

CHRISTMAS SERIES
“THE UNFOLDING TESTAMENT OF THE BIRTH OF JESUS CHRIST”
PART THREE
“THE TESTAMENT OF THE SHEPHERDS”
LUKE 2:8-20

INTRO: In reading the Word of God it is significant for us to acknowledge that every account, every illustration, every sentence, and every word is in the scripture for a purpose. Everything we read in the Bible is there to either show the expectation and the work of God or to teach us how to live to honor God. **The same is with the account of the incarnation of Jesus Christ. Even though we are familiar with the presence of the angels, the shepherds and the other characters surrounding the birth of Christ, we often fail to see or understand the spiritual relevance of them in the purpose of God.** We read and sing about the various characters, **but we often overlook why they are included in the tapestry of the unfolding of Christ’s birth.** Last week in our Christmas series we studied the significance of the Angels in announcing Christ’s birth. Today we shall look at the role of the shepherds played in our Lord’s incarnation. The spiritual lessons that are connected with the shepherds are to be learned and applied to the overall ministry of Christ which we will attempt to reveal today.

I. THE SHEPHERDS IDENTIFICATION

- A. By Name: We know none of their names, but God does and each one of them were present for a purpose.
- B. By Number: We do not know how many were there, but they were present to proclaim the message of Christ’s birth, which we shall study today.
- C. By Occupation: Shepherds were generally looked down upon as humble poor people.
- D. By Responsibility: The particular shepherds in this account were not normal shepherds but were undoubtedly those who raised sheep for the sacrifices that were offered in the temple at Jerusalem.
- E. By Illustration: The shepherds illustrated biblical concepts.
 - 1. The first blood sacrifice recorded in scripture was offered by a shepherd – Abel in Genesis 4:1-4.
 - 2. The work of the shepherd for his sheep pictures the love of Christ for His people – Psalm 23; John 10:11
 - 3. The relationship of the shepherd with his sheep portrays the relationship Christ has with His flock – John 10:27-30

II. THE SHEPHERDS SIGNIFICANCE

WHY WAS IT IN GOD’S PLAN TO ANNOUNCE THE BIRTH OF CHRIST TO SHEPHERDS BEFORE ANYONE ELSE ON EARTH?

- A. Because of their Social Connection
 - 1. Shepherds were the lowest of the lows in Christ’s day
 - a. The Talmud (The primary source of Jewish Law of the day) prohibited the shepherds from entering into the court of the Temple.
 - b. By Custom, the people of Israel were encouraged **NOT** to provide any help for shepherds. They were neglected by purpose.
 - 2. As Christ’s birth was announced to the shepherds, Christ came to provide salvation to the lowliness of all mankind – 1 Cor. 1:26-29.
- B. Because of their Spiritual Implication
 - 1. In Reference to the Humility of the Shepherds – As shepherds were **humble in character**, throughout the scripture is the **humble that are used by God**. Psalm 138:6; Isaiah 66:2; James 4:6
 - 2. In Reference to the Humility of Christ – The announcement of Christ’s birth to **humble shepherds**, presupposed the **humility of Christ**
– Philippians 2:5-9

3. In Reference to the Mission of Christ – As according to the Talmud the sacrificial sheep were tended on hills outside of Bethlehem, the mission of Jesus Christ as **THE LAMB OF GOD** was to sacrifice His life for the people of the world – John 1:29

III. THE SHEPHERDS RESPONSE

“LET US NOW GO EVEN UNTO BETHLEHEM AND SEE THIS THING WHICH IS COME TO PASS WHICH THE LORD HATH MADE KNOWN TO US.” Vs. 15

- A. The Shepherds Clearly understood the message of the Angels.
- B. The Shepherds Quickly responded to the message of the Angels.

IV. THE SHEPHERDS WITNESS

- A. The Shepherds Saw Jesus - According to the record, the shepherds were the first ones on earth who were told about and who saw Jesus after His birth besides Mary and Joseph.
- B. The Shepherds Spoke of Jesus – Vs. 17
- C. The Shepherds Glorified God – Vs. 20

LESSON AND APPLICATION

- 1) God reveals Himself to those who are humble before Him.
- 2) Those who see Christ should promote Christ as did the shepherds.
- 3) When we have the opportunity to learn about Christ, we should respond by running to Him.