

Veiled In Flesh The Godhead See

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[0 : 00] All right, well, as we read God's Word, I'll read it out loud. You read it with your eyes. And remember, this is the inspired, inerrant, clear, sufficient, and infallible Word of God Himself.

Luke chapter 2, verses 1 through 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 in the 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 the angel of the Lord appeared to them. And the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were filled with great fear.

[1 : 22] 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, 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.

Verse 15. 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, the baby, lying in a manger. And when they saw it, they made known the saying that had been told to 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.

[2 : 35] And the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen as it had been told them. This is the very word of God.

Thanks be to God. You may be seated. Let's pray. Let's pray. Guide us, O Lord, by your word and by your Holy Spirit, so that in your light we may see light.

In your truth we may find freedom from sin. And in your will we may discover true peace for our souls by the power of Jesus Christ, our Lord, in us and with us.

Amen. Well, this time of year, everywhere you go, you're going to be hearing songs that tell you how you need to feel. Have a holly, jolly Christmas.

It's the best time of the year. All the decorations, all the consumer marketing, it's trying to make you have this glaze that everything should feel happy.

[3 : 44] But you can talk to probably 10% of children at recess at any given school and you will see that this is empty sentimentalism. They're going home, many of them, to broken families.

The reality that we live in a sinful world is very clear. And so to be told you should feel happy right now, it's even more confusing.

And it's children, they don't need to be fake. They feel it. I don't feel happy. Why is everything around me trying to make me feel jolly and holly? So Christians, we are realists.

We know that this world is broken by man's sin, even though God created it good. And we know that even as Christians, we still have indwelling sin in our flesh, even though our souls are united to

Christ.

And we saw this in our Bible study. If it were not for God's preserving grace, I'll speak for myself. Give me 24 hours without God's preserving grace on me and I will fall into scary sin.

[4 : 48] I mean, we need Christ. Our remaining flesh is so strong. But Christ has overcome the world. And we can have peace with God through Christ. So we sing as realists, as Christians, O come, O come, Emmanuel, and ransom captive Israel that mourns in exile here until the Son of God appear.

And Advent means waiting. It means a forthcoming. You know, Christ, that Israel had been waiting for Christ to come. In the same way we, the church now, we wait for his second coming as exiles, as sojourners in this world.

And I do want us to pause in this time. And my prayer for you has been this, that God would reform you and me as we ponder Christ's birth, but that he would reform us through his word and by his spirit against, over against the power of consumer marketing that's coming at us so powerfully this time of year.

So the title of the sermon is how veiled in flesh we can see the Godhead. Veiled in flesh, the Godhead see as we have sung. And I have two points.

I want to first to show you that it's historical. So God will reform you as we, as you see that what happened took place in history. It's real. So imagine Christ's birth historically.

[6 : 11] That's the first thing I hope you get out of it. That's the first half. The second half, this is what he's unveiled in time and space, in history, written down, recorded so that you would believe. And so that's my second point, is that you would ponder, not just intellectually, ponder in your heart that this is the spiritual reality that you live in.

Those are my two objectives for today. So first, let's get started. How will you imagine Christ's birth historically? And I know the stage is set for us to focus on the manger scene historically, but I want to take you to a different scene that's about 85 years after that.

There sat the once young doctor from Antioch, now a white bearded elder, perhaps at the church in Philippi. See how all the New Testament's connected.

All the churches are working together. This now old doctor is eager to resume a project that he has desired to write for over 40 years. And it's carried him back through these memories he's had of adventures that far surpass the myths that he heard in his Greek school as he was brought up. Who is this doctor? Well, Colossians 4.12 refers to Luke as the physician. See, Luke had been discipled by Paul. He had traveled with this little company of pastor missionaries through the churches in Asia Minor.

[7 : 35] And he writes firsthand witnesses of the work that God had done. Now, he was not a disciple of Christ, but we have the apostolic authority of Paul for sure, because he was a traveling companion with Paul.

