED A FEW PEOPLE IN THE OLD TESTAMENT TO SEE A MANIFESTATION OF HIS PRESENCE, BUT NOT HIMSELF. THEY SAW HIS GLORY, THE PLACE WHERE HE DWELT, BUT NOT HIM! THE BIBLE SPOKE OF GOD'S HANDS, ARMS, FEET AND EYES BUT THESE WERE EXPRESSIONS OR WAYS OF REVEALING THE INFINITE GOD TO FINITE BEINGS. THAT IS, AN INVISIBLE MAY MANIFEST HIMSELF IN A VISIBLE FORM.

FOR EXAMPLE, THE HOLY SPIRIT DESCENDED UPON JESUS IN THE BODILY FORM OF A DOVE. THE PHRASE "ONLY BEGOTTEN SON" IS A REFERENCE TO THE UNIQUENESS OF JESUS CHRIST. ANGELS, ADAM, AND BELIEVERS ARE ALL CALLED SONS OF GOD. HOWEVER, CHRIST ALONE IS UNIQUE - THAT IS THE ONE AND ONLY SON LIKE HIMSELF. THE WORD BOSOM WAS USED IN HEBREW TO SPEAK OF INTIMACY. THE WORD DECLARED IS A COMPOUND GREEK WORD MADE UP OF EX WHICH MEANS OUT OR OUT OF AND AGO WHICH MEANS TO LEAD OR BRING. THE ENGLISH WORD EXEGESIS COMES FROM THIS TERM. IT LITERALLY MEANS TO BRING TO VISIBILITY. FOR SOME PREACHERS, PREACHING LITERALLY MEANS TO "EXIT JESUS!" HOWEVER, IN THE PURE SENSE OF THE TERM IT REFERS TO THE SHEDDING LIGHT ON A TEXT OF SCRIPTURE, TO BRING TRUTH TO THE SURFACE, TO MAKE IT CLEAR SO PEOPLE MAY UNDERSTAND THE MEANING OF THE BIBLE. JESUS CHRIST REVEALED OR BROUGHT GOD TO VISIBILITY SO MEN MIGHT LOOK UPON GOD AND KNOW WHAT HE IS LIKE AND STILL LIVE. (JOHN 14:9) SOMEONE HAS USED THE ILLUSTRATION OF AN ELECTRICAL TRANSFORMER. IT IS AN APPARATUS FOR TRANSFORMING ELECTRICAL CURRENT FROM HIGH TO A LOW POTENTIAL WITHOUT CHANGING THE CURRENT ENERGY. ONE MIGHT SAY THAT IN THE INCARNATION, JESUS CHRIST "STEPPED DOWN" HIS DIETY SO TO SPEAK WHEN HE TOOK UPON HIM A HUMAN BODY BUT IT IN NO WAY CHANGED HIM IN ESSENCE AND BEING. IN JESUS CHRIST, THE GOD WHO SEEMED DISTANT TO MEN, CAME NEAR. THE GOD WHO WAS INVISIBLE BECAME VISIBLE. THE GOD WHO SEEMED UNAPPROACHABLE WAS APPROACHABLE. (HEB. 4:16)

III. HE CAME TO RESIDE AMONG MEN - JOHN 1:14

A MOTHER ONCE TOLD HER CHILD WHO WAS AFRAID TO SLEEP IN A ROOM BY HIMSELF: "THERE IS NOTHING TO FEAR OF THE DARK BESIDES THE ANGELS ARE NEAR YOU." THE CHILD ANSWERED THAT HE DIDN'T WANT TO SEE ANGELS OR EVEN CARE IF THEY WERE

NEAR. "I WANT SOMEONE WITH SKIN ON HIS FACE." IN THE INCARNATION, GOD BECAME A MAN. THE PHRASE "DWELT AMONG US" LITERALLY MEANS TO TABERNACLE OR PITCH A TENT. JUST AS THE TABERNACLE IN THE OLD TESTAMENT WAS A TENT AND THE SYMBOL OR MATERIAL PRESENCE OF GOD DWELLING IN THE MIDST OF HIS PEOPLE, SO CHRIST TABERNACLED OR DWELT AMONG MEN. (THE STORY IS TOLD OF A FATHER AND SON WHO WERE WALKING ALONG THE ROAD AND AS THEY DID SO, THE FATHER CARRIED A WALKING STICK IN HIS HAND. THE SON ASKED IF HE MIGHT CARRY THE CANE FOR A WHILE. HE PROMPTLY BEGAN HITTING STONES AND BUSHES, WHACKING HIS WAY ALONG THE PATH. AS THEY LEFT THE ROAD AND WALKED ACROSS AN OPEN MEADOW, THE BOY SPOTTED AN EMPTY BIRD'S NEST ONLY TO DISCOVER THAT THE SMALL BIRDS IN THE NEST HAD BEEN KILLED. THE BOY WAS SAD AND EXPRESSED HIS CONCERN BUT WAS POWERLESS TO DO ANYTHING ABOUT IT. THE FATHER REMINDED THE SON THAT IT WAS IMPOSSIBLE FOR A BOY TO EXPRESS HIS GRIEF TO A MOTHER BIRD BECAUSE HUMAN BEINGS CANNOT COMMUNICATE WITH BIRDS THAT WAY. IN ORDER TO DO SO, ONE WOULD HAVE TO BECOME A BIRD HIMSELF! "IN THE INCARNATION, THE SON OF MAN BECAME A MAN TO ENABLE MEN TO BECOME SONS OF GOD." (C. S. LEWIS)

IV. HE CAME TO RESCUE SINFUL MEN - JOHN 1:29

THE WORDS "LAMB OF GOD" WERE FAMILIAR TO JEWS. THE STORY OF THE PASSOVER AND THE BLOOD OF THE LAMB SACRIFICE TO PROTECT THE FAMILY FROM DEATH WAS A WELL-KNOWN STORY AMONG HEBREWS. TWENTY NINE TIMES IN THE BOOK OF REVELATION, JOHN USED THE WORD LAMB TO FOCUS THE MINDS AND ATTENTION OF HIS READERS UPON THE CENTRAL THEME OF THE BIBLE - NAMELY, THE DEATH OF CHRIST ON THE CROSS. THERE IS NO HELP OR HOPE FOR MANKIND APART FROM THE BLOOD OF CHRIST. ACCORDING

TO THE TEXT, HE "TAKETH THE SIN OF THE WORLD."
THE CROSS AND THE BLOOD OF CHRIST ARE THE ONLY
BASES FOR FORGIVENESS AND CLEANSING. THIS
PHRASE SPEAKS OF SUBSTITUTION AND EXPIATION.
THE QUESTION ISAAC ASKED HIS FATHER IN
GENESIS 22:7 - "WHERE IS THE LAMB?" WAS
ANSWERED FOR EVERYONE, EVERYWHERE AT CALVARY!

V. HE CAME TO RECEIVE ALL WHO WILL RECEIVE HIM - JOHN 1:12

QUESTION: IF ALL MEN ARE ALREADY THE CHILDREN
OF GOD, WHY WOULD JOHN ASK US TO BECOME SOME-
THING WE ALREADY ARE? (GAL. 3:26) THE TWO
PRIMARY WORDS FOR POWER IN THE BIBLE ARE
WHICH SPEAKS OF AUTHORITY AND
WHICH SPEAKS OF ABILITY. THE WORD
"BECOME" IN THE TEXT IS A WORD THAT SUGGESTS
BIRTH. (IT IS THE WORD GENNAOO. IT IS TRANS-
LATED IN JOHN 3:3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8. IT IS ALSO
USED IN JOHN 16:21 TRANSLATED DELIVERED, A
REFERENCE TO BIRTH. IN ORDER TO HAVE LIFE,
ONE MUST HAVE BIRTH. ISRAEL DID NOT WELCOME
JESUS TO HIS LAND. SO MANY DO NOT WELCOME
HIM TO THEIR LIFE. THE GIST OF 1:11 IS THAT
JESUS CAME TO HIS OWN THINGS - NEUTER GENDER.
THE SECOND OWN REFERS TO PEOPLE AND IS IN THE
MASCULINE GENDER. THE VERSE STATES THAT JESUS
CAME INTO THE WORLD WHICH HE OWNED BY VIRTUE
OF CREATION AND HIS OWN PEOPLE, THE JEWS, DID
NOT WELCOME HIM. IT IS MUCH LIKE AN OWNER
BEING EVICTED FROM HIS OWN PROPERTY! ACCORDING
TO THIS VERSE, MEN MUST BELIEVE BEFORE THEY
BECOME. ACCORDING TO VERSE 13, JOHN SPEAKS OF
THREE WRONG ROADS TO RIGHTEOUSNESS:

(1) PARENTS - A REFERENCE TO PHYSICAL BIRTH
AND SPIRITUAL BIRTH IN TWO DIFFERENT REALMS.

(2) PROGRESS - FLESH CAN ONLY PRODUCE FLESH. PROGRESS IS NOT RIGHTEOUSNESS. A PERSON MIGHT PUT ON A POLICEMAN'S UNIFORM - THAT DOES NOT MAKE HIM A POLICEMAN. A PERSON MIGHT STAND IN A GARAGE BUT THAT DOES NOT MAKE HIM A CAR. HE MAY SIT IN A PEW AT CHURCH, THAT DOES NOT MAKE HIM A CHRISTIAN.

(3) PEOPLE - THIS IS A REFERENCE TO RELIGIOUS PEOPLE AND RELIGIOUS rites. ACCORDING TO REVELATION 3:10, JESUS KNOCKS AT THE DOOR OF OUR LIFE AND THE WAY TO BE SPIRITUALLY BORN IS TO INVITE HIM IN. JUST AS WHEN SOMEONE KNOCKS AT OUR DOOR, THERE ARE TWO ANSWERS - COME IN OR GO AWAY.

CHRISTMAS FEELINGS

ONE POPULAR CHRISTMAS SONG SAYS OF THIS SEASON.... "IN THE AIR THERE'S A FEELING OF CHRISTMAS." MUCH OF WHAT IS IMPORTANT TO US ABOUT CHRISTMAS HAS TO DO WITH HOW WE FEEL ABOUT CHRISTMAS. FOR SOME, CHRISTMAS IS A TIME OF SADNESS. FOR OTHERS IT IS A TIME OF GLADNESS. TODAY, LET US EXAMINE SOME OF THE FEELINGS REFLECTED IN THE BIBLE ABOUT THE FIRST CHRISTMAS.

