

Wheelersburg Baptist Church 12/22/91
Luke 2:15-20 "The Correct Response to the Christ of Christmas"

Intro: (of service) Merry Christmas! This morning we will conclude our 3 week series, "Whatever Happened to the Christ of Christmas?" Luke 1-2

December 8 (AM) "Is Christmas More Than a Sentimental Story?" 1:1-4

December 8 (PM) "Getting Ready for the Baby" Luke 1:5-80

December 15 "The Humble Birth of the Sovereign King" 2:1-7

December 22 "The Correct Response to the Christ of Christmas" 2:15-20

Intro: (of message)

****Goal of our Study in Luke 1-2:**

Why did Luke write this gospel?

For Theophilus: Look at 1:4. He had a friend named Theophilus, a man who had heard of Jesus but never met Him. Luke himself had never seen Jesus. So he engaged in a vast assignment. He interviewed those living individuals who were eyewitnesses of the life and ministry of Jesus--the apostles, Mary, and others (?). Then guided by the Spirit of God, he wrote this biography of Jesus. Why? 1:4 "that thou mightest know the certainty. . ."

For us: Luke wants to help us to get to know the real Christ of Christmas. And once we do, we'll gladly place our complete confidence and trust in Him.

Illust:

Last Week: We examined the familiar account of our Lord's birth in Luke 2:1-7. Three scenes--The Decree, the Destination, and the Delivery. These 3 scenes, Luke presents three attributes of our Savior--His Sovereignty, His Majesty, and His Humility.

Note: Observe something that is very important. Luke devotes more verses to telling us how people responded than to the actual account of Jesus' birth. The birth story appears in vv 1-7. The responses appear in vv 8-38.

What's the point? There is a RIGHT way to respond to the Christmas story, and God wants us to know what it is.

Q: What is the correct response to the Christ of Christmas?

A: Luke shows us how several responded in Luke 2.

1. The Angels (13-14)--Praised
2. The Shepherds (15-17, 20)--Proclaimed
3. The People who heard the Shepherds (18)--Puzzled
4. Mary (19)--Pondered
5. Simeon (25-35)--Prophesied
6. Anna (36-38)--Publicized the news in Jerusalem

Illust:

Last Year: We looked at the angel's announcement in Luke 2:10-11.

This Year: Let's look at Christmas from the perspective of the Shepherds. How did the Shepherds respond to the Christ of Christmas? There are tremendous implications for us.

Proposition: In Luke 2:15-20, Luke tells us 4 steps involved in the Shepherd's response to the Christ of Christmas.

- I. Step #1 Revelation (15)
- II. Step #2 Application (16)
- III. Step #3 Proclamation (17-19)
- IV. Step #4 Praise (20)

I. Step #1 Revelation (15)

V 15 "And it came to pass as the angels were gone away from them"

From whom? See v 8

V 8 "And there were in the same country shepherds. . ."

The very night of Jesus' birth, shepherds were busy in a Palestinian field. What were they doing?

- 1. Abiding
- 2. Watching over their flock

Then what happened? All of a sudden, an unexpected visitor took the shepherds by surprise! In fact, notice the 3 short, stacato-like statements in v 9.

- 1. And lo an angel of the Lord came upon them
- 2. The glory of the Lord shone round about them
- 3. They were very much afraid!

The angel spoke to the shepherds. He delivered a birth announcement!

Vv 10-12 "And the angel said. . ."

It was Jewish custom for a birth to be celebrated with music. When a boy was born, local musicians congregated at the house to greet him with simple music. Jesus was born in a stable in Bethlehem. There were no earthly minstrels. But that didn't keep the minstrels of heaven quiet!

Vv 13-14 "And suddenly there was. . . a multitude of heavenly host praising. . ."

You remember the scene well.

Illust: Christmas programs!

Q: Why shepherds? Why did God choose shepherds to be the first to hear the grand news of the Savior's birth?

