

Good Tidings  
of  
Great Joy



One of the most curious parts of the “Christmas Story” must be when the awesome news of this eventful birth in Bethlehem was announced only to a few humble shepherds:

*And there were in the same country shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night. And, lo, the angel of the Lord came upon them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them: and they were sore afraid. And the angel said unto them,*

*“Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people.*

*unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Messiah the Lord.*

*this shall be a sign unto you; Ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes,\* 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, to men of good will.”*

*And it came to pass, as the angels were gone away from them into heaven, the shepherds said one to another, “Let us now go even unto Bethlehem, and see this thing which is come to pass, which the Lord hath made known unto us.”*

*And they came with haste, and found Mary, and Joseph, and the babe lying in a manger.*

*And when they had seen it, they made known abroad the saying which was told them concerning this child. All they that heard it wondered at those things which were told them by the shepherds. ...And the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things that they had heard and seen, as it was told unto them.*

*(From the Gospel of Luke, Chapter 2)*

That amazing news for which the whole world is celebrating during the Christmas season was originally announced in the oddest place to the smallest of audiences, especially considering the magnitude of the announcement. A poor band of

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\* *swaddling clothes* — narrow bands of cloth wrapped around a newborn child to restrain its movements and quiet it.

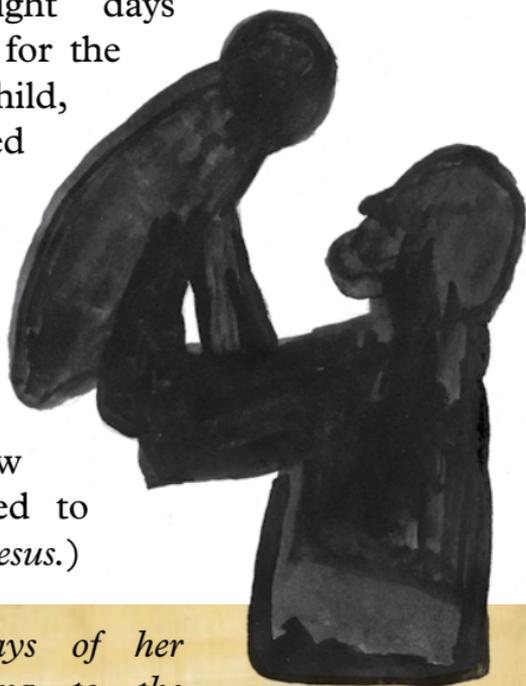
shepherds on the hillside saw the Heavenly Host rejoicing in the sky above them, as the earthshaking news was first proclaimed. *The Savior of the world was born!*

It was not announced to kings or even in the midst of the temple to all the very pious in their religious garb. No, it was the small and humble that heard the news. Surely these shepherds must have been the “men of good will” the angels spoke about. And that news certainly brought those humble shepherds peace.

One may see the massive celebrations of the annual Christmas season and surmise that truly it must have been “tidings of great joy,” because look at the worldwide celebrating that is still going on 2000 years after the eventful birth in Bethlehem. Everyone is out and about, parking lots are crammed with cars, traffic jams everywhere... yet somehow one is left to wonder whether it is those “glad tidings of great joy” that are really behind all this fanfare. Searching intently amongst the tinsel and decorations, are those glad tidings anywhere to be found in all this rush?

Yet, may those “men of good will” — wherever they be found on earth — find the peace they were promised.

And when eight days were accomplished for the circumcising of the child, His parents named Him *Yahshua*, for that was the name given by the angel before He was even conceived in the womb. (*Yahshua* is a Hebrew name, later changed to the Greek-derived *Jesus*.)



*And when the days of her purification according to the law of Moses were accomplished, they brought him to Jerusalem, to present him to the Lord; As it is written in the law of the Lord, Every male that openeth the womb shall be called holy to the Lord; And to offer a sacrifice according to that which is said in the law of the Lord, a pair of turtledoves.*

The Savior of the world was redeemed, as a firstborn son, with two turtledoves. Jewish law (Exodus 13) would have the firstborn given to the LORD whether animal or man, but giving a sacrifice of a young animal, the faithful Jewish family could

redeem their firstborn. If they were very poor and did not have the price for a lamb, and all they could give was two birds, then God understood their poverty and would accept that for an offering. Many people do not realize that this very Jewish family of Joseph, Mary, and their son were under obligation to keep the Law and actually made the proper sacrifice to redeem their firstborn son. So, here we can see the Savior of the world was Himself redeemed for two turtledoves. What an awesome privilege those two turtledoves had!



*And, behold, there was a man in Jerusalem, whose name was Simeon; and the same man was just and devout, waiting for the consolation of Israel: and the Holy Spirit was upon him. And it was revealed unto him, that he should not see death, before he had seen the Lord's Messiah. And he came by the Spirit into the temple: and when the parents brought in the child, to do for him after the custom of the law, then took he him up in his arms, and blessed God, and said, "...mine eyes have seen thy salvation, which you have prepared before the face of all people; A light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of thy people Israel." And Simeon blessed them, "Behold, this child is set for the fall and rising again of many in Israel; and for a sign which shall be spoken against; ...that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed."*

Why did Simeon say that the Savior would cause the fall and rising of many in Israel? And why would He be a "sign which shall be spoken against"? It is obvious that this Baby who would be the Savior of the world was not going to have an easy road in life. Obviously some people would not want his "salvation," or Simeon would not have spoken like this of this precious Baby that he held that day in the Temple. Surely it was true what Simeon said: "The thoughts of many hearts will be revealed" in how they respond to this Baby born in the manger....

*May we all be like the Shepherds on the hillside  
and Simeon in the Temple, receiving the  
glad tidings with the joy it deserves.*