I. THE SURPRISE OF CHRISTMAS - LUKE 1:34

was she surprised?
can!
(RELATE THE STORY TOLD TO ME BY LEHMAN STRAUSS OF HIS SUGGESTION TO ELSIE THAT THEY HELP A WORTHY PERSON AT CHRISTMAS. HE ASKED HER IF SHE WOULD PREPARE CHRISTMAS DINNER FOR THIS UNKNOWN PERSON AND FAMILY. IT HAD BEEN HER UNDERSTANDING THAT HER CHILDREN - TWO BOYS AND THEIR FAMILIES COULD NOT BE AT THE STRAUSS HOME FOR CHRISTMAS. THIS WAS ALL SET UP BY LEHMAN AND THE SURPRISE WAS REVEALED AT DINNER WHEN HER TWO SONS AND THEIR FAMILIES CAME INDEED TO HELP A WORTHY PERSON AT CHRISTMAS - ELSIE STRAUSS.) MARY WAS STARTLED AND AMAZED AT THE NEWS THAT SHE WAS BOTH INVOLVED AND INDEED THE INSTRUMENT OF THE INCARNATION! HOW COULD SUCH A THING HAPPEN TO HER? AS A MATTER OF FACT, SHE WAS AN UNMARRIED GIRL AND THIS WHOLE EVENT BROUGHT HER INTO PUBLIC DISGRACE. SHE WAS ASTONISHED AT THE DOCTRINE OF THE VIRGIN BIRTH JUST AS MANY ARE TODAY. IT WAS A BIBLE MIRACLE TO SAY THE LEAST. HOWEVER, THE DOCTRINE IS VITAL AND UNDERSTANDABLE BECAUSE IF CHRIST WERE SINLESS AS THE BIBLE SAYS HE IS, THE VIRGIN BIRTH WAS A MUST

FOR WITHOUT IT A SINLESS PERSON COULD NOT EXIST! (EXPLAIN IN THE LIGHT OF ROMANS 5:12)

(A) THE APPEARANCE OF THE ANGEL GABRIEL -
LUKE 1:26

ONE CAN TELL SOMETHING OF THE IMPORTANCE OF AN EVENT BY THE PEOPLE WHO ATTEND! WE LEARN SOMETHING OF HEAVEN'S EVALUATION AND ESTIMATION OF THIS EVENT BY THE PRESENCE OF THE ANGEL GABRIEL. THE LAST TIME WE SAW THIS GREAT PERSON WAS IN THE BOOK OF DANIEL, 600 YEARS BEFORE JESUS WAS BORN! HE HADN'T CHANGED ONE BIT IN ALL THAT TIME, HE WAS STILL A REVEALER OF GREAT TRUTHS. (EXPLAIN DANIEL 8:16, 9:21) AS A MATTER OF FACT, THERE ARE MORE REFERENCES TO GABRIEL IN THIS CHAPTER THAN ANYWHERE ELSE IN THE ENTIRE BIBLE WHICH SHOULD SPEAK OF THE GRAVITY OF THIS MOMENT. WE READ ABOUT THESE EVENTS IN SCRIPTURE AS IF THEY HAPPEN EVERY DAY. WE SHOULD LEARN HOW IMPORTANT THIS EVENT MUST BE TO OUR PLANET TO SEE HOW INVOLVED HEAVEN WAS IN ITS HAPPENING. IT ALSO TELLS US SOMETHING ABOUT MARY. TODAY IF SUCH AN EVENT WOULD HAPPEN TO A PERSON THEY WOULD GET ON TELEVISION TALK SHOWS, WRITE BOOKS SUCH AS "GABBING WITH GABRIEL", ATTEMPT TO MAKE A GREAT DEAL OF MONEY OUT OF SUCH EVENTS. THIS WAS NOT MARY'S NATURE OR WAY.

"Angels I Have Known" -

(B) THE DECLARATION OF MARY'S FAVOR
WITH GOD - LUKE 1:28

THE THREE SIGNIFICANT STATEMENTS ABOUT MARY SPEAK OF HER ~~IMPECCABLE~~ CHARACTER. NOTICE THE HIGH PRAISE HEAPED UPON THIS HEBREW GIRL BY AN ANGEL WHO STANDS IN THE PRESENCE OF GOD!

(C) THE ANNOUNCEMENT OF MESSIAH'S BIRTH! -
LUKE 1:35

MARY, LIKE YOU AND ME, DID NOT UNDERSTAND EVERYTHING ABOUT THE DOCTRINE OF THE VIRGIN BIRTH, SHE ONLY BELIEVED THAT IT WAS TRUE AND THAT IT WOULD HAPPEN JUST AS THE ANGEL SAID. IT WAS A SUPERNATURAL EVENT CONTRARY TO THE COURSE OF NATURE IN THAT JESUS WAS DIVINELY CONCEIVED THROUGH A SPECIAL MINISTRY OF THE HOLY SPIRIT. APPLICATION: LIKE MARY, BELIEVERS ARE OFTEN SURPRISED AT THE PRESENCE OF THE LORD IN HUMAN EVENTS. WE ARE OFTEN SURPRISED AT GOD'S WORKING AND WONDER IN OUR LIVES.

II. THE EXCITEMENT OF CHRISTMAS -
LUKE 2:13

IN A WORLD WHERE EVERYTHING SEEMS TO GET BIGGER AND BETTER WITH THE PASSING OF TIME, IT TAKES MORE AND MORE TO GET FOLKS EXCITED AT CHRISTMAS. FOR EXAMPLE, SOME OF YOU CAN REMEMBER WHEN A WAGON, OR BIKE, OR DOLL WAS ENOUGH TO MAKE CHRISTMAS VERY SPECIAL AND VERY WONDERFUL IN THE LIFE OF A YOUNGSTER. I HAVE HEARD MY GRANDPARENTS SPEAK OF AN ORANGE, OR STICK OF PEPPERMINT CANDY AS A SPECIAL TREAT AT CHRISTMASTIME - AND THERE WAS NOTHING ELSE. THE BIBLE GIVES INDICATION OF SOME VERY EXCITING THINGS THAT HAPPENED ON THAT FIRST CHRISTMAS:

(A) THE EXCITEMENT OF THE HEAVENLY HOSTS -
LUKE 2:13-14

THE TEXT DOES NOT SAY THAT THIS GREAT ARMY OF HEAVENLY BEINGS COMPOSED A CHOIR OR THAT THEY SANG A CANTATA BUT WHATEVER THESE

HEAVENLY VISITORS DID, IT WAS WITH GREAT ADORATION AND PRAISE TO GOD. THEY UNDERSTOOD WHAT MANY EARTH DWELLERS MISSED, NAMELY, THAT GOD WAS COMING TO EARTH TO LIVE AND MEN SHOULD PREPARE FOR HIS COMING. I CANNOT IMAGINE ANGELS ANNOUNCING SUCH SHATTERING EARTH-CHANGING NEWS IN A DULL, CASUAL, QUIET WAY. SOMETHING GREAT WAS GOING TO HAPPEN AND THEY DECLARED THAT FACT WITH GREAT ENTHUSIASM AND VIGOR. AFTER ALL, WOULDN'T YOU EXPECT SOMEONE TO GET EXCITED ABOUT A VISITOR OR VISITORS FROM ANOTHER PLANET WHO ARE GOING TO RESIDE ON EARTH! - E.T.!

(B) THE EXCITEMENT OF THE SHEPHERDS -
LUKE 2:8,16-20

MY FRIEND WARREN WIERSBE SAYS THAT THIS IS THE FIRST RECORDED "CHRISTMAS RUSH." WE ARE AUTHORITIES ON UNDERSTANDING HOW NEW BABIES CREATE EXCITEMENT IN A HOME, BUT THIS ONE ABOVE ALL! THE EXCITEMENT OF THE FIRST CHRISTMAS WAS OVER EVENTS WHICH HAD ENORMOUS SPIRITUAL IMPORTANCE. BECAUSE THE PARTICIPANTS WERE CONSCIOUS OF THE GLORY OF GOD MORE THAN THE GLORY OF MEN.

III. THE HOSTILITY ^{AT} OF CHRISTMAS -
MATTHEW 2:16 - *no nativity scene*
Suble threat

TO SAY THAT HEROD WAS THE FIRST "SCROOGE" IS A GROSS UNDERSTATEMENT. IT IS INCREDIBLE THAT A KING LIKE HEROD WOULD BE SO TROUBLED AT THE NEWS OF A BABY'S BIRTH IN A REMOTE STABLE IN BETHLEHEM. HOWEVER, HEROD'S PARANOIA ABOUT HIS POSITION WOULD TOLERATE NO THREATS OR RIVALS EVEN THE THREAT OF AN INFANT. HIS AGITATION AND PERPLEXITY

TRIGGERED A REACTION IN ALL OF JERUSALEM. HEROD CAME TO PALESTINE AS A BUILDER, GENEROUS IN HIS ATTITUDE TOWARD THE JEWS BUT HE WOULD KILL TO GET HIS WAY. HISTORY RECORDS THAT HE WAS INSANELY SUSPICIOUS OF ANYONE WHO APPEARED TO BE A THREAT TO HIS POWER AND THE OLDER HE BECAME THE WORSE HE BECAME. HE MURDERED HIS WIFE, MOTHER AND THREE SONS. ONE HISTORIAN RECORDS: "IT WAS SAFER TO BE HEROD'S PIG THAN HIS SON." THERE IS A SENSE IN WHICH HEROD WAS AFRAID THAT JESUS MIGHT INTERFERE IN SOME WAY ON HIS COMFORTABLE LIFESTYLE AND HE WAS PREPARED TO GO TO ANY LENGTHS TO PRESERVE IT. HE THEREFORE ADOPTED A POLICY TO GET RID OF JESUS EVEN IF IT MEANT INFLECTING SORROW AND GRIEF ON THOUSANDS OF OTHER PEOPLE. BY THE WAY, WHEN ONE EXAMINES THE DECREE OF HEROD HIS RUTHLESS NATURE MAY BE SEEN IN THE FACT THAT HE SLEW ALL CHILDREN TWO YEARS AND UNDER, NOT JUST MALES! HEROD REPRESENTED THEN AND NOW THE PERSON OF THIS WORLD WHO WANTS TO GET RID OF JESUS AT ANY PRICE. HE MAY DO SO IN THE NAME OF PLURALISM, FAIRNESS AND FREEDOM BUT IN FACT FAILS TO RECOGNIZE THAT HE WOULD HAVE NO FREEDOM AT ALL WERE IT NOT FOR JESUS. IN OUR TIME IT SEEMS AS IF THE PHILOSOPHY IS "GOVERNMENT AGAINST GOD" BUT IT IS NOT A NEW IDEA, IT IS AS OLD AS BABEL AND PHAROAH AND AS NEW AS THE ACLU. AS A MATTER OF FACT, MARY AND JOSEPH WERE NO DIFFERENT FROM THE GOVERNMENT'S POINT OF VIEW THAN MOSES' PARENTS FOR THEY SOUGHT TO PRESERVE THE LIFE OF THEIR YOUNG SON THROUGH THE CRUEL DECREE OF A HEATHEN KING. ACCORDING TO LUKE 2:19, WE LEARN THAT "HEROD DIED." ACCORDING TO HEBREWS 9:27, HEROD HAS MET

ONE OF TWO APPOINTMENTS WHICH ALL MEN, IF THE LORD SHOULD TARRY, MUST MEET AND THEY WILL KEEP BOTH - DEATH AND JUDGMENT. IT IS MY FEELING THAT THIS TROUBLED EMOTION ABOUT JESUS HAS NOT CHANGED A GREAT DEAL EVEN IN OUR TIMES. IT MAY NOT BE COUCHED IN THE VIOLENCE OF YESTERYEAR BUT MEN ARE TROUBLED WHEN THEY HEAR ABOUT JESUS BECAUSE THEY KNOW HE WILL CHANGE THEIR LIVES FOREVER. THEREFORE, IF THEY GO TO A CHURCH AND MEET PEOPLE WHO TALK ABOUT JESUS AND A CHANGED LIFESTYLE THEY ARE TROUBLED AND OFTEN JUST SIMPLY DON'T PLAN TO BE AROUND FOLKS WHO TALK THAT WAY. IF YOU ARE PLEASED WITH YOUR CURRENT LIFESTYLE, THEN JESUS IS NOT FOR YOU.