And as I've prepared for today, I believe we probably have John, the apostle John's apostolic authority over Luke as well. You'll see why in a moment. And perhaps Peter as well. So here he is, and he's given us this other gospel account of the life of Christ.

Luke is written as part one. The book of Acts is part two. Part one in Luke is how Christ came to reign on earth, the kingdom of heaven on earth. Acts is how now Christ reigns over earth from his throne in heaven.

Most likely the book of Hebrews was also written by Dr. Luke. It's most likely a collection of his sermon notes. He's meticulous at how he records it. And it was probably Paul opening up the Old Testament, preaching to the church, and Luke taking meticulous scholarly notes, because the Greek that's used in the book of Hebrews is found nowhere else except for Luke Acts.

But yet the theology is very Pauline. So that's who is giving us this book. One scholar said that Luke, he uses intentional allusions and references to and quotations of ancient classical and Hellenistic authors, such as Homer, Aesop, Euripides, and Plato.

[8 : 56] That's why Luke is regarded as perhaps the most scholarly and literary of all of our New Testament authors. So from the pen of Luke, working on this project now, probably in the year 85 or so AD, he's got these parchments.

And I picture his office space, his work area, very tidy because that's how he writes. He's super organized, super careful. Every parchment where he took these interviews as he traveled and went back to Jerusalem, it's got a label and it's in a category.

And now he's pulling out his resources and he sits down. And I picture Luke lifting his hands up to heaven where Christ rules over his church and praying, pleased by your spirit, Christ, breathe out the words I'm about to write.

And this particular parchment with notes on it was very precious to him. This is from an interview he got to have with Mary herself, perhaps. Now, where would Mary be?

Remember, our Lord's final words on the cross was to honor his mother, fulfilling the Ten Commandments even as he dies. And who did he ask to take care of his mother? It was the Apostle John.

[10:02] We're preaching through his gospel. See how it's all so closely related? So perhaps when Luke was traveling back through Jerusalem, you know, Paul interacted with the church in Jerusalem, was collecting money for them.

And one of those occasions, Luke, from Philippi ministering elsewhere, gets to worship in Jerusalem at the church. Well, who would have been the elders of this church? What we know is Peter and James.

They remain there. And who was the brother of James? It was John. And Mary's from that region of Bethlehem, really near Jerusalem as well. So perhaps, perhaps we have Luke interviewing Mary in John's home.

Maybe others gathered around. And he's taking notes. Mary recalled, In those days, a decree went out from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be registered. And Luke, the careful historian, documented that.

Yes, this is verifiable. Verse 2, This was the first registration when Quirinius was governor of Syria and all went to be registered, each to his own town. Verified that.

[11:02] And maybe at this point, if this, in fact, was in John's care, he just leans back and smiles and loves hearing this story, especially when Mary herself retells it. Verse 4, Now, Nazareth, as we've seen in the beginning of John, it's further north in Israel, and it's kind of on a cliff overlooking all these major trade routes.

So all the continents of the world coming to to crisscross in the region of Galilee. Galilee was very cosmopolitan, very international. Nazareth could see that, but it was a bit removed, a bit secluded small town.

That's where he was working, but he had to leave there. And our verse says he went up to Bethlehem. Even though he's traveling south, Jerusalem is a city on a hill, so you're traveling upward as you go to Jerusalem.

And so we read, He was of the house and lineage of David. And the town is called Bethlehem. We remember now, this is where we've seen in the book of Ruth.

And we know now we can picture in these fields around Bethlehem, Boaz and Naomi. This is the house of bread. These are the fields that will produce abundant crops. And you'd have from there, in a little bit lower elevation where there's less moisture, you'd have this great wilderness.

[12:21] So a desert right on the edge of Bethlehem. And then as the elevation picks back up, more moisture in the air, you can see the green of Moab that tempted Naomi and her family to travel to Moab.

So that's the scene as Mary is recalling him. Now, I want you to let God's word reform you as you ponder Christ's birth.