You need to know something about Jewish shepherds in 1st century Palestine. Shepherds were despised by the orthodox good people of the day. The care of their flocks placed demands on them that prevented them from following the Jewish ceremonial laws. They couldn't observe all the meticulous handwashings, and rules and regulations. So shepherds were ceremonially unclean.

Who does Luke say were the first to hear of the Messiah's birth? Caesar Augustus? No. King Herod? No. The High Priest in Jerusalem. No. God bypassed

men of royalty and men of religion. He sent His angel to common, even despised shepherds.

V 15 ". . . which the Lord has made known unto us"

Step #1 is Revelation. God revealed the truth of Christ to Shepherds.

Why is that significant?

Throughout his gospel, Dr. Luke has a heart for common people. This fact caught his attention, that God revealed the birth announcement to common shepherds. It says much to us about Who the Christ-child really was, and why He came into the world.

Lk 5:32 "I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance."

Key: You'll never understand why God sent His Son into the world to be your Savior, until you grasp and admit that you are lost.

Illust:

Note: It's also possible that these were special shepherds. We know that their flocks were near Bethlehem. It's possible that these shepherds were in charge of the sheep from which the Temple offerings were chosen! How fitting that those who looked after the lambs of sacrifice would be the first to hear of the Lamb of God who came to take away the sin of the world!

Q: How did the shepherds respond to this grand revelation from God?

Tran: Step #2. . . Obedience

II. Step #2 Obedience (16)

The shepherds held a conference in v 15. They made a unanimous decision.

V 15 "Let us now go even unto Bethlehem. . ."

How must we receive God's revelation? The shepherds show us. They received the message first by faith, then by obedience. They did NOT say, "Ah come on now. Be real. A Savior has been born? Christ the Lord? And in Bethlehem? And God sent an angel to reveal it to us? Man, what did we eat this evening that prompted this hallucination!" Was that how the shepherds responded? Obviously not.

They received God's message by faith--v 15 "which IS come to pass". And they verified their faith by obedience in v 16.

V 16 "And they came with haste and found. . ."

Observation: The angel never told the shepherds to go see Jesus. He just announced that Jesus was born. There was no question that they would indeed go, however. They could not help but go after hearing this amazing news about the Christ-child.

Application: You can't help but be drawn to Jesus once you learn Who He really is!

Illust:

Step #1 was Revelation. Step #2 was Obedience. The shepherds went.

V 15 "even unto Bethlehem"--indicates the trip was of some distance. And v 16 points out they came "with haste." Who watched the flocks? We don't know. And it didn't matter. Nor does anything else matter when you have the opportunity to come to Christ!

Quote: Howard Luccock called this "the first Christmas rush"! Wiersbe

Q: What did the shepherds find when they arrived?

Luke is very graphic. The shepherds journeyed to Bethlehem. They followed the angel's instructions. They located the nativity scene, not some cozy picturesque scene as we think of it. Look! Look at the nativity scene through the eyes of the first visitors, the shepherds. What did they see? (found = found after a search)

First--"and found Mary"--an ordinary, common Jewish girl

Second--"and Joseph"--nothing spectacular

And finally, the climax--"and the babe"

Wow! Notice the simplicity of the scene. No fanfare. No festivity. No glamour. None of that. Just a peasant couple. And a baby.

What impressed the shepherds about the baby? Did they see a halo around His head? No. Did they see an angel perched by his side? What did they see? What caught their eye?

v 16 "lying in a manger"

Last week I reminded you what this word means. "Manger" is translated "stall" in Lk 13:15. It can mean either a "feeding trough" or an enclosure for animals.

Just think of it! The shepherds had heard the angels announcement--"For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior who is Christ the Lord!" The shepherds had heard the multitude of heavenly hosts filling the night sky with their praises saying, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men."

But when the shepherds arrived what did they see? A baby. A baby born in a place usually occupied only by animals. God's anointed lying in a feed trough cradle! What a humble birth! But the shepherds had been forewarned in v 12, "You will find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger."