INDIFFERENCE

IV. THE INDIFFERENCE OF CHRISTMAS - MATTHEW 2:4-6

THE FOCUS OF INDIFFERENCE TO CHRIST IS HEADED UP IN TWO PEOPLE OR CLASSES OF PEOPLE:

(A) RELIGIOUS INDIFFERENCE

THE PRIESTS AND SCRIBES KNEW WHAT THE OLD TESTAMENT SAID ABOUT MESSIAH, YET WITH THEIR INTELLECTUAL KNOWLEDGE OF FACTS ABOUT HIM, THEIR HEARTS AND LIVES REMAINED UNCHANGED. THEY LIVED JUST SIX MILES FROM WHERE JESUS WAS BORN BUT MADE NO ATTEMPT TO INQUIRE ABOUT HIM! THEY WERE HAPPY WITH THEIR RELIGIOUS LIFE AND THEREFORE DID NOT TAKE THE NEWS OF JESUS' BIRTH SERIOUSLY. RELIGION IS LIKE THAT, IT KEEPS PEOPLE FROM GOD! IT IS POSSIBLE TO HAVE THE RIGHT ANSWERS ABOUT CERTAIN DOCTRINES AND THE WRONG ATTITUDE TOWARD CHRIST.

IT IS POSSIBLE TO QUOTE VERSES AND KNOW THE LANGUAGE OF EVEN FUNDAMENTAL CHURCHES AND BE RELIGIOUS AND LOST. IN THIS INSTANCE, THE RELIGIOUS TRAINING AND RITUAL OF THE PRIESTS BECAME AN OBSTACLE TO KEEP THEM FROM GOD'S CHRIST.

(B) COMMERICAL INDIFFERENCE - LUKE 2:7

THE INNKEEPER HAD NO SYMPATHY FOR AN EXPECTANT MOTHER WHO HAD TRAVELED MANY MILES AND WAS BONE TIRED. SHE GOT THE SAME TREATMENT AS THE ANIMAL UPON WHICH SHE HAD RIDDEN! I WONDER IF SOME HIGH ROMAN OFFICIAL HAD BEEN TRAVELING THROUGH THE COUNTRY IF THERE WOULD HAVE BEEN A ROOM IN THE INN FOR HIM? THE INNKEEPER REPRESENTS A CLASS OF PEOPLE WHO TREAT PEOPLE LIKE ANIMALS OR IN SOME CASES HAVE MORE CONCERN FOR ANIMALS. (THERE ARE SOME FOLKS WHO HAVE MORE REGARD FOR THE CATS THAN FOR THE KIDS.) MARY WAS NOT EVER TREATED AS A CUSTOMER BUT AS AN ANIMAL - THIS SEEMS HARSH BUT TRUE. THE STABLE WAS GOOD ENOUGH FOR MARY - AND IN A SENSE GOOD ENOUGH FOR GOD'S SON, THE KING OF THE JEWS - AN INCREDIBLE ATTITUDE.

C. Political
V. THE EXPECTATION OF CHRISTMAS

(A) SIMEON - LUKE 2:25

THE WORD SIMEON MEANS "ONE WHO HEARS." IN A TIME IN ISRAEL'S HISTORY WHEN THE RELIGIOUS WORLD HAD LITTLE VITAL CONTACT WITH GOD AND HAD SETTLED DOWN TO A LIFE OF EMPTY RITUAL, HERE IS A MAN WHO WAS SPIRITUAL IN NATURE AND WHOSE SATISFACTION IN LIFE CAME FROM SPIRITUAL REALITIES! THE MESSIANIC HOPE LIVED IN HIS HEART. HE WAS LIVING IN JERUSALEM, THE CITY OF THE GREAT KING, THE PLACE WHERE GOD HAD SAID THE MESSIANIC HOPE

WOULD REST. FOR THAT REASON, SIMEON WAS ON THE SPOT WHEN GOD BROUGHT HIS SON TO EARTH. SIMEON'S SPIRITUALITY IS FURTHER ILLUSTRATED BY HIS DWELLING IN THE TEMPLE. IT WAS THE TIME WHEN TEMPLE ATTENDANCE WAS LOW AND IN LARGE MEASURE PEOPLE HAD ABANDONED THE HOUSE OF GOD. SIMEON REMAINED STEADFAST AND EXPECTING, IRRESPECTIVE OF PEOPLE AND CIRCUMSTANCES AROUND HIM.

(B) ANNA - LUKE 2:36

THE STORY OF ANNA IS SAD AT THE OUTSET. SHE WAS A WOMAN WHO HAD KNOWN THE LOSS OF HER HUSBAND EARLY IN HER MARRIED LIFE. INSTEAD OF BECOMING BITTER AND REBELLIOUS TOWARD GOD OR LETTING HER CIRCUMSTANCES IN LIFE WRECK HER FAITH, THIS WOMAN'S FAITH HAD CONTINUED TO GROW. SHE WAS A WOMAN WHO HAD GROWN GRACEFUL WITH AGE AND WHOSE SPIRITUALITY HAD DEEPEINED WITH TIME. SHE, TOO, STAYED NEAR THE HOUSE OF GOD. WHAT THESE TWO WANTED MOST OF ALL WAS TO SEE JESUS BEFORE THEY DIED. GOD HONORED AND ANSWERED THAT REQUEST. THEIR LIVES REMIND US THAT NO PERSON IS READY TO DIE UNTIL HE SEES JESUS!

Simeon
LK 2:
29

THE EMOTIONS OF CHRISTMAS

MOST OF OUR EMOTIONS AT CHRISTMAS ARE

1. COMFORTING IN NATURE. HOME, FAMILY, FRIENDS, FIRE, FOOD AND FUN ALONG WITH CHRISTMAS TREES, CAROLS, GIFTS AND BONUSES ALL REFLECT THE TRUTH THAT CHRISTMAS IS THE FAVORITE TIME OF THE YEAR FOR MANY IF NOT MOST PEOPLE.

2. HOWEVER, CHRISTMAS IS ALSO A TIME OF CONFLICTING EMOTIONS. PEOPLE BUY GIFTS FOR OTHER PEOPLE WHOM THEY SCARCELY KNOW OR MAY NOT LIKE, WITH MONEY THEY DO NOT HAVE TO IMPRESS PEOPLE WHO DON'T REALLY CARE. I HAVE NEVER UNDERSTOOD THE SYMBOLISM BEHIND THE GIFT OF A BILLFOLD AT CHRISTMAS FOR DAD - HE HAS NOTHING TO PUT IN IT! FOR SOME, CHRISTMAS IS A TIME OF CRYING. (COMPARE MRS. ELLIOTT.)

I. CHRISTMAS IS A TIME WHEN SOME ARE TROUBLED-

MATTHEW 2:2

IT IS AMAZING THAT A KING LIKE HEROD WOULD BE TROUBLED AT THE NEWS OF A BABY'S BIRTH IN A REMOTE STABLE IN BETHLEHEM. HISTORY RECORDS THAT HEROD WAS PARANOID ABOUT HIS POSITION. HE WOULD TOLERATE NO RIVALS OR THREATS TO HIS POWER, NOT EVEN THE THREAT OF AN INFANT. HIS AGITATION, PERPLEXITY AND CONCERN TRIGGERED A REACTION IN ALL OF JERUSALEM FOR THEY FEARED HIS VIOLENT TEMPER AND REPRESSIVE MEASURES. HEROD HAD NO INTENTION OF WORSHIPPING JESUS, HIS OBJECTIVE WAS TO KILL HIM. HEROD'S REPUTATION WAS WELL KNOWN. HE CAME TO PALESTINE AS A BUILDER, GENEROUS IN HIS ATTITUDE TOWARD THE JEWS BUT WOULD KILL TO GET HIS WAY. HISTORY RECORDS THAT HE WAS INSANELY SUSPICIOUS OF ANYONE WHO APPEARED TO BE A

* THREAT TO HIS POSITION AND POWER AND THE OLDER HE BECAME THE WORSE HE BECAME. HE MURDERED HIS WIFE, MOTHER AND THREE SONS. ONE HISTORIAN SAID: "IT IS SAFER TO BE HEROD'S PIG THAN HIS SON." HEROD WAS AFRAID THAT JESUS MIGHT INTERFERE OR MESS-UP HIS COMFORTABLE LIFESTYLE AND HE WAS PREPARED TO GO TO ANY LENGTH TO PRESERVE IT. AS A MATTER OF FACT, HE WOULD KILL TO PRESERVE HIS STATION IN LIFE. THIS TROUBLED EMOTION ABOUT JESUS HAS NOT CHANGED A GREAT DEAL, EVEN IN OUR TIME. MAYBE IT IS NOT AS STEEPED IN VIOLENCE BUT THE EMOTION IS THERE NEVERTHELESS. MEN ARE TROUBLED WHEN THEY HEAR ABOUT JESUS BECAUSE THEY KNOW HE WILL CHANGE THEM FOREVER. THEREFORE, IF THEY GO TO A CHURCH OR MEET PEOPLE WHO TALK ABOUT CHRIST AND A CHANGED LIFESTYLE, THEY ARE DEEPLY TROUBLED AND WILL FIND A PLACE WHERE JESUS IS NOT PROMINENT. AS A MATTER OF FACT, IF YOU ARE PLEASED WITH YOUR CURRENT LIFESTYLE THEN JESUS IS NOT FOR YOU. HOWEVER, PLEASE KEEP IN MIND THAT HEROD DIED HAVING TURNED AGAINST AND AWAY FROM JESUS. PRIOR TO HIS DEATH, HE HAD SEVERAL PROMINENT CIVIC OFFICIALS IMPRISONED WITH THE DECREE THAT UPON HEROD'S DEATH THEY WERE TO BE EXECUTED. HIS REASON, HE WANTED PEOPLE TO CRY, SHED TEARS AT HIS DEATH AND REALIZING THEY WOULD NOT CRY OUT OF SYMPATHY FOR HIM HE MANUFACTURED A SITUATION TO EVOKE SORROW AT HIS DEATH - AN INCREDIBLY CRUEL AND FOOLISH GESTURE.