See, even as this is being retold and recounted, and Luke is capturing it historically, I'm sure that even their thinking was being reformed. And the Holy Spirit is illumining and showing them all the ways that God has been faithful.

For example, this had been prophesied in Numbers 24, 17, that a star shall come out of Jacob, and a scepter shall rise out of Israel. And now that star, that rising king has come.

In verse 5, we're told that he went there to be registered with Mary, his betrothed, who was with child. And we know that this child was not Joseph's child.

[13:21] So this is significant. And perhaps even as Mary told it that way, she knew, okay, Joseph is still going to include me in his household. I will be registered with him.

He will be taking me and I will be taking his name. Now our household together, both of our lineages will be the household in which Jesus Christ would live and be raised.

And perhaps even in that interview, Mary would, without realizing it, rest her hands back on her tummy, looking back if she's now a great grandma, and just realizing the mystery that had

happened.

In her tummy, God put the seed of woman, that very seed promised to Eve, that would one day be bruised by Satan, but which ultimately would crush the serpent's head.

J.I. Packer said, Mary could know that inside of her was a true son of hers.

[14 : 28] And all of her qualities being a human being were present in the eternally existent, fully divine son of God, who took on flesh within her.

And at the same time, all of the qualities and powers that are in God, they were and are and ever will be really present as well in the person of Jesus Christ.

What a glorious mystery. First, second Corinthians eight, nine calls this. It's the grace of God in our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sake, he became poor so that you by poverty might become rich.

Now look at verse six. 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 that same region, there were shepherds out in their field, keeping watch over their flock by night, keeping watch over their flock by night.

[15 : 37] Could it be even that the church now in Jerusalem under persecution had been reminded, maybe very recently by pastor Peter preaching to them. What we read now in first Peter chapter two, verse 25, you were straying like sheep, but have now returned to the shepherd and overseer of your souls.

Just as the shepherds were keeping watch over their flock at night. So now the Lord Jesus keeps watch over your soul in the darkness of this world. What a glorious mystery.

Now, there are some details we're going to come up to next that I really want you to pay careful attention to, because my objective here is that your thinking about the birth of Christ will be reformed.

And we, I think we would almost be at an advantage if we were in a remote part of the world and we were just hearing the Bible for the first time. And we didn't have all the baggage of Western consumerism layered in on top of a holiday.

Because pay careful attention to verses seven and eight. I want you to think about where this was taking place. And then let's try to deduce from the Bible what time of year this would have been.

[16 : 49] And I'm just going to tell you, I'm not leaving this as a hypothetical. Okay. This is going to be, it's going to be black and white by the time we're done. So where were they? And what time of year was it? Well, the shepherds we read in verse seven were keeping watch over their flock by night where verse eight in the same region, the shepherds were out in the field.

Notice the sheep at this time of year were not out in the wilderness. See the wilderness is where David had to take his sheep at a different time of year. And when Samuel came to his home, they couldn't just say he's just right there in the field where we grow our crops.

They had to go out into that wilderness between Bethlehem and Moab. The elevation drops and it's arid. It's a desert. And that was where these had to find little patches of grass. Why?

Well, it's because that time of year there were crops growing on the fields. You would not put your sheep on your fields if you're growing crops on the fields. Are you with me so far?

So, so that's why, you know, David, you know, out in the wilderness, that's where they would go.

While the crops are growing. But here we read that the sheep were on the fields right around, right around Bethlehem in that region.

[17 : 58] So let's go to Deuteronomy. You don't need to turn there, but if you want, it's Deuteronomy 8, 8. Deuteronomy is Moses giving a command to the nation of Israel, the second generation. They're about to go into the land of Israel.

And the command is that they will be giving to the Lord the first fruits, because this land is from the Lord. The fruit that's going to produce the crops, it's all belongs to the Lord. So you give the Lord the first fruits.

And to say you give him the first fruits of every season, every harvest, Moses lists them. Moses was trained as a scribe in Egypt. He lists them in the right order of the harvest as they happen.

