

## “AFTER JESUS WAS BORN”

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, saying, "Where is He who has been born King of the Jews? For we have seen His star in the East and have come to worship Him." When Herod the king heard this, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him. (Matthew 2:1-3)

What is it like at your house after Christmas? There are probably boxes or trash bags filled with torn and wadded wrapping paper, tangles of ribbon. There is a debate about how long to leave up the Christmas tree and the wreaths and Christmas lights on the outside of the house. Whatever date is decided on, the day after Christmas, we start putting away the presents, and ornaments. Some of the presents are put aside to be exchanged if possible. After hearing Christmas music on the radio and television for a month, suddenly it is gone.

In the refrigerator and pantry are the leftovers of our Christmas entertaining. We try to use them in meals before they spoil. Before we put the Christmas cards away, we sort through them and make notes for next year about who had died, who has a new address, etc. Sometime after Christmas we begin to get the credit card statements. Christmas shopping is so hectic; we don't know how much we spent the bills come.

There is a sadness that comes after Christmas. Whether family has come to visit, or we have visited family, or we stayed home and no one came, Christmas is an annual milepost that reminds us how quickly time is passing, that old friends are now gone, that family ties are fraying. There are more suicides at Christmas time than any other.

After Christmas is a time when we should ask ourselves, was the Christ Child's coming more real to me this year than in years past?

1.) Now there were in the same country shepherds living out in the fields, keeping watch over their flock by night. And behold, an angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were greatly afraid. Then the angel said to them,

"Do not be afraid, for behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy which will be to all people. "For there is born to you this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord. "And this will be the sign to you: You will find a Babe 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, goodwill toward men!" So it was, when the angels had gone away from them into heaven, that the shepherds said to one another, "Let us now go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has come to pass, which the Lord has made known to us." And they came with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the Babe lying in a manger. Now when they had seen Him, they made widely known the saying which was told them concerning this Child. And all those who heard it marveled at those things which were told them by the shepherds.

(Luke 2:8-18 NKJV)

The Westminster Shorter Catechism refers to Jesus' life on earth as "His estate of humiliation." "And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself..." (Philippians 2) His humiliation is seen in the circumstances of His birth. After Jesus was born, He was wrapped in swaddling clothes and lay in a manger for His bed. His humiliation was continued by announcing His birth to members of one of the lowest classes of society: shepherds.

Jacob and his sons, Moses, and David were shepherds. As people moved into town or onto farms, those who continued the nomadic life of herdsmen were looked down on. Joseph advised his brothers-

"So it shall be, when Pharaoh calls you and says, 'What is your occupation?' 'that you shall say, 'Your servants' occupation has been with livestock from our youth even till now, both we and also our fathers,' that you may dwell in the land of Goshen; for every shepherd is an abomination to the Egyptians.'" (Genesis 46:33-34 NKJV)

In her song *Magnificat* Mary said that God has highly exalted men of low degree. The shepherds were the first of God's people to be given the news of Jesus' birth. They were the first to visit and see the Holy Child. They were the first to announce to others the good news of His birth.

Now when they had seen Him, they made widely known the saying which was told them concerning this Child. And all those who heard it marveled at those things which were told them by the shepherds. (Luke 2:17-18 NKJV)

Then the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things that they had heard and seen, as it was told them. (Luke 2:20 NKJV)

2.) And when eight days were completed for the circumcision of the Child, His name was called JESUS, the name given by the angel before He was conceived in the womb. Now when the days of her purification according to the law of Moses were completed, they brought Him to Jerusalem to present Him to the Lord (as it is written in the law of the Lord, "Every male who opens the womb shall be called holy to the LORD"), and to offer a sacrifice according to what is said in the law of the Lord, "A pair of turtledoves or two young pigeons." (Luke 2:21-24 NKJV)

After Jesus was born, Joseph and Mary obeyed the Law of God concerning the birth of a male child. Eight days after His birth, He was circumcised and it was then that He was given His name Jesus. This probably took place in Bethlehem. Forty days after His birth Joseph and Mary took the baby Jesus to the Temple to be dedicated to the Lord. The usual offering at this ceremony was a young lamb in its first year for a burnt offering and a pigeon or turtledove for a sin offering.