II. CHRISTMAS IS A TIME WHEN SOME ARE PUZZLED- MATTHEW 1:18-19; LUKE 1:34, 2:19

A. JOSEPH - MATTHEW 1:18-19

JOSEPH WAS A REMARKABLE MAN. FACED WITH SLANDEROUS GOSSIP AND SOCIAL DISGRACE HE TOOK

STEPS TO SPARE MARY FROM PUBLIC DISGRACE BEFORE THE COURTS. (IT WOULD BE HARD TO DISGRACE SOMEONE PUBLICALLY TODAY OVER A MORAL ISSUE.) JOSEPH WAS PERPLEXED ABOUT MARY'S CONDITION BUT POSITIVE ABOUT HER CHARACTER. HOWEVER, HE HAD NO ANSWER TO HIS PROBLEM. HIS DREAMS HAD BEEN TURNED INTO A NIGHTMARE. HE QUIETLY DID THAT WHICH WAS RIGHT AND KIND FOR MARY. OUT OF THIS TIME OF MYSTERY AND CONCERN, GOD WAS BRINGING TO PASS THE SINGLE MOST EVENT IN HISTORY TO THAT POINT. JOSEPH WAS AN INTEGRAL PART OF THAT GREAT EVENT. GOD SENT AN ANGEL TO RESOLVE THE DILEMMA AND JOSEPH'S PUZZLE WAS TURNED INTO AN ENORMOUS BLESSING FOR HIM AND THE WHOLE WORLD.

B. MARY - LUKE 1:34; 2:19

MARY'S QUESTION WAS HOW COULD SUCH A THING TRANSPIRE BECAUSE SHE WAS MORALLY PURE YET THE REALITY OF HER PREGNANCY WAS THERE. HOW COULD THIS HAPPEN? IT WAS A MIRACLE FROM GOD NEVER BEFORE ACCOMPLISHED ANYWHERE, ANYTIME - IT WAS A VIRGIN BIRTH, THE FULFILLMENT OF BIBLE PROPHECY. POINT WHEN GOD MOVES IN HUMAN HISTORY, IT IS NOT UNUSUAL FOR MAN TO HAVE ABSOLUTELY NO IDEA WHAT HE IS DOING OR WHERE HE IS GOING. (ISAIAH 55:8-9) WHAT WAS TRUE THEN, IS TRUE TODAY. MOST PEOPLE HAVE NO IDEA WHAT GOD IS DOING IN HUMAN HISTORY OR WHERE HE IS GOING. FOR MANY, THE EVENTS TRANSPIRING IN HISTORY TODAY ARE TOTALLY MYSTERIOUS. THEN AS NOW, THE ANSWER IS FOUND IN SCRIPTURE. GOD HAS A PLAN, AND HE IS RIGHT ON SCHEDULE. YOU AND I MAY BE PART OF THAT PLAN FROM ONE OF TWO PERSPECTIVES, EITHER AS AN "INSIDER" (II COR. 5:17) OR AS AN "OUTSIDER" (EPHESIANS 2:12)

III. CHRISTMAS IS A TIME WHEN SOME ARE JOYFUL - LUKE 2:10, MATTHEW 2:10

THE JOY OF CHRISTMAS IS NOT RELATED TO A BOTTLE, BUT TO A BABY. THE ANGELS UNDERSTOOD WHAT WAS HAPPENING AND CAME ALL THE WAY FROM HEAVEN TO LEAD A CHRISTMAS CANTATA OF PRAISE. THE MUSIC ON THAT OCCASION WAS FILLED WITH JOY... "I BRING YOU GOOD TIDINGS OF GREAT JOY... TO ALL PEOPLE." THE BIRTH OF A SAVIOUR WAS THE REASON FOR GREAT JOY ON EARTH THAT FIRST CHRISTMAS DAY. APART FROM CHRIST, RELIGION SLIPS INTO A MINOR KEY AND A MOURNFUL SOUND. FOR EXAMPLE, THE CHRISTMAS SONGS ARE INDEED SONGS OF JOY. "JOY TO THE WORLD", "JOYFUL, JOYFUL, WE ADORE THEE." JESUS AND JOY GO TOGETHER. IF JESUS IS NOT IN YOUR LIFE, ONE MAY HAVE A MEASURE OF HAPPINESS AND PLEASURE BUT GENUINE BIBLE JOY IS MISSING. AS A MATTER OF FACT, A SMOG OF SADNESS HAS SETTLED OVER MANY HOMES THIS CHRISTMAS BECAUSE JESUS IS NOT THERE. JOY IS A WORD LINKED TO MORAL RECTITUDE OR GOODNESS. THERE IS NO JOY IN IMMORAL PURSUITS. FOR EXAMPLE, THERE ARE NO JOYFUL DRUNKS, JOYFUL ADULTERERS, JOYFUL LIARS, OR JOYFUL THIEVES. IT IS POSSIBLE TO HAVE JOY EVEN IN THE MIDST OF SUFFERING AND AFFLICTION AS IN THE CASE OF THE JOYFUL JAIL EXPERIENCE. (ACTS 16.) THERE ARE FEW SEASONS OF THE YEAR, EVEN IN OUR LAND, THAT EVOKE MORE GENUINE PLEASURE THAN CHRISTMAS.

(Reverence) For

IV. CHRISTMAS IS A TIME TO WORSHIP CHRIST - MATTHEW 2:11

wise men

THE ~~SHEPHERDS~~ WERE CAREFUL TO WORSHIP HIM AND NOT HER. THE STABLE AT BETHLEHEM WAS NOT A SHRINE OR AN OBJECT OF WORSHIP, IT WAS SIMPLY THE PLACE WHERE CHRIST WAS BORN.

(Today) Sandy

WHEN IT CAME TO WORSHIP, IT WAS THEN AS NOW, CHRIST ALONE. I HAVE WATCHED WITH INTEREST AS AMERICANS HAVE ATTEMPTED TO DEIFY MEN RANGING FROM PRESIDENTS, TO PREACHERS, TO PERFORMERS. SOME HAVE IDOLIZED MEN ONLY TO BE DISILLUSIONED WITH THEIR QUESTIONABLE IMMORAL CONDUCT. MOST CANNOT STAND THE PUBLIC SCRUTINY OF THE MAGNIFYING GLASS OF INVESTIGATION. AFTER 2000 YEARS OF DIGGING AND SEARCHING FOR THE SLIGHTEST ERROR OR INCONSISTENCY, CHRIST STANDS TODAY, AS THEN, THE EPITOME OF GRACE AND VIRTUE WORTHY OF OUR WORSHIP. THERE IS A SENSE IN WHICH A PERSON CANNOT REALLY WORSHIP CHRIST UNTIL HE KNOWS HIM AS LORD AND SAVIOUR. MEN DO NOT DO GOD A FAVOR BY SHOWING UP IN CHURCH AT CHRISTMAS. SURELY GOD IS NOT IMPRESSED FOR HE RECOGNIZES THAT TRUE WORSHIP MUST COME FROM A CHANGED LIFE. (JOHN 4:24) THE FOUR EMOTIONS IN OUR STUDY ARE REFLECTED IN THIS CONGREGATION TODAY.

MICAH: FROM THE MANGER TO THE MILLENNIUM

MICAH 5:2

THIS IS ONE OF THE BEST KNOWN OLD TESTAMENT VERSES ON PROPHECY DEALING WITH THE FIRST COMING OF CHRIST. IT IS LOCATED IN A BOOK CALLED A MINOR PROPHET BUT IT IS OF MAJOR SIGNIFICANCE. (EXPLAIN) MICAH WAS CONTEMPORARY WITH BOTH HOSEA AND ISAIAH. WHEREAS ISAIAH WAS A PREACHER TO THE COURTS AND CITIES, MICAH WAS TO THE COUNTRY AND THE POOR. HE PREACHED THREE SERMONS RECORDED IN THE BOOK, EACH BEGINNING WITH THE WORD HEAR. (1:2, 3:1, 6:1-9) MICAH WAS THE FIRST TO POINT THE PROPHETIC FINGER TO THE PLACE WHERE MESSIAH WOULD BE BORN, 700 YEARS BEFORE IT HAPPENED. THE WISE MEN FOLLOWED A STAR THAT LED THEM TO BETHLEHEM. THE SCRIBES GAVE THE SCRIPTURES AND THE MICAH PASSAGE IN REPLY TO HEROD'S INQUIRY. (MATTHEW 2:4-6)

I. THE PLACE IN THE PROPHECY - "BETHLEHEM"

(RELATE STORY OF SOMEWHERE IN PENNSYLVANIA) BETHLEHEM WAS AN UNLIKELY AND INSIGNIFICANT PLACE FOR JESUS TO BE BORN. JERUSALEM WAS THE CAPITAL CITY AND THE CITY WHERE ONE WOULD EXPECT ROYALTY TO APPEAR. ONE WOULD EXPECT THE KING OF ISRAEL TO BE BORN IN A PALACE NOT IN A STABLE, TO APPEAR ON PARADE NOT BEFORE SHEPHERDS. WHEN MARY WAS ABOUT TO GIVE BIRTH TO HER FIRST-BORN CHILD, SHE WAS LIVING IN NAZARETH IN THE NORTH OF ISRAEL. A ROMAN TAX DECREE DECLARED BY A CAESAR LIVING IN ROME SET EVENTS INTO MOTION THAT MOVED MARY

SOUTHWARD TO BETHLEHEM RIGHT ON SCHEDULE. (LUKE 2:1-7) MARY CAME TO BETHLEHEM AT EXACTLY THE RIGHT TIME TO FULFILL MICAH'S PROPHECY - TO THE LETTER! COULD IT BE LUCK, FATE, HAPPENSTANCE, THE EVENTS OF HISTORY OR THE WORKING OF DIVINE PROVIDENCE? THIS CITY, 6 MILES SOUTH OF JERUSALEM, HAS BEEN CALLED "O LITTLE TOWN OF BETHLEHEM," HOWEVER, IT HAD A LONG BIBLE HISTORY BEGINNING WITH THE TIMES OF JACOB. RACHEL GAVE BIRTH TO BENJAMIN THERE AND DIED IN CHILDBIRTH, HER TOMB BUILT IN BETHLEHEM. (GENESIS 35:16) RUTH CAME TO BETHLEHEM WITH NAOMI, BACK TO NAOMI'S HOMETOWN IN DEEP SORROW YET RUTH MARRIED BOAZ AND LIVED HAPPILY THERE. (RUTH 2:1) DAVID GREW UP IN BETHLEHEM, A SHEPHERD AND SINGER. HOWEVER, WITH SUCH A RICH HISTORY, AFTER THE TIME OF DAVID, IT SEEMED TO DROP OUT OF SIGNIFICANCE TO REAPPEAR IN IMPORTANCE AT THE PLACE OF JESUS BIRTH. (THE WORD "SMALL" IS USED TO DESCRIBE THE SIZE OF BETHLEHEM BUT ITS ~~STRATEGIC~~ IMPORTANCE IN THE ECONOMY OF GOD WAS GREAT. TO BE SURE, AWAY FROM THE SPOTLIGHT OF HUMAN EVENTS IT TOOK ON SPECIAL MEANING BECAUSE JESUS WAS THERE. THROUGHOUT HISTORY, GOD HAS USED SMALL THINGS TO ACCOMPLISH HIS GREAT OR LARGE WORK. FOR EXAMPLE, ~~SAMSON~~ USED THE JAW BONE OF AN ASS, ~~DAVID~~ A SLING, ~~MOSES~~ A ROD TO ACCOMPLISH GOD'S WORK. ~~GOD DELIGHTS IN USING WHAT OTHERS OVERLOOK OR CALL INSIGNIFICANT TO ACCOMPLISH HIS WILL.~~ THE DAY JESUS WAS BORN THE "BETHLEHEM BANNER" HEADLINED THE NEW TAX PROGRAM FROM ROME. GOD SENT ANGELS TO UNDERSCORE THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE BABE IN THE MANGER.

