

1. The Christmas Story

- a. What an amazing birth story we have on Christmas. We have heard all kinds of crazy stories about babies being born. I read a headline of a story- wasn't really all that interested in the details- recently that was about a woman giving birth in a cab in NYC. People have given birth on airplanes. There were apparently two babies born at 11:11 on 11/11/11.
- b. While stories like that can be fascinating, they really don't compare to what we see at Jesus' birth. Angels called out to shepherds to come see the baby who would be their king.
  - i. "Do not be afraid; for see — I am bringing you good news of great joy for all the people: to you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is the Messiah, the Lord. This will be a sign for you: you will find a child wrapped in bands of cloth 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 heaven, and on earth peace among those whom he favors!"
- c. The shepherds set out to find this baby and when they did, they told his parents all that they angels had said. They knew that they had been witness to something amazing.
  - i. The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen, as it had been told them.
- d. We also know from Matthew's account of Jesus' birth that a bright star shone that led astrologers from the east to come and see him. So the angels and the multitudes of heaven were proclaiming God's glory at the birth of Jesus. The shepherds of the field came to see this child of a family they had never met. They went away worshiping and praising God. Wise men from the east came, led by the heavens themselves. It seems that whether angel or man, and even creation itself cried out for joy at the birth of Jesus.
- e. Beyond all that, it is an amazing story because this is the birth of our King, born around livestock and being attended to by angels and shepherds. He wasn't born in a palace with dozens of servants. He was the most important birth in history, and he was born in the humblest of fashions.

2. The Meaning of the Christmas Story

- a. Why should this be such a big deal? Why should the birth of this little baby be so meaningful to so many?
- b. Paul gives us some real insight into this in his letter to Titus.
  - i. **Titus 2:11** For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all.
  - ii. The grace of God to which he is referring is Jesus. It is interesting that in all the ways we talk of grace, we rarely if ever mention that Jesus is not just one who brings the grace of God- but he IS the grace of God.
  - iii. Grace is unmerited favor or an underserved gift. This describes Jesus perfectly. He was the gift sent to mankind to save us, to reconcile us to

God, to bring us back to our Father in heaven, even though we had completely rejected him. We didn't deserve it. We simply received it as a gift from God.

- c. Paul went on that because the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to us all, that we should live lives of godliness, renouncing sin, and being upright before God as we wait for Christ to return.
- d. What is most important in this passage is what Paul said in verse 13: while we wait for the blessed hope and the manifestation of the glory of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ.
  - i. He challenged them to live godly lives while they waited for the blessed hope and manifestation of Christ's glory- in other words, while they await his return. The grace of God appeared at the birth. Then they should live godly and upright lives while they wait for his return in glory.
  - ii. But the really important part is how Paul referred to Jesus: our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ. He told them they were waiting for the second coming- not just of a man who had been their savior, but of their God and Savior, Jesus Christ.
  - iii. Combine this with the fact that in vs. 10 Paul calls God our Savior and we get a pretty clear picture of what was going on. If God is the Savior and Jesus is the Savior, then who is Jesus? God. Just as Paul said- we wait for the blessed hope and the manifestation of the glory of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ.
- e. It is this that makes the birth of Christ so remarkable. It isn't just the story of some guy who set a great example. It isn't just the story of a great historic figure who had some really insightful things to say. It isn't about a religious leader for the Jews. It is about the gift of God taking on human flesh- God coming to us, God with us- because we could and would never come to him on our own.
- f. In his great mercy, the grace of God appeared in Christ, and "He it is who gave himself for us that he might redeem us from all iniquity and purify for himself a people of his own who are zealous for good deeds." That is the meaning of Christmas.