And here's what Deuteronomy 8, 8 lists. First is going to be the wheat harvest. Next, barley, then grapes, then figs, then pomegranates, then olives, and then finally honey.

Those are the harvest cycles on the Jewish calendar. Well, barley and wheat were planted and still are today in Israel in the autumn, in the fall. You would plant them in the fall.

[18 : 56] And then there's the rainy season from November until April. It's the rainy season. That's when you want the seed and the crops to be growing. So that's the winter time in Israel. There's the winter cold rains coming down and the crops are growing.

So you already see where this is going. It would be impossible for the sheep to be on the fields during the winter time. It's impossible that Jesus was born in December. It was just could not have happened.

The crops are growing on the fields and we're told that the shepherds were taking care of the sheep, washing their field, their sheep on the field. So we're going to have to deduce down. What could this have been?

In verse seven, we also told that they laid him in a manger because there was no place for them in the end, but there was room in the manger. This is also significant. So the sheep could be three places.

They could be out in the wilderness while the crops are growing. Most of the time over the winter, the cold winter rains, they'd be out in the wilderness. Now, if it's in the summertime and you just finished the harvest, you got these barren fields.

[19 : 56] It's nice to bring the sheep on because they're going to eat the stubble, clean it up a little bit. Their manure will replenish the soil. It'll be natural fertilizer. That's pretty smart. You got a little rotation going, but in the real cold winter days, the manger is where you'd want to bring your sheep into.

So we're going to create some warmth with the bodies of the sheep and the manger would be where you'd pack them in to keep them cold on those winter nights. So again, the manger, there was room because the sheep were not there. It was not in the cold winter that Jesus was born. So when you hear of Christmas in July, remember, you're trying to have a biblical mindset and picture this biblically, historically, how it actually would have happened. And that's probably more historically correct.

We can narrow it down to June, July or August. And I, this is important because, you know, we're told to reform and be conformed by the renewing of our minds.

How do our minds get renewed? By being washed by the word of God. In second Peter one 16, he said, we did not follow cleverly devised myths when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.

[21 : 02] But we were eyewitnesses of his majesty. And that's exactly what we have from Mary, from Luke, from John, from Peter. And what we'll see next is from the shepherds.

So speaking of the shepherds, they were watching their sheep in the fields at night, we're told. So even at nighttime, when it's supposed to be really cold in the desert, it wasn't that cold.

They were out there at night. They're doing just fine. We don't know because none of the deacons of the church are listed. But if a, if a shepherd, one of the youngest, kind of the lowest on the family totem pole or in society, look, you know, youngest ones are going to be shepherds, send them out to do the dirty work that no one wants to do.

Let's picture maybe an 11 year old was one of these shepherds. Well, our Lord had a ministry on earth when he was for 33 years. So let's say one of these shepherds was 11 when these angels appeared to them.

Fast forward 33 years, they would only be 44 at the time of Christ raising from the dead and the spirit being poured out on the church. Is it possible that even some of those shepherds kept in touch with Mary?

[22 : 07] You know, when she would come back to Bethlehem to that region. And then I just started thinking, would it be possible that they were lifelong shepherds and believers? And maybe some of them brought their sheep to the sheep gate that we read about in John 5.

Maybe some of them actually got to see the lame man walk. And they're being there like, keep an eye. I knew it. See, this is why no one would believe me about the angels. It's true. He's really bringing the kingdom of God.

And they maybe never forgot that. And could it be, and they probably wouldn't have known, but could it be that when the disciples purchased and they prepared the Passover meal, where the Lord instituted the last supper, could it be that that lamb was even raised by one of them?

And could it be that if they recognized Mary and maybe had seen her off and on throughout their life, that as they saw now, Jesus, this man who had fed the multitude, everybody was talking about them. They would never have forgotten seeing the angels in the sky, that they also were part of the crowd that followed to see what would happen when he got arrested.

And maybe these shepherds were, were there and they recognize Mary again. Now she's 33 years older. And they saw her weeping at the foot of the cross where her son now hung.