II. THE PERSON OF THE PROPHECY - HE CAME...RULER IN ISRAEL

Clinton
BOUND UP IN THIS PROPHECY IS A KEY TO EARTH'S BLESSING. BETTER PHILOSOPHIES AND PROGRAMS HAVE AND WILL BE SOUGHT FOR HUMAN GOVERNMENT AND HISTORY BUT BETTER PEOPLE AND ESPECIALLY A BETTER PERSON TO RULE AMONG MEN IS THE ANSWER TO PEACE ON EARTH. THIS PERSON IS BOTH HUMAN AND DIVINE IN ORIGIN. BETHLEHEM SPEAKS OF HIS HUMANITY WHEREAS EVERLASTING SPEAKS OF HIS DATELESSNESS AND TIMELESSNESS, HIS HABITATION OF ETERNITY - HIS DIETY, "FROM LONG AGO FROM THE DAYS OF ETERNITY". NASV THE KINGDOM IN HISTORY HAD A PROBLEM IN THAT BOTH RULER AND SUBJECT WERE IMPERFECT AND WEAK. SAUL, FIRST KING IN ISRAEL, HAD AN ENORMOUS EGO AND PROBLEM WITH PRIDE. HE WAS STUBBORN, SELF-CENTERED, DIS-OBEDIENT TO GOD. DAVID, WAS AN EXCELLENT KING IN MANY RESPECTS BUT GIVEN TO *Weakness to* SENSUALITY AND PLEASURE. THE KING MENTIONED IN THIS PROPHECY WILL BE DIFFERENT INDEED. HE BEGAN WITH A VIRGIN BIRTH (ISAIAH 7:14), HE WAS A VICARIOUS SUFFERER (ISAIAH 53:6), HE WILL CONCLUDE WITH A VICTORIOUS RULE (ISAIAH 2:2-4). (ISAIAH 11:1-9) THE CHIEF PRIESTS AND SCRIBES IN JESUS' DAY KNEW THE LOCATION OF THIS PROPHECY BUT SUSPECTED IT REFERRED TO TWO MESSIAHS. PETER SHOWS THAT IT SPOKE OF ONE MESSIAH BUT TWO COMINGS OR ADVENTS OF THE SAME PERSON (I PETER 1:9-11)

III. THE PLAN OF THE PROPHECY - "UNTO ME" OR "FOR ME" (NASV) *Rule*

THE PERSON IN THIS PROPHECY WOULD ACCOMPLISH GOD'S WILL ON EARTH. MICAH SAW WITH THIS

COMING RULER A GREAT KINGDOM, (MICAH 4:1-4, 5:4-5) THIS PERSON WOULD ACCOMPLISH WHAT JESUS SPOKE OF IN HIS PRAYER IN MATTHEW 6:10. ALSO IN MATTHEW 19:28, OUR LORD REFERRED TO A REGENERATION IN SOCIETY ACCOMPLISHED WHEN MESSIAH RETURNS TO EARTH. DANIEL SAW THE SAME EFFECT IN DANIEL 2:44 - AN EVERLASTING, UNIVERSAL KINGDOM ON EARTH BRINGING PEACE ON EARTH AS THE ANGELS SANG THAT FIRST CHRISTMAS MORN. IT WAS THE ANGELS SONG AS WELL AS THE APOSTLES SERMON! TODAY, GOD'S KINGDOM IS NOT ON EARTH BECAUSE THE KING IS AWAY IN EXILE. THE KING WAS CRUCIFIED AND ROSE FROM THE DEAD TO RETURN TO HIS FATHER. DURING THE INTERVAL, THE SERVANT OF THE SON IS CALLING OUT FROM THE NATIONS OF THE WORLD A BRIDE FOR THE KING'S SON. IN THE FUTURE, THE SON WILL RETURN FOR THE BRIDE AND WITH THE BRIDE FOR A KINGDOM HONEYMOON ON EARTH. DURING THAT TIME GOD'S TWO GREAT PEOPLES, THE CHURCH AND ISRAEL - HIS EARTHLY AND HEAVENLY PEOPLE - WILL LIVE ON EARTH TOGETHER IN PEACE. RIGHTEOUSNESS AND PEACE WILL CHARACTERIZE THAT KINGDOM, IT HAS BEEN THE THEME OF MEN THROUGHOUT AGES YET UNACCOMPLISHED. GOD'S PLAN FOR EARTH BOTH IN HISTORY AND FOR THE INDIVIDUAL IS LINKED TO JESUS CHRIST. (COMPARE EPHESIANS 3:11) GOD'S PLAN FOR EARTH IS NOT MARXIST, SOCIALIST OR EVEN DEMOCRACY, IT IS AN ETERNAL PLAN - A THEOCRACY WITH CHRIST AS KING. LET ME EMPHASIZE ONE ASPECT OF THE MESSIAH'S KINGDOM AT CHRISTMASTIME - NAMELY, WHERE JESUS IS THERE IS ALWAYS GREAT JOY. THE ANGEL SAID TO THE SHEPHERDS: "I BRING YOU GOOD TIDINGS OF GREAT JOY WHICH SHALL BE TO ALL PEOPLE." (LUKE 2:10) NEED I EMPHASIZE THAT EVEN TODAY IN OUR IMPERFECT

PROBLEM-FILLED WORLD THERE IS NO HAPPIER
TIME NATIONALLY THAN CHRISTMAS! JESUS
AND JOY ARE SYNONYMOUS. SO, TOO, WHEN
MESSIAH RETURNS TO ESTABLISH HIS KINGDOM
ON EARTH IT WILL BE A TIME OF GREAT JOY.
LISTEN TO THE OLD TESTAMENT PROPHET:
(ISAIAH 51:11, ISAIAH 61:3) RELATE THE
STORY OF DEBBIE GRUBB'S MOTHER.)



THE SHEPHERDS WERE ALSO WISE MEN

LUKE 2:8-20

S.S. Teacher
FAVORITE *Christ Story - Shepherd to "Lambenent"*
"washed their socks" by night.

THE SHEPHERDS AND THE WISE MEN WERE THE TWO GROUPS WHO CAME TO SEE THE YOUNG CHILD JESUS. THE SHEPHERDS CAME TO THE STABLE, THE WISE MEN LATER ON, PERHAPS AS MUCH AS A YEAR LATER. THE SHEPHERDS WERE WORKING AT NIGHT WHEN VISITED BY AN ANGEL. THEIR RESPONSE TO HIS MESSAGE REVEALS THAT THEY TOO WERE WISE MEN. HOW COULD MEN BE CALLED UNWISE WHO DID EXACTLY WHAT GOD TOLD THEM? INDEED, WISDOM IS THE PROPER OR PRUDENT USE OF KNOWLEDGE AND THAT IS EXACTLY WHAT THE SHEPHERDS DID - THEY ACTED WISELY WHEN THEY HEARD FROM HEAVEN! LET US EXAMINE SEVERAL WAYS OR AREAS IN WHICH THE SHEPHERDS WERE WISE:

I. THE WISDOM OF THE ORDINARY - VERSE 8WISDOM

THERE IS WISDOM IN SIMPLICITY. (PSALM 23, GETTYSBURG ADDRESS). WHEN GOD WANTED TO ANNOUNCE THE GREATEST NEWS EVER IN HUMAN HISTORY, HE CHOSE SIMPLE SHEPHERDS TO RECEIVE THAT NEWS AND NOT SOCIALITES, SAGES OR SCHOLARS! THERE IS A KIND OF WISDOM THAT COMES FROM THE ORDINARY SIDE OF LIFE. COMMON MEN ARE READY TO COMMUNICATE WITH GOD. TOO OFTEN RELIGIOUS PROFESSIONALS HAVE BEEN AND ARE SATISFIED WITH THE SYSTEM IN WHICH THEY ACT AS RELIGIOCRATS - THAT IS TECHNICIANS OF A SYSTEM. SCRIPTURE REMINDS US THAT IT WAS NOT THE WORSHIPPERS IN THE TEMPLE BUT THE BUILDERS WHO REJECTED THE CORNERSTONE. (COMMENT ON RECENT READER'S DIGEST ARTICLE, EXPLAIN) HEAVEN'S MESSAGE AND MESSENGER CAME TO SIMPLE SHEPHERDS. MANY EXPECT GOD TO

Shepherd = impt. occupation
food, clothing, shelter - he is essential
their care.

"Flocks + Flocks"

MT. 21:42

Stone Throwers Rejected

MT. 23

MT. 21:42

STORIES OF JESUS (Parables)

Today:

- ① Not a work - only by light 2-
- ② Sick, vacation, visiting relatives
- ③ Partying

shaking
wheat

Gideon
David
Isaiah

Rock

CRASH INTO THEIR LIVES IN SOME SENSATIONAL OR UNUSUAL WAY. AS THESE MEN WERE AT THEIR PLACE OF RESPONSIBILITY, THEY HEARD FROM GOD. IT IS INTERESTING TO OBSERVE THE NUMBER OF PEOPLE IN THE BIBLE WHO HEARD FROM THE LORD AS THEY FAITHFULLY PERFORMED ORDINARY TASKS (COMPARE MOSES, DAVID, GIDEON, JACOB). G. H. MORRISON SAYS: "WE CRAVE LIBERTY FROM COMMON DRUDGERY. WE SEEM TO MISS SO MUCH IN THE ROUTINE. WE LONG FOR A LARGER LIFE. THE ANGEL MUSIC NEVER COMES THAT WAY. HEAVEN HAS NEVER A SONG FOR THOSE WHO SHIRK. IT WAS ON MEN WHO WERE FAITHFUL TO THEIR APPOINTED TASK THAT THERE BROKE THE GLORY OF THE LORD." while others slept!

Routine

Concl.