'And if she is not able to bring a lamb, then she may bring two turtledoves or two young pigeons-one as a burnt offering and the other as a sin offering. So the priest shall make atonement for her, and she will be clean.'" (Leviticus 12:8 NKJV) Mary brought an offering of two birds because she wasn't able to bring a young lamb.

There in the Temple Jesus was revealed as the promised Messiah to two elderly, godly people who were anxiously awaiting the Messiah.

And behold, there was a man in Jerusalem whose name was Simeon, and this man was just and devout, waiting for the Consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit was upon him. And it had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not see death before he had seen the Lord's Christ. So he came by the Spirit into the temple. And when the parents brought in the Child Jesus, to do for Him according to the custom of the law, he took Him up in his arms and blessed God and said: "Lord, now You are letting Your servant depart in peace, According to Your word; For my eyes have seen Your salvation Which You have prepared before the face of all peoples, A light to bring revelation to the Gentiles, And the glory of Your people Israel." And Joseph and His mother marveled at those things which were spoken of Him. Then Simeon blessed them, and said to Mary His mother, "Behold, this Child is destined for the fall and rising of many in Israel, and for a sign which will be spoken against "(yes, a sword will pierce through your own soul also), that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed." (Luke 2:25-35 NKJV)

Now there was one, Anna, a prophetess, the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Asher. She was of a great age, and had lived with a husband seven years from her virginity; and this woman was a widow of about eighty-four years, who did not depart from the temple, but

served God with fastings and prayers night and day. And coming in that instant she gave thanks to the Lord, and spoke of Him to all those who looked for redemption in Jerusalem. (Luke 2:36-38 NKJV)

### 3. After Jesus Was Born, He Was Revealed to the Gentiles.

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, saying, "Where is He who has been born King of the Jews? For we have seen His star in the East and have come to worship Him." When Herod the king heard this, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him. And when he had gathered all the chief priests and scribes of the people together, he inquired of them where the Christ was to be born. So they said to him, "In Bethlehem of Judea, for thus it is written by the prophet: 'But you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, Are not the least among the rulers of Judah; For out of you shall come a Ruler Who will shepherd My people Israel.'" Then Herod, when he had secretly called the wise men, determined from them what time the star appeared. And he sent them to Bethlehem and said, "Go and search carefully for the young Child, and when you have found Him, bring back word to me, that I may come and worship Him also." When they heard the king, they departed; and behold, the star which they had seen in the East went before them, till it came and stood over where the young Child was. When they saw the star, they rejoiced with exceedingly great joy. And when they had come into the house, they saw the young Child with Mary His mother, and fell down and worshiped Him. And when they had opened their treasures, they presented gifts to Him: gold, frankincense, and myrrh. Then, being divinely warned in a dream that they should not return to Herod, they departed for their own country another way. Now when they had departed, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream, saying, "Arise, take the young Child and His mother, flee to Egypt, and stay there until I bring you word; for Herod will seek the young Child to destroy Him." When he arose, he took the young Child and His mother by night and departed for Egypt, (Matthew 2:1-14 NKJV)

The Christ Child was introduced to three different groups of Gentiles. The Wise Men followed a special star a great distance. They were astrologers who interpreted as the meaning of the star that the King of the Jews had been born. They believed that this was a very special King who had been born. They had come prepared with gifts to worship Him.

King Herod represented the Romans. He felt threatened by the birth of this Child born to be King and he was determined to kill the baby Jesus.

Joseph fled into Egypt with Mary and the baby. Egypt was ruled by Greeks at that time and part of the Roman Empire. The Holy Family was unnoticed by the people among whom they lived in Egypt.