[23 : 16] Well, if, if in fact, some of those shepherds remained and stayed in touch, and then they were, they were believers, they became part of the church. I'm sure they would be serving in the church. Maybe some of them were officially deacons even, or, you know, who knows?

And so it's possible that Luke even got to talk to some of these very shepherds and just hear their account. Because we have this firsthand, either from Mary, from what the shepherds told her, or he got to talk with them.

Look at verse nine. An angel of the Lord appeared to them. The glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were filled with great fear. Listen to the detail he gives us.

The angel said to them, they remember word for word what it was. Fear not, for behold, I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David, a savior who is Christ, the Lord.

This will be a sign for you that you will find a baby wrapped in swaddling cloths and lying in a manger. This is what heaven opened up to reveal.

[24 : 20] And God could have sent the angel of the Lord with the whole host of heaven's angels anywhere on planet earth to anyone. And he chose to send them first to the shepherds.

Do you think that might be significant? Is it significant that God revealed the gospel of Jesus first to these simple shepherds? See, it was the wealthy who owned the land and farmed the fields.

The shepherds tended the sheep. For some reason, this was not God's law, but it was man's law. Shepherds were considered unclean. They were not even allowed to enter into the temple.

Yet in scripture, every time we hear of shepherds, it's a favorable metaphor. Think about that. The very first shepherd in all of the Bible was the son of Eve and Adam, Abel, Cain and Abel, the two brothers.

He was the seed of the woman whose innocent blood would be spilled. He's a type of Christ. And his brother Cain tended the ground, we know. He was a farmer. And as Bizzle puts it, both Abel and Cain made offers to God, but Cain's offer felt incomplete.

[25 : 37] Even though we have the gospel in kernel form, we can say this, all I know is that Cain offered the work of his hands. Abel tended the sheep, so he must have offered a lamb.

Well, we know too that David was the shepherd, the lowliest in his family, yet he was the one God raised up and anointed as a picture of Christ, the shepherd king.

And then David says, of my Lord, he says, in Psalm 23, the Lord is my shepherd. So being a shepherd in the scripture is a positive, favorable metaphor.

Wolves are a threat to those who are weak. And Israel's unfaithful prophets, unfaithful priests, and unfaithful kings were considered poor shepherds or wolves.

But yet God has always been faithful and he promises blessing through his shepherd. Jeremiah 3, 14, he says, return, Oh, faithless children, declares the Lord, for I am your master.

[26 : 48] I will take you one from a city and two from a family, and I will bring you into my kingdom. And I will give you shepherds after my own heart, who will feed you with knowledge and understanding.

The Lord promised he will fill his land, his kingdom, and he will dwell with his people forevermore. Is it significant that God chose to reveal himself in the gospel to simple shepherds?

Well, who better than shepherds? Who better than shepherds to recognize the Lamb of God, slain for the forgiveness of sins?

Excuse me. Verse 13, we read that suddenly there was with that angel of the Lord, 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.

The Greek word here is translated, preached the gospel. That's what the angels did. That's what they did. They came praising God and preaching the gospel.

[28 : 11] Now, hold on. You're standing up there telling me you really believe angels, multitude of angels, appearing into the physical realm, out of the spiritual realm. If you're a Christian, you are an

unashamed supernaturalist.

That's what we are. Yes, we believe there is a supernatural realm, a spiritual realm. And angels exist in that realm. And God has used angels.

angels. They've, they've had a work to do. And it's been at all the prominent turning points in God's great divine plan of salvation. And here's why you need to believe in angels as God's warriors as well.

Because Jesus said himself in Mark 8, 38, whoever is ashamed of me and my words in this adulterous and sinful generation of him, will the son of man also be ashamed when he comes in the glory of his father with the holy angels.

Angels are important for us to understand because they're coming when Christ returns in his second advent. So what are angels and what does the Bible teach about them?