Conclusion

II. THE WISDOM OF SOLITUDE - VERSE 8

"A field... Night"

"FIELD - FLOCK - NIGHT" LONELINESS AND SOLITUDE ARE NOT THE SAME. SOLITUDE FOR SAINTS IS GOOD FOR THE SOUL. MANY YOUNG PEOPLE HAVE LEARNED THAT THE SOLITUDE OF CAMP LIFE AWAY FROM THE DISTRACTIONS OF HOME AND OTHER INFLUENCES CAUSES ONE TO FOCUS ON THE ETERNAL. AS A MATTER OF FACT, A PERSON COULD BE A HERMIT AND NEVER EXPERIENCE SOLITUDE. IN TODAY'S WORLD, TOO MANY SEEK THE NOISE OF CITIES AND CROWDS AND ARE INDEED AFRAID OF SILENCE. ANY VOICE IS OK EXCEPT THE VOICE OF GOD. IN SILENCE, GOD IS OFTEN ABLE TO SPEAK TO US. IT IS MY CONTENTION THAT GOD STILL WANTS TO COMMUNICATE WITH US AS WE GET AWAY FROM THE NOISE OF THE MASSES AND LISTEN TO THE SMALL STILL VOICE OF GOD. MEN CANNOT HEAR THE VOICE OF GOD AMID THE STEREO, SIREN, VIDEO, HORNS, PLANES AND AUTOMOBILES. ROCK STARS AT ROCK CONCERTS ARE NOT DESIGNED TO DRAW MEN TO BUT TO DRIVE THEM AWAY FROM GOD, TO FEEL

Remarks

Comments



"Running on Empty" - 3-

Away from home!
Salome!

THE MUSIC AND THE PASSION IT PROMOTES IS TO FILL UP THE EMPTINESS OF THE SOUL WITH THE EMPTINESS OF THE SOUND OF TODAY'S SOCIETY. LOUD IS ITS PRIMARY FEATURE AND THE DEAFENING RESULTS ARE TO STOP THE SWEET SOUND OF THE SPIRIT IN THE SOUL. PERHAPS THE ANGEL OF THE LORD KNEW THAT HE WOULD NOT BE INTERRUPTED BY SOMETHING OR SOMEONE ELSE WHEN HE SPOKE TO THE SHEPHERDS IN THE SOLITUDE OF THAT MIDDLE EASTERN FIELD. (COMMENT ON MOSES, ELIJAH AND PAUL)

III. THE WISDOM OF REVERENCE - VERSE 9

THE WORD FEAR OR AFRAID DESCRIBES THE EMOTION OF THESE MEN BUT ALSO THEIR ATTITUDE TOWARD GOD. AS A MATTER OF FACT, ONE OF THE HEBREW WORDS FOR FEAR IN THE OLD TESTAMENT IS THAT OF AWE, HONOR, OR TO FALL DOWN IN A PROSTRATE POSITION BEFORE A SUPERIOR. ACCORDING TO PROVERBS 1:7, FEAR OF THE LORD IS THE BEGINNING OR PRINCIPAL PART OF KNOWLEDGE. TO FEAR GOD, ACCORDING TO THE BIBLE, IS BOTH AN HONORABLE AND HEROIC PHILOSOPHY. IT IS THE CORRECT AND NOT THE COWARDLY THING TO DO. A RIGHT ATTITUDE OR STATE OF MIND TOWARD GOD IS THE PRIMARY PLANK IN ANY PHILOSOPHY OF LIFE THAT IS BUILT UPON THE CORRECT FOUNDATION. ONE WHO KNOWS GOD KNOWS THE SOMEONE WHO CAN TEACH HIM SOMETHING ABOUT EVERYTHING. THEREFORE, TO BE A WISE MAN AND NOT A FOOL IS TO BE INFORMED ABOUT AND NOT IGNORANT OF GOD! (PSALM 14:1) BY CONTRAST, ROMANS 3:18 REMINDS THE READERS OF SCRIPTURE THAT "THERE IS NO FEAR OF GOD BEFORE THEIR EYES...." THIS IS THE WRONG ATTITUDE TO HAVE TOWARD GOD. VANCE HAVNER SAID: "WE MAJOR NOWADAY ON RELEVANCE AND MINOR ON REVERENCE."

Not a Low F.R.
A Low View of God!

Not God-fearing
people!

"Tough men
Travellers"

Angels
experience
= Heaven
view of
this
event

(BY THE WAY, SOME PREACHERS HAVE PROBLEMS WITH THE TITLE "REVEREND." THE RATIONALE IS THAT THIS WORD APPEARS ONCE IN THE BIBLE ATTACHED TO THE NAME OF GOD. IT HAS ALWAYS SEEMED TO ME TO BE AN HONOR TO BE ASSOCIATED AS A SERVANT OF THE LORD AND ONE WHO REVERES HIM! (PSALM 111:9 COMPARE THE NAME CHRISTIAN AND CHRIST - SAME LOGIC.)

IV. THE WISDOM OF URGENCY - VERSE 15-16

**The First Christmas Rush!*

THERE ARE SOME AREAS IN LIFE WHERE HURRY LEADS TO WORRY AND WORRY LEADS TO SORRY. THIS IS NOT ONE OF THOSE PLACES. THE ANNOUNCEMENT BROUGHT ACTION. THE MESSAGE MOVED MEN. IT WAS TIME TO STOP ASKING AND START ACTING. THERE IS A DIVINE URGENCY AND IMMEDIACY TO THE RESPONSE OF MEN TO THE MESSAGE OF GOD. (COMPARE GENESIS 22:2 LUKE 19:5-6) THERE IS A TENDENCY ON THE PART OF MEN TO VIEW WHAT GOD SAYS APART FROM URGENCY. THE FEELING ABOUT ETERNAL THINGS IS OFTEN THAT THERE IS PLENTY OF TIME AND NO NEED FOR HASTE. IT SEEMS TO ME THAT THE SOONER MEN SEE JESUS THE BETTER OFF THEY WILL BE. "SOME DAYS" AND "MAYBES" ARE COBBLESTONES ALONG THE ROAD OF GOOD INTENTIONS THAT LEADS ALONG THE BROAD WAY THAT ENDS IN DESTRUCTION! (MATTHEW 7:13-14) ANYTHING GOD TELLS US TO DO - DO IT NOW! (II COR. 6:1)

V. THE WISDOM OF EVANGELISM - VERSES 17-20

(Spreading the Good News!)

THE SHEPHERDS DID NOT KEEP THE GOOD NEWS TO THEMSELVES. WHEN THEY SAW JESUS THEY COULD NOT HELP BUT TELL OTHERS WHAT THEY HAD SEEN AND HEARD. QUESTION: WHY DO SO MANY BELIEVERS KEEP THE MESSAGE OF CHRISTMAS AND THE CROSS TO THEMSELVES. THE ANSWER MAY BE

Divine Direction
NVL -
SS/DUBC
Killed!
Swift
catch
Watchers
Became
Worshippers
** the soonest*
People get
to Jesus
the better
off they
will be!

"The Kingdom of God is at hand" = "The Kingdom of God is here!"
Breaching = "The Kingdom of God is here!"

MANY-SIDED.

MT 7:22

- (1) SOME WHO SAY THEY KNOW HIM DO NOT.
- (2) SOME MAY KNOW HIM BUT ARE AFRAID TO SPEAK THE MESSAGE OUT OF FEAR.
- (3) OTHERS MAY BE TOO PROUD ^{AFRAID} TO REVEAL SHALLOW KNOWLEDGE OF CHRISTIAN FAITH.
- (4) SOME MAY LACK CONCERN OR APPRECIATION FOR THE URGENCY OF THE HOUR.

IF OUR THEOLOGY IS WRONG, OUR URGENCY WILL BE OFF. IF A PERSON IS OK SPIRITUALLY, THEN CONCERN WILL BE LOW. AT CHRISTMAS-TIME WE SING A SONG ENTITLED "GO TELL IT ON THE MOUNTAIN." WE MIGHT BE BETTER OFF TO SING "GO TELL YOUR NEIGHBORS AND FRIENDS," THE PEOPLE AT WORK AND EVERYWHERE AROUND THE WORLD, THE GOOD NEWS OF THE GOSPEL. BY THE WAY, NOTHING IS MENTIONED IN THE BIBLE ABOUT THE INNKEEPER SHARING THE GOOD NEWS OF WHAT HAPPENED IN HIS STABLE - NOT A WORD! AS A MATTER OF FACT, HE SEEMED TO NOT KNOW WHAT WAS HAPPENING IN HIS OWN STABLE. A KING WAS BORN THAT NIGHT AND HE WAS IGNORANT OF OR OBLIVIOUS TO WHAT WAS TAKING PLACE. PROVERBS 11:30 IF YOU AND I INVEST OUR TIME, TALENT AND TREASURE IN BUILDING HOSPITALS AND EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS THAT IS A WORTHY GOAL IN LIFE. AS A MATTER OF FACT IT MAY HAVE AS ITS REWARD A MEMORIAL OR A MONUMENT. HOWEVER, YOU AND I WILL MOVE OFF AND LEAVE THAT MEMORIAL AND IN TIME IT WILL DECAY AND DISAPPEAR. IF THE SPIRITUAL GOAL OF YOUR LIFE AND MINE IS THAT NOW WE HAVE BEEN WON TO CHRIST, WE WANT TO WIN OTHERS - THEN WE ARE ACCOMPLISHING THE WISDOM OF THE PROVERBS PASSAGE. THE WORK OF WISE MEN IS TO WIN SOULS. SOMEBODY SAID

(Fri) during (4)
Two Groups:
① Innkeepers
② Shepherds

SV
28

THAT THE CHURCH IS A GOOD GROUP OF NOBODY'S
TELLING EVERYBODY ABOUT SOMEBODY. IF MEN
ARE REALLY LOST, AND THEY ARE, YOU AND I,
LIKE THE SHEPHERDS, HAVE A DIVINE OBLIGATION
TO TELL MEN TODAY THAT THERE MAY BE NO
TOMORROW FOR THEM.

John 8:18

Shepherd — from THE Shepherd!

4:35

- 1. Ordinary - v.8
- 2. Overwhelmed - v.9-10
- 3. Obedient - v.15-16
- 4. Outspoken v.17
- 5. Overjoyed - v.20

When are people lost? Now!

Conclusion:

Everybody needs a shepherd. (Rev. 23:1)

Someone to turn our wayward feet to God. Who is your Shepherd?

Chas. Mem. Hospital
auto accident —
life moving —

"The Lord is my Shepherd"

"A"
"Mg"

"WHERE CHRIST CAME"

MICAH 5:2

IN OUR TIMES TOGETHER THIS MONTH, WE HAVE CONSIDERED THE WHY AND WHEN CHRIST CAME - TODAY THE WHERE. THIS IS ONE OF THE BEST KNOWN OLD TESTAMENT VERSES DEALING WITH THE FIRST COMING OF CHRIST. IT MAY BE THE SOLITARY REFERENCE TO THE EXACT LOCATION OF HIS BIRTH. THE CHIEF PRIESTS AND SCRIBES KNEW ITS LOCATION WHEN THEY WERE INTERROGATED BY HEROD: "AND WHEN HE HAD GATHERED ALL THE CHIEF PRIESTS AND SCRIBES OF THE PEOPLE TOGETHER, HE DEMANDED WHEN CHRIST SHOULD BE BORN. AND THEY SAID UNTO HIM, IN BETHLEHEM OF JUDAEA: FOR THUS IT IS WRITTEN BY THE PROPHET, THAT THOU BETHLEHEM IN THE LAND OF JUDAH ART NOT THE LEAST AMONG THE PRINCES OF JUDAH: FOR OUT OF THESE SHALL COME A GOVERNOR THAT SHALL RULE MY PEOPLE ISRAEL." (MATTHEW 2:4-6)

I. THE WHERE OF GEOGRAPHY - "BETHLEHEM EPHRATHAH"

"O LITTLE TOWN OF BETHLEHEM, HOW STILL WE SEE THEE LIE...." TODAY, BETHLEHEM IS A TOURIST ATTRACTION OR IN SOME CASES DISTRACTION BECAUSE ONE OF THE MAJOR DISAPPOINTMENTS OF ANY TOUR TO ISRAEL IS A VISIT TO BETHLEHEM. THE CHURCH OF THE NATIVITY BUILT OVER THE "CAVE" WHERE JESUS WAS SUPPOSED TO HAVE BEEN BORN, IS A GAUDY SITE! AS A MATTER OF FACT, CALVARY OVERLOOKS A BUS STATION! BETHLEHEM MEANS "HOUSE OF BREAD". EPHRATHAH MEANS "FRUITFUL" AND IS NO DOUBT A REFERENCE TO THE FERTILITY OF THE REGION. IT ALSO DIFFERENTIATES IT FROM BETHLEHEM IN ZEBULUN. DESPITE ONES DISAPPOINTMENT AT THE SITE OF BETHLEHEM, IT IS A REMINDER THAT WE DO NOT WORSHIP SHRINES BUT THE SAVIOR!

