

Lk. 2:8-20 "A Message to Shepherds"

For the Children: Have you ever witnessed somebody doing something wrong? Sometimes you don't want to tell on them, especially if the other person is a friend. But you might have to tell what you saw anyway. If it is something good that you witnessed, then you probably want to tell others about it. Of all the good things we have learned about, there is nothing greater or better than the fact that the Lord Jesus came into the world to save sinners. We should be very keen to give witness to that! **Questions:** How does the text put emphasis on God's glory? How does the coming of the Christ show the glory of God? How did the coming of the Christ bring peace?

Introduction:

First Point: The Incarnation Is about God's Glory

- 1) An Emphasis on Glory: The glory of the Lord shone around the shepherds. The angel of the Lord stood before them – soon with a great host of angels. They shout, "Glory to God in the highest!" At the end of the account, we find the shepherds also glorifying and praising God (v. 20).
- 2) Lowly Witnesses: The greatness of God is also emphasized by the contrast with the recipients of His message – lowly shepherds (in addition to Mary and Joseph and Gentile wise-men). Shepherds were at the bottom of the social ladder then. God shows His power in using such witnesses for His own glory.
- 3) The Glory of the Message: The angels give a message of good news, peace and great joy: The birth of the Messiah, who is Lord and Saviour. But behind that lies the greatness and glory of God, as seen in His plan for the world, His promises, His wisdom, power and mercy. His majesty is seen in the very fact that all this could come through a helpless baby in a manger.

Second Point: The Incarnation Is about God's Peace

- 1) Peace Versus Fear: Sinners being confronted with the glory of the holy God had every reason to be afraid. The angels told them not to fear, because God had done something to deal with the problem of sin. He is the cause of joy, the "good news" of the Gospel. He is Saviour and Messiah, born "for you." He brings peace and God's pleasure upon those He saves (v. 14). It is evident from what the shepherds are told that their Saviour is both man (a baby at that time) and God ("Lord" and "Saviour;" See Ps. 79:9, Is. 45:15). See also Mic. 5:2.
- 2) Peace Through Humiliation: The way the shepherds will find the Christ is a "sign" (v. 12). It was a sign of the way God was bringing peace to the world: through the humiliation of the Lord Jesus. He was clothed in human flesh, born into a humble family in humble circumstances, praised only by humble shepherds etc. Later, He would suffer the utmost in humiliation on the cross. That is how God has brought peace.
- 3) Peace to Elect Sinners: God was not bringing peace to all sinners. Literally, "peace among men with whom He is well-pleased" means peace to those upon whom God has set His good-pleasure i.e., the elect. This good news is for "all the people" (v. 10). This is a common term for Israel. However, the New Israel would contain elect Jews and Gentiles.
- 4) Peace Witnessed: The news of God's peace through Christ was so great, that the shepherds testified to it by telling Joseph and Mary what the angels had said (v. 17) and by continuing to praise God after they left (v. 20). Mary also pondered and treasured these things inwardly (v. 19). We also carry this message of peace, based on the Biblical witness.

Conclusion: