

Christmas

AT HARVEST

CHRISTMAS DEVOTIONAL

READ: Take the time to read the account of Jesus' birth in Luke 2:1-20.

"In those days a decree went out from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be registered. This was the first registration when Quirinius was governor of Syria. And all went to be registered, each to his own town. And Joseph also went up from Galilee, from the town of Nazareth, to Judea, to the city of David, which is called Bethlehem, because he was of the house and lineage of David, to be registered with Mary, his betrothed, who was with child. And while they were there, the time came for her to give birth. And she gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in swaddling cloths and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn.

And in the same region there were shepherds out in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night. And an angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were filled with great fear. And the angel said to them, "Fear not, for behold, I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord. And this will be a sign for you: you will find a baby wrapped in swaddling cloths and lying in a manger." And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying,

*"Glory to God in the highest,
and on earth peace among those with whom he is pleased!"*

When the angels went away from them into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, "Let us go over to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has made known to us." And they went with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby lying in a manger. And when they saw it, they made known the saying that had been told them concerning this child. And all who heard it wondered at what the shepherds told them. But Mary treasured up all these things, pondering them in her heart. And the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen, as it had been told them."

— Luke 2:1-20

In Bible times, shepherds were not looked upon with esteem. They were actually one of the lowest class of people. Shepherds were not wealthy people either, rather they lived in the fields with the sheep and sometimes smelled like sheep too! But what is interesting in this Christmas story is the angels didn't announce the birth of Jesus to kings, queens, or presidents, but rather to the lowliest of people.

Q: Who do we sometimes think is beyond the good news of Jesus? Take time to pray that they would accept the greatest gift ever given, salvation through Jesus Christ.

Initially the shepherds were afraid when the angels appeared to them, as any of us would be if we were in their place that night. But in spite of the fear, they obeyed what the angels told them to do and took time to find Jesus and worship Him.

Q: On this Christmas day, are we, like the shepherds, taking time to worship Jesus for who He is and all He has done for us? Take time to say to one another one thing you are thankful to Jesus for in this past year.

READ: Take time to read the account of the wise men visiting Jesus in Matthew 2:1-12

Now after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king, behold, wise men from the east came to Jerusalem, 2 saying, "Where is he who has been born king of the Jews? For we saw his star when it rose and have come to worship him." 3 When Herod the king heard this, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him; 4 and assembling all the chief priests and scribes of the people, he inquired of them where the Christ was to be born. 5 They told him, "In Bethlehem of Judea, for so it is written by the prophet:

*6 "And you, O Bethlehem, in the land of Judah,
are by no means least among the rulers of Judah;
for from you shall come a ruler
who will shepherd my people Israel."*

7 Then Herod summoned the wise men secretly and ascertained from them what time the star had appeared. 8 And he sent them to Bethlehem, saying, "Go and search diligently for the child, and when you have found him, bring me word, that I too may come and worship him." 9 After listening to the king, they went on their way. And behold, the star that they had seen when it rose went before them until it came to rest over the place where the child was. 10 When they saw the star, they rejoiced exceedingly with great joy. 11 And going into the house, they saw the child with Mary his mother, and they fell down and worshiped him. Then, opening their treasures, they offered him gifts, gold and frankincense and myrrh. 12 And being warned in a dream not to return to Herod, they departed to their own country by another way.

The wise men would have been individuals who studied the stars. This passage states they were from the Far East, which would be in the direction of Babylon and ancient Persia. The Bible does

not tell us how long the journey took to find Jesus. But we can assume it was a very long journey. In the Luke 2 account the shepherds found Jesus in a manger. In this account, the wise men find Jesus in a house and he is described as a child. Meaning, it was quite a while after the shepherds see Jesus that the wise men worshipped Jesus.

Q: The wise men had a very long journey to find Jesus to worship Him. They could have made many excuses to not make the journey, but their desire to worship Jesus as King compelled them to go. How have you made or not made Jesus the #1 priority in your life?

The wise men brought three gifts to Jesus. Gold and frankincense and myrrh. These valuable items were standard gifts to honor a king or deity in the ancient world: gold as a precious metal, frankincense as perfume or incense, and myrrh as anointing oil. The Book of Isaiah, when describing Jerusalem's glorious restoration, tells of nations and kings who will come and 'bring gold and frankincense and shall proclaim the praise of the Lord.'" (Isaiah 60:6).

The shepherds, though they did not bring material gifts, brought themselves and their worship as their gift to Jesus. Christmas is the day we celebrate the greatest gift ever given, Jesus Christ. Though we do not know the literal date of when Jesus was born as a baby, Christmas is termed as Jesus' birthday. The day Jesus put on human flesh for the purpose of living a perfect life for you, dying on the cross for your sins, and 3 days later raising himself from the dead.

He did this all for you! So that on this day we can celebrate the salvation from our sins that Jesus provides in Himself.

Ephesians 2:8-9 – 8 For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, 9 not a result of works, so that no one may boast.

Q: What on this day can you commit to grow in your relationship with Jesus as a gift of your worship to Him as your Savior King? Take some time to pray and think what the Lord would want you to grow in this next year. Grab a box and get some paper and write down whatever the Lord has pressed on your heart. Then share what you wrote with the person or persons that you are doing this devotional with. As you share place what you wrote in the box as a symbol of your gift to Jesus on this Christmas day.

Close out this time thanking Jesus for the salvation from sin that He provided for you and for the privilege to celebrate Him today.