ONE MIGHT BE SURPRISED THAT JESUS WAS BORN IN BETHLEHEM. JERUSALEM WAS THE CAPITOL CITY, THE PLACE ASSOCIATED WITH ROYALTY AND RICHES. ALSO, ONE MIGHT EXPECT THE KING OF KINGS TO BE BORN IN A PALACE HOSPITAL BUT CERTAINLY NOT IN A STABLE. HOWEVER, BETHLEHEM HAS A RICH HEBREW HISTORY WHICH INCLUDES THE BURIAL PLACE OF RACHEL. DAVID LIVED IN AND ROAMED THE HILLS OF BETHLEHEM - IT IS CALLED "THE CITY OF DAVID". ISAIAH REMINDS HIS READERS CONCERNING THE MESSIAH THAT: "HE SHALL GROW UP BEFORE HIM AS A TENDER PLANT, AND AS A ROOT OUT OF DRY GROUND...." THIS IS NOT ONLY A REFERENCE TO THE GRADUAL PROCESS OF HIS COMING BUT ALSO THE UNLIKELY AREA OF THE WORLD FROM WHICH HE AROSE.

II. THE WHERE OF HISTORY - "LITTLE AMONG THE THOUSANDS OF JUDAH"

BETHLEHEM IS A SMALL VILLAGE AMONG THE CLANS AND FAMILIES OF JUDAH. DAVID'S FAMILY HAD LONG SINCE DISAPPEARED FROM THE AREA AND HUMANLY SPEAKING THERE IS ABSOLUTELY NOTHING SIGNIFICANT ABOUT THIS SMALL DOT ON THE MAP. IT IS NOT A PLACE WHERE A PROMINENT PERSON WOULD BE EXPECTED TO LIVE. THE HISTORY OF JUDAH LEAVES THE STUDENT OF SCRIPTURE BACK TO GENESIS 49:8-12. AT THAT TIME, JACOB WAS OLD, SICK AND CALLED HIS TWELVE SONS TO HIMSELF TO PREDICT THEIR PLACE IN THE FAMILY AND IN HISTORY. HE BEGAN WITH REUBEN AND CONCLUDED WITH BENJAMIN. HIS NUMBER FOUR SON BORN OF LEAH WAS NAMED JUDAH. TWO PRIMARY IDEAS PREVAIL CONCERNING JUDAH - HE WOULD BE A LEADER AMONG THE TWELVE AND KINGSHIP IN ISRAEL WAS ASSIGNED TO HIM. THE LION WAS A SYMBOL OF STRENGTH AND SOVEREIGNTY. THE LORD JESUS HIMSELF IS CALLED THE LION OF THE TRIBE OF JUDAH - REV. 5:5. THE WORD SHILOH MEANS PEACE GIVER AND IN ALL PROBABILITY IS A REFERENCE TO THE MESSIAH.

THE WORD JUDAH REFERRED TO THE FOURTH OF JACOB'S SONS, THE TRIBE WHICH AROSE AROUND HIM AND EVENTUALLY AN ENTIRE TERRITORY IN ISRAEL. THE WORD "LITTLE" SPEAKS OF THE INSIGNIFICANCE OF BETHLEHEM. SOMEONE HAS SAID "LITTLE IS MUCH IF GOD IS IN IT." BETHLEHEM ILLUSTRATES THIS PRINCIPLE. APPARENTLY, SIZE IS NOT SIGNIFICANT IN THE ECONOMY OF GOD. ONE DOES NOT NEED THE SPOTLIGHT OF SIGNIFICANT SIZE IN ORDER TO STAND OUT IN THE WORK OF GOD. THIS IS A SMALL TOWN WHERE A SMALL BABY WAS BORN WHO WOULD CHANGE THE COURSE OF HUMAN HISTORY. GOD DELIGHTS IN "SMALL THINGS". A DAVID IN OPPOSITION TO A GOLITH, MOSES' ROD AGAINST THE FORCES OF PHAROA, A LITTLE MAID TO NAMAN, AND A LITTLE LAD'S LUNCH IN THE HANDS OF CHRIST ALL SMALL, INSIGNIFICANT THINGS WHICH DRAMATICALLY AFFECTED THE COURSE OF HUMAN HISTORY.

III. THE WHERE OF PROHPHECY - "RULER IN ISRAEL"

AS MARY NEARED THE TIME THE BIRTH OF HER SON, SHE WAS LIVING IN NAZARETH IN THE NORTH OF ISRAEL. IF SHE HAD GIVEN BIRTH TO HER SON THERE ALL OF BIBLE PROPHECY WOULD HAVE COLLAPSED! HOWEVER, THERE WAS NO "CRISIS CONFERENCE" WITH THE TRINITY OR THE ANGELS CONCERNING WHAT TO DO ON EARTH. A SIMPLE TAX EDICT OR PROGRAM BY A ROMAN RULER LIVING IN ROME SET INTO OPERATION EVENTS THAT MOVED MARY SOUTHWARD RIGHT ON SCHEDULE. (LUKE 2:1-7) THE KINGDOM IN HISTORY HAD PROBLEMS WITH IMPERFECT AND WEAK RULERS AND SUBJECTS. SAUL THE FIRST KING IN ISRAEL HAD AN ENORMOUS EGO PROBLEM. HIS PRIDE AND STUBBORNNESS DISQUALIFIED FROM BEING KING BY VIRTUE OF HIS DISOBEDIENCE TO GOD. DAVID BY CONTRAST WAS AN EXCELLENT KING IN MANY RESPECTS BUT WEAK IN

THE AREA OF SENSUALITY. THE RULER IN THIS PASSAGE IS INDEED A REMARKABLE ONE. (MICAH 4:1 FF, ISAIAH 9:6-7, REV. 12:5 - THIS VERSE SPEAKS OF HIS FIRST ADVENT, RESURRECTION AND THE TRIBULATION PERIOD. MICAH SAW THIS MESSANIC RULER PRESIDING OVER A WORLDWIDE KINGDOM. DANIEL SPOKE OF THAT KINGDOM AS EVERLASTING AND UNIVERSAL IN NATURE BRINGING PEACE TO THE EARTH AS THE ANGEL HAD PREDICTED THAT FIRST CHRISTMAS MORNING, (DANIEL 2:44) THEOCRATICALLY SPEAKING, GOD'S KINGDOM IS NOT ON EARTH TODAY BECAUSE THE KING IS IN EXILE. THE KING WAS CRUCIFIED. WE HAVE LEARNED IN THE BIBLE THAT GOD HAS TWO GREAT PEOPLES - THE CHURCH AND ISRAEL - HIS HEAVENLY AND HIS EARTHLY PEOPLE. GOD'S PLAN FOR EARTH BOTH IN HISTORY AND IN PROPHECY IS LINKED TO JESUS CHRIST. (COMPARE EPHESIANS 3:11) THE KINGDOM TO WHICH MICAH REFERS WILL BE BOTH A POLITICAL AND SPIRITUAL KINGDOM. QUESTION: IF ALL OF THE PROPHECIES CONCERNING JESUS CHRIST'S FIRST COMING CAME TRUE, AND SINCE THERE ARE THREE TIMES MORE REFERENCES IN SCRIPTURE TO HIS SECOND COMING, WOULDN'T IT STAND TO REASON THAT HIS SECOND COMING WILL BE RIGHT ON SCHEDULE ACCORDING TO BIBLE PROPHECY?

IV. THE WHERE OF ETERNITY - "FROM OLD, FROM EVERLASTING."

THE IDEA OF ETERNAL OR EVERLASTING CARRIES ONE IDEA IN HEBREW OF THAT WHICH HAS ENDURED FOREVER. SOMETHING THAT HAS A BEGINNING BUT WILL NEVER HAVE AN ENDING. SOMETHING THAT IS LONG, EVEN ENDLESS IN DURATION. FIGURATIVELY SPEAKING THE WORD EVERLASTING IS ATTACHED TO THE MOUNTAINS OF EARTH BECAUSE OF THEIR LONG DURATION. LUKE 1:32-33 LINKS JESUS CHRIST TO

AN ENDLESS KINGDOM. THREE CORE IDEAS PREVAIL REGARDING THAT KINGDOM AND THE WORD ETERNITY.

(1) AN ETERNAL SOVEREIGN - Rev. 1:18

(2) ETERNAL SUBJECTS - Rev. 4:9, 5:13-14

(3) AN ETERNAL SPHERE - Rev. 22:5

QUESTION: IF THE WORD ETERNAL AND EVERLASTING ARE ATTACHED TO MESSIAH'S KINGDOM, THEN IF HUMAN BEINGS ARE GOING TO LIVE WITH HIM IN THAT KINGDOM, SOMETHING HAS TO BE DONE ABOUT THE TEMPORARY NATURE OF THE LIFE WE NOW POSSESS. HARDLY A WEEK GOES BY THAT WE DO NOT HEAR OF SOMEONE WHO HAS DIED OR WHOSE LIFE HAS BEEN THREATENED BY DISEASE. IF WE ARE GOING TO LIVE FOREVER THEN WE MUST BE LINKED SOMEHOW TO GOD AND ETERNAL LIFE. (COMPARE JOHN 10:28, I JOHN 5:12-13)