Listen. No Jew in the first century expected the Messiah to be born in poverty, in a cattle shed! That didn't fit into their plans. That wasn't the kind of Messiah they expected, or wanted.

What's more, no Jew in the first century expected the Messiah to die a criminal's death on the cross. But 33 years later, He did, according to eternal plan.

Why? Because Jesus came into the world with this objective in mind, right from His birth. He came to SAVE us.

Lk 2:10-11 ". . . to all people {not just Jews}. . . a Savior"

Illust: I read about a European monarch who used to worry his court. How? Often he would disappear from the palace and dress incognito and mingle with

his people. One of the king's men asked him not to do this--It's not safe. The monarch answered, "I cannot rule my people unless I know how they live."

Tran: What's the correct response to the Christ of Christmas? Luke has given us two steps so far in the lives of the shepherds. Revelation. Obedience. Notice what happened next.

III. Step #3 Proclamation (17-19)

V 17 "And when they had seen it, they made known abroad they saying. . ."

Luke says, "When they had seen it." The shepherds had a firsthand encounter with the Savior of the world, Jesus Christ. Listen. You can't pass on something with conviction what you haven't experienced personally yourself! The shepherds had heard God's revelation about the Christ-child. They'd seen the Christ-child.

So the next step was quite natural.

V 17 "They made known abroad. . ." (NIV "spread the Word")

Did you know that Shepherds were not allowed to testify in court? Yet God used humble shepherds to be His witnesses to testify of the Messiah's arrival! They couldn't contain themselves! They had to pass on the good news! To whom? Apparently to the village people in Bethlehem (whoever was awake!).

How did people respond to their proclamation?

1. Notice the People's Response (18)

V 18 "And all that heard it wondered. . ."--They were amazed.

2. Notice Mary's Response (19)

V 19 "But Mary kept all these things. . ."

Key: The shepherds provide us with a model. Our objective in life can be summed up to 2 main responsibilities. Notice 2 things true of the Shepherds:

v 15 "the Lord has made known to us"

v 17 "they made known abroad"

Think about it.

Q: What is our task in life? Two responsibilities

1. To know Christ = to have a personal, growing, lifechanging relationship with Him

Ph 3:7, 10

2. To make Christ known

II Cor 2:14

II Cor 4:5

Application: Do you know Christ? Is it a priority for you to get to know Him better every day? Are you making Christ known? When was the last time you shared with someone what Christ means to you?

Illust:

Tran: Three steps--Revelation, Obedience, Proclamation. Now the last. . .

IV. Step #4 Praise (20)

V 20 "And the shepherds returned. . ."

That was some return trip to the field! In fact, do you know what the shepherds did along the way? They had a Praise Service! Luke points out what they did:

1. Glorifying God (greek "doxazo" from which we get "doxology")
2. Praising God

For what?

1. All the things they had HEARD. (God's revelation from the angel)
2. All the things they had SEEN. (the Christ child in the manger scene)

Q: What is the correct response to the Christ of Christmas?

A: Praise--Praise that involves your lips and your life!

Did you see where the shepherds went in v 20? They "returned." They went back to their fields, to their occupations.

Listen. When we come to know Christ, what does our Lord want us to do? Hide away in some monastery? No. Live a life of praise. Go back into our lives as transformed people. Go back and let the people who know us see the reality of Christ in our lives. Go back and live a life of worship. That's the proper response to the Christ of Christmas.

Illust:

Notice something in v 20. Luke recognized the grace of God in action. The shepherds did not seek God. There they were tending their flocks, going about their business. God broke into their world. God sent the angel to them. God delivered a special message for them. God told them where they could find the Christ-child. God privileged them to behold with their eyes the Messiah. And it all happened, Luke says in v 20, "as it was told unto them." Passive. God told them.

So it is with us.

This morning, God is probing the hearts of some. You didn't come here seeking God. But He has sought you. And you have heard His Word today.

Q: How will you respond to the Christ of Christmas this morning?