[29 : 22] How could our thinking be reformed? Up to this point, I've, I've sought to have your, your imagination and what to picture about the birth of Christ to be reformed biblically, based on what is given to us as true history in time and space in this physical world.

Well, next part two, I want you to now ponder this spiritual reality. We've seen it's historically true and you can think about it biblically reforming thinking that way, but now let God reform you as you marvel at the spiritual truth that he gives us.

Let's start with these angels from the supernatural realm. What are they? Well, according to Zechariah 1 10, angels are mighty warriors of light whom the Lord sends to patrol planet earth.

Angel in Greek, it means messenger. And when God created the heavens, the invisible spiritual realm, he made angels. So angels are created beings. They do have a beginning point.

They're not eternal like God is. And when God said he made the heavens and the earth, I understand that first sentence to be describing the spiritual realm and the physical realm.

[30 : 33] So when he made the earth, he made the stars and the, you know, the light between the stars and the earth. And in seven 24 hour days, he created all that is in the physical world. And by doing that, he created time and space.

And he made the spiritual realm at creation as well. So the angels are spoken into existence. The spiritual host of heaven exists. And under Satan's leadership, there are, there are fallen angels. There are demons. Satan is the captain of that mobocracy, and they follow his command to destroy and thwart the plans of God. This is what the Bible teaches. Now, when you picture the angels of heaven, what should you picture?

How many should you picture? The Bible says that God has a vast army of angels in Matthew 26, 53. Again, these are the words of our Lord Jesus himself.

As he's being mocked and people are saying, if you're truly the God, you're truly a King, save yourself, take yourself off of this shameful death. And Jesus's reply, as the blood is flowing down his lips, do you think that I cannot appeal to my father?

[31 : 43] Because if I do, he will at once send me more than 12 legions of angels. At one word, the Lord Jesus can summon the armies of heaven.

How much is a legion? A legion is five to 6,000 Roman soldiers. That's the reference. So everybody would have been familiar. When you see a legion marching through the streets of Rome, back up, make room.

They are coming. Don't get in the way. It's 5,000 of them coming. And Jesus says, 12 legions. Now, 12 is the number of the tribes of Israel. It means fullness. So it could just be used that way.

But even if we were to take it, you know, as an actual, you know, numerical value, I had to, I had to do a little math and figure this out. So 12 legions would be 70,000 angels.

If you've ever been to watch a Nuggets game or, you know, a Disney on ice or something like that, you've been to downtown Denver's ball arena. And if you sit there, I mean, you just see, it feels like a multitude.

[32 : 43] They try to get them chanting something, you know, and picture that. Now that ball arena holds only 20,000. So it's about four of those stacked on top of themselves. So for these shepherds, the heavens open up and they see 12 legions of angels.

I mean, it's incredible to even try to describe that. So the Bible teaches that heaven is the headquarters of angels. They live there to constantly worship God. And from there, they are sent to render services to Christians at God's bidding, whatever God commands them to go do.

God has a vast army of these spiritual beings. They are holy, magnificent. They are fear striking warriors of light. When they appear, people tremble. And the angels of God, we read, they praise God at creation.

Job 38, seven says, the morning stars sang together and all the sons of God shouted for joy at creation. So why is now heaven being open and a multitude of angels worshiping and praising God and allowing humans to even witness what is happening?

It's because this is the beginning of the new creation. God's name is the birth of Jesus Christ. The birth of Jesus Christ. The kingdom of heaven coming to earth. The new creation.

[33 : 59] Those who are united to God. Those who are united to him. He is the second Adam. He comes to give life to those who have been fallen in sin and in darkness. And beholding this new creation.

The shepherds respond and Mary responds. I want to show you both of those responses to draw our application. How did the shepherds respond? Look at verse 15.

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.

The shepherds, you see, they received the gospel by faith from these angels. They have to believe what they just heard. And what do they do? Their response is immediate obedience.

Look at verse 16. They went with haste and found Mary and Joseph and the baby lying in a manger. If God has caused you to see his glory in the coming of Jesus Christ, your response needs to be immediate obedience.