CHRISTMAS ANGELS

LUKE 1:26-35

THERE ARE OTHER INTELLIGENT BEINGS ON THIS PLANET AND IN THE UNIVERSE. THEIR NAMES ARE NOT E.T. BUT ANGELS. THEY OCCUPY AN EXALTED POSITION IN THE UNIVERSE AND ARE MENTIONED OVER 270 TIMES IN THE BIBLE. ANGELS DO NOT DIE, DO NOT MARRY. THEY WERE PRESENT AT THE CREATION OF THE WORLD AND AT THE INCARNATION OF CHRIST. THAT IS TO SAY, ANGELS CAME TO EARTH TO HERALD CHRIST'S FIRST COMING (LUKE 2:13) AND WILL DO THE SAME AT HIS SECOND COMING (1 THESS. 4:13). AT CHRISTMAS-TIME, WE SING ABOUT ANGELS. FOR EXAMPLE, "HARK THE HERALD ANGELS SING, ANGELS WE HAVE HEARD ON HIGH, ANGELS FROM THE REALMS OF GLORY." ANGELS APPEARED TO THE SHEPHERDS WHEN JESUS WAS BORN AND THEY ALSO APPEARED AT THE SEPULCHER WHEN JESUS DIED. WE ARE SURPRISED TO LEARN THAT THE BIBLE DOES NOT SPEAK OF ANGELS HAVING WINGS OR HALOS AND AS FAR AS WE KNOW, THERE ARE NO FEMALE ANGELS! I HAVE NEVER SEEN AN ANGEL YET WE SPEAK OF GUARDIAN ANGELS FOR OUR CHILDREN EVEN DESCRIBING OUR CHILDREN AS ANGELS! THE WORD ANGEL MEANS MESSENGER. IF ANGELS COULD BRING A MESSAGE TO US THIS CHRISTMAS, WHAT WOULD IT BE? IT IS UNLIKELY THAT THEY WOULD BE CAUGHT UP IN THE COMMERCE OF CHRISTMAS. C. S. LEWIS REFERS TO THIS HOLIDAY AS THE SHOPKEEPER'S HOLIDAY WHERE PEOPLE ENGAGE IN "SANCTIFIED BLACKMAIL", THAT IS, WHEN PEOPLE ARE FORCED OUT OF EMBARRASSMENT OR GUILT TO BUY AND GIVE GIFTS THAT ARE OFTEN UNWANTED AND UNAPPRECIATED. SOMEONE HAS SAID THAT AT THIS SEASON OF THE YEAR MANY BUY GIFTS WITH MONEY

THEY DO NOT HAVE, FOR PEOPLE THEY DO NOT KNOW OR LIKE FOR REASONS THEY DO NOT UNDERSTAND. THE ANGELS HAD A MESSAGE FOR EARTH AT THIS SEASON OF THE YEAR AND WE WILL EXAMINE FOUR PASSAGES IN THIS REGARD.

I. AN ANGEL BROUGHT A MESSAGE TO CLEAR UP
A MYSTERY - MATTHEW 1:18-21

JOSEPH WAS A REMARKABLE MAN. FACED WITH SLANDEROUS GOSSIP AND SOCIAL DISGRACE, HE DECIDED TO TAKE PRIVATE STEPS TO SPARE MARY FROM PUBLIC DISGRACE BEFORE THE COURTS. AS HE PONDERED MARY'S CONDITION, HE WAS PERPLEXED BECAUSE HE KNEW HER CHARACTER. WHILE JOSEPH THOUGHT ABOUT THIS PROBLEM, HE COULD FIND NO ACCEPTABLE ANSWER. HE LOVED MARY BUT COULD NOT EXPLAIN HER PHYSICAL CONDITION. ONLY DIVINE REVELATION OF THE SUPERNATURAL NATURE OF THE SITUATION COULD CLEAR UP HIS DILEMMA. TO BE SURE, THERE ARE TIMES IN LIFE WHEN WE CANNOT FIGURE OUT COMPLEX PROBLEMS. THERE ARE MYSTERIES IN LIFE WHICH SIMPLY DO NOT OPEN TO OUR INQUIRIES. WE APPLY ALL THE TOOLS AT OUR FINGERTIPS BUT NOTHING OPENS THE DOOR. FACED WITH THE MOST DIFFICULT DECISION IN HIS LIFE, JOSEPH MADE NO ACCUSATIONS, HE SIMPLY DID WHAT WAS RIGHT. WHAT APPEARED TO BE SOCIAL DISGRACE AND RUINATION FOR JOSEPH AND MARY TURNED OUT TO BE THE SINGLE MOST IMPORTANT EVENT IN HUMAN HISTORY! JOSEPH AND MARY WERE PART OF THAT GREAT EVENT. GOD WAS DOING SOMETHING ON EARTH NEVER BEFORE DONE IN ALL OF HISTORY AND JOSEPH AND MARY WERE PERMITTED TO SHARE IN THAT EXPERIENCE. WHEN GOD MOVES AND WORKS ON EARTH, IT IS OFTEN BEYOND THE LIMITATIONS OF OUR

App.

COMPREHENSION. THERE ARE TIMES WHEN THERE IS NO NATURALLY ACCEPTABLE ANSWER AND ONLY GOD CAN PROVIDE THE MISSING PIECES OF THE MYSTERY. THIS HE DID IN JOSEPH'S CASE. JOSEPH'S DREAMS TURNED TO NIGHTMARES BUT THEN TO NEW HOPE!

II. AN ANGEL BROUGHT A MESSAGE THAT LED JOSEPH'S FAMILY TO SAFETY - MATTHEW 2:13-15

ANGELS ARE OFTEN MESSENGERS OF WARNING. (COMPARE GENESIS 19) EGYPT HAD HISTORICALLY BE A PLACE OF REFUGE FOR JEWS IN TIMES OF DISTRESS. HOWEVER, IN MANY CASES FLIGHT TO EGYPT WAS OFTEN AT A HIGH PRICE FOR THERE WERE LURKING DANGERS IN THE LAND, NOT THE LEAST OF WHICH WERE STRANGE GODS. HEROD HAD BEEN CALLED A MASTER IN THE CRAFT OF ASSASSINATION. HISTORY RECORDS THAT HEROD KILLED MOST OF THE MEMBERS OF THE SANHEDRIN, OVER 300 COURT OFFICERS, HIS WIFE, MOTHER-IN-LAW AND 2 OF HIS 3 SONS. HEROD SIMPLY WOULD NOT ACCEPT NEWS THAT A NEWBORN BABY MIGHT BECOME SOME KIND OF KING IN HIS JURISDICTION. HE TOOK STEPS TO SLAUGHTER EVERY MALE CHILD IN THE LAND UNDER TWO YEARS OF AGE. SIMPLY STATED, HEROD REPRESENTED A CLASS OF MEN WHO WILL GO TO ANY EXTENT TO GET RID OF JESUS. THEY LOOK UPON JESUS AS A THREAT, AN OBSTACLE AND WILL SPARE NO TACTIC IN THEIR TYRANNICAL RAGE TO RID HIM FROM THEIR VIEW. HEROD WAS SIMPLY ONE LINK IN A CHAIN OF GODLESS MEN WHO TRIED TO RID THE WORLD OF GOD'S INFLUENCE AND REDEMPTIVE POWER. (COMPARE PHAROAH AND HAMAN)

III. AN ANGEL BROUGHT A MESSAGE CONCERNING THE ARRIVAL OF A NEW BABY - Luke 1:11-13

THERE WAS NOTHING ESPECIALLY NEWSWORTHY ABOUT THE ARRIVAL OF A NEW BABY. SUCH NEWS APPEARS EVERYWHERE EVERY DAY. HOWEVER, THERE WAS SOMETHING SPECIAL ABOUT THIS NEW ARRIVAL, SO SPECIAL, THAT GOD DISPATCHED GABRIEL, ONE OF THE THREE HIGH-RANKING ANGELS WHICH WE CALL ARCHANGELS. IN THE BIBLE, GABRIEL SEEMS TO HAVE A UNIQUE RESPONSIBILITY TO THE THRONE OF GOD. ON THIS OCCASION HIS MISSION WAS TO TELL BOTH ZACHARIAS AND MARY ABOUT THEIR COMING SON. HE APPEARED TO ZACHARIAS WHILE HE WAS GOING ABOUT HIS PRIESTLY DUTIES AND THE MESSAGE WAS IMPLY THAT THEIR PRAYERS HAD BEEN ANSWERED AND IT WAS TIME TO FIX UP THE NURSERY! POINT: ONE MUST BE IMPRESSED WITH HOW GOD APPEARS TO MEN. MOST MEN WILL SEE NO BURNING BUSY OR HEAR NO LOUD VOICE FROM HEAVEN BUT GOD APPEARS TO THEM AS THEY GO ABOUT THE ORDINARY, ROUTINE DUTIES OF LIFE. IT IS THEN AND THERE THAT GOD SPEAKS TO THEM. FOR EXAMPLE, IT WAS WHILE THE SHEPHERDS WERE ABIDING IN THE FIELDS WATCHING OVER THEIR FLOCKS, GOING ABOUT THEIR ORDINARY WORK THAT GOD APPEARED TO THEM. ONE WRITER HAS SUGGESTED THAT IF THEY HAD TAKEN THE NIGHT OFF TO STAY HOME TO DO SOMETHING ELSE, THEY MIGHT HAVE MISSED THE GREATEST NIGHT OF THEIR LIVES! IT WAS AS THEY WERE GOING ABOUT WHAT THEY WERE SUPPOSED TO DO THAT GOD APPEARED TO THEM WITH THE GREATEST MESSAGE MAN HAS EVER HEARD.

*God sends the ships to
our dock - we gone!*

*1:8
while he
executed
the priests
office...*

IV. AN ANGEL BROUGHT THE MESSAGE OF THE IMPORTANCE OF GOD'S GLORY - Luke 2:8-15

THIS WAS THE SAME GENERAL AREA WHERE DAVID HAD WATCHED HIS FATHER'S SHEEP. WHEN GOD DECIDED TO APPEAR IN HISTORY WITH THIS WONDERFUL NEWS IT WAS NOT TO SCRIBES OR SAGES OR SOVEREIGNS OR SOCIALITES, BUT TO SIMPLE SHEPHERDS. THE HEAVENLY HOSTS SPOKE OF GLORY TO GOD ON EARTH AND PEACE ASSOCIATED WITH THAT GLORY. IT IS AN INTERESTING PARADOX IN LIFE THAT PEOPLE WHO WORK FOR THEIR OWN HONOR AND GLORY SELDOM FIND ANY REAL JOY IN THEIR WORK OR IN LIFE IN GENERAL. THE WAY TO FIND REAL PEACE IN LIFE IS TO BE AWARE OF AND ASSOCIATED WITH THE GLORY OF GOD. THE GREAT QUEST ON EARTH IS FOR BOTH PERSONAL AND POLITICAL PEACE. THE WORD PEACE IN THE NEW TESTAMENT CARRIES WITH IT THE IDEA OF WANTING THE HIGHEST GOOD FOR ANOTHER HUMAN BEING. IT IS NOT SOMETHING MAN ACHIEVES BUT RATHER ACCEPTS BY FAITH. (JOHN 14:27, "PEACE I LEAVE YOU, MY PEACE I GIVE UNTO YOU: NOT AS THE WORLD GIVETH, GIVE I UNTO YOU. LET NOT YOUR HEART BE TROUBLED, NEITHER LET IT BE AFRAID.") QUESTION: IF AN ANGEL COULD APPEAR IN OUR PRESENCE THIS CHRISTMAS DAY, WHAT WOULD HE SAY? I THINK THE BIBLE GIVES SOME INDICATION. (GALATIANS 1:8)

(Dick Lewis story?)