

A Day of Signs and Wonders

Opening Text: Luke 2:7-19 (The Passion Translation)

This is the story of the birth of Jesus. When He came into our world, it was a day of signs and a day full of wonder!

1. Shepherds

V.8 - *That night, in a field near Bethlehem, shepherds were watching over their flocks*

I believe that no detail in this story is irrelevant:

- a) The revelation came to a group of men who were watching. They would normally watch out for robbers or predators, or if perhaps one of the sheep would drift away into the darkness. They knew what it was to stay alert, awake and attentive – and ready to respond. I believe that God knew that He could entrust people like that with the message of Messiah.

In the darkness of the world we live in, how important it is to be alert spiritually, awake, to watch and to pray!

- b) They would normally be ready to respond to any perceived threat, but when they saw the angel, they realised that this was something bigger than anything they had seen. They feared!

In Psychology there is something called “*the fight or flight response*”. However, the response required here was not to “**fight** or **flight**” but **faith**! That is why the angel reassured them and said, *don't be afraid*.

This wonderful description of the supernatural birth of Jesus is here so we can have faith! Faith in a powerful God!

2. Angels

V.9 - *9 Suddenly, an angel of the Lord appeared in radiant splendour before them, lighting up the field with the blazing glory of God, and the shepherds were terrified!*

- a) Everything about this night was unusual. There was
 - an unusual **visitor**: an angel
 - an unusual **vision**: the blazing glory of God
 - unusual **voices**: (**V.13** *Then all at once in the night sky, a vast number of glorious angels appeared, the very armies of heaven! And they all praised God, singing*)
- b) Angels rejoiced at the birth of Jesus. There are at least 3 references to angels rejoicing and singing in the Bible:

- When Jesus was *born*,
- When the universe was *born* (Job 38:7)
- When a sinner is *born again!* (Luke 15:7,10)

Interestingly the word ‘rejoice’ in the Hebrew language little means to ‘*spin around, to leap or to dance*’. Could it be that angels might have spined around, leaped and danced at the birth of Jesus?

3. Jesus

V.15 (NKJV) - *15 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.”*

- a) ... “*let us go and see this thing*” ... - the word ‘**thing**’ is used here to describe the ‘unusual’. That was an unusual night. There was
- an unusual visitor,
 - An unusual vision,
 - unusual voices and now...
 - An unusual baby!

*“Let us now go to Bethlehem and **see this thing**” ...*

Was Jesus being called a ‘**thing**’? Human words were not available to properly describe someone so unusual.

Luke 1:35b KJV - ... *“that **holy thing** which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God”.*

Isaiah 43:19 – *“Behold, I do a **new thing** and now it shall spring forth”*

- b) The Shepherds left their sheep to go and find Jesus. They left what was precious to them, the reason, the focus, and the centre of their daily lives to find the One the angels had announced.

Not everyone to whom the good news is announced does this. Some are happy to hear a message but don’t go far enough to encounter Him, to personally meet the Jesus of the message.

- c) **V.15** - *When the choir of angels disappeared and returned to heaven, the shepherds said to one another, “Let’s go! Let’s hurry and find this Word who is born in Bethlehem and see for ourselves what the Lord has revealed to us.”*

Someone once said that “*some people are happy with good theology but fall short of an encounter*”. Not so with these shepherds. They wanted to see for themselves.

V.20b - *They praised God and glorified him for all they had heard and seen for themselves, just like the angel had said.*

They saw what the angel talked about: the incarnate Logos, Jesus, the Son of the living God. However, they didn't stop there either:

d) **V.17** - ¹⁷ *Upon seeing this miraculous sign, the shepherds **recounted** what had just happened.* ¹⁸ *Everyone who heard the shepherds' story was astonished by what they were told.*

The shepherds did not keep this whole unusual event to themselves. No, they did what Jesus told us to do in the great commission. The shepherds told everyone about Jesus. That was no longer the job of angels (they had left to heaven). That was their job now. It is our job too – now. The result was that people were astonished. The word in Greek (*thaumazo*) literally means “*to be out of one's senses or to be awestruck*”

4. Signs and Wonders

As I said at the start, this was a night of signs and wonders. God's power was on display in a supernatural way. I want to end this message by simply looking again at something we read in **verse 12**:

¹² *You will recognize him by this **miraculous sign**: You will find a baby wrapped in strips of cloth and lying in the feeding trough!”*

Have you ever thought about that? I understand that seeing an angel is miraculous or seeing a radiant light in the night. However, where's the miracle here?

The miracle is in the fact that unlike much of what we have been told, in those days, babes were not wrapped in swaddling cloths. This was unusual. The strips of cloth found in that manger were to be used to wrap up the legs of the lambs that were going to be brought to the temple to be sacrificed.

The sacrificial lambs had to be without any spot, any bruise and without any defect. They were laid in a manger lined with soft hay to prevent them from hurting themselves. They were then carefully taken in the arms of a priest to the temple.

The miracle sign for these shepherds was this baby lying where the Passover lamb should be – in a manger with strips of cloth. This was a sign prophesied by Micah and that pointed to the very reason Jesus was born. He was the only baby born to die. You cannot separate the manger from the cross.