[34 : 59] Learn that from these simple shepherds. In verse 16, the verb found, they found him.

That really means found after a search, after been searching to see, okay, a baby in a manger, most likely carved out into a stone cave where the sheep could have gone and crammed in there to keep warm.

That's where we got to find a baby, a newborn wrapped in swaddling cloths. Look for that. And what did they do when they found him? They worshiped him and marveled at God's grace and goodness. I'm sure they were shocked as well that God had brought such good news to them. First, look at verse 17. When they saw it, they made known the saying that had been told them concerning this child and all who heard it wondered.

They wondered. They marveled. They worshiped at what the shepherds had told them. Could it be that God was sending the promised anointed one, the one who would save his people once for all? One more thing that's significant is that shepherds were not permitted by law to testify in court. They were not allowed in the temple. And if they tried to bear witness and give a testimony for a trial in a legal court, they were not counted.

[36 : 12] They were considered sub citizens. They were not even permitted or considered reliable. And yet God just smiles. Yes, shepherds, shepherds have a purpose in my kingdom.

That's who I will use. Well, verse 16, we read that they went with haste and found Mary and Joseph and the baby lying in a manger. And then from the encounter of Christ, they go out into the city.

They go out to everyone they see and they do what they learned from the angels. They tell the gospel. They tell the good news. They say glory to God in the highest.

He is making peace come to you. If you find favor in God and it's going to be through the Messiah, a kernel of the gospel that they had, they made it known. They wanted to have everyone understand the good news.

Well, what about Mary's response? In verse 19, we read that Mary treasured up all these things, pondering them in her heart. Mary pondered in her heart what all of the Old Testament prophets had to ponder about God as well.

[37 : 20] How God had revealed to them that they were serving not themselves, but you church.

They were serving you Christians as you read this now in the things that have been now announced to you through those who preach the good news to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven.

Things into which angels long to look. First Peter 1 12. Mary's response was to know that God was going to bring salvation and it would have have a beginning in her own home, in her own life, in her own love for this child.

And that that Jesus, like Revelation 7 17 says, he was born to be the lamb of God. And she had to know that her baby boy would one day be slain because he is the lamb of God that was slain from before the foundation of the world for us.

Ponder the spiritual reality that's revealed to us in the birth of Christ and let God reform you as you marvel at his truth. The innocent blood of the lamb covering sinful man over and over and over in God's word.

And Bizzle says, and I agree, it all becomes clear when Jesus finally steps on the scene. In his lyrics, he says, I am the way, the truth, he accepts when your works have been rejected.

[39 : 21] I'm the one who pleads your case before the judge in heaven. I knew that you were guilty, but I loved you so much that with joy, I served your sentence. The wages for sin is death, but I died to expunge your record.

See, I am the Passover. The wrath of God is waiting. Every life not covered by my blood will be taken. I am the way, the truth, the life, and I will always be.

I am, I am, beloved. It was always me, says Jesus. And let God reform you as you marvel at his truth.

It's what 1 Timothy 3.16 says, How should you respond?

You should respond like the shepherds in verse 20. God's revelation reformed the thinking of these simple shepherds.

[40 : 44] They recognized the Lamb of God, and they declared the good news of his gospel. And if you love Christ for all he truly is, you will do the same.

Let's pray. From 1 Corinthians 1.27. Oh God, you chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise. You chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong.

You chose what is low and despised in the world, so that no human might boast in your presence.

Because you are love, you sent your only begotten Son, Jesus Christ, for our righteousness, for our sanctification, and our redemption.

We believe what Revelation 13.8 says, that Jesus Christ now sits on the throne as our shepherd, and we trust that he will guide us to springs of living water, and God himself will wipe away every tear from our eyes.

So now we, along with your host of angels, we sing glory to the newborn King, veiled in flesh, the Godhead sea, and hail the incarnate deity, who is Jesus Christ, our Lord.

[42 : 00] Amen.